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— *maHKUzine*

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*Henk Slager*

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## EDITORIAL

NAMELESS SCIENCE

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*Sarat Maharaj*

## KNOW-HOW AND NO-HOW:

STOPGAP NOTES ON

## "METHOD" IN VISUAL ART

AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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*Morten Torgersrud*

PHOTOGRAPHING THE

BARENTS REGION

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# Henk Slager

## EDITORIAL

The debate on artistic research, emerging worldwide in the field of visual art for some five years now, tends to focus on what artistic research could be or should be. As a consequence of that debate, artistic research, an as-yet undefined sanctuary for creative experiment and knowledge production, is prone to the danger of being absorbed by an intellectually crippling academic discourse on how the specificity of research-based art as a novel *modus operandi* could be defined and framed. That tendency is comparable to what happened in the 1990s, with the initially so radically formulated anti-disciplinary cultural studies. Such academic debate that ultimately seems to be focused particularly on institutional and managerial results – and is, moreover, associated in Europe time and again with the so-called Bologna rules, i.e. the introduction of a bachelor, master, and PhD structure in art education, provides very little insight into the specific qualities of the artistic research process as such. Therefore, it is highly pressing for us to approach research practices from the perspective of the artistic profession, implying entirely different, and also more intrinsic, views.

In that context, the project *Nameless Science*<sup>1</sup> aims at expanding the artistic research debate while showing the concrete outcome of seven artistic research “best practices” in PhD projects. These actual projects will demonstrate that the form of research taking place through the practice of visual art is, in fact, much more dynamic than usually observed within the traditional academic bastions still characterized by distinct and clear fields and disciplines. Visual art embraces a different form of research strikingly described during one of the first European conferences on artistic research by Sarat Maharaj as “spasmodic, interdisciplinary probes, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interaction, and imaginary archiving.”<sup>2</sup> A mode of research not focused purposefully on generating “expert knowledge”, but specifically on expressing experiential knowledge. Such knowledge cannot be channeled through rigid academic-scientific guidelines of generalization, repetition and quantification, but requires full attention for the unique, the qualitative, the particular, and the local. In short, a form of nominal knowledge production unable to serve a retinal, one-dimensional worldview characterized by transparent singularity, but rather creating – and if necessary demanding – room for the undefined, the heterogeneous, the plural, the contingent, and the relative. Such knowledge production can only be the sole outcome of a research practice defined at all times by an absolutely open, non-disciplinary attitude and an insertion of multiple models of interpretation. That mode of research was strikingly described in the 1970s by the philosopher of science Feyerabend, in a then-utopian fashion, as “anarchist methodology” and “Dadaist epistemology.”<sup>3</sup>

In spite of much academic skepticism, there is indeed today a visual practice satisfying the essential components of widely accepted research. Research conducted by artists – similar to research in the traditional

<sup>1</sup> NAMELESS SCIENCE. EXHIBITION:

*Apexart, New York. December 10 – January 31,*

*2009. Curated by Henk Slager. Symposium:*

*The Cooper Union, New York, December 12,*

*2008. The symposium involved a presentation*

*of the NAMELESS SCIENCE research*

*projects by the artists, followed by a discussion*

*with critical referents from EARN (European*

*Artistic Research Network) members Mick*

*Wilson (GradCAM, Dublin), Gertrud Sandqvist*

*(Malmö Art Academy), Felicitas Thun (Acad-*

*emy of Fine Arts Vienna), Tamar Zinguer (The*

*Cooper Union), and John Rajchman (Columbia*

*University). Also keynote statements by Sarat*

*Maharaj (Malmö Art Academy), Grant Kester*

*(University of California, San Diego), and*

*George Smith (IDSVA, Portland).*

<sup>2</sup> Sarat Maharaj UNFINISHABLE SKETCH

OF “AN OBJECT IN 4D” SCENES OF

ART RESEARCH in *Annette W. Balkema*

*and Henk Slager, Artistic Research, Amsterdam/*

*New York, 2004, p. 50*

<sup>3</sup> Paul Feyerabend AGAINST METHOD,

OUTLINE OF AN ANARCHISTIC THEORY

OF KNOWLEDGE (1975).

sciences such as humanities, social sciences and natural sciences – is as well-guided by the most important maxim of any scientific activity since time immemorial: the awareness of the necessity of transparent communication. The artist as researcher needs to explain clearly why the domain of visual art necessitates the research questions and, conversely, why those questions should necessarily be articulated in the visual domain. In addition, the researcher should be able to justify both the process and the chosen operational methodology and trajectory. In that context, one characteristic turns out to be particularly remarkable. A striking methodology in the topical practice of artistic research appears to be the formulation of a certain problem from a specific situational artistic process and, furthermore, to interconnect that problem in an open constellation with various knowledge systems and disciplines. Such artistic research projects seem to thwart the well-defined disciplines, since 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 that capacity and willingness to continuously engage in novel, unexpected epistemological relations in a methodological process of interconnectivity, artistic research could best be described as a delta-discipline: a way of research not a priori determined by any established scientific paradigm or model of representation; an undefined discipline as “nameless science”<sup>4</sup>, directed towards generating novel connections, flexible constructions, multiplicities, and new reflexive zones.

That undefined non-paradigmatic discipline as nameless science is indeed the curatorial basis underlying the exhibition *Nameless Science*. All seven artistic research projects presented deal with an artistic reinterpretation of representation(al) models, existing disciplines, comprehension strategies, and academic classification systems. Consequently, these research projects do not solely produce fluent forms of interconnectivity and methodology accompanied by different forms of knowledge production. They also lead to novel artistic strategies and intensity of perception.

In his project *Photographing the Barents Region* (2008), Morten Torgersrud (Bergen National Academy of the Arts) deconstructs a homogenizing geography from the paradigm of the nation-state and a territorializing form of atlas-thought by focusing on the complexity of a political, cultural, and economic interstitial domain: the Barents Region determined by the spheres of influence of both Norway and Russia. Torgersrud’s “essay installation” consists of a creative atlas, mapping a series of significant locations – not from a centric perspective or a coherent narrative, but from a passion for both the material history of the landscape and the politics of space. The installation is accompanied by a series of slide projections and textual reflections dealing with how the medium of photography contributes ideologically to the historical rise of the homogenizing concept of landscape.

Researchers Matts Leiderstam (Malmö School of Art) and Jan Kaila (Finnish Academy of Fine Arts) engage in related research questions. In his project *See and Seen* (2006), Matts Leiderstam investigates the conventions for the ideal landscape developed as techniques of perception in 18<sup>th</sup>-century painting (e.g. Claude Lorrain). A research trajectory consisting of investigation into historical reports and contexts, and production of various artistic strategies (copying, tourism), leads to the

<sup>4</sup> *CF* Giorgio Agamben’s POTENTIALITIES

(1999). *Here Aby Warburg’s research is sketched as “unnamed discipline”: a mode of being freed from a formalizing, academic disciplining process.*



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issue and implications of current spectatorship and how to address that subject in artistic work.

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The project *Photographicality* (2008) by Jan Kaila focuses on the dominance of the photographic paradigm in current visual communication.

Such photographic perception seems to manifest itself in an almost intermediated way as an artistic tenet and attitude. The use of different media aiming at creating pictures awakens perceptions, associations, and other meanings similar to the working of photographic images. In an installation consisting of photographic images mediated by video and text, Kaila explores whether the photographic process of communication might be related to a polar intertwining of a presentational, aesthetic dimension (“the here and now”), and the photographic, representative, and informational dimension (“the there and then”).

Ronan McCrea (University of Ulster) also examines the photographic process of communication. In his *School Play Series* (2008) project, he creates a series of markings in a schoolyard suggesting an undefined game. Photographs appear to demonstrate that the game is spontaneously played. However, the photographs also force us to pose the ontological question whether playing a game – as an anthropologically ambiguous and in fact undefined phenomenon – could indeed be captured in a decisive moment. For example, a moment where the child finds out that the rules governing the game are similar to the rules of daily life; a life lived outside the safe environment of the school.

In Ricardo Basbaum’s (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) project *NBP (New Bases for Personality)*, a hermeneutic link is created between game and artistic experience. The installation is a multifunctional metal structure, a set of instructions for the participants, video registrations of a series of games played, and a diagram with several layers depicting both the original project and the transformations submitted throughout history. That creates a series of rhythmic propositions, an awareness of potential forms of social relations, and ultimately a topology of a dynamic concept of identity surpassing the interpretative framework of social science.

Do natural sciences allow an artistic intervention and re-verification of visual representation? That question is the starting point for Irene Kopelman’s (*maHKU*, Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design) research project *Ubx expression* (2008). Kopelman investigates how various natural science collections used to base their display systems on 19<sup>th</sup>-century forms of categorization, and logics of identity, a classifying logos excluding differences and singularities. In the form of a concentrated series of artistic interventions and deconstructions of device systems, Kopelman develops alternative forms for archiving and display for a number of natural science collections.

Examining the logic of display and exhibition occupies Sarah Pierce (Goldsmiths College, London) as well. Pierce’s project *Test Pieces, Ambivalence and Authority* (2006-2008) focuses on the paradox of the curatorial characterized by a point of order but also by a point of pause. In *The Eyes of the University*, Derrida related the concept of points of pause to the college campus as a tentative, transitional site of speculation and deferral. Departing from that deconstructivist insight, Pierce draws attention to the anticipatory status of student work. In her Apexart presentation, she links the status of artistic



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research to the implications of a research attitude for the development of an art education curriculum. Therefore, a video registration of (and a critical, epilogical reflection on) the *Nameless Science* symposium and contributions from students at various New York art academies are included in Pierce's installation.

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Sarat Maharaj

## KNOW-HOW AND NO-HOW:

## STOPGAP NOTES ON

## "METHOD" IN VISUAL ART

## AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

These jottings touch on five elements of method that I should like to relate to art practice and research. Two are sketched below followed by four truncated entries for future elaboration "Lund", "Confucius Lab", "Uddevalla Volvo", "Nameless Science or the Unnameable?"

MULLING OVER METHOD 1. The query that crops up right away with the idea of "visual art as knowledge production" is: "what sort of knowledge?" Hard on its heels "What marks out its difference, its otherness?" Should we not rather speak of non-knowledge – activity that is neither hard-nosed know-how nor its ostensible opposite, ignorance? The question is especially pertinent in today's expanding knowledge economy that we should not only see as a "technological development" but as an emerging overall condition of living that I prefer to speak of as the "grey-matter" environs.

2. "Visual Art as Knowledge Production" involves sundry epistemic engines and contraptions that we might broadly refer to as "Thinking Through the Visual". What do such modes of knowing entail? How do they tick?

With 1 above, we can get bogged down fairly quickly with the daunting notion that nothing counts unless it has the systematic rigour of "science". This might be an unavoidable, bracing test-demand of today's knowledge scene. However it should not blind us to the fact that what we lump together as "science" is often a congeries of quite divergent activities, disciplines and domains, each with its own kit of objectives and logical procedures. We should be wary of treating them as if they added up to a monstrous monolith. In any event, many scientists themselves remain more than a pinch circumspect of philosophical attempts to sum up their activities with a single overarching methodological principle. We might do better to keep matters open, perhaps with a feel for the hodgepodge of methods, even muddle, that attends the lab workbench. Though Gaston Bachelard's musings might in parts sound a touch dated, his view of "science" as a plurality of practices in which "each secretes its own epistemology" – each, arguably, with its own "degree of approximation to truth" – serves as an antidote to a solo, make or break, subsuming principle of knowledge, truth and method. (*Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique* 1934) His account resonates with the state of play in art practice and research that also 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 – at any rate; they resist being wholly taken under the wing of systematic methodological explication.

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Two examples fleshes out the point: Marcel Duchamp spent years devising a lingo, with rules, anti-rules and measures, mingled in with doses of quirk, chance and random intrusion for his *Large Glass project* (1915-21). Sometimes they appear to strive towards formulation as abstract principles of method – as “algebraic expression” in his phrase – that can be applied at large. At other moments they hunker down to one-off use – with relevance only to a particular, unique, intensive instance. There is a billowing out towards the global scope of “method proper” countered by retraction to the modestly local, here and now. Duchamp damped down wider claims for his methods by noting that they were “probably only applicable to individual works” such as his own *Large Glass*. With the “Passage from Virgin to Bride” we feel a process of becoming – emergence from brooding states of possibility – towards a kit of disposable rules of engagement that seem poised to dissolve back into a pervasive, unpredictable, creative muddle. In contrast to Duchamp’s conceptual domain, the second example is from the retinal field: David Hockney’s look at regimes of seeing, “Secret Knowledge” (1990) – a project that might be seen as “art research” *avant la lettre*. He rubs up his examination of retinal-optical schemas and their underlying structural principles against his keen observations of how they are often modified and moulded by the artist’s eccentric eye or touch. We glean that the drive to render, regulate and represent perceptual experience on the back of methodological formulae is constantly amended by the artist’s handling, by embodied knowledge.

What comes into spotlight with these two somewhat iconic examples – the sample could be expanded to take in Mario Navarro, Seydou Boro, Tamar Guimaraes, Thomas Hirschhorn, Lu Jie, Huang Xiaopeng amongst others – is the point that method is perhaps less about given, handed-down procedures than about approaches that have to be thrashed out, forged again and again on the spot, impromptu in the course of the art practice-research effort. I am left pondering the idea that method is not so much readymade and received as “knocked together for the nonce” – something that has to be invented each time with each research endeavour.

ANY SPACE WHATEVER With the above we have what looks like a roller coaster between the methodological pole of “universal application” and that of the rule of thumb restricted to the “particular”. How to portray something of this oscillation in theoretical terms? Deleuze came to explore the sense of an unfolding flux between the “poles” in all its phases and variability through the notion of “any space whatever” – drawing on a series of examples from film. (GD. *Cinema 1 & 2*) In his critique, “any space whatever” takes on the force of method: it embodies the concept of “singularity” that cuts across the poles of the universal and particular dissolving them. A strand in the backstory of this notion, as we might deduce from his reference to Bachelard, seems to lie with Ferdinand Gonseth who had tussled with the “any space whatever” in mathematics, with rules that undergo

change, with process and contingency. In the framework of a non-Aristotelian logic, Bachelard had used the term for an alternative tack to the Kantian principle of the “universal” – also, to bridge the gap between thinking either in apriori or aposteriori terms, in empirical or in rationalist key. (GB. *La philosophie du non*. 1940)

For our purposes, it is Georgio Agamben’s “whatever” that will have to do as a more digestible, more spelled-out version of a methodological alternative to the “universal/particular” polarity – to what can be slotted neither into the category of the “individual” nor into the “generic” without grievous distortion. He broaches it as modal oscillation illustrated by the example of the human face. Its constantly changing liveliness, its vivacity, he notes, embodies a singularity that is neither an individual manifestation of a “general pre-existing facial template” nor a “universalisation” of the unique traits of one specific face. Perhaps not unlike an ever morphing ripple between the extremes of “all faces in a crowd” and “just this one” in front of us? He goes on: “In the line of writing the ductus of the hand passes continually from the common form of the letters to the particular marks that identify its singular presence, and no one, even using the scrupulous rigour of graphology, could ever trace the real division between these two spheres. So too in a face, human nature continually passes into existence and it is precisely this incessant emergence that constitutes its expressivity. But would it be equally plausible to say the opposite: it is from the hundred idiosyncrasies that characterize my way of writing the letter p or of pronouncing its phoneme that its common form is engendered. Common and proper, genus and individual are only the two slopes dropping down from either side of the watershed of whatever”. (GA. *The Coming Community*. 1993 p. 19)

His sum up can sound a trifle pat, even reductive. He evokes something elusive graphically only to nail it down all too firmly as a principle.

Deleuze, on the other hand, teases out, frame by frame, the diverse ways in which “whatever singularity” comes to be embodied in specific scenes – a diverse sequence of examples that cannot be fixed into a rule that has “universal” coverage. Agamben highlights the tricky methodological poser we cannot easily shake off – that by opting to treat art practice and research either entirely under the universal or the particular, either exclusively on the immanent or transcendental plane, we miss out on reckoning with its intrinsic condition, its “singularity”.

With 2 above, we have to clock both senses of the phrase “Thinking Through the Visual” in order to latch onto its import for method. It is not only about thinking by means of the visual, via its sticky thick as it were. It is about unpacking it, taking apart its components, scouring its operations. A point that crops up at this juncture is what makes the texture of visual art thinking quite its own, its difference? What is its distinctive thrust in contrast to other disciplines at the more academic end of the spectrum – to forms of inquiry tied up with, say, mainstream anthropology, sociology, literary and communication studies or historiography? Does it spawn “other” kinds of knowledge they cannot – what I’ve elsewhere called “xeno-epistemics”? How to sound this obscure surge without treating it as an unchanging essence of art practice? What I am trying to finger eventuates not so much in the well-trodden terrain of the academic disciplines or in the so-called gaps, chinks and cracks between them or in any designated

"interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary" belt. Rather it is a force in its own right, always incipient in "whatever" spaces – windswept, derelict brownfields and wastelands -where intimations of unknown elements, thinking probes, spasms of non-knowledge emerge and come into play. It is distinct from the circuits of know-how that run on clearly spelled out methodological steel tracks. It is the rather unpredictable surge and ebb of potentialities and propensities – the flux of no-how. The term is Samuel Beckett's although I intend it here without that shot of bleakness with which he normally imbues it. *No-how* embodies indeterminacy, an "any space whatever" that is brews up, spreads, inspissates. (SM. *An Unknown Object in 4D: scenes of art research* 2004)

This is not to say that visual art practices do not interact with established discursive-academic circuits and think-know components. They do so vigorously – glossing and translating them, aping them with bouts of piss-take, subjecting them to détournement. However, this should not lull us into seeing the discursive as the only or the prime modality of "thinking through the visual". Alongside, runs its intensive non-discursive register, its seething para-discursive charge and capability – both its "pathic" and "phatic" force, its penumbra of the non-verbal, its somatic scope, its smoky atmospherics, its performative range.

For method, the job is to draw a vital distinction between "thinking through the visual" and the somewhat crimped mode of "visual thinking". By the latter, I mean those approaches to the visual that treat it predominantly as an "image-lingo" – basing it on a linguistic model ostensibly with codes of grammar, syntax and related regularities. The rise of this view accompanies strands of Conceptual Art – also the poststructuralist-semiological dispensation where "reading and telling" the visual is styled as an almost full-blown linguistic and "literacy" enterprise. Its impact is to restrict the visual to verbal-discursive legibility – a linguistic turn and dexterity exemplified by Lacan's pronouncement that "the unconscious is structured like a language". In this perspective, "talking over the visual" – in the sense of mulling it over – literally turns into "talking over and above it".

AGGLUTINATIVES "Thinking Through the Visual" – at odds with "visual thinking" – is about what we may dub the "agglutinative mode":

1. To speak of it both as "liquid, wordless syntax" and as the "grammarless zone" of unknown possibility sounds a bit double-tongued. But the mode is shot through with contraries. Its principal thrust is decisively beyond the organizing, classifying spirit of grammar, beyond the –

2. divisions and discontinuities associated with the way regular lingo cuts up and shapes thought and expression. Henri Bergson saw such categories -verbs, substantives, adverbs – as brittle, arbitrary functions of the intellect-analytic. They rendered the ever-changing flow of time, experience and consciousness in terms of static representations, stills and freeze shots. He likened this to the "cinematographical mechanisms of thought" – to "cut and paste" techniques that conjured up the illusion of movement instead of immersing us in duration, flow and change – in the "streamsbecoming". Duchamp and Deleuze sought to articulate such passages of transition and transformation – precisely by a "turned around" use of film stuff that Bergson had railed against. (SM. *Fatal Natalities* 1997) In articulating the "streamsbecoming", the agglutinative

brings into play associative manoeuvres, juxtaposition, blend and splice, non-inflexional modes of elision and stickiness. We have a dramatic contrast by setting it off against parsing – a function that epitomizes the “slice and carve” mechanism of grammar. It is about chopping up flows of information, experience and thought into combinatory bits, modules, units and packets to configure them into algorithmic sequences – into the computational mode. It stands at the opposite end of the spectrum to the agglutinative’s “stick on” processes of figuring forth, of constellating assemblages. Whether this puts it entirely outside the ambit of grammar remains arguable. More likely we are faced with an agrammaticality that has the capacity to oscillate rapidly between several modalities. In this sense, it is at odds with the computational constancy and equilibrium of *know-how* and closer to the all-over smears, surges and spasms, the unpredictable swell and dip of *no-how*.

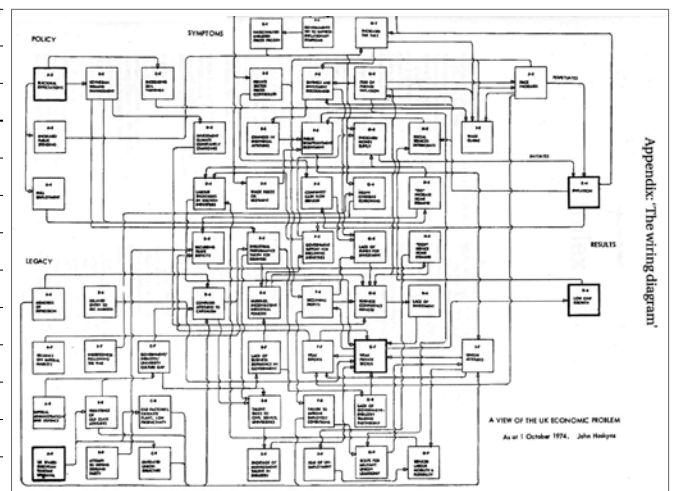
KNOW-HOW AND NO-HOW:

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THE WIRING DIAGRAM: 01.10.1974 <sup>1</sup> John Hoskyns spent ages perfecting his diagram of factors and protagonists in the sorry saga of the mid-seventies British economy. (JH. *Just in Time* 2007) An arresting piece of visual thinking, it reminded Mrs Thatcher of a “chemical plant”. At first sight, it seems a jumble of pathways, routes, cul de sacs. But as we pore over the carefully plotted circuits and linkages, we become aware of the array of social forces and institutional relations teetering on the brink. In the larger sweep of historical events, it is perhaps a miniscule, if sparking, footnote to Mrs T’s tough remedy for the “sick man of Europe” – a cure that involved “rolling back state bureaucracy”, halting creeping socialist control and a “long march” to the free market economy. Systems theory, cause and effect relations, feedback loops shape Hoskyns’s visual exposition. The various positions have a sense of reversibility, an air of linear-causal rationale. The impression we have is of a set of relations that can be rerun with much the same result each time – or with little leeway for difference of outcome, for detour and digression. It lends a stamp of reliability, consistency and coherence as would be expected of a considered socio-economic statement. This is at odds with how we might understand repetition in art practice and research where such degree of “exact repeatability” would be looked upon not only as unlikely but undesirable, where each rerun would spawn unique, one off variants – where repetition amounts to unpredictable generation of divergence and difference.

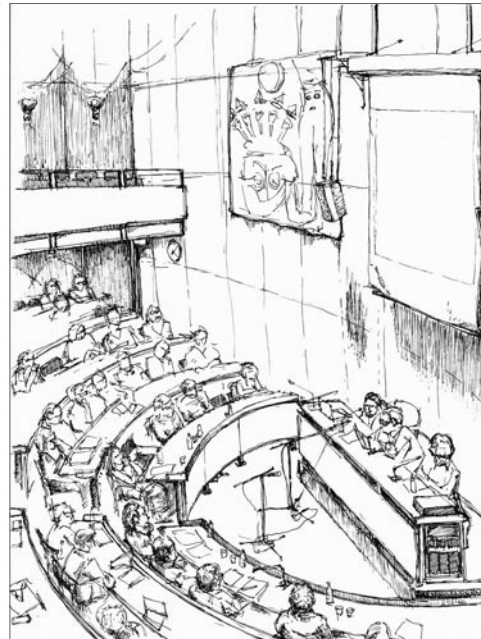
<sup>1</sup> THE WIRING DIAGRAM. 01.10.1974.BY JOHN HOSKYNs. *Reproduction from 'Just in Time' (Aurum Press. 2000)*

2. Whether we take the Ezra Pound/Marshall McLuhan exchange on the copula of dialectical thinking pitted against agglutination (EP/MCL. *The Interior Landscape* 1969) or James Joyce’s sticky lingo in *Finnegans Wake* or Derrida’s reading of Jean Genet against Hegel (JD. *Glas* 1989) or Michel Foucault’s unpacking of the “Western episteme” – we have probes galore looking for an escape hatch from the closures of dialectical thinking in which Hegel is usually billed as the bugbear. The point here is whether the agglutinative offers a less overbearing logical structure and is less of a “no-exit” contraption than its dialectical counterpart? The complaint against the latter is that from its opening gambit, its proposition already contains the outcome – “foreclosing” engagement with radical difference. It leaves no room for the “other” to put in an appearance in his or her own terms. We are presented with a thesis which already prefigures and tailors the antithesis of the “other” – groomed for “cancellation and carry over”, for “Aufhebung”, onto a “higher”

plane. From the word go, the "self" who makes the proposition calls the tune in constructing the "other" – a view of dialectical procedure that comes in for heightened criticism under post-Marxist, postcolonial eyes today. Deleuze relates the agglutinative to a "loose, open-ended logical structure-in-progress". Its components are linked together by no more than a lick of glue – threaded together with no more than the humble conjunctive form and+ and+ and+..." Elements join up in an *add on ad infinitum* scenario at odds with the assimilative force unleashed by dialectical relations. The sort of non-assimilative threading is not unlike a "list that can be added onto interminably" that is Feyerabend's riposte to the streak of control freakery in dialectical thinking. It is not surprising that he and Deleuze cite Kurt Schwitters's merz-assemblages as models of non-dialectical method seeing in his art practice a kind of Dada epistemics – a shuttle between Muddle-Method-Madness – an opening to otherness and difference that cannot be known in advance. (SM. *Monkeydoodle*. 1997 & *Merz-thinking. 50 years of Documenta*. 2006)

**METHOD FEVER** The preceding issues of method are largely in theoretical vein. Below are notes on (1) & (2) institutional (3) economic (4) historical factors that have a bearing on the story.

**1. THE DISPUTATION AT LUND. 15.09.06** <sup>2</sup> The first PhDs in visual arts practice "under Bologna" were assessed (Lund Stadshal & Konsthall. 2005) by an international panel of examiners chaired by Gertrud Sandqvist and Hakan Lundstrom, Malmo Kunsthogskola, Lund University. The three doctoral submissions were by Sopawan Boonimitra, Matts Leiderstam and Miya Yoshida. The event marked a substantial advance in formal visual art education. Not least, it signals the growing institutional location of visual art practice and research in the university sphere. In the UK, where these developments are further down the road, we see the emergence of a full-blown art practice-research system with a corpus of methods and procedures – identifiable, validated and testable – that is increasingly the *sine qua non*. The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the meta-review of research criteria (Roberts Report), journals, publications and conferences further attest to investments in art method as an "emerging arena of practice and research" and its "academic legitimating". A comprehensive mid-way reflection on these developments (*History of the Human Sciences. Knowledge for What?* 1999) concluded that some tendencies have proved positive and fruitful, others remain cause for concern – above all, the prospect of an administered, highly managed "ideology of creativity". The plethora of "Departments of Creativity and Innovation" – especially at the intersection of New Media, Art, Design and Science – signal both contemporary anxieties over "creativity" and new mappings of the terrain. It also heralds the phenomenon of the "methodologization process" generally understood in somewhat instrumental fashion as a kit of know-how procedures and techniques. The frenzy over method is perhaps not dissimilar to the moment in the "onwards march of method" in philosophy of science in the heyday of Karl Popper. It provoked Feyerabend's "Anti-Method" – a call to resist "methodologization" by taking heart from both an original scepticism and "creative muddle" that attends scientific experiment and art practice. The call resonates with an earlier moment in the history




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<sup>2</sup> DISPUTATION AT LUND. 15. 09.06. BY  
 CEDRIC BOMFORD Pen and Ink Sketch of first  
 visual arts practice PhD candidates at the public  
 defence of their doctorates, Lund Stadshal.

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of the English Art School when it was to some extent regarded a site of “unschoolability” – where one stumbled over unknown possibilities, over “no-how”, rather than trained in the know-how of a practitioner “in the method school of acting”. (SM. *Vienna* 2001)

2. CONFUCIUS LAB Why knowledge “production”? The question crops up again as we see “method fever” intensifying the drive towards institutionalization of art research and practice: with this goes a heightened academicization not in the sense of enhanced analytical rigour but of regulation and routine. Why speak of “production” when it smacks of factories, surpassed industrial modes, heavy metal sites and plants, the assembly line’s mechanical regime – standardizing components at odds with the vagaries of art practice? The usage is to help distinguish it sharply from the domain of “knowledge transfer”. The latter chugs on primarily with acts of transmission. It is about shifting already-made bodies of thought and data, about handling and filtering existing information. The emphasis is on both reproducing data and passing it on, a DNA Xerox process – the logic of replication.

“Production”, on the other hand, centres on a transformative crossover that throws up a surplus, that churns out something more than what was there to begin with. In this sense it harbours the possibility of spawning something “other” than what already exists – the logic of invention and innovation. It is about generating data, new objects and ways of knowing. “Transfer” presides over a defined territory, ultimately the canonical corpus. The concern is with mastering and mining an already identified field with fixed procedures and protocol, with formal induction and training. The epitome of this drive is perhaps the antique “closed-circuit” of the Confucius exam system. Its function was to ensure replication of scholarly knowledge and bureaucratic know-how – the maintenance of a sense of stasis, of perpetual equilibrium. It marks a scene of learning that essentially unfolds within a frame of rules to ensure carry over and continuity. In contrast, with “production” there is leeway to this regulative force, the possibility of divagation, of divergence and disequilibrium over a period of time that makes vital room for the appearance of something different or unforeseen. In this sense, the scene of learning becomes like a “lab without protocol”.<sup>3</sup>

The Lab has featured widely in recent years as a model for what the contemporary Art Academy might look like. The idea gained further currency with *Laboratorium* (Antwerp, 2001) that implicitly probed and unpacked traditional models of the Academy – Studio and Atelier. The Lab model gave impetus to mapping new, emerging relations between work, labour, creativity and scientific-technological practices – interactions increasingly shaping the structures of contemporary production and living. It tended to show up the Academy more as a “self-organizing space” than as the transmission belt of “knowledge transfer” based on the authority of the master practitioner. This tilt becomes pronounced with “outsourcing” – practitioners plugging into hi-tech know-how beyond the Academy walls for the construction and execution of their work. It put into question the Lab model itself – the older view of the Academy as the self-sufficient Pan-Epistemon. Today the “Academy” is seen not as the fixed-site, Know-All Centre but as a straggle of self-organizing educative-creative events and

KNOW-HOW AND NO-HOW:

STOPGAP NOTES ON

“METHOD” IN VISUAL ART

AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION



<sup>3</sup> BO SHI HALL. CONFUCIUS EXAM ROOM

& PROFESSORIAL CHAIR. 13.09.08 BEIJING

conjunctures, each springing up afresh from scratch, as it were, for whatever art research project. The Academy becomes less a monolith establishment, more a series of micro-labs or nano-labs that take shape within a band of knowledge practices – within the modalities of the haptic, retinal, computational, the frequencies of sonic grime, the somatic, performative, digital amongst others. Each time an art or research programme is floated, we might say, a micro-lab has to be knocked together for the occasion. Like kluges or Heath Robinson contraptions, they have to be patched together for the occasion with whatever is at hand – what we might call “a lab for the nonce.”<sup>4</sup>

3. UDDEVALLA, VOLVO 1989-93 As the “conditions of creativity” undergo change today, they have increasing bearing on what we consider as “work” – how we define labour, knowledge, creativity and art practice. Method and technique feature heavily in this shifting scene. The Volvo factory at Uddevalla, Sweden was tailor-made for one of the most advanced experiments in work, method and creativity in terms of the post-Ford model of production. The deep distinctions in older industrial production between workforce and planners, brawn and brain, makers and thinkers came in for re-mapping at Uddevalla and its counterparts in other parts of the advanced capitalist world – a development coinciding with the sine qua non of information technology. Stationed in special work bays, workers were equipped to plan and direct the whole project with emphasis on feeding new ideas into production – tapping into the worker’s “creativity and imagination”. From the image of the worker as an alienated, automaton-operative we move to that of the knowledge-concept engineer whose store of brainwork, inventive and creative capacities becomes the linchpin of production in the “immaterial labour” of the knowledge economy. We might see a rough but suggestive parallel between this development and the notion Duchamp had toyed with – the idea of a “grey matter, cortex-based” art. He conceived of this partly to weed out the somewhat lowly, “physical” status of art knowledge and creativity encapsulated in the phrase “as stupid as a painter”. What would be the shape of an intelligent-conceptual-cortical art practice remains an open issue in contemporary. However, there is not a little irony in the fact that the “work-creativity embrace” in today’s “grey-matter” environs is not dissimilar to what he seems to have had in mind. It marks a further step down the road of what we might call the “corticalization of creativity” – tending towards the pole of dexterous, “ether-real” permutations in the algorithmic mode. The tendency marks the rendering of creativity increasingly as hard-nosed know-how – a drift that makes it even more crucial to keep the door open for the unpredictable see-feel-think processes of no-how.

4. NAMELESS SCIENCE OR THE UNNAMEABLE? When I mentioned Agamben’s account of Aby Warburg’s “Nameless Science” almost in the same breath as Samuel Beckett’s “Unnameable” (SM. *An Unknown Object in 4D*. 2003), my aim was to highlight a factor that has come to “Nameless Science or the Unnameable?” loom large today – the tendency towards the institutional captivity of art research, the academicization of “thinking through the visual”. I tend to see this an intrinsic effect of philosophical explication on experimental-

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 KNOW-HOW AND NO-HOW:

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 STOPGAP NOTES ON

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 “METHOD” IN VISUAL ART

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 AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

LAB	KNOW-HOW & NO-HOW	KNACK
NANO RICHARD FEYNMAN	MICRON	ANGSTROM LENS
NOUMENAL GASTON BACHELARD	CORTEX CAP	ARIITHMETICIZATION OF REALITY  CHALKBOARD
DIGITAL VIRTUAL		KEYBOARD MOUSE
VISCERAL HAPTIC	SWEATSHOP FABRICATOR	NEEDLE SCREEN
POST-DISCIPLINARY PETER GALISON	CREOLIZING CORRIDORS	WATER COOLER OASIS
RETINAL	LIFE ROOM	DVD TV AUDIO VIDEO
EZRA POUND LOUIS AGASSIZ	SLIDES LIGHT BOX	IPHONE POWERPOINT
	OUTSOURCING	

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<sup>4</sup> DIAGRAM SCM LAB FOR THE NONCE

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 08.11.07 GUANGZHOU

embodied practice such as Warburg's – that it renders what we call the "Nameless Science" in danger of been named explicitly and being tagged with an all too determinate identity, perhaps no more than a step away from setting it up as a recognizable, academic terrain with disciplinary borders. This has little to do with Agamben's analysis as such – which happens to be a nuanced, suggestive piece – but rather with the drive in theoretical exposition to make transparent the "rationale" behind Warburg's "chaotic, impromptu think-feel-know sorties", to lay them out in a clear-cut way as a methodological kit. The threat of codifying his approach has shadowed his work all along from the time the Warburg Library-in-Exile of the 1930s underwent incorporation by the late 1940s into an "Institute" of University of London.

The demand to nail the unnameable covers several dimensions of his work: the pressure to identify the logic behind "thinking through the visual", behind elements of "xeno-epistemics" in his yearning to reconnect with the "other worlds" of the Pueblo and Hopi, behind the Dada-epistemics of his "critique of unreason" of his *Bildatlas*. The demand to iron these out tended to be in the interests of placing the "Nameless Science" in the order of university disciplines, in the formation of the History of Art as a proper field of study with know-how credentials. His apparently topsy-turvy think-feel-know contraptions perhaps truly took refuge with artists – with practices such as Ron Kitaj's and Eduardo Paolozzi's, in their disjunctive collage-modes (R.B. Kitaj. *Pictures With Commentary. Pictures Without Commentary* 1963) These seemed to spring at the outskirts of regulated readings of Warburg's visual investigations. At odds with the "institutional drive" – one that can easily repeat itself in the art research world after the "Disputation at Lund" – we have Samuel Beckett's "Unnameable" crucially signposting the creative murk, the unforeseeable drifts of no-how.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> WARBURG INSTITUTE

University of London, Bloomsbury



Morten Torgersrud

## PHOTOGRAPHING THE

## BARENTS REGION

I am based at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts, where I am now in my final year in the Program for Research Fellowships in the Arts – a program that is still being developed. Since I am still enrolled in the program, the work at Apexart is “in progress”, at least in the sense that I will be presenting it for a final evaluation in June 2009, possibly with more pieces.

I think of my project as a photographic landscape project, where I try to consider ontological and conceptual aspects of photography and space, and the relationship between the two. The research seeks to develop perspectives on photography through its relation to a particular political-economic landscape.

Geographically, the project relates to contemporary political configurations of the landscape in northernmost Europe. This area includes the northern parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland, as well as northwestern Russia. It could be referred to as Barents Region (a concept from transnational foreign policy) or as Sápmi (ethnic/indigenous territory). Additionally, it could of course be seen from the perspective of nation-states. These different configurations of landscape exist “together” as contradictory understandings and practices in the landscape. This is the backdrop of the project.

The sociological or philosophical theory on space that I have been examining has a common view of “global capitalist modernity” as a structuring “form”, so to speak. Examples of that type of theory are Saskia Sassen, Peter Osborne, or David Harvey. What I derive from these theoretical perspectives is:

1. An understanding of place as constructed or produced. This is important in relation to structures such as Sápmi or Barents, as geographies that are configured by cultural, political, and economic practices.
2. The status of the local in relation to this, including a consideration of a dynamic between the fixed/local and the circulation of commodities or capital.
3. The questions that this raises with regards to topographic readability.

In order to say something about the relation between photography and space in this context, I am trying to develop some parallels between sociological/philosophical perspectives, and photographic theory and practice.

From a photo-theoretical point of view, the writings of Walter Benjamin might be a place to start. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin describes how technical reproduction breaks down authenticity and uniqueness in terms of space and time. Although he is talking about “works of art” in relation to technical reproducibility, he is



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likewise describing effects of photographic technology.

A return to Benjamin could be useful, since photography, in addition to being a medium of the frozen moment and representation – which have been dominant ways of discussing photography since the 1980s – is also a distribution medium. Photography might be seen as site-specific and concrete in its representation of reality, while at the same time also opening up avenues for circulation of spaces and realities. In such a perspective, photography might be understood as both of the place and as placeless. So, reproduction creates a situation where the “placement” of the photograph becomes uncertain. In this sense, there could also be something spatial at stake in how photography is used.

Building upon this perspective, I hope to explore in greater depth the relationship between the photographic form and modernity. Proposing that the photographic has certain structural capabilities with spatial implications, the assumption is that the reproducibility of photography is related to features of modernity such as fragmentation, uprooting, equalization, and the breaking down of distances.

The book presented in the *Nameless Science* exhibition at Apexart consists of pictures from sites that have some kind of political-economic function or value, including sites of cultural value, which I also consider political/economic. Containing 372 photographs (in this show), the publication reproduces the landscape as a series of individual sites. As a form, it unites a differential landscape and shapes it through repetition and systematic display. The volume of images presented without much contextual information pushes Walter Benjamin’s concept of reproduction to the limit and levels the relation between the photographs. – Benjamin described “the universal equality of things” made possible by reproduction. – The equalizing also de-emphasizes the importance of the content of the individual image. This is also further emphasized by the choice of subject matter – architecture and built structures placed in the landscape. Architecture is used here as a cultural form shaped by economics, politics and technology, but whose readability in itself remains questionable. (Objects, buildings, monuments, landscapes).

The publication also “works” through a series of juxtapositions, producing shifting comparisons which unsettle clear readings of the meaning (or identity) of the places depicted. In one sense, this is visual; the forms of the structures in the photographs connect to each other in a way that displaces the content of the image to its surface. Or, in other words, lifts the attention of the work to the “surface” of the image, to a formal level. – This might be described as an equalization of image and content. – The paradox that follows from this equalizing is that the site-specificity of photography becomes equal to any other photograph within the system. At stake in this is a photographic vacillation between form and content, perhaps more precisely articulated by Peter Osborne as a “general specificity”.

Further, there are some historical (or contextual) references that I would like to mention here. Landscape; there is also a whole history where issues of culture, nation and identity have been constructed and discussed in terms of landscape and landscape images. – A tradition that might be particularly strong in Scandinavia. – Anthropology, ethnography; it could be related to anthropological or ethnographic projects that would map a place in a certain way by collecting photographic images of landscape and artifacts.



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It also positions itself in relation to documentary work tracing a kind of embeddedness or belonging in the landscape. The failure of the book to speak of place in a “proper” way might relate differently to the idea of cultural mapping or representation than some other photographic projects from this area – I refer to both art projects and photographic projects outside of art.

I would like to refer now to my other piece in the Apexart show. In my research, I have been using the photographic work of the socialist revolutionary Ellisif Wessel as a platform for investigating certain photographic issues relevant to the project. Wessel was active as a photographer around 1900 and was part of an upper-class elite of state employees that were more or less situated in the area, and left behind a substantial archive of photographic documents from the area, most of them made on different journeys. Today, the photographs she took appear in different contexts or archives, such as the national museum of photography, local historical museums, and sometimes as illustrations in books of different kinds. – And also in art projects.

Of special interest is the 1902 book *From our Border towards Russia*, which describes a journey along the Russian-Norwegian border through photography and text – describing both landscape and people. The book was published only a few years before Norway’s independence as a state, and the geographical configuration that the book proposes ties in with the construction of the territory of the nation-state. Photography participates in this imagined geography – through the tracing of the border it represents. This is possible precisely because of the “distributability” of photography.

All of that has relevance both to the development of theoretical perspectives within the project – in particular the conceptual relationship between photography and locality – and it is also the starting point of one of my pieces in the *Nameless Science* show at Apexart.

While the publication is almost an exaggeration of photographic reproducibility, the slide piece might be seen as a kind of withdrawal from (photographic) representation. The piece takes the form of a continuous loop slide show where text slides make references to Wessel. The journey is re-described by texts that focus on topographic aspects of traveling in relation to the act of photographing, thus examining how the photographic technology takes part in a certain structuring of space.

**RESPONSE / Tamar Zinguer** First of all I would like to say that I am struck by the inventiveness of the Fine Art PhDs, and the way research is created, rather than conducted.

**THE ARCHIVE** It is customary, at least in US doctoral research, to find an archive which has not yet been uncovered and bring its contents to light. Morten Torgersrud’s ingenious work *constructs* an archive.

His photography constructs data and, rather than categorize those data and organize them, works to create geographies and topographies.

The work accesses a late modernist discourse in architecture – one that criticizes the precepts of modernism and involves photography.

**THE ORDINARY** Seen together, the photographs counter expectations of Nordic landscapes. They create another kind of site, one that is



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parallel to the Independent Group's search for the *As Found* aesthetic in the early 1950s in London, the search for the ordinary, or in the language of Allison and Peter Smithson, a site "without rhetoric." The same Independent Group created a show in 1953 called *Parallel of Life and Art* that consisted of a display of photographs, without captions, from all walks of life. The photographs were all reproductions, some of architecture, some of plants, others of archeology, x-rays, etc. No hierarchy was present, only relationships that the viewer could conjure up. The superimpositions denied any hierarchies. For Allison and Peter Smithson, what was innovative about the show was its "*As Found* quality; the statement that art results more from the act of selection than the act of design." It seems that this is the modernity Morten's work refers to and takes as a point of departure; a modernity already critical of modernism, of its fixed precepts, and formal logic.

THE JOURNEY / THE EYE IN MOVEMENT *Parallel of Life and Art* precedes by almost twenty years another photographic journey along the Las Vegas strip, *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi and Scott Brown, where the "ordinary and ugly" rose above the "heroic and original" qualities of modernism. Morten's skepticism towards the character of Nordic places (at least as we New Yorkers expect them to be – full of ice and snow) raises questions about the nature of the ordinary. Is the local ordinary? Or is the ordinary global?

The Smithsons also published *As in D/S* in the early 1980s: the diary of a car's movement, recording the evolving sensibility of a passenger in a car to the post-industrial landscape. It seems that Morten's photographs belong in that category of "sensibility primers" to the political/economic values of site – while the nature of the vehicle of transportation here remains unknown. Sights or sites along a journey are usually identified by their monuments. Here the monuments are indistinguishable or missing, reinforcing that *As Found* quality, reinforcing the discovery of the ordinary. I could say that through this work we are Learning from the Barents Region.



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Jan Kaila

## PHOTOGRAPHICALITY

My doctoral thesis, *Demonstration of Knowledge and Skill* for the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts is made up of two components: *Mystery of the Object*, an exhibition composed of nine large artworks shown in the Amos Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki in 2000; and a book published in 2002. The photographs in the book document the development of my works and also present art created by other artists which has influenced my practice and research. The textual part of the book consists of four conversations I had with my supervisor Carolus Enckell, accompanied by lengthy appendices which embellish upon questions that emerged in the discussions and in my practice, and which, I hope, are also relevant to the entire field of contemporary art and photography. What is photographic presentation? How is *photographality* presented in contemporary art?

The piece you see now displayed on three monitors is an attempt to visualize essential parts of my research. On display are conversations, appendices, and images that deal with three artworks. The conversations are not presented entirely and in a linear order as was the case in my book. I have instead placed all materials that dealt with each work sequentially. In the first research plan for my doctoral studies, which I wrote in 1998, I stated that the works to be incorporated in the research would consist of photographs on urban themes realized with the logic of a street photographer. I thus committed myself to the well-known tradition where the photographer is a wanderer, a *flâneur* who seems to discover the world he encounters partly by accident, partly according to a plan. The photographer “collects” that world by taking images of it, processing it further by aesthetic means, while simultaneously trying to maintain the authentic information contained in his findings.

I therefore initially limited myself to using photography as my sole medium. This might be seen as a gesture of insecurity, since I had adopted other media for my art years before embarking on my course of study. Yet in early 1999, I found myself making art not only by photographing, but also by making videos and using objects (clothes, books), as well as texts. Around that time, my work reached a turning point in that I abandoned the traditional narrative mode that had occupied a central place in my earlier production. Since then, many of my works, and even more so the exhibitions they eventually grew into, would no longer necessarily have a verbally definable topic sited in a specific time and/or place.

The new situation awakened a host of questions, not necessarily always pleasant, about whether my research might be too thematically incoherent. I gradually realized, however, that my works were not as heterogeneous as I had thought. In spite of using different media and addressing mutually very different themes, difficult to express in words, as an author I was still a wanderer and a collector interested in discovering things and organizing them into informational images and works that allude to their origin. This attitude towards the practice of



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art, stemming from my background in photography, appeared in my new works as a factor that lent unity to my production, a feature I began referring to by the term *photographicality*.

Photographicality is not a quality limited only to photography, however. 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. In my own work, this strategy appears in the ways outlined below.

My videos do not draw upon the core tradition of moving images, where changing camera angles, dollies and editing are used to create a linear story. In my works, the camera is stationary, just like in a photo, and all movement derives from the motions of the subject of the shot. My editing is mainly directed toward creating a sense of simultaneity, not linearity.

My use of objects also aims at *photographicality*. My hope was that it would recall the traditional conflict within photography, the fact that photos allude representatively to something in the past, while at the same time they are present in the here and now as physical artifacts.

It is thus essential that I have chosen to use secondhand clothes and books; in other words, objects where the past becomes visible.

I have been fascinated for years by a comment made by Walter Benjamin, in his essay on the history and meaning of photography, *A Short History of Photography*. Benjamin writes: “Thus in fact it is to *build something up*, something artistic, created.”

Building developed into an important artistic method for me, but perhaps in a slightly different way than Benjamin was thinking. For Benjamin, building was a force contrary to photography, which relied upon a creative, traditional aesthetic; the kind of (photographic) constructivism developed by the Surrealists or Russian avant-garde filmmakers through the use of collage and montage. For me, building meant the construction, processing and combination of my photographic discoveries into a kind of presentation, where information would be paralleled, and also opposed, by aesthetic dimensions contained, not in language, but in a more immediate sensory perception, and which were based on repetition, color and space.

Thus my production gradually developed into an investigation, not only of the found, but also of the *presentation* I had made using found objects.

At the same time, my research began revolving around what was to become the main theme of my work, the polar intertwining of the presentational, aesthetic dimension, the “here and now”; and the photographic, representative and informational dimension, the “there and then.”

As a painter whose work rests upon non-figurative and colorist reduction, Carolus Enckell represents a mode of artistic thinking which contradicts the informational tradition of documentary photography which served as the starting point in my artistic work in the early 1980s. My decision to invite Enckell to be my thesis supervisor and interlocutor was based on the fact that my art had changed gradually in the 1990s – issues dealing with repetition, color and space had become central to the way I thought about photography and making art.

In early 1999, I suggested to Enckell that we start meeting once every six months or so to discuss my ongoing works that would be included in my doctoral thesis project. This resulted in four conversations, each lasting 4–5 hours unedited. Neither of us planned our talks very much; the idea



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was instead to comment freely on everything that the works and changes in them would bring to mind. This must not be taken to imply that our meetings were accidental in terms of their content. The preceding conversation always affected the course of the subsequent one – in other words, we established a discursive contact and culture.

For some time, discussion has been a natural way for me to approaching art, and I have used it when I have produced material for publication about other artists. I think that a dialogue, which a conversation always essentially is, creates at best the kind of unforeseeable knowledge and sense of presence not always achieved in writing, which tends to be more theoretical. Discussion also seemed suitable to my artistic research, because it would permit me to document, in a more or less chronological and authentic manner, those reactions and moods which the current phase of the works elicited over the course of the two years it took to make them.

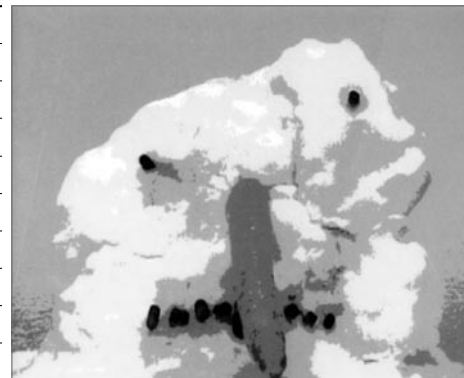
At a later stage, I wrote appendices to the conversations. I wanted to include in my research also these elements that had affected my work, which for practical reasons were impossible to explore systematically in the meetings between Enckell and me. These elements included theory, phenomena and works in the sphere of the history and present status of photography and art.

My original idea was not to evaluate the interrelationship of the appendices well in advance, but to link the appendices to every relevant point in the conversations so that the end result would resemble a collage with multiple perspectives. I did follow this idea for quite a while, but the scope of my material just kept expanding. At one stage, I was working on 150 extensive appendices, whose subject matter differed so wildly that I was completely unable to control the situation. I therefore continued by cutting and combining, finally ending up with 32 appendices which had a concrete link to my practice, and also shed light on its background within the complex framework of *photographality*, presentation and contemporary art.

**RESPONSE / George Smith** I love the term *photographality*. It is so pertinent to the problems we are dealing with when it comes to the question of a PhD project in visual art and the notion of research as a studio practice. *Photographality* situates your project within an in-betweenness, which seems the key to it, since in-betweenness undermines the hierarchy of knowledge and frames the debate around the question of classical, traditional and conventional philosophy on the one side, and research and knowledge on the other. It allows us to see relationship as one of becoming, as opposed to one fixed in a dialectical tension. What we get then is a much more dialogical relationship, moving away from a hierarchical, dialectical relationship.

In the context of your work specifically, I love how the grid interacts with the notion of the everyday. The everyday is of course something that comes in through a romantic channel. Posited against the neoclassical representational aesthetic discourses, it allows us to think about the commonplace level within an aesthetic appreciation, and it moves towards reminding us of the hierarchical structure of knowledge in the relationship of aesthetics and philosophy.

Jan Kaila's project shown in the *Nameless Science* exhibition is a wonderful project. The language used to represent the process itself becomes



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embedded in the artistic experience, turning the art inside out.

Precisely through representing the language as part of the work, the philosophical principles do not clothe the work, but evolve from within.

Again, that is a wonderful way of getting toward the dialogical relationship between philosophy and art, between knowledge and artistic representation.



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Matts Leiderstam

SEE AND SEEN –

SEEING LANDSCAPE

THROUGH ARTISTIC PRACTICE

My dissertation was presented in Lund, Sweden, in September 2006 and contained an exhibition, a website and a text. I will present two acts of seeing landscape in my account that became the core of my research project – and then say a few words about how I developed a new way to present my work in space during my doctoral study at Malmö Art Academy.

The starting point for *See and Seen* was the conventions of the Ideal Landscapes painted in Rome during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by artists such as Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, England was translated into a particular gaze that became the fashion for how, and the parameters within which, the landscape was to be seen and that subsequently gave rise to landscaped parks, poetry and painting, and consequently had a significant role in shaping theories of the Picturesque. These ideas gathered currency outside Europe partly through the pathways opened by British colonialism, which still to a certain extent determine the Western notion of landscape and landscape architecture. This is part of a narrative relating to the popularity of landscape as a subject, that is also embedded in and produced by the discipline of art history, a model I worked with in my art practice from the beginning of the 1990s.

In *See and Seen*, the focus was on studies of landscape and landscape painting, for example through copying a painting by Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), *Landscape with Rebekah Taking Leave of Her Father* (1640-41), and photographing a real view of an existing historical landscape seen from the United States Military Academy at West Point, in the Hudson Valley, New York.

When I saw *Landscape with Rebekah* in the museum, I was looking at an object mediated through generations of art-historical research and exhibition practice – including all misunderstandings, mistakes and manipulations. Aspects of this mediation include the actual change in the appearance of the painting. The picture was re-canvassed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – this method involved gluing the canvas to a new one by stretching it under pressure, which had the effect of flattening out some of the brushstrokes on the surface of the painting. This, along with the varnishes applied, the changes to the color pigments over time, multiple washes, restorations and touch-ups, contributes to and affects how it is seen today. It is a different painting to the one that left Lorrain's studio to begin its journey to its first owner.

Since the end of the 1980s, in my own artistic practice, I have returned to pictures by Claude Lorrain. My artistic method has been symptomatic



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in relation to Lorrain: to emphasize in practice the process of seeing by painting copies/paraphrases (repetition and mimicry.) Through this, a desire emerged to see these pictures again – but also the possibility and necessity of fantasizing about what might take place in these landscapes. In my doctoral study I did this again, however, now with the capability, through my research, to see myself seeing.

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While copying, I studied the original at a distance of approximately one meter, sometimes leaning in closer, inspecting as closely as I dared. I was looking at the picture for a longer time than a normal museum visitor would. How close I could get to the painting's surface was decided by the security system. If I worked during the museum's opening hours, I often had onlookers who watched, and who saw a painting and a man who copies at an easel in the museum. It is a recognizable impression – something a museum visitor would expect and relate to (and so can I), despite the well-known fact that copying is no longer part of an artist's training. Every museum I have worked with had different rules regarding how to deal with copyists. At Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, the rules state that the painting has to differ from the original size by at least 30%; and when the copy is ready, the head conservator stamps the picture on the back of the canvas with the word "Copy". However, I was allowed to make a copy in a 1:1 ratio size.

I decided to call my copy an "After Image". In art-historical terminology the copy is described as being made "after" the original image. An after image is an optical illusion that is created in our brains when looking away from a direct gaze on an image. My motivation for using this notion for my copy relates to how this delusion reveals itself as a reversal of what is seen. For example, when looking at a green figure, the brain creates a red after image. My after image deals with difference rather than likeness.

In a way, making a copy is doomed to failure if absolute likeness is at the goal, since it relates to acts that have already been performed, and will necessarily miss the target. It is this act of being off-target that I oppose to the expected "eternal truth" of the original.

When working on my after image, I started to think about *Landscape with Rebekah* as a theatrical stage with Lorrain as both its scenographer and illuminator.

My intentions became clearer when I looked at the Nationalmuseum's x-ray of *Landscape with Rebekah*. The x-ray revealed that "inside of the outside" of the painting there was another sun in the sky, right above the two parties of figures populating the painting. This other sunlight hit both parties from behind, while also shedding light on the two men's meeting in the foreground. I then decided that the sun would be painted as it was in the x-ray, with the aim of mimicking Lorrain's initial intention. If this – today – invisible alternative sun had shone on the scene, then Rebekah would have parted from her father a few hours later that morning. The mere act of painting shifts the sun in my after image, turns time into past tense, into past time, from inside of the outside of *Landscape with Rebekah's* own painting history. By proceeding with this act, time also has jolted forward, for that day, and in that landscape. This act made with a brush and white oil color produces a set of perplexing histories about both the historical time of painting the pictures (mine and Lorrain's), and about the sun's traveling over the sky in both landscapes.

My next decision was to move the sun again, triggered by what the x-ray had revealed to me. I altered the sun's position in several stages from left to right, documenting it at each shift until it had disappeared behind the horizon. Technically, from a painter's point of view, the brush drew a new sun for every repositioning and another painted over the old one. In this way I created a whole set of new suns that remained shining on the inside of my painting. This act bore consequences – it meant that the painting went through a continuous change, gradually becoming darker on the outside and lighter on the inside. By unfixing Lorrain's sun and by the end letting the sunset in the picture, I changed the form and the shapes of trees, figures, cattle, clouds, mountains and the land beyond the horizon, and kept the history of this change throughout my documentation.

It meant that my painting, in the process of being executed, increasingly departed from Lorrain's landscape model. I started to see my after image as distinct from Lorrain's painting more and more, approaching the condition of becoming a painting in its own right, while I could only fantasize about what kind of landscape would take form on the inside of the outside. Looking back at all the documentation I also understood how I, at an earlier stage, by changing the light, had removed Lorrain from his position in relation to his theater.

As a final act, I took an x-ray photograph of my after image/painting, to reveal "its" light, its "inside of its outside".

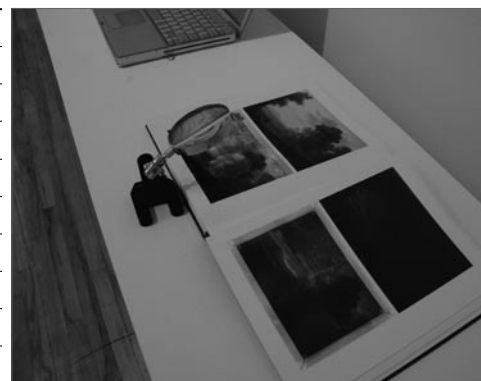
My other project related to seeing landscape – *View* – became a series of works made in relation to, or after, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century seeing instruments, the Claude Lorrain Mirror and the Claude Lorrain Glasses – invented and first used by 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century British travelers in search of the Picturesque.

The Claude Lorrain Mirror was a convex mirror on black foil with the surface turned towards the landscape by its user. The size of the instrument corresponds roughly to a small paperback book and it was a miniaturized version of the larger convex studio mirror used by painters.

The Claude Lorrain Glasses were round, tinted glass discs with a diameter of approximately 2.5 cm (1 inch), mounted like magnifying glasses in sets of 3 to 8 discs on the arms of a fan-shaped protective frame and usually made of horn. In the past one believed that the landscape should be transformed so as to resemble the paintings of the master, Claude Lorrain. The light golden-brown glass, for example, gave an illusion of dawn light; the dark pink-brown glass created twilight; and the blue one produced a picture of a landscape apparently illuminated by the moon, or a snowy landscape.

Landscape artists and tourists used the Claude Lorrain Glasses and Mirror in a desire to control and fix the view. In a sense, this new kind of spectator traveled through the landscape and "took pictures" in the same way we do today with our digital cameras. The landscape was, in a way, produced, developed and captured through the use of these instruments. What in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a sophisticated hobby for the upper classes has today become an activity characteristic of the modern-day tourist.

Raymond Williams poses in his book, *The Country and the City*, "A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation." Williams goes on to say that to turn land into landscape requires a set of socially negotiated ideas, a decision



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to impose a way of seeing onto a place, and that this is “not a kind of nature but a kind of man”. This framing of land as landscape that Williams points out underscores the significance of addressing the way in which we see landscape, and that our relation to memory, culture and history are main players when forming such a view.

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, the notion of the Picturesque developed into nostalgia for a recently lost landscape, a desire for the cultivated landscape that was disappearing with industrialization. In spite of this, the Picturesque was to have a great influence on how people were to see landscapes in America. One of the places on which the Europeans and the descendants of European immigrants projected their Lorrain-inflected gaze was the Hudson Valley, and in particular the Hudson Valley Highlands, where the mountains of West Point surround the river passage, all of which was cloaked in memories from the recent War of Independence. At West Point I made a series of photographs that became important for my research.

Working at the United States Military Academy at West Point on April 30, 2003 (the “last day of the Iraq war”, according to George W. Bush’s declaration on May 1<sup>st</sup>), my job on the site was to unfold the Claude Lorrain Glasses and hold them one by one in front of the large-format camera lens. Kelly, the photographer, controlled the shutter, and our assistant, Jay, recorded the different exposure times and colors and mixtures of filters. The view I observed reminded me of a stage set from classical theater, the mountings like screens framing the stage of the Hudson River. When the round shape of the Claude Lorrain Glass is held in front of the camera lens, the gaze is drawn to the center, as if the form of the glass is placed on top, and makes the penetration into the landscape clearer. I looked at the photographs just taken: I saw the river flow towards me and the shape of the instrument makes its movement more vivid. A horizon is clearly there, at times taking on more clarity and at other times more diffuse, depending on the color of the filter: Yellow Dawn, Rose Twilight and Moonlight Blue. While looking, I became aware of eyes that see me and the view in the same moment, the system of surveillance of the Military Academy, the tourists with their cameras dipping in and out of the vista, and all the registering eyes of the satellites high above this beautiful landscape.

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.

My artistic method proceeded from two different traditions about how to approach an historical painting, namely the artist’s and the scholar’s. I should point out that it is those conventions that identify and give meaning to the artists and art historians I refer to, for these terms are utilized in my work as two “routines” to consider when approaching painting. The first routine was that of the artist who remakes the picture in a desire to learn about its coming into being; the other was that of the art historian who reveals the subject by analyzing and gathering information about it and its context.

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## SEEING LANDSCAPE

## THROUGH ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Part of my roadmap of art projects that became important for my research was *Grand Tour*, an exhibition I produced and which toured five art institutions in Europe between 2005-2007. *Grand Tour* broadly related to traveling, seeing landscape and cultural places in Italy, as well as dealing with a gay cruising gaze.

During my research, I did find a way to work with my material as an archive and a kind of machinery for seeing. This involved an attempt to detect a form of complexity within historical representations, through a schematic, clear, lucid presentation in my installations – simultaneously providing me with the possibility of changing the focus and the narrator. With this method, I found that the gay man's gaze paradoxically mimics the amateur's love for paintings in a museum, as well as the art historian's research, all of which intersect in my installations in the exhibition space.

Henri Lefebvre makes a connection between the experience of looking at a painting and a face or façade, saying that the face of the painting always meets the viewer with the same logic – the painting turns in the direction of anyone approaching it. Therefore, the museum gallery is a place like no other, in the sense that we move in this space in relation to this encounter.

Despite the seemingly complex relations that create the contexts within a museum, this is a public space as negotiated as a supermarket or a hospital. We know, and our bodies recognize, how to act in these kinds of spaces and we bring our eyes to focus on the subject suggested by the context. To look at paintings in a museum is an active bodily experience.

I created a system to underscore this bodily experience of seeing.

I designed tables made for studying books, paintings and other material presented on them. And I placed viewing instruments, like magnifying glasses and field scopes, to propose an installation made for the viewer to explore the act of looking. The installation was oriented in one direction to help the viewer move from viewing point to viewing point. In this system I juxtaposed pairs of images – often a reproduction of a painting and my after images. I tried to create an installation that involves the viewer in the negotiation process that constructs the way we perceive pictures in art history. I use the original paintings as a starting point, since they often relate to an existing canon within the history of, in this case, Western art, i.e. the designated masterpiece as style and norm, a formula that I would like the viewer of my installations to scrutinize.

I would also like to add that the system used in both my *See and Seen* exhibition as well as in *Grand Tour* became a kind of self-portrait; all was established in relation to the embodiment of my gaze: the scale of the objects, the way the objects were spread on the tables, the height of objects in relation to my own height. In fact the supports, such as benches and chairs, are there to help the viewer to see from my vantage point. I know that I can never know what the viewer sees. However, in the exhibition system, I have seen myself seeing, a kind of specter of me appears when the viewers are in my installation, and when I install the work I am also imagining the viewer leaning over my tables, looking into my field scopes. I am, then, there with the unknown.

RESPONSE / *John Rajchman* Matts' interesting thesis research into notions of landscape in classical and contemporary settings intersects with the work of a number of historians. But in what sense does this research belong to the "nameless science" we are debating today in New



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York? What in fact is this “nameless science” in which Giorgio Agamben saw a paradigmatic case in Aby Warburg’s own long, mad, private research project also concerned with memory of European painting at an earlier time in history? The question I would like to open for discussion thus has to do with the larger framework of this symposium.

One issue is the relationship of “nameless” research not simply with knowledge, but also with changing models of what knowledge is or does. What is the role of images or pictures in knowledge, in the arts and sciences? What are their relationships with one another? In that context, one could imagine analyzing how the aesthetic concepts of landscape vary with corresponding knowledge about what a milieu or environment is in the sciences (as for example in Foucault’s analyses of bio-power). Of course, it then matters whether landscape is used in a way that contrasts with the city or rather whether one can speak of urban landscapes.

In literature and in cinema, we see many ways of how characters figure in landscapes. For example, with the heightened sensibilities of characters inhabiting strange new disconnected or absent spaces. Looking at Neo-realist cinema, Deleuze analyses the condition of an entirely new relation between cinema and thinking, in, between cinema and research – and also notices peculiar urban landscapes or percepts in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the larger tradition in painting that Matts Leiderstam is looking at, there is an important distinction of this sort to which I would like to draw attention.

In her book *The Art of Describing* (1983), Svetlana Alpers analyses a shift from window to map in Dutch masters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Written under influence of Foucault, the book is one attempt to counter or qualify Panofsky’s question about perspective and its relation to knowledge and related ideas about what an image or picture is. In Dutch painting, Alpers observes that the window is replaced by the map. There is a new relationship to knowledge, much less textualist or dependent on the principle of *ut pictura poesis*. That type of analysis differs from how Matts starts from the mythological themes in classical works. Mapping landscapes belongs to an art of describing rather than depicting them as if from a window or through a frame.

Today we might see landscapes as part of a larger series of relations of drawings or pictorial techniques not related to classical perspectival conventions, but rather to architectural plans, even musical scores or theatrical scripts. The problem of map or diagram, as distinct from window or frame, is one which has generated a large volume of literature. For example, in his essay directed against Fredric Jameson in a collection called *Critical Landscapes*, Mark Wigley draws attention to a highly suggestive use of the notion of map or diagram and a sense of being lost in space in Walter Benjamin’s autobiographical writings. But it is Gilles Deleuze who perhaps goes the furthest in the development of the notion of map and its critical applications, when he contrasts *carte* and *calque*, mapping and tracing as if from a prior model.

An interesting application in seeing landscape is the notion of moving eyes and the role of the camera in substituting them in cinema. For example, a traveling shot has a different relation to landscape than a panoramic shot. It is suggestive, in this regard, that the Chinese (then Japanese) hand scroll tradition is seen as proto-cinematic since Eisenstein, is also one which departs from the classical idea of the window.

The notion of diagram or of mapping in Deleuze's hands – in relation to non-probabilistic chance in pictorial facts painted or studied by Francis Bacon, for example – involves a kind of research carried out by artists or filmmakers which might be called "nameless" in a peculiar sense. That is a bit different from Aby Warburg's catastrophically disappointed faith in humanist *Wissenschaft* not governed by prior method and at odds with instituted or clichéd ways of seeing and talking.

I stress such distinctions between mapping and depicting landscapes, and the kinds of research they involve, because it seems to me that much contemporary art and architecture has focused on the issue of map or diagram rather than the more classical notions of frame or window.

In the research projects presented as part of the last Shanghai Biennial, for example, it seems that the issue of mapping new translocal kinds of urban space (or landscape) was much more central than tradition of classical window with which Matts is concerned. My question then is this: is Matts' return to an earlier European convention of the window a deliberate attempt to counter this trend? If not, what then is its purpose?

What is its relation to nameless research?



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Ronan McCrea

## SEQUENCES, SCENARIOS

## & LOCATIONS CONTINUED

**CONTEXT & DESCRIPTION** *School Play* was the outcome of a public art commission associated with the construction of a new school building for a state primary school, catering to children ages 4 - 12. The funding for the commission comes directly from the central government as part of a “per cent for art” scheme for publicly-funded infrastructure projects.

*School Play* consists of two main elements: a permanent design for a school play yard, consisting of a series of painted circles and arcs on the tarmac; and a series of thirty color photographs.

The school is an “Educate Together” school, a model of school governance developed as an alternative to religiously governed schools and is based on a child-centered, multi-denominational, co-educational and democratically run ethos. The school has a relatively high proportion of what is termed “New Irish”, children of recent migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia, and the school is very proud of its multicultural character.

The design for the yard consists of a series of circles and arcs painted in various colors onto the tarmac and also on the adjacent footpaths and car park. This graphic element on the schoolyard has a dual function: primarily to be used by the children in their self-directed playtime activities, and also to create a set or stage for the creation of a series of photographs.

Following a period of research into the children’s play activities, particular attention was focused on those times of self-directed and self-organized play, which range from elaborate group games to individual daydreaming. These games are highly regulated by the children themselves, in that a lot of effort is invested into establishing the parameters and procedures for each activity, but these regulations creatively and rapidly shift, dissolve and coalesce from moment to moment. In this sense the circles are utilitarian – acting as boundaries and markings for un-prescribed play.

Imaginatively, some of the circles extend far beyond the edge of the yard. What is visible in the yard is a small arc, which, if it were to be completed into a full circle, would reach far beyond the school gates and encompass surrounding hinterlands. While this is a somewhat subliminal aspect to the design, it also links with an image from Joyce’s *Bildungsroman: Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*.

Stephen turned to the flyleaf of the geography book and read what had been written there: himself, his name and where he was:

*Stephen Dedalus*

*Class of Elements*

*Clongowes Wood College*

*Sallins*



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County Kildare  
Ireland  
Europe  
The World  
The Universe

Ronan McCrea

SEQUENCES, SCENARIOS  
& LOCATIONS CONTINUED

Then he read the flyleaf from the bottom to the top till he came to his own name. That was he: and he read down the page again. What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything after the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall, but there could be a thin, thin line there all around everything.

It was very big to think about everything and everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

The second element of the *School Play* project is a series of photographs, which were all shot from an elevated position looking down onto the yard during break time. From over 400 negatives, a final set of 30 images was selected for the series. Twelve of the photographs are printed in 112 × 90 cm size, framed and hung in the corridors and common areas of the school. The full series will be published in early 2009 as an artist's book designed by Peter Maybury, to be distributed throughout the school community and beyond.

The circular markings become a set – in the sense of a stage set, or a film set – for everyday action. The circles and arcs mark out and bisect the pictorial frame. Random actions become relational. The play becomes choreography. Miniature dramas and moments, both individual and collective, become related through spatial arrangement. No directions are given from photographer to subject. Everything is random, like the Brownian motion of particles, or perhaps one of Canetti's crowds.

Working in a school, one becomes aware of a society in microcosm.

The photographs recall Rodchencko's street photography in the composition of angles and perspectives and something of his utopian notion of a new subjectivity revealed by new perspectives. They also acknowledge the historical methodologies of sequencing, series, and typology from Muybridge, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and the Düsseldorf School of conceptual art practices in the 1960s.

A typology is a type of knowledge. In his book *The Ambiguity of Play*, play theorist Brian Sutton Smith focuses on play theories rooted in seven distinct "rhetoric" – the ancient discourses of Fate, Power, Communal Identity, and Frivolity, and the modern discourses of Progress, the Imaginary, and the Self. Sutton says this rhetoric "reveal more distinctions and disjunctions than affinities, with one striking exception: however different their descriptions and interpretations of play, each rhetoric reveals a quirkiness, redundancy, and flexibility."<sup>2</sup> This reading of the rhetoric of play suggests it is an ideal subject for exploration of ideology and disciplinary boundaries.

SCHOOL PLAY / PHD RESEARCH AND NAMELESS SCIENCE PROJECT *School Play* is one of a number of artworks created since September 2007, which address in different ways photographic methodologies and questions raised by my practice based PhD. The title of the PhD is *Sequences, Scenarios & Locations continued (cinematic forms, the still image and celluloid materiality in the space between collective and individual remembering)*.

<sup>1</sup> James Joyce PORTRAIT OF THE  
ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN (1987)  
London: Penguin Classics.



Ronan McCrea A TABLE FOR NAMELESS  
SCIENCE TO ACCOMPANY SCHOOL PLAY  
PHOTOGRAPHS 1<sup>ST</sup> OCT 2008 *A small table*  
(like a "table for two" in a restaurant) perhaps  
wooden, not new and maybe a little worn.  
The table wobbles due to the fact that one leg is  
a little short. The table is stabilised using a  
paperback book – a copy of "The Ambiguity of  
Play" by Brian Sutton Smith (Harvard University  
Press) – propping up the short leg. On the table  
are photocopies of a short text by Ronan McCrea  
concerning his work *School Play*.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Sutton-Smith  
THE AMBIGUITY OF PLAY (1998)  
Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.

This research examines relationships between still (photographic) image and moving (filmic) image with particular reference to theoretical notions of ‘artistic medium’ and the use of analogue technologies in artistic strategies that articulate ideas of memory and narrative.

The impetus for these questions arose from my episodic slide projection series *Sequences, Scenarios & Locations* made between 2000 and 2005, which is referred to in the PhD title.

The first investigation into these issues surveys the historicization of experimental film practices of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular structural and materialist film and how these ideas inflected ideas of medium-specificity within paradigms of modernism and postmodernism. Seeking out the echoes of this discourse in contemporary artistic practices, I find an entry point into these questions via a remark made by Stan Douglas to Diana Thater about how he would have realized his 16mm film work *Der Sandmann* had he been “a hard-assed materialist.” Important within the context of the exhibition *Nameless Science* is that all my recent artworks, such as *Medium (The End)*, *Medium (Upside-down)*, *Medium (Corporate Entities)*, *School Play*, and *New Town Project (Extract # 1)*<sup>3</sup> are produced in what can be called the art world. While forming part of the “practice” of a “practice-based PhD”, these works also exist independent of the PhD context. They succeed or fail on critical terms in the institution of art, rather than in the institution of PhDs.

Interrelated and overlapping, the “practice-based PhD” and artistic practice are nonetheless separate, notwithstanding the presence of all sorts of research practices within the domain of all sorts of artistic practice. For me, they are distinct on the level of content, form and institution. A useful metaphor is one coined by Paul Willemsen who suggests that the function of “research is to irrigate the ground of practice.”

<sup>3</sup> FOR FURTHER DETAILS SEE:

[www.ronanmccrea.com](http://www.ronanmccrea.com)

RESPONSE / *Felicitas Thun* Deleuze perceives the unique relationship between philosophy and art as “a system of relays within a large sphere, within a multiplicity of parts that are both theoretical and practical.”

So how to put this in a format like, the *Nameless Science* show? Seen from the viewpoint of the arts, one might recognize the contingency and fictional quality of knowledge or the aspect of oppression and exclusion inherent in knowledge structures like exhibition spaces.

Ronan McCrea was not sure how he should deal with the format of presenting his PhD project still in progress. But he did deal with it, together with Henk Slager, the curator of the *Nameless Science* show. The outcome proved to be a laboratory situation where the artwork has become a strong communicative tool in exchange with the other presentations; a cartography of artistic knowledge production.

Two elements frame McCrea’s contribution: four photographs – color prints out of a series of thirty – on the wall, and a simple wooden table in front with a leaflet on it. The photographs show a bird’s-eye view of a schoolyard with playing children, where Ronan created a series of floor markings suggesting an undefined game. The photos seem to demonstrate that the games are played spontaneously.

In the leaflet, we read that, a starting point, “Ronan McCrea examines the photographic process of communication” and it ends with the ontological question of “whether playing a game – as an anthropologically ambiguous and in fact undefined phenomenon, could be captured in a decisive moment.”



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Immediately the visitor tries to put these elements together. In reference to the bird's-eye perspective of the photos, one starts to position oneself physically and psychologically regarding the schoolyard and its playground. As the observer is part of the game, s/he finds him/herself in a performance situation, as part of a spatial production.

A central question for Ronan McCrea is: What characterizes the process by which the interaction of a performance gesture, objects, the subject and the community become entailed in concrete spaces? Could playing a game indeed be captured in a decisive moment, as the exhibition leaflet claims? A frozen gesture – after Flusser? Still – motion, a performative gesture?

I think of John L. Austin and his influential 1955 lecture “How to do things with words?” which I would paraphrase as “How to do things with art?” Austin added the performative to the referential dimension of linguistic utterance. Today, visual art could be considered a paradigm of contemporary culture, since artists position – as is the case in Ronan's project – referential and performative aspects against each other, while shifting the idea of the world as text to the notion of the world as performance.

The resulting liminal space I experienced in the exhibition is one of negotiation and dynamic. In my point of view, here visual art has become a kind of meta- commentary on our culture, reflecting its fundamentally transitory character while playing with possible meaning and subjectivity. The reality of the schoolyard is the backdrop and context of a redefinition of space as quintessentially dynamic and performative, defined by geographical and bird's-eye structures of the apparatus and by an understanding of human bodies as open systems of exchange.

Within practice-oriented research, Ronan's project investigates fictional and non-fictional methodologies to find out what kind of knowledge becomes privileged or repressed the moment performative experience is established as a mode of knowledge acquisition, as a methodology of critical research, or a way of communication. The required research does not comprise a set preliminary work phase of art production. It is a work as such, where artistic research and its product are one and the same. As Ronan McCrea argued, it once again disrupts the dichotomy of practice-led research and theoretical research. According to the cultural scientist Marcel Mauss, the poorly-delineated boundaries between the scientific fields would not display the most urgent problems, but be the place for the as yet “unknown”.

In this liminal sphere, where the performative production of “wild knowledge” or “nameless science” is still unstructured, non-conceptual and uncanonized, a form of knowledge once termed experience in philosophy can flourish. Such knowledge does not occur within the space and framework of the expected. In that respect, Ronan McCrea's project is a clear metaphor of the undefined game we are all playing.



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Ricardo Basbaum

WOULD YOU LIKE TO

PARTICIPATE IN AN

ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO  
PARTICIPATE IN AN  
ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE?

The *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?* project was started in 1994 (see [www.nbp.pro.br](http://www.nbp.pro.br)) and is still going strong in 2009 – there is not an established deadline for it. As far as the project itself is capable of generating interest and there are participants who will join in, it will continue. I'd like to comment here, briefly, on some aspects of the development of my PhD research, which took the “*Would you like...?*” project as its main topic.<sup>1</sup>

When the academic research started in 2004, it seemed that including *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?* as its main line would mean a new impulse for the artistic project itself. I asked myself, “Maybe the academic world would offer some space for its further development, a different quality of space that would allow one to problematize it, make it fold over itself and generate a conversation that might add new layers to it?” Obviously I had to be conscious of the fact that “university” and “art world” are two distinct territories, and each one of them has its own legitimating mechanisms – that is, what is interesting to the art world might not seem so attractive to the academic world, and vice versa. Therefore, taking an art project to the university requires one to think in advance about the development of some strategy dedicated to soften – or even dismantle, if possible – some of the barriers and borderlines that these two self-confident territories have erected to protect themselves against (in general sense) the world. Recognizing the particular characteristics of each is not meant to establish any hierarchical relation; on the contrary, it makes easier to spot the passageways and contact lines that might make it possible for the two fields to communicate in more dynamically and productively.

Because it was developed basically as a project to encounter possibilities of movement of some lines of flight in the art circuit, the “*Would you like...?*” project has been conducted as a sort of autonomous system, composed of a set of protocols regulating it along the standards of a basic dialogical structure involving artist, object, and participant.

The public or general audience only accesses the project later, at the documentation or archive level. In that sense, the presence of *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?* at Documenta 12 was very significant, for the installation displayed there was in fact the very first opportunity to exhibit the project in its entirety, presenting an architectonic-sculptural structure that functions as the project's museum (or, on that particular occasion, a museum inside a museum), framing dialogically the protocols of relationship between artist, object, participant and

<sup>1</sup> Concluded in 2008 at the Escola De Comunicações e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, with Dr. Martin Grossmann as Advisor. Original Title, in Portuguese: VOCÊ GOSTARIA DE PARTICIPAR DE UMA EXPERIÊNCIA



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audience. Thus, to produce the necessary displacement of such long-range activity towards the academic procedures requires a careful approach in order to realize which particular aspects could be further reworked, extended and linked to specific investigative topics.

One of the key elements of the *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?* installation display, which has been present since the project started, is its diagram. There, in a combination of lines and words, the main dialogical guidelines of the project are portrayed, together with information on some of its generative statements (e.g. the **NBP** – New Bases for Personality project), other series of works developed in tandem and which share mutual influence, and also with some data information on number of experiences, names of the cities included in the network, etc. Yet also important to the diagram are the layers of comments included successively during the project's development, throughout the years – you can read, for instance, at the diagram's top right corner, the dates of the project's four phases until now (phase 4 is still ongoing). Thus a decisive moment for the development of the PhD research was when it appeared evident to me that the way to problematize the “*Would you like...?*” project was to extract the topics, themes and questions directly from the diagram – that is, literally localizing them in the diagram. With such a gesture, the research would not define its contours from a position of exclusion, but could be conducted from within the project's proper structure. Then, a set of eight different blocks – each including groups of concepts – was added to the diagram, to be extended later through discursive tools.

The PhD thesis, which can be considered a specific exercise of “hypertrophied” writing (in the sense that it extends a particular form of writing through several pages to fulfill certain academic requirements), was thus achieved with a body of text that advanced each of the eight conceptual blocks further. The concrete presence of these eight conceptual blocks as drawing, in the diagram, made it also possible to practice different modes of writing, letting the proper academic discourse shift closer to a sort of poetic or fictional use of words and phrases. The result was a body of texts completely interconnected with the diagram – a sort of hypertext where different parts relate among themselves, mixing drawing (diagram) and discourse – and that is now a concrete and particular part of *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?* In some ways, such text has still to find a concrete way to access a more public audience, to make itself as available as the art piece; at the same time, it creates true access for the art project to the academic space, making it function there not just as a “passive conceptual monument” but as a provocative poem that resists interpretation and always asks for more (or less).

Perhaps the most ambitious aspect of the finished PhD research, though, is to consider the resulting writing as standing among the texts produced by most of the more than 100 participants of the “*Would you like...?*” project. All of them configure statements produced in direct relation to the proposed experience – such texts comment, extend, interpret the project, adding to it multiple voices, positions and points of view. It can be said that the entire archive (composed not only of texts, but also of photos, videos and audio files), produced by the participants, shapes an interconnected set of discursive and non-discursive documents, which



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stands as a truly polyphonic and polyrhythmic body of records. It is interesting to consider a collective production as such as a critical novel, depicting the adventures of different characters who are always in the foreground; each new participant contributes to the conversation, adding new voices to it, summing up dialogues, inflections, pauses, confrontations, conflicts, etc. One can imagine that a collective reader is required as well, as a network always offers space for many, and not for only one exclusive gaze – which is strictly refused. A diagram is conceived of as a surface which triggers thinking processes, narratives, histories, stories. In that sense, if you let yourself be captured by its lines and words, you will be taken elsewhere – and when you get back, you won't be the same; such is the promise articulated in transformational processes.

Considering the PhD thesis as just one of the chapters of a critical novel is an interesting mode of approaching it – it means it should not be read in isolation from the other multiple voices that compose the “*Would you like...?*” project. But also it points to the fact that it is not finished or concluded. Its dynamic is concretely in progress, acquiring some different features each day. Productive confrontations between academic and artistic worlds can bring both of them to light and in direct communication during certain particular and intensive moments – to achieve this is interesting and important.

**RESPONSE / Gertrud Sandqvist** I am a professor in Art Theory at the Malmö Art Academy where I started, together with Sarat Maharaj, the first PhD program in visual art in Sweden. Up till now, we have had three PhD students. One of them is Matts Leiderstam, who is in the *Nameless Science* show at Apexart, and there are six more students to follow. From the beginning, our question was: Is there any kind of knowledge that could be produced from the field of visual art that would be transferable to other fields of knowledge? If this kind of transfer does not exist, we should not have PhDs in art. That sounds a bit absolute, but it was our point of departure.

It was very interesting to hear you talk about arrogance and escape. About the arrogance of the art world, the arrogance of the university world, and the question of whether we are able to escape the two.

Your second question is: What kind of method can be used in visual art, which would also be used in other fields of knowledge? For me, the most important method was the free experiment. Are you using the free experiment as an artist or as a researcher in other fields? Not only in science, but in all fields of knowledge we have experiments. So what kind of experiment are you actually using? What kind of parameters do you have? How are you able to decide whether it is a good research or a good art piece? What kind of method are you using and why are you using that particular method? These questions are enormously important, and the answers are complex.

In the field of visual art, there are many experiments producing much new knowledge, not necessarily transferable to other fields of knowledge. This is really the crucial point. What kind of knowledge is it that would be transferable to other fields of knowledge? Of course, as you just said, you would have the impact of writing a standardized academic thesis. But I believe that the art world views the university world as much more conservative than it actually is. There are new ways of writing all over



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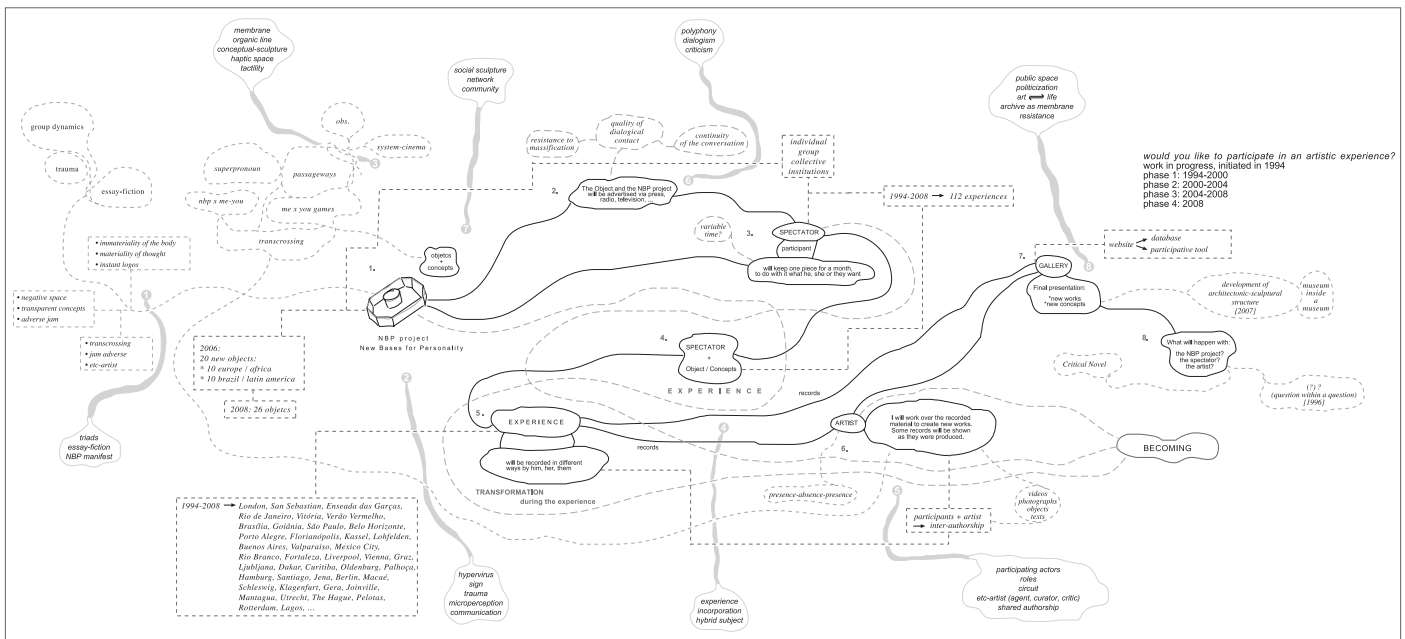


One last comment on the question of criticality. As you know, normally in the art world, you will be reviewed, but you wouldn't necessarily be criticized. And you definitely need not change anything in your results due to criticism. However, in a PhD program, you are criticized all the time. And you have to change, every now and then, your results. That is not easy for an artist to do, but I believe that it is absolutely necessary. So, what is it that art research might do apart from creating and generating new knowledge? In my opinion, that would be to use critique in the old Kantian sense, i.e. imply investigation when you criticize or when you are criticized. That means one has to be open to critical evaluation.

Ricardo Basbaum

Ricardo Basbaum

maHKUzine





*Irene Kopelman*

## UBX EXPRESSION

My PhD project researches the problem of the tension between sameness and difference. Throughout the upcoming years of research, I am looking to reopen the category of sameness, and using means of representation, I hope to make evident the impossibility of enclosing the complexity of things in departmentally restrictive categories.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a scientific project needed to force things into categories 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.

*Ubx expression* is the first project I am developing in the context of the PhD program. *Ubx expression* is a research project carried out at the Entomological Collection in the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The research focuses on the morphology in insect patterns, thus looking at the specimens themselves but at the same time intending to examine the overall structure which is needed in order to archive collections of this sort. The research also uses sources from other collections, such as the Geological Museum in Amsterdam and the University Museum in Utrecht.

As I said at the beginning, my PhD project researches the problem of the tension in between sameness and difference. Natural sciences collections are the ideal platform for working on this issue, since one can observe a vast amount of samples and at the same time the strategies employed to organize those samples.

My fieldwork consists largely of visiting natural sciences collections, hunting for material with which I could work, and building up an archive of raw material. By the end of the research period, I will have an archive as part of the outcome of the project. This archive will continue to develop and grow during the entire trajectory. At the same time, I will choose several museums where I will develop site-specific projects.

Working with archival material, one of the first questions one encounters is how to approach the collections – I'm sure every artist working with archival material has a different strategy. For me the most important thing is to find the people who will open up not only the collection in a material sense, but also the stories surrounding it. Without those stories, the archival material is completely hermetic and therefore dead. Related to this is the issue of patience, since it takes much time and multiple visits to get to know the people in the collections, to get an idea of how to navigate each collection and how to tackle the often immense amount of information.



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ON UBX EXPRESSION – REFERENCES AND ISSUES The first of my PhD projects uses the Entomological collection in Amsterdam as a base. During the past few months of research, I have been spending time each week in the entomological collection, which is part of the Zoological Museum at the University of Amsterdam. It is a very large collection, with about eight million labeled specimens. The collection is used for research and is not open to the public. I decided to start my PhD project there, as I have visited this collection for several years now, so I know it quite well, and the people who work there too.

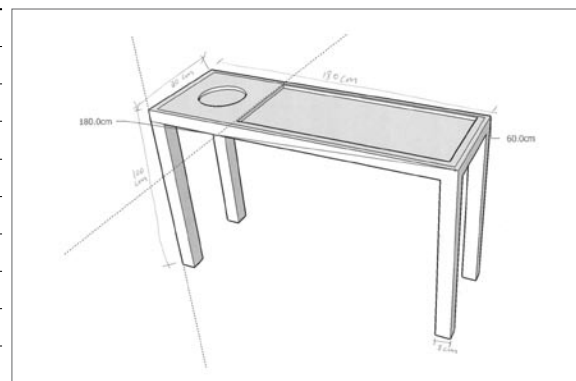
I have chosen to work with moths and butterflies, because their pigmentation makes it easy to visualize the differences in patterns. Literally each individual specimen, even when belonging to the same species and family, is always at least slightly different from the other. The rule of differentiation is shared by any living and non-living organism, but in the case of moths and butterflies, the differences crystallize in shapes and colors.

The title *Ubx expression* alludes to a chemical expression, the Ubx protein, which regulates detailed aspects of scale morphology, pigmentation and eyespot pattern on the hind wings of butterflies. The Ubx protein affects ways in which patterns are organized and is related to the variability of those patterns. This project is still in progress and at Apexart, New York, in the *Nameless Science* exhibition, I am presenting the initial outcome.

Even though I had a premise I wanted to prove in the *Ubx expression* project, it was really very difficult to visualize differences at first glance when opening the drawers. During the first few weeks, I was photographically documenting many samples of the same type, comparing them and trying to figure out the differences among them. After a while I started making drawings, since that seemed to allow an analytical observation of the samples and apprehend the small variations and permutations in each individual butterfly. The process of making drawings slowly developed into an urge to build an archiving system allowing the visualization of each individual drawing and comparisons. The pattern on butterfly wings is unique among animal patterns in that the elements composing the overall pattern are individuated. Unlike the spots and stripes of vertebrate color patterns, the elements of butterfly wing patterns have identities that can be traced from species to species, and typically across genera and families. Because of this identity tag, it is possible to recognize homologies among pattern elements and to study their evolution and diversification.

During pattern evolution, the same set of individual pattern elements is arranged in novel ways to produce species-specific patterns, including such adaptations as mimicry and camouflage. Patterns still exist and coexist with many others which evolved from the first one. You need a trained eye to see that a pattern undergoes different variations and permutations during thousands of years. In the evolutionary line, sometimes we find the spots as spots, sometimes they expand into a stain, or merge together into a line. All of those species could be flying and coexisting at the same time in amazing cases of camouflage and mimicry.

After spending a few months in the collection and opening a fair amount of drawers, I understood the urge to schematize the variety of forms into an idea of what those forms might mean. While the theory that the patterns are never exactly the same has once more been proven throughout the project, I understood the need to create some kind of



Irene Köpelman

UBX EXPRESSION 2008,

table, butterflies, drawings, glass pieces.

synthesis which could help identifying and differentiating among the immensity of samples within the same type as one image.

The overwhelming vastness in existing butterflies, the subtlety that sometimes exists between different families, combined with the fact that each individual sample is different, makes that universe incomprehensible. Once I started to look at a few drawers and, within these, at individual samples, I understood not only the need to create classification schemes which would identify at least the various types, but also the need to apply to the natural system an artificial system that would help us to understand it.

It was interesting to me to realize that the distance imposed by any amount of reading on the subject would not help me to understand this in the same way as undergoing the process by navigating the collection, trying to find a system to manage it, and making the series of drawings. I understood also, more profoundly this time, the concept of evolution. It is actually very easy to visually understand it when you can see how a family of butterflies changed color overnight because they needed to camouflage for a certain environmental reason. That realization might be quite a simple thought and we might read it and reread it in many books, but my point is that there is a certain type of embodied knowledge that one can achieve only by undergoing the experience.

The understanding does not come into being only by visualizing the individual samples, but by a very specific approach to the visual information which is (in my case) the attempt to understand its morphology by drawing the samples. Opening a drawer, observing the samples and even photographing them did not lead me to a very comprehensive understanding of either the samples or the collection. It had even been impossible to notice, by merely observing, that every single wing in every butterfly is unique. It was only by drawing them that I was able to acknowledge the small details that made each pattern unique, similar to the next but never the same. There is an analytical attitude to drawing which forced me to “see” what I could not otherwise visualize in the samples.

Another interesting thing about drawing as a way of acquiring a certain type of knowledge is that it also requires a certain type of skill. These skills are not only for drawing but also for observing. You cannot learn this type of skill overnight; it requires some time and patience.

The story of Leeuwenhoek’s microscope is a fine example to quote in this context, speaking of skills for observing and the subjectivity of communicating such observation. Leeuwenhoek invented a very special microscope, a tiny one, which was controversial in his time because none of his contemporaries could see what he was able to see through it.

The reason for that is that the microscope had an extremely small lens, with a very short focal distance, requiring perceptual skills to look through it. Similarly, one needs to have or build up a repertoire of skills in order to see what is in the patterns. The eye needs to be trained – and drawing is an effective tool for training the eye.

The time factor becomes then a fundamental factor for this project; time to see, time to draw, and time to engage not only with the material collection but also with the people working in the collection.

The vastness of the collection becomes a blockade when one tries to enter it. One can easily get lost, either in the overall landscape of the



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infinite drawers, or in the details of one particular sample. It is the people who work in the collections who could help make or break a project of this kind. And it is again the time factor, allowing them to understand what you are looking for in the collection. They need to see what you are doing, look what you are looking at, and see you getting lost in the collection a few times until they realize how they might help you and start guiding you through the collection. Lastly the time factor is also implied in letting the information settle, your processing it until you understand how to materialize it as an artwork.

During this kind of research, one often finds impressive information or beautiful material which cannot always be readily applied to a project. It is important to understand that there are a series of filtrations and processes that the material has to undergo before it can be turned into a piece. These filtrations are material and conceptual operations, which creation of distance between the references and the material outcome of the project.

*Ubx expression* is in the stage of processing the visual and conceptual information related to the project, and while some steps have been taken towards the concretizing of a piece, there still is space for much further development within the project. The universe of insects is a very complex one, and the entomological collection, as an artificial organization of it, is even more complex. Within my process, this has opened up a very wide range of possibilities which will continue to crystallize in different forms in the coming months.

This train of thought led me to become acquainted with an academic discipline focusing on the embodiment of knowledge, called Experimental History. That field of study has developed increasingly over the last fifty years and it seeks to draw attention to the role of materials, techniques and practice in scientific research. The research method implies the re-making of scientific experiments in order to understand the experiment as such. The next question, both for them and equally for me, is how to communicate that experience.

**RESPONSE / Grant Kester** One aspect of your work is your interest in systems of scientific classification and the question of how certain objects possess a kind of irreducible specificity, because they can never be fully grasped by classifying and by systematizing. Your talk might conventionally be seen as a way to criticize classification systems. You said that classification systems have the effect of imposing a kind of totalizing, systematizing gaze on the thing as such, a thing that can never be fully comprehended by categorical knowledge. Thus, you romantically hold out for the idea of some inevitable, natural essence that cannot be fully mapped, codified, controlled, identified, visualized and so on.

This seems to be one trajectory in your work, but at the same time, the other trajectory is that you keep trying to precisely map and capture idiosyncratic differences, which could arguably be seen as another way of objectifying these objects in a more precise way while trying to capture their unique specificity. Why does it matter to know that these discrete objects are different, that there is such difference in nature? What did you, as an artist, learn from this project you did not know when you started this project? What insight was generated through the practice itself? And knowing that one butterfly is much more complex than the existing



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classification systems can capture; doesn't that simply become an argument  
for science to get better and better in describing things? So, maybe it is an  
argument that science needs to borrow from the arts in order to get better  
and better at classifying and systematizing the natural world.

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*Irene Kopelman*

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UBX EXPRESSION

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## Paneldiscussion:

## CONCERNING

## DOCTORAL STUDIES

INTRODUCTION / *Mick Wilson* Today we will have two speakers who are very well-versed in addressing the topic of doctoral studies in the United States of America. The first speaker is George Smith, the founding president of IDSVa, the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts. He has recently established a unique doctoral program, specifically configured to facilitate artists in acquiring advanced studies across art theory, aesthetics and a range of discourses framing the discursive landscape of contemporary art practice. IDSVa has its headquarters in Portland, Maine, but the program is realized in a number of different locations including Harlem/New York, Venice, and Paris. Today, George is going to address a new philosophy of graduate art education: the non-studio PhD.

The second speaker is Grant Kester, who is based in the department of visual arts at the University of California at San Diego, where he is the coordinator for the new PhD-concentration in art practice.

This doctoral studies program is designed for visual artists who realize research through studio production, but the program focuses on both practice and written work.

*George Smith* I can't help but thinking about *Nameless Science* – what we are doing here in New York – in light of another recent gathering, which many of you will know about, called *Thinking Worlds*. This was the *Moscow Conference on Philosophy, Politics, and Art*, held in conjunction with the Second Moscow Biennial. Like the present symposium, *Thinking Worlds* included scholars, philosophers, and cultural theorists currently posing questions on the relationship between art and knowledge. But there was a difference. While *Thinking Worlds* was gathered in the midst of a major exhibition of contemporary art, not one artist was included on the roster of conference participants.

Here I am reminded of the story I heard about a famous psychiatrist who taught at the Harvard Medical School. One day while taking his interns on rounds, he stopped in front of a catatonic frozen upright in a straight back chair. As he pointed at her eyes and turned to his students for diagnostics, she bit off a chunk of his finger.

While no one is suggesting that academics who go about their ways concerning contemporary art without paying heed to contemporary artists should lose any fingers, I think it is fair to say that many academics are as surprised as the good doctor to find that the object of their scientific analysis is alive, that artists think and talk, and pose and respond to the same or similar questions as those theorized in purely academic circles. As Henk Slager and others have pointed out, what is at stake here is knowledge: who creates it, who owns it, who speaks it. On this score,



PANELDISCUSSION participants:

*Grant Kester, George Smith, Mick Wilson*

philosophy likes to see itself as the origin and oracle of knowledge, and as such, philosophy likes to be in charge of art. And here by philosophy I mean academic thought in general, such as *Thinking Worlds*, for example, as well as philosophy in particular. Anyhow, philosophy's higher than thou attitude toward art goes back a long way. It is true that Aristotle was nicer to art than Plato. Aristotle said art is better than history because its truth, its knowledge is closer to that of philosophy. But his point remains: philosophy is higher than art because its knowledge is more true. To go from the classical hierarchy to the modern, we might start by quoting Bishop Sprat from the late Sixteen Hundreds: "The influence of [art] is now exhausted and our present concern is with the serious work of trying to behold face to face, through science, what was formerly seen through a [looking] glass darkly." So much for Shakespeare's mirror. And while Kant a century or so later famously grants the title of genius to the artist, Kant is only too quick to add that the classical hierarchy of knowledge is still coursing ahead, precisely insofar as the mind of the scientist/philosopher is still to be viewed as far superior to that of the artist. A century after that, worried that Kant had made too fine a discrimination in saying the artist was a genius and the scientist of superior mind, William James takes the title of genius away from the artist and hands it over to the scientist.

At the time of publication, William James's *Principles of Psychology* was hailed as the most important contribution ever made to the study of human consciousness. But it is in the novels and tales of William James's brother Henry, that we see the first theorization of deferred action. Deferred action would become the key to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and indeed is the first principal of Žižek's philosophy. Which is only to say that the artist has always been a philosopher. The reason, or at least part of the reason, why he/she has not been well recognized as such is that the artist often does not know exactly what he/she is doing when she creates art, when he/she produces knowledge, when he/she creates philosophy. One might say he/she has attained in such moments to a Deleuzian pure immanence of a kind similar to that of our mutual friend, the catatonic. In this respect Sarat Maharaj describes the creative process as "spasmic, interdisciplinary probes, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interaction, and imaginary archiving". Here he is saying much the same as Kant. The difference is that Maharaj sees the artist's creative process as a beautiful promise for the conception of knowledge; while Kant sees it as good reason to count artistic knowledge as less valuable, less credible, and, looking ahead to William James, less useful, less pragmatic, than so-called scientific/philosophical knowledge.

Finally – two centuries after the *Critique of Judgment* and a century after *The Principles of Psychology* – what we are now coming to, thanks to Foucault and Lyotard and many others, certainly Deleuze, is that the process of knowledge production is not a measure of bona fide knowledge; bona fide knowledge, rather, is the measure of legitimate philosophical inquiry, however and wherever it gets done – hypothetically or rhizomatically. And yet, because the process is different, the bona fide knowledge of the artist/philosopher is and will be different from that of the scientist/philosopher. Quoting Henk Slager: the artist's process not only "produce[s] fluent forms of interconnectivity and methodology through different



forms of knowledge production, but leads to novel artistic strategies and intensities of perception.” To say that there is an equality of value is not to insist upon an equivalency of kind. On a slightly different plane, one might go so far as to say that the relation between scientific and artistic philosophy has become or is becoming more dialogical and less dialectical. Which reminds me to say a word about Hegel. Like so many philosophers who use art to prop up their claims for the supremacy of philosophy, much of what Hegel says about art is good and true. For instance he says that when the philosophy of art is waxing you can bet that art itself is in decline. Such, I believe, is where we’re heading now. How do we wave off the philosophy that is today buzzing around art? How do we never mind about the adornment of art with philosophical thought and devote our thinking and studio practice to art that is philosophy through and through? How, finally, do we get philosophy to see that any given work of art is the concrete representation of a philosophical abstraction, which is another way of saying that the knowledge of art is the knowledge of philosophy? It seems to me that one answer lies with the artist-philosopher, which is precisely what the PhD in art prepares the artist to become. At least that is the answer I get from the artist-philosophers showing in *Nameless Science*.

The PhD for visual artists has taken on several forms. This is a good thing. We should not fall into the academic trap of insisting that there is only one way. Those of us who are pioneering the PhD curriculum for visual artists will continue, I hope, to see each of our respective enterprises as important work that supports the work of other colleagues and institutions in the field. To that end I propose the formation of an international association of PhD programs for visual artists.

Let me now briefly say a word or two about IDSVA. The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts. Founded in 2006 and headquartered in Portland, Maine, IDSVA is the first and only school in America founded for the sole purpose of providing doctoral education in philosophy to visual artists. We believe that rigorous philosophical study sharpens the hand & eye as well as the mind and extends the artist’s range of creative expression and her possibilities for the discovery of philosophical knowledge. The PhD qualifies the artist-philosopher to teach theory and philosophy- courses traditionally taught by non-artists in the American university. And the IDSVA PhD is also meant to bring together a community of practicing artists for the study of theory and philosophy at a time when we need new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing.

The IDSVA academic year begins for first and second year students with a four-week May/June residency intensive at Spannocchia Castle in Tuscany. The Spannocchia intensive includes weekend study with lectures and seminar presentations in Siena, Florence, and Milan. At the end of the Spannocchia intensive students travel to the Venice Biennale, where they work with curators and artists, and engage in what is described as critical intervention. In biennale off-years years, students go from Spannocchia to Paris to study and critique museum collections and art sites. At mid-year they attend an annual one-week intensive in Harlem and New York City, and third year students attend a two-week dissertation orientation convened in August at Brown University.

The residency intensive schedule is designed as unmediated educational experience. Students begin each year in residency at a feudal agrarian castle near Siena, a medieval city. The shift to Venice brings students to an aristocratic renaissance city, and Paris is studied as a bourgeois city born of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution. Harlem in particular and New York City in general serve as specimens of the American post-industrial urban landscape. All of these sites are brought into historical proximity with each other, especially in terms of what they reveal about the history of art in relation to class, race, and gender. In future years we hope to include travel to other European sites, as well as Africa, South America, and the East.

IDSVA students work directly with internationally renowned artists and thinkers. One self-designed independent study and one seminar course per semester comprise the three-year curriculum. Independent studies are faculty directed. Seminar courses commence in residency and continue online. While the seminar courses develop a sequential reading and critique of continental philosophy, the independent studies are designed to take the student in a direction of particular scholarly interest, with a view toward arriving at a thesis topic in the third year. Online coursework and independent studies are pursued through fall and spring semester and include regular individual faculty/student discussions, study group discussion and collaboration, and project research conducted through IDSVA's virtual library. Beyond the three-year curriculum, up to three additional years are allowed for completion of the dissertation.

*Grant Kester* In the US system of higher education, art history and art practice are quite often segregated. This is especially the case at the graduate/post-graduate level, where PhD programs in art history are almost always housed separately from MFA programs in art practice. UCSD's Visual Arts department was founded with an explicit commitment to trans-disciplinary work that challenges this segregation. From its earliest days, the department's faculty included prominent artists who were also practicing theoreticians and critics, such as David Antin, Manny Farber and Allan Kaprow. It also included figures such as Helen and Newton Harrison, whose research moved across the boundaries between art and science.

In the mid-1970s, when the Department began to build its art historical component, it took care to recruit art and media historians who were interested in the issues posed by artistic practice and were committed to working with students in the MFA program. The continuity between studio practice and art history and theory is by now one of the defining features of our department's activity. Today UCSD's Visual Arts department continues to bring practitioners, theorists and historians together to encourage innovative work at the boundaries of disciplines, discourses, and methodologies, as evidenced by the work of figures such as Teddy Cruz, Kyong Park, Amy Alexander, Ricardo Dominguez, Cauleen Smith, Jordan Crandall and many others.

In 2002, the department launched a PhD program in Art and Media History, Theory and Criticism that has rapidly become a magnet for young scholars committed to historical and theoretical research into contemporary art and media. Six years later, in 2008, the Visual Arts

department added a new Concentration in Art Practice to the existing Art and Media History PhD program. The Art Practice Concentration is designed for artists engaged in advanced research who wish to pursue their work in an environment geared towards doctoral study, and to produce studio work alongside a written dissertation. The concentration was a natural outgrowth of the reciprocal relationship between history, theory and practice in the Visual Arts department. The new Concentration in Art Practice is unusual, if not unique, among practice-based PhD programs in the United States, as it parallels other areas of specialization within our existing art history and theory program (from Meso-American to Renaissance to New Media). It thus acknowledges artistic production as a field of intellectual inquiry capable of an equal level of theoretical elaboration and conceptual density. Art practice students fulfill the same requirements as students working in other PhD concentrations, including the completion of 2-3 years of graduate level course work, language exams, qualifying exams and the submission of a dissertation. Their dissertations, however, combine a shorter written component with a completed art project (film or video, exhibition, installation, public project, etc.).

There is, of course, some controversy regarding the introduction of art practice doctorates in the United States. While they have been common in Europe for many years, they are still relatively new here and many are suspicious of the perceived institutionalization and codification of a form of cultural production (art practice) that is traditionally understood as intuitive, transgressive and decidedly anti-institutional. While it is easy to sympathize with these concerns (which were also raised during the widespread introduction of Master of Fine Arts programs in the US during the 1970s), they underestimate the extent to which contemporary art production is already subject to disciplinary protocols and forms of formal and informal institutionalization that exercise a decisive influence on the kinds of art that younger artists produce. While it is wise to retain some skepticism about the ongoing professionalization of art education, it is also important to recognize the increasing pressures exerted on art production, and culture more generally, by the forces of neo-liberalism. One of its chief effects has been the growing assault on all areas of “public” discourse that challenge or resist the imperatives of the market system, from attacks on public education and publicly-funded broadcast media to the erosion of state safeguards against corporate misconduct. The public university, for all its complicity with the mechanisms of corporate and military power, remains one of the few sites left in the American cultural landscape in which at least the principle of independent critical thought and analysis can still be defended.

A ready example comes from the Visual Arts department itself, where artist Ricardo Dominguez (associated with the development and theorization of “electronic civil disobedience”) staged a “Virtual Sit-In in Solidarity with the Striking Students of France” on March 16, 2006 using his UCSD *b.a.n.g lab* as a base of operations. The protest recruited several thousand supporters and the French government responded by threatening to block university access to French internet sites unless UCSD shut down its own network. The university refused this request and Professor Dominguez was supported by both his department and the Dean of Arts and Humanities, who defended “cyberactivist” practice as a significant area of research deserving

of academic protection (*see: <http://post.thing.net/node/772>*). We are hopeful that the Art Practice concentration will, despite the dangers of institutionalization, provide a space in which critical forms of cultural production and analysis can be sustained, and even flourish.

*Mick Wilson* I would like to identify some divergences and convergences between what is happening in the European domain and what is emerging in the us. I think it is worth emphasizing that not all doctoral programs in Europe entail funding. They are quite often self-funding. In terms of the institutional politics of legitimacy, a key measure is to access funding for researchers, to demonstrate viability in the larger academic funding landscape and, thus, to establish proper status for a research undertaking.

It strikes me that in Europe – my colleagues from Europe might slightly disagree on this – the predominant mode of debate around the issue of a PhD in art has been to focus on methodology and epistemology, i.e. the production of knowledge through a creative act. Many of these debates have become tiresome in their repetition. The importance of the intervention of the *Nameless Science* exhibition is its attempt to displace epistemic kinds of debates by concrete instantiations of specific projects, so that a different kind of conversation might emerge. However, I am still intrigued by the little squabbles that might appear from biochemists or sociologists when the question of an artistic research project hits the committee table. I am curious to know whether the same contest of legitimacy would play a role in such context.

The motivation for the PhD programs in Europe is complex, since it is rooted in five or six different processes. On the one hand, you have what has been described as the discursive turn in conceptual and post conceptual practice, whereby a range of practices outside of the academy engage with notions of the relational, the discursive, the production of meaning, the production of knowledge, and the production of science.

The discursive turn is also allied with the emergence of a remarkable curatorial discourse; a discourse not filled by institutions of higher education or by museums, but actually emerging from the informal networks of cultural practitioners or artist-curators throughout the 1990s. That discourse started to put on the agenda questions of agency, of conditions for understanding what it is that you have done as a cultural practitioner. Within the academic discourse, the questions of agency seem to have been displaced by the triumph of a third-hand postmodernism. I think that is one of the reasons why there is a desire on the part of practitioners themselves to generate a space that is neither fully that of the art academy, nor fully that of the university, nor fully that of the art world, but something that is both hybrid and interstitial. Something between these modes allowing these spaces to co-produce an independent discourse.

Another contributing factor is I believe the issue of professionalization.

The question of the competition for reputation, status, standing, and power within institutions as played out around and contested by the standing of the professor with PhD and the professor without PhD, expressed in salary differences and in terms of difference of authority when it comes to a discussion at the committee table. Other factors include the desire to take ownership of a body of theoretical and

discursive work, which was largely seen to belong to philosophers.

There is a significant engagement with doctoral programs in Europe prompted by mid-career artists with an established international profile, who reenter an academic frame in order to get empowered in relation to a body of theoretical work seen to be setting the terms for the discussions happening in mainstream art world.

A number of additional factors are at play as well. One of the things that is really important and has not been fully thematized enough yet is Grant Kester's reference to the universities and their privileging of the technocratic agenda, i.e. the agenda for science and technology.

The emergence of such a subsidized research wing of corporate industry as a dominant within the university is a problem for the humanities in general. It seems to me that the art research agenda – not only the PhD construct, but also the larger agenda of art research – must be part of a permeable academic institution that re-addresses the situation cogently.

The art research agenda is forcing new relationships with the world beyond the academy in a way that could moderate the debate across the entire spectrum of the humanities.

The debate in the humanities played out in the US is internationally known – as say for example in the sequence of “cultural wars” throughout the 1980s and 1990s. But a credible and disseminating rhetoric, with which to champion a hermeneutical humanities-type of enquiry that traditionally inhabit philosophy, history, literature, and so forth is still lacking. That could change. I am not talking of artists having a fetish for philosophy or, vice versa, of art historians and philosophers having a fetish for artists. This is something else. What is of interest here is a new domain coming into being, a space of independent possibilities. The bureaucratization of this space is also an eminent threat – something colleagues in the UK would be very well-positioned to address. Clearly, there is a dull, grey instrumentalization in many new research initiatives. Indeed, this is a very dangerous threat for us all and something we need to be more willing to openly discuss with each other in order to resist bureaucratic, institutionalized exercises of self-reproduction. Yet, an art-research mode of inquiry open to a larger world beyond the academy could take advantage of the potential of the academy and at the same time be transformative of the academy.

Sarah Pierce

## EPILOGUE: AMBIVALENCE

## AND AUTHORITY

In 2007, I became interested in a specific PhD course. I was not looking to do a PhD. After two years working as a Research Associate in an art department in a UK-based university, I felt duly ambivalent about “research” as constituted by the British point system.

As university departments seek to accommodate (and profit from) artistic research, they require those engaged in practice-based PhDs (artists) to codify their output. For example, self-publishing, a mode of artistic research that is certainly prevalent enough to warrant academic attention, does not count unless it is reconstituted as a topic. But legitimating self-publishing as a topic of artistic research is not the same as recognizing self-publishing as a form of basic research with its own findings – as itself capable of discovering, interpreting and producing knowledge. It is precisely this relationship of knowledge to legitimacy, legibility and recognition which is at stake in artistic research produced within the university context.

The ambivalence that some of us feel, that indeed continues to be the condition of my PhD, is perhaps rooted in a certain suspicion of structures seeking to institutionalize artistic production. But as Grant Kester rightly points out, art practice is subject to pressures, both informal and formal, which institutionalize and accredit, not least among them the university, which has long awarded degrees in art in recognition of certain behaviors and outputs. What is more important than somehow protecting the space of art from such pressures, or worse, imagining that in so doing we protect its abilities to transgress them, is to understand that ambivalence is a condition of knowledge that artistic research shares with other fields. Here, we might understand how rebellion at the site of knowledge is present in a notion of the PhD.

In 1959, the American sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote *The Sociological Imagination*, where he outlined a way of working that calls upon the interdisciplinary aspects of intellectualism and the practice of keeping a file or set of files containing all the ideas or materials that compel one’s research. He wrote the book for his students, young sociologists whom he anticipated would constrain their interests to outdated systems that require researchers to know their topic before setting out on a course of study. He recommends periodically spreading the files out on the floor and arranging their contents to figure out connections, convened temporarily, and driven in places by merely coincidental affiliations that lead to unexpected readings often immersed in dissent and self-determination. During his lifetime, Mills was notably anti-careerist, anti-expert, and anti-establishment – attitudes he carried throughout his professional tenure at Columbia. He despised the tendency of universities to delineate what constituted “official” research, and he



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encouraged those entering academic study to challenge the policies of disciplinary work. Mills understood the importance of research that is both interdisciplinary and undefined through “discipline”. Mills wrote scholarly texts, but in keeping with his intellectual commitment, he was an avid pamphleteer – a proclivity that greatly disturbed colleagues. It is in the face of these dismissals that I have decided to cite his work here. As we enter the political apparatus of intellectual work, *The Sociological Imagination* moves us away from specialization and prepares us, to disagree, to dissent, and most importantly, to self-determine one’s intellectual “craft”.

It is the necessary uncertainty that accompanies self-determination that I would like to reflect on for a moment in this epilogue to a collection of texts focused on current debates surrounding artistic research. At the heart of these debates, perhaps like any other, are processes of validation and rationalization that simultaneously attempt to legitimate the artist-researcher while making artistic research legible through terms like “outcomes” and “best practices”. Yet all the while we repress a paradox that is crucial to our work *within* the university. Accreditation, as it arrives through various stages of a PhD, allows our work to gain certain authority, yet we still do not know exactly what that accreditation is. Instead of rationalizing this difficulty, perhaps we can understand it as an ambivalence that will follow us through the PhD. The PhD sets us out on a path that carries with it the insecurities of not knowing our destination. Derrida, when speaking about “sendoffs” in “Eyes of the University”, thinks through the scheme of destination as rhythms, accents, phases, “points of pause” named as “those signs destined less to mark the measure than to suspend it on a note whose duration may vary.” Derrida uses the word fermata for points of pause, which in music is the notation that indicates that a note should be sustained longer than its note value would indicate. Exactly how much longer it is held is at the discretion of the performer or conductor. Rather than leaving us suspended or in suspense, it is possible, I believe, to highlight these points of pause as a kind of praxis. A “doing” that in the moment of research indicates a hesitation as well as a decision. A point of pause that is not about casting off limits, but about duration. An insistence that at the same time avoids the trap of assurances along the way; the “disguised re-centering”, “the hegemony of a problematic” – to use Derrida’s words – that convince us that this is indeed the right path.

In a precursory paper to “Sendoffs” delivered at Cornell University in 1983, Derrida speaks of a “double gesture” similar to the paradox in “sendoffs”, which asks us to act “as if” no object of study is out of the question, is “off limits” so to speak, which Derrida suggests transforms the contract itself into a pretence for the regulating idea of the university. “There is a double gesture here, a double postulation: to ensure professional competence and the most serious tradition of the university even while going as far as possible, theoretically and practically, in the most directly underground thinking about the abyss beneath the university.”<sup>1</sup>

This double gesture both opens the university to the outside, “the bottomless” depths of what is not yet “knowledge”, and in doing so closes the university in on itself as it strives for “still not legitimated path-breakings” that attempt to situate what is “unsituable”.



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<sup>1</sup> Derrida, Jacques, et al., THE PRINCIPLE OF REASON: THE UNIVERSITY IN THE EYES OF ITS PUPILS. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983.



Derrida refers here to Cornell's landscape, famously built high along the rim of several deep gorges. Cornell University is "the campus on the heights, the bridges, and if necessary the barriers above the abyss – and the abyss itself." (In noting the barriers on campus, Derrida also refers to suicide, a myth that persists at Cornell to this day, especially around exam time, when the temptation to jump into the gorge, and into the vast unknown, is all the more real). We base our grounds for our research upon a gorge; "[...]by which we mean on a grounds, whose own grounding remains invisible and unthought."

I have no idea what "outcomes" might be in this context, nor do I feel reassured to be included among a set recognized as "best practice". How we stage our research, how we declare its meaning at the site of knowledge, is how research becomes practice, and not 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.



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