



Introduction: Artistic and Art-Based Research Methods

The Mutual Developments of Theory and Practice in Contemporary Research

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In this special issue, we will draw on the expertise of a wide range of artistic researchers who in different capacities and with different motivations engage in reflecting on their practice. They do this by striving to give words to methods and research concepts that were often created as part of their projects. Some of the contributors offer direct insight into the creation of artworks, while others show the mechanisms and exchanges of collaborations. Pedagogical considerations and epistemological positions are often inherent, and sometimes explicitly motivate the reflections. We can take note of how relations and contexts are visible and influential, and how artistic methods might reference qualitative methods from other fields of research.

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After 2018, when new regulations for a PhD in artistic research were implemented in Norway, most major institutions of higher education in art established PhD programs in artistic research accordingly (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018). The former national programme of artistic research continued as a national research school for artistic research, available to the new PhD candidates. Discussions of what artistic research implies, how it was to be understood, shared, and documented, rose to a new level where a wider research community could take part. However, whether artistic research should, or even wants, to be recognised within the paradigm of scientific research, is still unresolved in Norwegian higher education policy. The decision to establish a separate PhD programme on the one hand recognises the artistic research area, and on the other hand separates the artistic research area from other research areas. But as a result of establishing the programme, artistic researchers that were part of higher educational institutions could now apply for funding from regular research programmes, and thereby become part of national and international research projects that constitute our contemporary knowledge basis.

The field of artistic research is constituted not by *one* art-based or artistic research mode, but is nourished by several theoretical, scientific, and artistic approaches. To create a language for discussion and critique is demanding, but necessary in a developing field. Here we seek to connect artistic research to a more general reality of research paradigms today. Connecting to other contemporary tendencies in the humanities and social sciences, this also implies a push forward towards methodological crossovers and towards multimethod development that is not based on polarised dichotomies.

An important factor driving this development, is how current research policy is getting all the more applied and all the more oriented towards impact (European Research Council, 2018). The critique of the 'ivory tower' character of universities can be said to have resulted in new research policies and requirements that emphasise praxis connections and user and industry involvement. Also, recent management strategies have often steered research institutions towards new degrees of application and economic outcome. In this climate, the role of artistic research also acquires new dimensions – the emerging 'researcher as practitioner' makes formulating the diversity in practical research methods both necessary and relevant.

As *praxis* is not only encouraged, but also required in academia to a larger extent, it becomes relevant to delineate the relations between *art-based research* and

practice-based research. Are these different and if so, how? What characterises artistic research modes when seen as different methodologies, and which theories and analytical approaches can be applied to emphasise these characteristics? The role of the artist in research as a counter-positioner, wonderer, scrutiniser, open-up'er, criticiser, or non-purpose-finder, becomes not only important for balancing and complementing purpose-oriented practices, it is also important for finding meaning and strategies of innovation.

As the authors in this special issue are investigating some of these questions, mainly through their own research and artistic practice, the epistemological choices as *framing mindsets*, ways of seeing and thinking, emerge as another vital field of discussion in artistic research. An epistemology is a way to conceptualise the world and constitutes a specific knowledge construction based on a set of structuring or framing of realities or perceived phenomena (Aure, 2020). Research methods can be seen as ways of executing these epistemologies – and following that we here look at different sets of artistic methodologies, we must also look for different epistemologies. Artistic and art-based research may embody different epistemological and methodological positions. Showing how the different artistic researchers and art-based researchers use and investigate a range of epistemologies / conceptualising entries, we may also ask if art and artistic research in itself is about finding other epistemologies? Could we speak of speculative epistemologies in artistic research?

Many of the articles presented here move between fields of research and different conceptions of knowledge. This might be seen as a particular characteristic of artistic research, as the nature of art may be seen to question precisely our conceptions of the world and the way we process and construct sensuous meanings. This 'boundary work' that explores the boundaries of conceptualisations through art works and art-based research methodologies, creates both a view onto oneself and a possible new view on what is on the other side of the perceived boundary (Gieryn, 1983). The artwork then, becomes a pinnacle for different research categories and traditions, where the specific thinking of the research is extended onto new paths and categorisations – not at all free from method, or created with one type of method, but instead manifests and projects different possible methodological choices that may or may not be executed.

On the contributions

This special issue has its base in the research group *Art in Society Research*, established at the Oslo Metropolitan University in 2013. Starting by developing artistic research and empowering artists in the academic system – to now having manifested an array of artistic research methods and outcomes, in written, visual, or other sensuous formats in this issue, the group has created not only a collection of articles or written reflections, but reflects a contribution of practices to the field of artistic research that is still in rapid development.

This journal issue is divided in four sections: 1) Forms of artistic and art-based research, 2) Material constrictions and relations, 3) Artistic research in a social context, and, finally, 4) Extended conceptions of knowledge in an art related research context.

In the first section *Forms of Artistic and Art-Based Research*, we start by aligning what may be seen as actual different approaches to artistic research in terms of format. In several of the examples, the artistic methods seem to become less internal to the individual practice and more articulated when the artists enter collaborations with others. This reveals how closely the methods are linked to the content of the work and exemplifies how modes and methods of artistic practice and research carry meaning which is inherent in the artwork. Ellen Røed's video essay *Listening to the forest* reveals its methods and how the methods are inseparable from the content of the work. Røed ties this to earlier female practices in video art and to contemporary sound art. Positioning the recording devices as a material reality that interacts with the conditions of the site, Røed questions other earlier artistic traditions of depicting or representing nature. Most of all, the work points to aesthetic possibilities in a less anthropocentric era. The work could also be described as an *observational mode* of artistic research, where the ability to look, to observe, to listen and to take in, constitutes an epistemological approach in itself.

In *Penance Practices – Used as an artistic research method*, ceramic artist and Associate Professor Gunhild Vatn presents her conceptual, but also very materially grounded porcelain project. In her investigations into Norwegian oil history as an artist, and what she calls 'climate shame', she reuses ceramic forms and objects of her previous production. This method of repetition becomes a penance practice, as she forces herself to revisit her own responsibilities and involvements in material production. Vatn makes an important connection between political and conceptual

points of departure, critical reflection, material involvement, and ethics. The artist researcher has a particular possibility to connect the very personal with the very political, and precisely this activates the ethical dimension of the material production as a personal footprint.

Moving on to Professor Ingeborg Stana's *Artistic research in artists' books*, we go further into what is the artistic reflections around a production and the different forms of documentation, texts, and disseminations an artist can produce as part of artistic research processes. A central discussion in artistic research has been whether artwork is not research in and of itself – some still hold this position – but most researchers now agree that artwork must be accompanied by a reflection, contextualisation, or dissemination to be research of some kind, though this accompaniment does not have to be written. As a painter, using mostly oil, Stana shows impressive patience in transmitting cloud formations onto the canvas. To contextualise her paintings, she publishes artist books, invites fictional authors to comment, and in different ways curates a published collection of her works. In the current article, she discusses and explains the process of artistic publication as an artistic research method.

In the article *Dogma film and ceramic art: The case of 'Blue Collar – White Collar'*, a group of ceramic artists sharing a studio (Arild Berg, Elise Kielland, Linda J. Lothe and Mimi Swang), reflect on their own experience in meeting film maker Mona J. Hoel and experiencing her making of a documentary about their work and working methods. Hoel's practice of Dogma film principles opens a space for reflection that seems to bring new insights into what is already at play for the ceramicists, but also inspires a new boldness. From the outside, the affinity between Dogma principles and ceramic arts is not obvious, but the study shows how filmmaking ideas can influence artistic approaches and methods and translate to material crafts. This again points back to the material foundations in filmmaking and how Dogma principles disrupt conventions.

Material constrictions and relations

For some artists, it is the material itself that constitutes the conversation partner, and it is the imprints, marks, constrictions, and relations that the body or the instrument leaves on the material that becomes the lifelong path of research. From ancient times we have descriptions of the artist as a someone who masters the material, but through time artists' relation to materials has also become one of mutual imprint and

an investigation into the quality and nature of the material itself. Several of the projects presented in this issue could be placed under this heading, as the artistic methodologies often have underlying material questions. However, here we present only three projects, showing how they take a relation to materials as their methodological point of departure and, adding the research context of academia, includes another layer of relationality in the artistic creative process: Heimer through her individual body and even only one hand forming the clay, Sjøvoll and Grothen in collaboration on the white surface of the paper, and Veiteberg Kvellestad as a teaching artist in a student project with co-designed embroidery.

Astrid Heimer is the author of the article *AestPra – a meta-methodology for art and craft. Positioning of aesthetic practice in academic scientific research*. In this article that springs from her PhD work in product design as a ceramic artist, Heimer presents the term AestPra as a methodology that includes a network of approaches, various methods, and explorative ceramic art processes, to reflect upon aesthetic practice-based research. She emphasises knowledge derived from aesthetic practices, and the concept of aesthetic awareness is used to describe an open attitude and sensitivity towards the interaction between the form and body through the material. Continuing the reflections on the creative process and research context for artists, Vibeke Sjøvoll and Geir Grothen in their personal essay *To research by two hands*, situate themselves in an 'unfriendly' academia which denies them the pleasures of writing and drawing as artistic subjects, as each of them are writing their PhD thesis. After having completed that stage of their careers, Sjøvoll and Grothen show how they stimulate each other and are inspired by others, in particular *Hélène Cixous*. Unless they are able to create this space for the artistic within their work, critique inevitably seems to turn back on them and a stiffened institutionalised knowledge production.

Moving on to an article that uses student art processes to describe central perspectives in the artistic process, between the individual and the collective when creating, the article *Co-designed embroidery - student projects in art and design education* by Randi Veiteberg Kvellestad presents an embroidery project where students cooperated in an action research project spanning over a six-year period. The author discusses how embroidery can contribute to a deeper understanding of teamwork in design, arts and crafts education, and how practice-based projects may prepare students for a teaching profession. Photographs are used as documentation of the practice-based experiences. Their working process involved critical reflections

on the art teacher's research-based practice and the term *a/r/tography* is used to raise awareness of the three roles of artist, researcher, and teacher.

Artistic research in a social context

Balancing between contexts and awareness of contexts is a vital part of reflection in artistic research. In the same way as material investigation is inherent to art, so is the role of art and its potential in a social and societal context. Art can contribute to create awareness or can *in itself* be a particular form of sensuous awareness. The relation between the sensuous and the political or social in art have been discussed many times the latter years; in times of crisis for example, by asking what the role of art is. On the other hand, these social and political forces might put strain on the autonomy of the artwork; for example, how applied can an artwork be before it loses its artistic dimensions and becomes something else, like social work or pedagogy? In this issue we present three articles that approaches the social potential and impact of art in society in different ways - through questions of sensuous awareness, critical awareness, and social awareness.

The possibility of art in war and conflict, in health care, and in the education of artists, raises different ethical and aesthetical dilemmas. In *Border Threads – How ethical dilemmas of user involvement in art become a driving force for developing artistic practice* by artist and social innovation advisor Camilla Dahl, artistic intentions and ethical issues of user involvement in art is discussed. The article presents and reflects on the methods used in the project *Border Threads*, a collaborative artwork in the form of a textile tapestry, consisting of more than 300 individual textile artworks and reflecting participants from subcommunities encompassing school classes in Norway and Syria, a women's collective in Turkey, a network of women in Lebanon, and a group of women in a refugee camp in Greece. The project addresses questions about community relations, representation of others, and about contributing to something meaningful when working with participants in a collaborative art project.

The article *Research innovation: Developing arts-based research methods to make sense of micro-moments framed by dementia* by Rikke Gürgens Gjørnum and Lilli Mittner moves further into how the methodological meta-perspective of art forms and subjects can contribute to other societal fields, in particular education and health care. In a classical 'hierarchy of needs', art is often described as belonging to the upper section, the spiritual and intellectual need level – a level that is often discarded

in times of crisis and need to secure fundamental needs such as food, warmth, and safety. The connections between the physical and the mental, the perceptual and the spiritual, are however underdeveloped in this hierarchy. Dahl, Gjørnum, and Mittner all imply that art production and experiences can contribute to a better physical condition, by creating safer environments and a will to live and produce also under extreme conditions. Patients with dementia may in this way be intellectually and sensuously ignored or under-stimulated – through artistic and art pedagogical research, however, Gjørnum and Mittner show with reference their methodological approach, how different research methods based in artistic research may create meaningful moments and results in a wider research context.

When artists look at themselves as producers of meaning beyond individual works, artistic research can be understood as set in a social context. Art teachers and art professors in higher education, by having completed their PhDs, contribute to the development of a field of knowledge production both within the arts, but also outside the art field. The ‘teaching artist’ is a way of disseminating the sensuous and critical perceptual perspectives that art educations are often build on. Being an artist is not only being a producer of objects, it also entails being a producer of meaning, often beyond institutionalised contexts – now all the more articulated as precise meaning, epistemologies, and knowledge contexts that we need in order to deal with the innovation and climate crisis. In the final article of this section, Helene Illeris, Kristian Nødtvedt Knudsen, and Lisbet Skregelid uses an *a/r/tographical* methodological approach to deal with the leftovers of rational science, that is trivial, sensuous, pragmatic, and often very personal experiences. In *A/r/tography as entry to the development of a sensuous and sustainable art didactic* Illeris, Knudsen, and Skregelid ask how everyday relations are experienced through an *a/r/tographical* approach. Furthermore, the authors ask how these modes of artistic research could contribute to the development of a sensuous and sustainable art didactics, aimed towards future art teachers.

Extended conceptions of knowledge in an art-related research context

Having reached the closing section of this special issue on artistic and art-based research methods, we address the issue of knowledge production in the arts, seeking to contribute to a further verbalising of the non-verbal qualities of art experience and modes of perception. In *Enabling knowledge: The art of nurturing unknown spaces*, the authors Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk and Cristina Archetti approach deep human

trauma from a performance based on documentation of child abuse, to a performance lecture presenting both research and lived experience of involuntary childlessness. Starting from the concept of 'ethics of the unknown', they lay bare a process which could not have been anticipated. Roles and relations seem to be negotiated through artistic experimentations and mutual confidence. They end up by suggesting 'research-creation' (after Erin Manning) as a fruitful concept.

Moving to Ingri Fiksdal's *Choreographic principles in Affective Choreographies*, based on her PhD project in choreography, we see the continuation of research into the term *affectivity*. Fiksdal proposes choreography as a practice of organising actors and movements through a set of principles that may create an experience of affect in the audience. She further questions how this affect can generate new or altered states, experiences, thoughts, and ideas. Two perspectives are as important to how these questions are approached by Fiksdal; *the audience* as receivers of the performances where the questions were put into practise, and the idea of *potentiality* as something which can and cannot be actualised, but is always seen in relation to something else.

Finally, Venke Aure and Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen have written the article *The Third Site: Blending polyphonic methodology and epistemology*. The authors' cooperation started as several lecture performances where an artistic exploration of sorrow brought forth new discoveries on the personal and professional level. Artistic and art-based competence, combined with performativity as an active event, were used to produce representations of lived lives – what the authors describe as the production of existential empiricism. Aure and Dahlsveen's endeavour to illuminate how value-related and new questions through art making connected to performative writing can create vital and varied epistemological and methodological possibilities for working with art and academia, in a position they call the third site.

Having presented 13 articles representing different methodological entry points to artistic research, we want to open the methodological discussions in art further. These are methodological perspectives that we hope can be used and developed by students and younger scholars in the future, in order to expand the notion of art in science and the diverse modes of knowledge production it might entice. Continuing these lines of inquiry, we suggest the interrogative approach of art established within the 'post-medium' and 'new material' conditions as a valuable perspective on future knowledge production and innovation in higher education. Since methodology

presents theory about different methods, the connection with epistemologies' concern with forms of knowledge is obvious. We can say that the connection between methods, methodology, epistemology (and ontology) can become seamless, and as such our choice of each of these aspects are part of how we want research to be presented and valued in society. To use and argue for artistic and art-based research methods is therefore part of creating more extended, context-aware, sensitive, and sensuous processes for questioning and articulate experiences and knowledge.

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