THE ART OF RESEARCH

Research Practices in Art and Design

Publication series of
the University of Art and Design Helsinki A 73
www.uiah.fi/publications

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Graphic design: Cleo Bade
Language revision: Damon Tringham
Cover photo: Sanna Kannisto

ISBN 978-951-558-218-8
ISSN 0782-1832

Printed at Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy
Helsinki, Finland 2006

THE ART OF RESEARCH

Research Practices in Art and Design

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Table of Contents

8 **Pekka Korvenmaa:**
Foreword

10 **Maarit Mäkelä & Sara Routarinne:**
Connecting Different Practices
An Introduction to the Art of Research

40 **Turkka Keinonen:**
Fields and Acts of Art and Research

60 **Maarit Mäkelä:**
Framing (a) Practice-Led Research Project

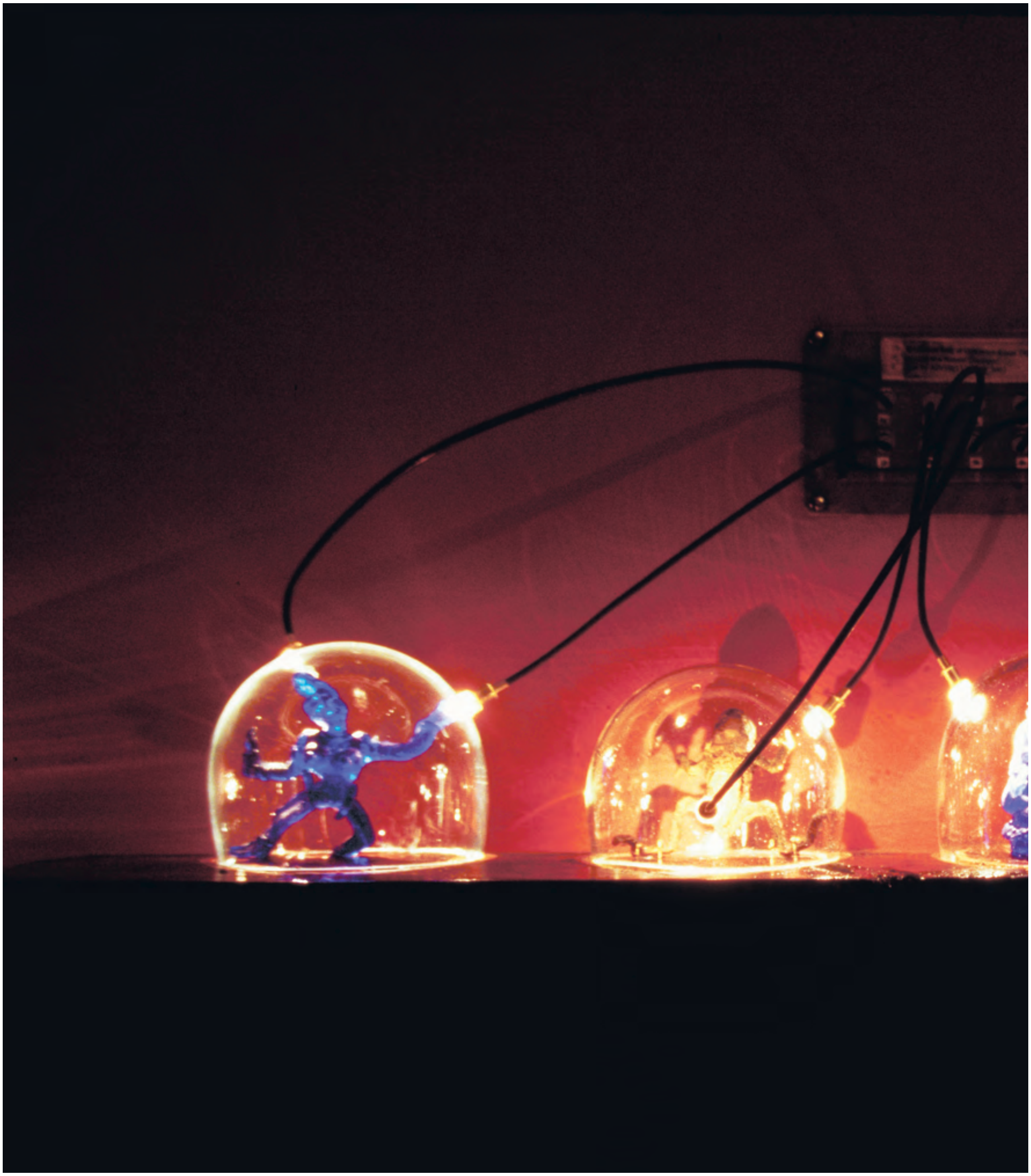
86 **Kärt Summatavet:**
Tradition, Inspiration and Artistic Innovation

114 **Outi Turpeinen:**
The interplay of Art and Research

138 **Laakso Harri:**
Imaginary Research

156 **Stephen AR Scrivener:**
Visual Art Practice Reconsidered:
Transformational Practice and the Academy

180 **Michael A R Biggs**
Modelling Experiential Knowledge for Research



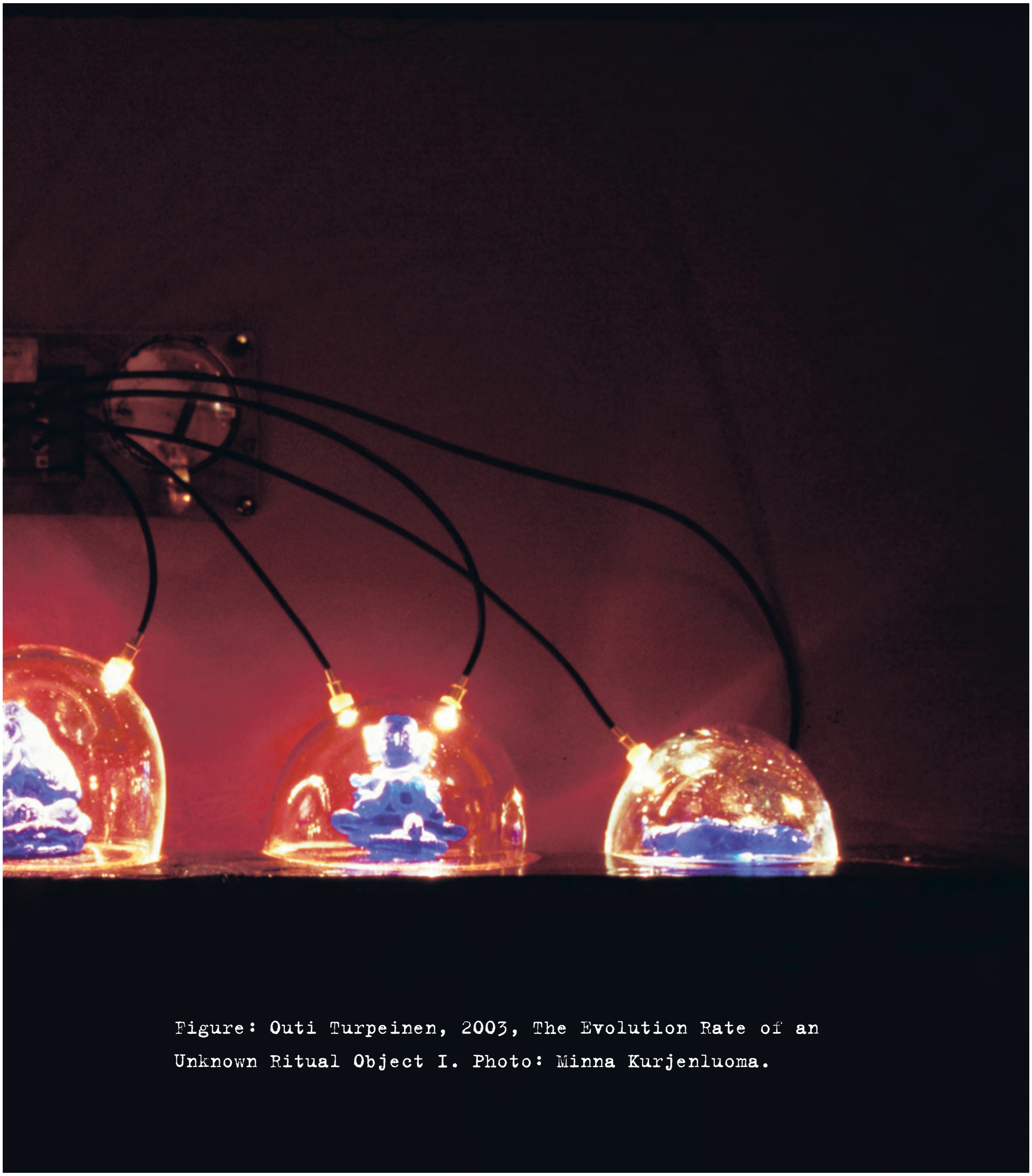


Figure: Outi Turpeinen, 2003, The Evolution Rate of an Unknown Ritual Object I. Photo: Minna Kurjenluoma.

Foreword

While this anthology was in the making in November 2006, a meeting was held at the Institute for Art Research in the Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki to inaugurate a project on the historiography of research into the arts in Finland. After several presentations by professorial chairs in the academe, many of them with a history dating back to the 19th century or more, the comment was made: are we forgetting the research done at the institutions for education in the arts, such as architecture, music and design? This query caused certain confusion among the participants representing established academic fields. Nonetheless, the significance was admitted of especially schools of architecture with a university status dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. But when the discussion went further to include the research at institutions such as University of Art and Design Helsinki, the conversation took on a new level of complexity. How should one assess this novel – as compared to the research into arts at the old universities – field which certainly bears the hallmark of research but is bound to professional education and not to academic disciplines with their capillary traditions of succeeding generations of influential professors and methodological evolution?

As the authors of the introduction to this volume as well as most of the other writers discuss in greater detail, the research at, for example University of Art and Design Helsinki, is recent in comparison to more established tracks at universities of liberal arts. The beginnings and actual start of it extends back to the 1970s when the institution was granted university status and later in the following decade when the right to doctoral education and to award degrees was obtained. The body of researchers and the output of doctors with the research degree of Doctor of Art began to grow significantly from the mid-90s onwards. At the time of writing this, total of some fifty doctoral theses have been accepted and, *nota bene*, published for the dissemination of the knowledge produced. In comparison with the international field of research at institutions of art and design education, this is a relatively long and wide track. While this output is young *vis-á-vis* the more established counterparts,it is,if not fully mature, at least a promising youngster amidst the global field of this genre, which is otherwise generally still under incubation or taking its first steps.

If this development and its production in research and qualified researchers does not easily fit into traditional categories and distinctions with their formal closures, so the approach to research discussed and elaborated in this volume is even further away from the codified canon of the practice of research. Here we discuss practice, yes, but practice leading the research. This practice-led research in the arts and in design has been under development and debate since the early 90s, the first doctoral outputs at University of Art and Design, Helsinki stemming from recent years. A small number of the theses earned at the University of Art and Design Helsinki have represented what now is called practice-led research, *i.e.* they have included parts where the exploration is conducted by the means of art and design practices. This is what is meant by the art of research. The intention of this volume is to take the discussion further and to contribute to the methodological and content growth of this approach, which is highly demanding but at the same time thrilling in its attempt to bridge and integrate two realms of knowing. This art of research is never and should not be a bypass to a doctorate, yet neither should it be a *cul-de-sac* but instead "a long and winding road" – with a rewarding goal.

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1

Maarit Mäkelä & Sara Routarinne

Connecting Different Practices

Figure: Maarit Mäkelä, 2000, exhibition Mirrorplay III.

An introduction to the Art of research

Over the last two decades, there has been an ongoing debate concerning **the role of art and design practices in the field of academic research.** One of the tasks of this anthology is to discuss the ways in which **artists** relate themselves to the field of research. In this discussion, **the product of making – the artefact** created during art and design practice – is conceived to have a central position in the academic research process be it a painting, a photograph, a designed object, a musical composition or a dance performance. This book aims at addressing the ways in which artistic practices meet the research practices. We will sketch out **a variety of possible connections** between these practices. In recent discussion, such attempts have been labelled practice based – or more precisely, **practice-led** – research.

In June 2006, Professor Chris Rust organised an online workshop on practice-led research. This workshop attempted to develop guidelines and review criteria for practice-led research in order to assist funding institutions[1] in evaluating projects within the academic field of art and design, and also to help these institutions understand why the relatively new field of research is continuously worth funding in a battle for resources inside the broad field of art and humanities. As Rust formulates in the discussion, practice-led research is research in which professional creative practices of art and design play an instrumental role in the research conduct. Yet, creative practice is not research in itself but rather a vehicle for an exploration that contributes to knowledge and understanding.[2] It is symbolic that the discussion took place online. This young field of research has not yet developed a series of refereed journals that is able to offer a forum for the discussion. In addition, the majority of arguments presented were based on experiences and hopes rather than research already conducted. This anthology contributes to the topical discussion through exploring possibilities, reporting cases, forming programmes and making philosophical analyses. All of these contributions are deeply based on practice-led research already conducted and evaluated to meet the academic requirements set for a doctoral dissertation.

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[1] This particular workshop formed part of a review project that was conducted for the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The workshop started on June 12, 2006 through ahrc-workshop-pl@jiscmail.ac.uk. Obviously, the discussion lends itself as a starting point for the anthology at hand since it reflects on the very issue of practice-led research.

[2] Rust's email to ahrc-workshop-pl@jiscmail.ac.uk June 13, 2006.

This anthology will, under the heading of practice-led research, focus on research that 1) evolves through the making of art and design, where 2) the questions and challenges are identified and formed within these practices or out of the needs of the practitioners, where 3) the process of answering these questions or needs is advanced by means of practice and through making, while 4) drawing on methods and methodologies familiar in the field of art and design and finally, 5) where the researcher is also involved as a practitioner. This programme places the artist(practitioner)-researcher in a double position: s/he can access the process of making while s/he is meeting the need for explicitness that is characteristic of academic research. (Biggs, 2002, 20–23; Scrivener 2002b, 1; Mäkelä 2005.)

The inquiry within the practice-led research can arise either from practice or research intent. The pivotal role of practice does not free the study from the requirement of rigour nor from the intention to add knowledge and understanding. Instead, practice-led research seeks for interesting ways to use art practice in order to conduct rigorous research projects. As a matter of fact, in a manner analogous to engineers doing engineering as part of their research procedure, practice-led research seeks to answer such questions as how doing art or making design advances creative disciplines within the fairly unique position of art in the academe.[3] These viewpoints provide a point of departure for this anthology in a wide framework of discussion that seeks interaction between art and design practices in an academic context. The articles below will address these issues in general (Biggs, Keinonen, Laakso and Scrivener) and specifically in terms of recounting a particular project (Mäkelä, Summatavet, Turpeinen and Laakso).

We have consciously chosen to use the term practice-led instead of practice-based research.[4] The term practice-led research is at the moment the term used internationally, especially in the UK, where this form of research tradition has been discussed and developed since the 1980s. The term is also used by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK (*e.g.* Biggs in this volume). At the same time, we are aware that both terms are used to refer to roughly the same sort of activity. That said, practice-based research is split across a multiplicity of disciplines, ranging from technology and primary health care to sociology of science and art. The scope of research that is referred to as practice-based is therefore very wide. It is even justified to speak of a 'practice turn' in contemporary theory (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Savigny 2001) being currently under way. Therefore, the term practice-based research may be even too wide for a coherent discussion. In the context of this book, we will narrow the focus of interest to that of those researchers who wish to contribute to research by giving a central position to art and design processes and products. Secondly, the notion of practice-**led** emphasises practice more actively in the process of that research. In this formulation, practice is conceived of as the leading force in an exploration.

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[3] Rust's email to ahrc-workshop-pl@jiscmail.ac.uk June 14, 2006.

[4] Thereby, we are also following the topical discussion on the role of practice in the field, as exemplified in the on-line workshop mentioned in the footnotes above. We think that the notion of practice-led research instead of practice-based research is more suitable for the context in which a practising artist or designer is the one who conducts research.

[5] There have been several attempts to describe practice-led research, including proposing characters and methodologies. As Carole Gray points out, the task is somewhat like describing the elephant in the Hindu story: we know it is there, but it is only perceptible through small, sometimes unrelated and very diverse elements. In the story, six blind men went to see the elephant. Each of them approaches and feels the elephant from a different angle and thus receives a different perspective from the whole. (Gray 1998, 82, 87.) However, as Biggs pointed out in personal communication, this analogy perpetuates the myth that research is difficult to understand.

The practice-led approach has recently been internationally applied, discussed and argued over in the broad field of art – including dance, theatre, music, architecture, fine arts and design. The anthology at hand will bring out certain elements of the diverse discussion around the concept of the practice-led approach and the central questions it poses in the field of visual arts and design. One of the relevant questions is what kind of different connections can be built between various art and research practices. What happens when research is brought into art and design practice? What is an artist or a designer looking for when stepping into an academic research context?

Towards a methodological discussion

Because the field of practice-led research has remained rather loosely demarcated,[5] the definition of research given by the Arts and Humanities Research Council AHRC seems to be considered, especially in the UK (*e.g.* Biggs 2002, 19; Biggs 2003; Scrivener 2002a, 33), as one of the cornerstones in the ongoing discussion. According to this definition, creative practice as such is not necessarily research, but creative practice that meets certain criteria can be regarded as research. The requirements are that there have to be explicit research questions, specific methods for answering the questions and a specific context in which the research is carried out (AHRB 2001, 7).

It has been argued that there are questions and answers characteristic to practice-led research, *i.e.* questions that arise out of, and in consequence to, practice. Some of these questions are pluralistic, in other words they may be answered in a number of different ways. What seems to be the most important task during the process of practice-led research is to show a clear connection between the question and the answer. The possibility of evaluating the functioning of the method used in a specific research project lies in this: a persuasive connection between the question and the answer proves the suitability of the method (Biggs 2004, 12–13).

Research in art and design is conceived of as being interpretational and pluralistic in nature. There is no preference for one set of methods over another, since finding multiple solutions is regarded as an asset, not a weakness. There is a dynamic relationship between the research context, the question, the method and the audience. Variation in any of these affects the appropriateness of the chosen method. This is the reason why the method is the last variable to be determined in the practice-led research process. This is also the reason why applying the same method repeatedly in order to solve the problems would be an invalid approach to research in art and design. (Biggs 2004, 14–19.)

The first conference in Finland where the methodological discussion around the practice-led research enterprise occurred was organised in Helsinki by the University of Art and Design in 1996. The name of the conference, "*No Guru, No Method?*", captured the situation in the field perfectly. It offered one of the first attempts to discuss, for example, the concept of practice-led research thoroughly in international context. A decade later, when editing this anthology, we are happy to take the above discussion as a foundation which we now find ourselves able to deepen, update and discuss.

The emergence of practice-led research within art and design

The emergence of practice-led research within art and design dates back to 1970s and 1980s. In that climate, art universities, alongside science universities, carried out a degree reform and began to create their own research traditions and practices. This took place in Finland, too, simultaneously with the development in the United Kingdom (*e.g.* Gray 1998, 83). It was a significant educational reform that invited art universities to be equal players in the academic field (*cf.* Scrivener in this volume).

In the art universities of Finland, the discussion about the substance and mode of research has been going on vividly since 1980s. There are four art universities in Finland and one art faculty within the University of Lapland, all of which have contributed to the field by opening their own doctoral education during the time period from 1982 to 1997. Each of these universities has produced slightly different requirements for the doctoral studies.[6] The form and content of the doctoral projects have also received different emphases, depending upon the university. In the University of Art and Design Helsinki, a scientific doctoral degree has been available since 1983, but an artistically-orientated option was not inaugurated until 1992 (Ryynänen 1999, 13). These two options are not separated from each other. Instead, the requirement is that the doctoral thesis also meets the academic criteria when part(s) of it take the form of art or design production(s).

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[6] There are 20 universities in Finland, including the four universities of art: the Academy of Fine Arts, Sibelius Academy, Theatre Academy and University of Art and Design Helsinki. The first of the art universities which took the challenge of a doctoral degree up was Sibelius Academy, where postgraduate programmes have been available since 1982. A doctoral degree can be taken either in the artistic study programme or in the research study programme. (Ryynänen 1999, 10.) The Theatre Academy opened their programme in 1988. Either artistically or research oriented programmes has been available since 1993. (Ibid. 14.) In the Academy of Fine Arts a doctoral degree has been available since 1997 (ibid. 8). The degree is comparable with the artistically oriented options offered by Sibelius Academy and Theatre Academy. In artistically oriented study programmes artistic projects and reports are assessed by experts with artistic competence and discussed public. The research-oriented theses are pre-examined and publicly defended following the academic criteria and procedures – as well as the works from Sibelius Academy and Theatre Academy that follow research-oriented path.

Though the art-based or practice-led way of carrying out individual research projects in the field of Art and Design began to take shape in Finnish art universities in the form of completed works at the beginning of the 1990s, defended doctoral dissertations within this enterprise have been fairly small in number. Keinonen (in this volume) discusses, among other issues, whether the scope of expertise expected from doctoral candidates at the University of Art and Design Helsinki is too demanding.[7]

The field of art has a strong tradition in the production of artefacts. Likewise, the field of research has a strong tradition in the production of knowledge. Instead of keeping these fields apart, the contributors in this volume aim at building connections between these fields. The objective is to try to ask what kind of outcomes might result from bringing these two fields into contact. If we think of a prototypical art project or a research project, the fields do not initially seem to have much in common (Scrivener in this volume.). However, they are not as alien to each other as one might imagine. In fact, art practices are explorative by their very nature, as will be discussed in Scrivener's article. The idea of art practice as inquiry is one of the central themes discussed across the art universities. It represents the basic line of discussion, for instance, in the publications *Artistic research (*Kiljunen & Hannula 2001); *Researching artist. Questions concerning the open marriage of arts and research* (Siukonen 2002); *The Arts and Narrative Research: Art as Inquiry* (Saarnivaara & Bochner 2003); *Art practice as research. Inquiry in the visual arts* (Sullivan 2005); and *Art as the source of knowledge* (Bardy 1998, especially the article by Sava in that volume). The articles by Mäkelä, Summatavet, Turpeinen and Laakso (in this volume) represent cases in point. Their articles exemplify some of the multiple possibilities for academic explorations through art practices.

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[7] David Durling, Ken Friedman and Paul Gutherson – who have all taken actively part to the diverse discussions in the field of design – have proclaimed, that the category of practice-based research has hitherto proven fruitless, and the efforts of the past decade which aimed at producing valid examples of "researching by designing" have failed (Durling et al. 2002, 11.)

Research at arts universities depends for its progress upon interdisciplinarity as well as exchange and interaction between research and the arts. In order to promote this novel form of communication, the Research Council, together with the Central Arts Council of Finland, supported a set of research projects over the period 1999–2001. In these projects, the goal was to seek solutions to the practical and methodological problems of arts research and to promote the integration of science and the arts. The review concluded that the pilot project had been encouraging – even though it had not been possible to resolve the questions of integration within the confines that were set as the goal of this targeted programme. (Oksanen *et al.* 2003, 232.)

Along with degree reform within art universities and the emergence of practice-led research, the overall development of research in art and design in Finland has begun to explore new dimensions. Strengthening of theoretical thinking and verbalising has influenced in the way that artists and designers, too, have begun to contextualise and interpret not only their own field, but also the creative process of making and the outputs of this process (*e.g.* Vihma 1995; Wiberg 1996). In the case of practice-led research projects, this interest is directed towards the artist- or designer-researcher's own creative process and artefacts created through it by looking at the process and the artefacts from within the process.

The first practice-led dissertation in Finland in the field of visual art and design was completed in the field of photography (Eskola 1997a and b). Currently, there are altogether 17 dissertations which are composed of a written element and an additional art production: nine from the University of Art and Design Helsinki, five from the Academy of Fine Arts, and three from the University of Lapland.[8] Today the number of completed practice-led dissertations seems to be sufficient to move the core of the discussion from convincing doubters of the justification of the practice-led research approach to the methodologically-slanted contribution that already has shaped this novel field.

As the focus of art-led research projects has hitherto been very much on the field of photography, the projects have particularly concentrated on the image and its cultural, social and political significance.[9] Especially in the first of the practice-led works completed in the University of Art and Design Helsinki, the methodological key question dealt with the interaction between artistic practice and research. For example, Taneli Eskola's and Kristoffer Albrecht's dissertations were in the form of two publications: one of the publications included a research element (Eskola 1997a and Albrecht 2001), and another publication included the photographs which were taken during the research process (Eskola 1997b and Albrecht 1998).

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[8] The universities that offer the possibility of this enterprise in the field of visual art and design are the University of Art and Design Helsinki, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the University of Lapland (a multi-faculty university with the Faculty of Arts).

[9] Dissertations in the field of photography with a practice-led approach have been written by Taneli Eskola (1997a and b), Kristoffer Albrecht (1998 and 2001) and Jan Kaila (2002). There are also other dissertations whose authors are photographers; the author has been taken pictures related to the research topic, but the direct reference to the works done during the research process is not emphasised. This has meant that rather than the produced artefacts, the other phenomena themselves have formed the focus of the dissertation. This form of work has been submitted by photographer-researchers Juha Suonpää (2002), Harri Laakso (2003), Petri Anttonen (2006) and Mika Elo (2005).

The first dissertation with a practice-led approach in the field of design was completed in the field of ceramics (Mäkelä 2003). In that work, the question of method was approached specifically by means of artefacts, in this case material objects made by ceramic artists. Along with this work and other works with material-based art approach (*e.g.* Ikonen 2004; Summatavet 2005; Turpeinen 2005), the discussion of artefacts and their meaning as an element of the research has increased greatly.

Designerly ways of knowing

As early as in the 1980s, social scientist Donald Schön stressed the role of the practitioner, whose understanding and knowledge from a particular field correspond to a perspective situated within the process of praxis. His thinking is crystallised around the idea of a reflective practitioner. Schön proposes that research ought to be geared towards an understanding of the nature and origin of knowledge (*i.e.* epistemology) which is tied to practice. (Schön 1995, viii.) More recently, these ideas have been developed by Stephen Scrivener, one of the contributors to this anthology. He has moulded a practice-led research programme on the basis of Schön's ideas (*e.g.* Scrivener 2002a).

As mentioned above, during the last decade, an understanding of the meaning of the practice element and the central role of the practitioner has been apparent in several discussions (*e.g.* Schatzki 2001). As a pioneering contributor, Bruce Archer argued for design as a third educational culture aiming at understanding embodied in the art of planning, inventing, making and doing (Archer 1979). On the basis of these ideas, Nigel Cross has argued that designers should concentrate on the underlying forms of knowledge particular to themselves. Cross pins this knowledge down to the practice of design which he labels "designerly" ways of knowing, thinking and acting (Cross 1982). Cross continued to discuss the forms of knowledge particular to the awareness and abilities of a designer right up until the turn of the century. He states that knowledge of design resides in people (*i.e.* designers), in the processes and in the products themselves (*ibid.* 223–225). Part of this knowledge is inherent in the activity of designing; it can be gained by engaging in and reflecting on that very activity. Knowledge also resides in the artefacts themselves, in their forms and materials. Some of this knowledge is also inherent in the process of manufacturing the artefacts and can be gained through making and reflecting upon the making of those artefacts. (Cross 2001, 54–55.) Although it is design that Cross discusses, his ideas transfer to the field of art, too. The triangle of practitioner (designer or artist), practice (designing, making art) and product (artefact) provides for perspectives through which it is possible to approach practice and a practitioner's ways of knowing.

The role of making in practice-led research

In established fields of research, making is generally regarded as consequent to thinking – at least in theory. Thus, a series of experiments, for example, is carried out in order to test a certain assumption, *i.e.* to solve a problem or answer a question. In the field of practice-led research, praxis has a more essential role: making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research and in certain modes of practice also the creator of ideas – such as, for example, painting (Scrivener & Chapman 2004, 7). In this way, invention comes before theory, *i.e.* the world of 'doing and making' is prior to understanding (Cross 1982, 225).

According to Scrivener & Chapman, if we follow this thinking, artefacts are not merely central in terms of output, they are also central to the very realisation of the outputs and hence must take central stage from the very outset of practice-led research. In this context, making functions as a means of realising an artefact which has to be perceived, recognised and conceived: understood. The creative process and the artefact created during the process are linked together inseparably. It is the making of the artefact, even if intuitive, that determines the direction of the practice-led research process. Without the artefact, there is only the assumptive theory, which is separated from the actual process of making (Scrivener & Chapman 2004, 7–8.)

The role of the artefact in practice-led research

Practice-led research has been characterised by a focus on issues, concerns and interests that are explored and manifested through the production of artefacts. This implies that, as an object of experience, the creative product is as important as any knowledge embodied in it (Scrivener & Chapman 2004, 2–3). The artefacts created translate messages between concrete objects and abstract requirements. In this way, they facilitate the constructive, solution-focused thinking of the artist or designer – in the same way as, for example, verbal and numerical communication and thinking facilitate analytical, problem-focused thinking (Cross 1982, 225).

It has been stated that there is no embodied knowledge in the artefact until it is interpreted (Scrivener 2002b, 8). This action is staged in a certain context, and the context affects the way the object is interpreted. In addition to emphasising the importance of context, Michael Biggs, one of the contributors of this anthology, also takes up the question of the role of words in the act of interpreting. In his view, it is the particular combination of artefacts and words that gives efficacy to the communication. When acting as bearers of meanings, neither artefacts nor words alone would be sufficient. Biggs reverts to a definition of research provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), a central funding body in the UK in the field of art and design. It proposes that what is required is a combination of artefact and critical exegesis that illustrates how the artefact advances knowledge, understanding and insight. (Biggs 2002, 23.)[10]

It should be emphasised that, from the artist's point of view, the production of an artefact is as such an event of interpretation, as the artefact itself is the artist's interpretation of some phenomenon of life. In the field of academic research, artefacts are conceived of as mute and the results of an investigation must be expressed in an explicit, verbal manner that enables a critical validation of the outcome. From an artist's point of view, the demand for such explicating words may appear superfluous. Yet, the demand for this more concrete analysis comes intelligible when one wishes to take the art practice into an academic research context to be discussed – in this case especially in the practice-led context. If the art universities are to practise what is required of an academic field, it requires applying academic conduct (Biggs and Scrivener in this volume). The art of research means inescapably a double position. This is to say that an artist-researcher cannot escape the act of interpretation nor the act of explicating in written form that interpretation. In academe, the artist-researcher cannot hide behind the robe of a mute artist.

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[10] In Finland, the Finnish government defines in Section 22 of the Decree on University Degrees the requisite components of a doctorate degree. The decree states the parameters for a valid postgraduate output in the fields of fine arts, art and design, music, theatre and dance. A valid output may be a public demonstration of knowledge and skills if so required by the university. (Valtioneuvoston asetus yliopistojen tutkinnoista [Government Decree on University Degrees] 2004). In addition, art universities have guidelines for their own doctoral degrees. In his article, Turkka Keinonen will discuss in more detail the degree requirements in the University of Art and Design Helsinki concerning (especially) practice-led research projects.

Updating the discussion

Research in the context of art and design is still a much-debated subject at the beginning of the 21st century (*e.g.* Durling *et al.* 2002). The debate becomes yet more animated when it touches the field of practice-led research, which can be regarded as one of the new ways of doing research influenced by the kind of accumulation of knowledge described above. Annoyance surfaces particularly when the making of artefacts is argued to comprise a research method, and when the artefact is regarded as the aim of research – the embodiment of new knowledge (Scrivener 2002a, 25). Therefore, among the issues we wish to address in this anthology is a concern for the knowledge of a creative practitioner, for the practitioner as affected by the process as well as for the process of making, when practitioner steps into the academic world. Biggs (in this volume) elaborates on one of these issues, namely that of subjectivity and the problems it poses in the research context. Biggs proposes a solution to these problems in a way that leaves room both for an original creative process and for contributing to knowledge on a more general, defendable level.

During the last few years, the attempts to define, structure and apply practice-led research as a disciplined inquiry in doctoral studies has spread widely around Europe in addition to Finland and the UK, for example in Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Hungary, Belgium and Spain. However, a glance back at the fairly similar historical development of the Higher Education Systems in Finland and in the United Kingdom might make sense of why all contributors of this anthology come from these two countries – or rather has been involved with the development of this debate either in the UK or in Finland.

The anthology at hand sums up some of the lines of discussion concerning practice-led research in an academic context. The discussion is not only constructed from diverse fields but also has different approaches to the theme. In this anthology, the field will be framed from two different directions. Four of the articles are written by artist- or designer-researchers who have finished their practice-led dissertation projects recently (Mäkelä, Summatavet, Turpeinen and Laakso in this volume). These articles will contribute to this anthology primarily through cases realised by the contributors' themselves (or, as in Laakso's case, by the author's colleagues). In some of these articles, the methodological or thematic discussions are developed further at a more general level. Three of the articles involve the broad debate around the topic. The authors of these articles have all earned degree in practice (*i.e.* they are a designer, painter and sculptor), but they are also involved in developing the research in the field of Art and Design (Biggs, Keinonen and Scrivener, and also Laakso in this volume). Through these articles, the structures, questions and problems of this novel field will be approached in different directions. Diverse suggestions will also be given as to how this approach should be developed. The broad purpose of this anthology is to seek and develop different connections between art and research.

The articles of this volume each form an independent entity. However, they have been subsequently organised in order to form a storyline. Having done so, we have imagined a reader who may change his or her stance and take different perspectives towards the art of research. We have designed a structure that will lead the reader: in this introduction we have described initially some of the currents characterising the field of discussion in practice-led research. The introduction is followed by Keinonen's conceptual exercise that opens the reader's mind for the potential to structure the concept of practice-led research. Next, the reported instances of different practice-led projects give shape to the possibilities for carrying out a practice-led research process. All the reported cases show that none of them follow exactly any of the models deduced by Keinonen; nevertheless, his models help the reader to position and compare the projects on a more abstract level. The last articles by Scrivener and Biggs wrap up the discussion by lifting the discussion onto a more abstract level. We believe that having had access to the particularities of specific case studies, the reader will be both willing and ready to apprehend the picture figured on a more schematic (Scrivener) and philosophical (Biggs) level.

Deducing the fields and actions

The discussion is opened by Turkka Keinonen's article that explores the ground. He takes a clarifying conceptual approach to the possible connections between art and research practices. In it, he reflects on the characteristics of the approved doctoral dissertations at the University of Art and Design Helsinki that include works of art and thus meet the notion of practice-led research.

Keinonen proposes that dividing the challenge of art meeting research into two main questions is likely to aid the discussion on the possible, interesting and appropriate patterns of academic pursuit within art and design institutions. Through his questions, he deduces what the possible models are for art and research interfacing and interacting within academic activity, and he then continues to evaluate which of the postulated models are the most promising from the perspective of the academic art and design community. The notions of art, research and activity encourage him to analyse two sets of fields and activities: firstly the field of research and the field of art, secondly the actions of art and the actions of research. The potential dynamics of these four dimensions lead to 8 models. Whereas two of these remain as mere theoretical options, the others are more likely to bear fruit. One characterises what is typically conceived of as purely academic enterprises in art history, and five more have already proven encouraging within the academic art and design community in terms of originality and having the ability to advance knowledge.

Keinonen's article prepares the ground for the following. The next three articles by Mäkelä, Turpeinen and Summatavet represent cases where a doctoral degree has been achieved through a research and production process in which a series of three exhibitions play an essential role. Although this structure is not an official requirement for an accepted research design, it has proven workable and effective. The subsequent exhibitions provide for anchoring points (Mäkelä in this volume), interplay (Turpeinen in this volume) and time for ideas to ripen (Summatavet in this volume).

Retroactive vision

Mäkelä's article represents one of the possibilities for framing practice-led research within the art university context. She discusses how the University of Art and Design Helsinki, unlike some other Art universities in Finland, has adopted a policy where all doctoral dissertations should meet the appropriate academic requirements. In addition to this, the project may include an art production. According to Keinonen (in this volume), Mäkelä's work exemplifies the possibility of how academic research can contribute to art. While this is one interpretation of her doctoral work, Mäkelä herself emphasises the role of art in advancing knowledge. Her research process follows a hermeneutic circle. In her artistic production, her learnedness in the field of women's studies encourages her to explore the representations of the so-called 'second sex'. In her scholarly approach, she thereafter positions her art work in a retrospective review. According to her, the series of three exhibitions form an anchoring practice. As a contribution to the field of practice-led research methods, she introduces what she calls the 'retroactive approach'.

Interplay of research and design in a cultural history museum

If a series of exhibitions is a device to halt the creative process for a retroactive vision, as in Mäkelä's research process, in Turpeinen's work, an exhibition itself is the object to be designed. Turpeinen positions her work in the context of cultural history museums. She draws attention to visual elements such as lighting, colour, materials, forms, spatial configurations and combinations of these. She argues that each of these plays an essential role in the composition of an exhibition. An object in a cultural history museum does not carry objective knowledge *per se*. Instead, she aims at placing importance upon experiential and interpretative knowledge in meaning construction that takes place in a context. In her doctoral process, exhibitions provide for a test place or laboratory in which she experiments with vitrines. Vitrines are chosen because they are common and visual but rarely addressed elements in exhibitions in the research of exhibitions. In addition, she interprets a vitrine as a metaphor of transparency which in turn is one of the requirements of academic research. Her contribution to the practice-led research is critical visuality that results from the interplay between reading, experiencing and making.

Designer as an ethnographer

Where Mäkelä has been inspired by the ideas of modern feminist theorists and Turpeinen experiments with museum spaces and vitrines, Summatavet draws on ethnographic fieldwork. As an artist who makes jewellery, she seeks to root her art work in tradition and to find themes in the living oral tradition in Estonia, her country of origin. In her work, too, one aspect giving structure to the doctoral process is a series of three exhibitions. What is original, however, is that an ethnographic fieldwork anchors and informs her art and creative process, which is presented in the three exhibitions. She claims that existing ethnographies do not sufficiently respond to questions concerning the autobiographical creative practices of members of traditional communities, nor is this necessary information available in the ethnographic archives. Yet these questions are highly important to an artist. Therefore, it is indispensable to immerse oneself in long-term contact with bearers of tradition instead of short-term fixing and preserving approaches. Summatavet argues that long-term fieldwork results in visual literacy: that is, learning to read the minute details and symbols in traditional arts and crafts. Ornaments play a leading role in Summatavet's doctoral process, both in the fieldwork as in her art work.

Imaginary vision

Mäkelä, Turpeinen and Summatavet describe art and research processes they have conducted themselves, whereas Laakso takes what he phrases 'a literary detour' which can be seen as a conceptual approach that aims at reinterpreting and clarifying some of the practices already shaping in the field of practice-led research. He quotes Blanchot and argues for an alternative approach where an artwork is not positioned as an accomplishment but instead has an imaginary centre that calls for unworking. The article opens this notion of unworking as an interruption or enabling plurality. Laakso also claims that understanding the idea of unworking could be one of the links that forms the common ground for acts of research and acts of art. In the approach proposed by Laakso, image is an agent or has agentive functions in the research process. He exemplifies and develops these arguments by translating Blanchot's ideas from literary theory to that of photographic art works. He ties the idea of unworking and imaginary centre to the projects of two contemporary Finnish photographers whose art works put into practice what he calls imaginary research. Critical visuality links Laakso's point to that of Turpeinen.

An academic research class in the field of art

The main body of articles in this anthology advance the discussion of practice-led research from the perspective of conducting such a project. Stephen Scrivener and Michael Biggs, however, direct the discussion towards a slightly different angle in the field. Their articles conclude the anthology by addressing issues that are especially relevant for the universities that offer academic degrees in the field of art.

Norms for practice-led research

Scrivener positions his input within the process of turning polytechnics into universities, a change that he observes from the UK perspective. As a result of that change, art education is expected to advance understanding by doing something that can be seen as research. Scrivener discusses some foundational differences between intellectual and creative cultures. One of the central features in science is that its practices are organised to advance understanding; this goal has a long history of institutionalisation and is constantly regulated by the academic institutions. Admittedly, the practices vary greatly between the natural sciences and those of the humanities. However, when it comes to art universities, institutionalised structures of advancing understanding are still in the process of being shaped, although, as he argues, there is no doubting that art culture has made special contributions to developing the field, leading to cultural changes and advancing understanding. This being the context, Scrivener contributes with his programme for educating a class of professionals in art universities. He frames a doctoral programme for contribution to the visual arts. This programme consists of eight steps or norms against which the contributions to the field can be evaluated and regulated. Scrivener's article lends itself to a reader who is intending to begin a practice-led research project, but it especially clearly provides devices for educators in art universities that guide evaluation of these transformational processes.

Experiential content indicated in aesthetic response

Practice-led research, as conceived in the context of the art of research, presupposes a practitioner. This practitioner acts as an agent who conducts research; moreover the object of this research is in part his or her own art practice. Biggs' article tackles a problem that the central position of a practitioner brings about: the role of experience. As he puts it, it is a problem of epistemic subjectivity that runs counter to the normal objective expectations of research. Yet, subjective experience and experiential content are highly valued in the art and design community. As a solution to this apparent difficulty, he proposes that the subjective experience of an aesthetic response is taken as an indicator of the presence of a quality called experiential content. This solution converts the problem of subjectivity into one of representation. The experience is cast not as presenting content but as an indicator of that content. This conceptual change invites and creates a need of research to provide transferable knowledge that can be communicated. Following Biggs' proposal leads to research questions that will always have the character of the question 'of what is this a representation?' Looking back to the preceding articles in this volume, the reader can detect that all the cases presented address this question in one way or the other. Biggs continues that an artefact does not provide an answer since it is indicator of the presence of something needing to be unpacked. Therefore, to take the step from practising art to practising practice-led research, the issue of communication and subjectivity should be dealt with in forms beyond the artefact. The role of the practice-led researcher is to extract the experiential context in a form that speaks to academe. As a conclusion, the conceptualisation of the act of research in art and design in the way proposed by Biggs substantially reduces the apparent differences between the sciences and the arts.

Acknowledgements

Like all books this anthology is not only the product of the authors but also of a broader community around us. We owe a great deal to people who have in one way or another contributed both to our thinking and to the very texts published on the previous and following pages. Especially, we wish to thank the School of Design at the University of Art and Design Helsinki that enabled Maarit Mäkelä to organise an international seminar under the heading “Combining art and design practices with research” from September 12–13, 2005. The idea of this anthology grew out of the presentations given and discussions started in that seminar where Professor Michael Biggs and Doctor Stephen Scrivener were the invited keynote speakers. Most of the authors in this volume gave as presentations the first versions of their now published articles. Moreover, the number of participants was higher than expected, a fact that indicated to us a definite need to continue this discussion. We acknowledge the participants of that seminar among the initiators and inspirers of this volume. Our special thanks go to Michael Biggs who actively commented on the articles and the introduction. His comments have pushed our thinking forward down the final straight to the finish line.

We wish to thank Professor Ilpo Koskinen and Professor Pekka Korvenmaa, both of whom read the manuscript and made valuable comments on the contents and organisation of the articles. In Pekka Korvenmaa, we also appreciate a poet who created the name of the book. We take it that “The Art of Research” catches nicely the activity of practice-led research that needs special skills and leads to special knowledge. We also express our gratitude to Damon Tringham for his valuable linguistic input. He not only checked the language of the articles but also now and then suggested formulations that catch more precisely the authors’ intentions. Without the University of Art and Design Helsinki Publisher, this process would not have resulted in a tangible book, for which graphic designer Cleo Bade did a wonderful

job. Last but not least, we acknowledge the artist-researchers (Christoffer Albrecht, Taneli Eskola, Sanna Kannisto, Petteri Ikonen and Jouko Pullinen) who agreed to have their works published as part of the present collection of The Art of Research.

Helsinki, November 20, 2006
Maarit Mäkelä and Sara Routarinne

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Connecting Different Practices

2

Turkka Keinonen

Fields and Acts of Art and Research

Figure: Petteri Ikonen, 2003, Everydays archeology (detail).

Introduction

The interaction between art and research has recently become a topical issue within art and design universities. This has been influenced by the new doctoral level programmes and degrees which these institutions began offering in the early 90s in the UK and Finland, a trend which has more recently been followed by several other countries, too. These programmes aim on the one hand at creating an alternative approach to academic research, which is built on the traditions of art and design. They would allow those students who have their BA and MA level degrees in these fields to further elaborate their skills and achieve higher academic merits and degrees based on what they have been studying, that is their art and design expertise (e.g. Durling et al. 2002, 7–13). On the other hand, many of the academic design institutions including the University of Art and Design Helsinki (UIAH) require also at least the most essential requirements associated with more traditional academic research to be fulfilled together with a high level of art contributions.

The models for composing these academic projects, which are often referred to as *practice-led research*, are not yet completely established. However, there are already sufficient examples for discussion of the phenomenon and its development instead of mere speculation using hypothetical models or referring to coincidental individual examples. The doctoral dissertation projects at UIAH, for instance, can be used as an example. Nine out of the 46 doctoral dissertations accepted at UIAH at the time of writing this essay (March 2006) include works of art and can thus be categorised as practice-led research. Among these, we have seen questionable theses which have contributed little while at the same time put the reputation and credibility of the institution, at least temporarily, at stake. We have also examples where high and exacting quality criteria have led to interesting results but long, laborious and demanding processes, which hardly meet the present efficiency and productivity criteria set on the universities. Obviously, the latter is not an academic problem as such, but causes headaches for those responsible for the practical running of the institution.

Even though it is obvious that the interfacing of art and research is as impossible, unnecessary and even harmful one might say to define as is the restriction of art and research with rigid definitions in general, some clarification and conceptual analysis of the emerging practices are worthwhile. In this chapter, it will be suggested that dividing the challenge of art meeting research into two main questions might help us take a step forward when discussing the possible, interesting and appropriate patterns of developing academic work within art and design institutions. These questions are: 1) which are the possible models of art and research interfacing and interacting within academic activity and 2) which of the models recognised are the ones that are the most promising and interesting for the academic art and design community? The answer to the first question is a prerequisite for answering the second. Below, there is a conceptual elaboration of the first one with links to the doctoral projects completed in UIAH during early 00s. In addition, discussion concerning the second question will be opened.

Fields and acts

The discussion assumes the existence of two distinct non-overlapping fields of activities namely the *Field of Art* (FA) and the *Field of Research* (FR). Both of the fields are characterised by a set of practices, values and institutions. These include, for instance, art exhibitions, professional unions of artists, art museums and galleries for the *Field of Art* (FA), and academic degrees, scientific journals, conferences and research funding agencies for the *Field of Research* (FR), to name a few. Detailed definition of these fields and their dynamics goes beyond the scope of this essay. Readers are trusted to share a common view about the institutional nature of research and art, though the vagueness and vulnerability of this approach is acknowledged. In practice, the fields (FA and FR) are neither completely distinct nor internally coherent either, but rather fragmented, dynamically changing and overlapping. This opinion is presented, for instance, by Stephen Scrivener elsewhere in this book (chapter 7) suggesting that the field of art includes the necessary transformational practices to ensure the development of the discipline. However, a theoretical ideal conception of the distinct fields is needed to simplify the structure of argumentation.

It is also assumed that an institutional approach to frame art and design might be more stable than ones focusing on the practices. For this discussion, the characterisations of the fields are assumed to be so strong that individual actions of art or research conflicting with the field have no more than incremental influence on the field itself and thus the fields can be regarded as stable. Obviously in the long run, influential violations of the boundaries will question our understanding about the nature of art and research; both in art and research this can be seen as one of the main goals for a practitioner – to change the paradigm.

In addition to the fields, there are individual actions, which are public gestures seen as relevant from the point of view of art or research. An action has two main attributes: the nature of the action and the location of the action. The nature of an action refers to the intrinsic properties of the action, that is to the correspondence of the substance of an action with the characteristic phenomena in a field. Thus, we can say that an *Action of Art* (AA) is an action that shares the key characteristics of the *Field of Art* (FA) and other *Actions of Art* while an *Action of Research* (AR) shares the characteristics of the *Field of Research* (FR) and other *Actions of Research*. The location of an action refers to the context where the action takes place. Physical and institutional environments as well as discussion forums are examples of what is referred to by ‘context’. The most typical and obvious case is that an

Action of Art (AA) takes place in the *Field of Art* (FA). This happens for instance when a member of the art community presents his or her paintings in an art gallery. Correspondingly, an *Action of Research* (AR) takes place in the *Field of Research* (FR) when a researcher employed by a university department presents a research paper in a scientific conference.

Classifying individual actions as being either actions of art or research is a necessary conceptualisation for the convenience of further analysis. An opposing view, that art and research are inseparable and in several respects identical activities, is well discussed by Laakso (chapter 6) and is also covered in other chapters of this book. A wider historical and philosophical review of visual arts and research is provided in Finnish by Siukonen (2002).

Interfacing practices

Now, being equipped with the four concepts FA, FR, AA and AR we can start outlining the possible models through which art and research may interact. In the following, eight different relationships are presented. They are not an exclusive list of the possible combinations, but a subset with some assumed interest.

1) Research interpreting art. There can be an Action of Research AR in the Field of Research FR, the object of which is an Action of Art AA in the Field of Art FA. In this case a researcher, or a team, conducts a research project in a research context concerning a phenomenon on the Field of Art. The activity has its foundations in research and aims primarily at contributing to research. An obvious practical example of these actions is a study about the history of art and design. This study does not compromise, when done appropriately, any of the established research criteria, but deals with art by explaining – or at least by recognising – phenomena within the Field of Art. No merits regarding the criteria set by the art community are expected. Let us call this activity *Research interpreting art* (Fig. 1).

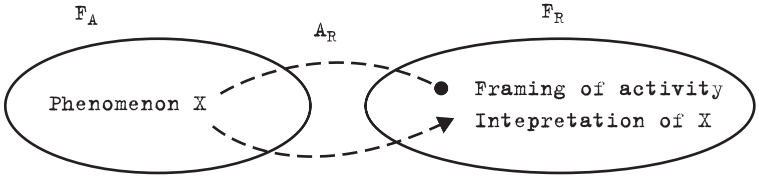


Figure 1. Research interpreting art.

Research interpreting art is a well established practice strongly related to the Field of Research. Research characteristically addresses issues outside of its own field, often having some influence on the research object or the way of explaining it. The studies have, however, very seldom a noticeable confusing effect on how the activity of research as such is understood. The same obviously applies when the topic of research is art or design. A study on naval history does not make the researcher a navigator; a study on art history does not make the researcher an artist.

Research interpreting art is not considered to be a key interest in the discussion about the emerging field of practice-led research. If it was, it would be unfruitfully close to renaming existing practices. However, it indisputably is something on which the research in art and design universities is historically based. For example, many of the pioneering doctoral dissertations at UIAH have been historical studies about design and media (e.g. Priha 1991, Hovi 1991, Wiberg 1996).

2) Art interpreting research. *Art interpreting research* is a mirroring approach to that above. There is an Action of Art AA in the Field of Art FA, the topic of which is an Action of Research AR in the Field of Research FR. In this case, an artist creates a work of art about a phenomenon that takes place in the Field of Research. The activity is framed based on art-driven criteria, it is primarily aimed at an art audience and is interpreted as a work of art. An example of art interpreting research is science fiction literature and films – the discussion about the relationship of art and entertainment is skipped – which create fantasies utilising and further elaborating the results of research and technical development. Specifically science fiction novels and movies deal with research and technical development by creating visionary projections of the future and outlining possible consequences. They create inspiring utopias, such as Jules Verne's novels, and scary scenarios, such as George Orwell's 1984 or Stanley Kubrick's Space Odyssey 2001. Examples closer to the visual arts include the bioart experiments with living organisms or inspired by bio sciences (e.g. Lehtinen 2004; Eerikäinen 2006). All these works of art can question the values and ethics of scientific development and stimulate discussion, but still it can probably be agreed upon that the contribution can be primarily regarded as artistic rather than scientific (Fig. 2).

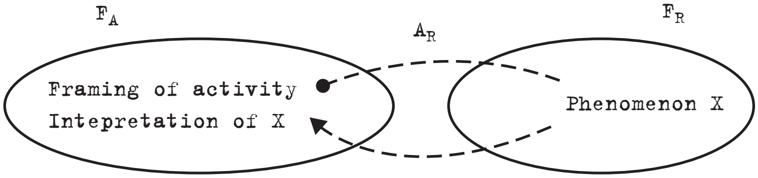


Figure 2. Art interpreting research.

3) Art placed in a research context. The model of fields and actions allows interpretations in which an Action of Art AA is positioned in the Field of Research FR. In this case, art is presented, discussed and evaluated in a research context utilising research criteria (See Fig. 3 below).

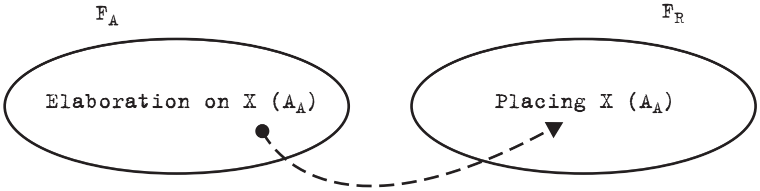


Figure 3. Art placed in a research context.

An example of this was the doctoral dissertation of Riitta Nelimarkka (2001), which passed the academic doctoral qualification with very limited research merits. The thesis was an experiment of art done in a research context. The devastatingly painful process for the doctoral candidate and the faculty, unfavourable publicity and bitter discussion around the experiment indicated the difficulties involved in the crossing over. The episode was discussed extensively in Finland (e.g. *Arttu!* 1/2001; Siukonen 2002, 56–57) and Nelimarkka herself also reflected upon the episode profoundly in her publication *Defence Comedy: The Battle for a Hat* (Nelimarkka 2003). Other theses more fluently defended at UIAH have also included elements of art presented in the academic forum. However, they have had also sufficient research merits to moderate the tension of evaluating art on the academic forum, *i.e.* in the Field of Research. In some cases, the art part of the theses has essentially been neglected in the evaluation.

It is necessary to notice that the presented interpretation regards a doctoral defence at UIAH as belonging to the Field of Research. This interpretation, though possibly open to question, is necessary and justified since otherwise Nelimarkka's defence would have been an Act of Art on the Field of Art without research links, and would have hardly made an impression in the press or in the university itself either.

While *Art placed into research context* is not enough to constitute a thesis by UIAH standards, it is a necessary precondition. Without art presented in the defence, theses can be approved, but not classified as practice-led. That said, in other art universities in Finland (*i.e.* in the Theatre Academy, the Sibelius Academy and the Academy of Fine Arts), presenting art in an academic context without traditional research merits is an approved practice for achieving academic degrees. Internationally the situation is similar: the qualifications do not differ only from a country to country, but also nationally between different art universities (Durling *et al.* 2002, 8).

4) Research placed in an art context. Corresponding to art positioned in a research context, we can imagine an Act of Research AR being presented in the Field of Art FA. An example of this might be philosophical discussions presented as a novel, *e.g.* Umberto Echo's novels, and thus positioned in fictive literature. Examples within the art and design discipline include, for instance, research-based Master's theses which have been presented in Master of Arts (MoA) student exhibitions at UIAH as posters. The MoA exhibitions clearly relate to art and design conventions – in spite of simultaneously containing academic references – with their review practices, opening invitations and ceremonies, locations, exhibition architectures and press responses on culture pages. (See Fig. 4 below.)

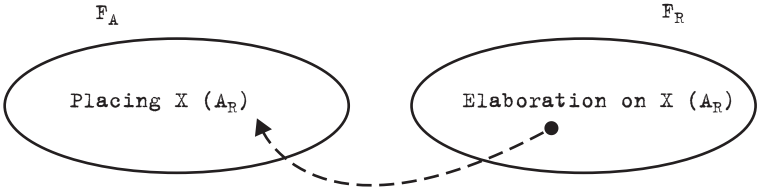


Figure 4. Research placed in an art context.

5) Art contributing to research. Art contributing to research refers to a process where Actions of Research AR in the Field of Research FR are preceded and motivated by an Action(s) of Art AA in the Field of Art FA. A work or action having its foundations in the Field of Art FA continues on and leads to contributions in the Field of Research FR. The chain of activities has started in the Field of Art, but at some stage the process crosses over to the Field of Research.

An example of the *Art contributing to research* kind of link between art practice and research is UIAH doctoral student Tiina Härkäsalmi's (2002) project. She started artistic experimentations with natural fibres – flax and hemp, but as a side product of her textile art she found a microbiological technique for cottoning flax. After recognition of the phenomenon, the work continued as microbiological research for developing, and creating a product from, the cottoning technique. Art lit a spark for innovation that perhaps other too-narrowly-focused research projects never noticed. Once the spark was lit, the rigorous process of natural science was necessary to test and develop the technique.

In Härkäsalmi's project, the artist herself continued to be heavily involved even after the leap to the research mode of operation. Another kind of example where there are no personal level links between art-based inspiration and research work utilising the contribution is provided by technical research in hi-tech industry. Nokia executives, including Chief Technical Officer Yrjö Neuvo, have recently admitted that the magical gadgets in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels have inspired some research and development work in the company (Potter magic charms Nokia chief, 2003). For a pictorial representation, see Figure 5 below.

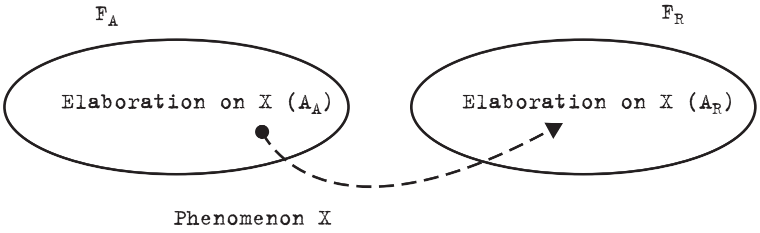


Figure 5. Art contributing to research.

6) Research contributing to art. Research contributing to art follows the same pattern of crossing over from one field to another as Art contributing to research does, but the process is reversed. It refers to a process where Actions of Art AA in the Field of Art FA are preceded and motivated by an Action(s) of Research AR in the Field of Research FR. In these cases, research work or its results influence art by perhaps inspiring interpretations. In certain parts of

Maarit Mäkelä's doctoral thesis (2003), for instance, her immersion into contemporary feminist theory in the Field of Research was not interpreted, at least not primarily, as another act of research, but as works of art. Mäkelä herself (chapter 3), however, prefers to underline the opposite process. The process described here is pictured in Figure 6 below.

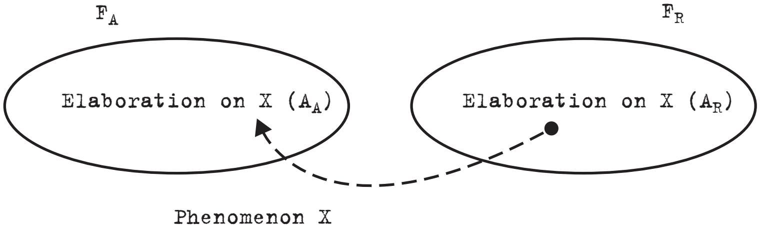
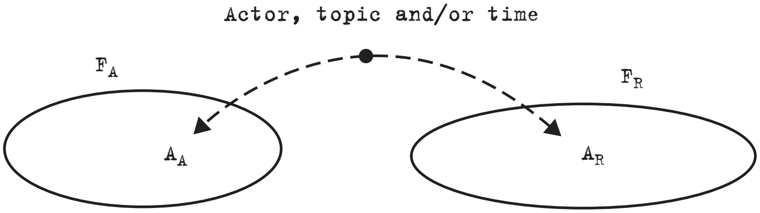


Figure 6. Research contributing to art.

Compared to the previous processes, *Art contributing to research* and *Research contributing to art* are essentially more demanding, because elaboration and contribution is required in both fields instead of just visiting or exposing the results.

7) The Common denominator. The models linking art and research above were based on the relationships between four concepts FA, FR, AA and AR. An obvious and necessary addition to this model is to consider a fifth element. This element would take the role of linking an Act of Art in the Field of Art to an Act of Research in the Field of Research. With a fifth element, the FA and AA do not have to have any direct link with FR and AR as was considered necessary above. They can be both completely meaningful contributions in their own fields without any necessity or obligation to refer directly to each other. The link may be, for instance, a shared topic or a shared actor (See Fig. 7).

Figure 7. The Common denominator.



Petteri Ikonen's doctoral thesis (2004) can be presented as an example of these kinds of projects. Ikonen exhibited jewellery designs – pieces of art – in three instances and wrote a study about the philosophical foundations and concepts around jewellery art. The substance of the research and the exhibitions was relatively vaguely linked. At least it is fair to say that both were interpretable without reference to the other. Petteri Ikonen's person, the topic of jewellery art and the timing of both parts of the dissertation were the strongest links between the art and research.

Discussion at UIAH about practice-led research has expected the same person to be involved in both of the fields. Perhaps the tight ties to doctoral dissertations have biased the development of practice-led research in this respect. That is, with theses the independent performance of a candidate is an important issue and justifies the requirement for the same person being able to paint and write. In a wider perspective, a natural team for conducting practice-led research would probably consist of experts with different repertoires of skills, some probably being more familiar with analysis than inspiration-driven work, and vice versa. As cross disciplinary team work is the standard research practice in most other fields of research and several big art projects as well, it is actually rather surprising that practice-led research and the discussion around it has been so individual centred.

8) Overlapping fields. The fields of art FA and research FR were above defined as distinct. However, it was not required that there could not be a third field, FX, which would overlap with both of them. This field would have its own practices, methods and values that at least partly are shared with both art and research. Actions taking place in the field AX could be relatively meaningfully seen at the same time as Acts of Art in the Field of Art and Acts of Research in the Field of Research. Most probably this FX field would be characterised by values that are common both in art and research, such as creativity, expertise and novelty. It would also need institutions and organisations to define it and maintain practices typical to the field (Fig. 8)

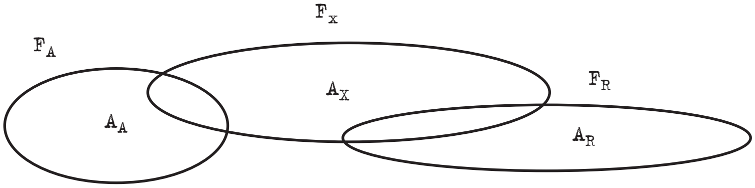


Figure 8. Overlapping fields.

Design, with some stretching of the fields of art and research, can be seen as a potential candidate for such a bridging third field, FX. The understanding of design as a transmitting space between different fields, e.g. art and research, has been already raised in several discussions where design has been understood as a disciplined research. In the 1960s, Herbert Simon proposed the idea of “the science of design” which could enable intellectual communication across the arts, sciences and technology. This interdisciplinary field could be accessible to everyone involved in creating the artificial world (Simon 1996, 111–114, 134–138; Cross 2001, 54, Mäkelä 2005). As seen in the discussion above, UIAH and actors working and studying there indeed were seen as representatives of both of the fields. The term “applied” has been used to moderate design sufficiently to allow for linking it with art and research. Design has been called – and the more art-and-craft oriented branches of it still are, though seen now as perhaps a bit old fashioned – applied art. Another interpretation of design, especially design for industry, prefers to see it as applied research interpreting technical, social and other research results for innovation processes in and for the industry in question. Thus, it can be said that an act of design AD in the field of design FD can be seen as overlapping with art and research simultaneously.

However, simply presenting working in the field of design as the answer to the present challenge of defining academic practices with reference to art and research combined would benefit no-one. Instead of regarding design as a unifying practice, it is probably more fair to say that design is split into practices and values which either refer to research or art rather than to both – frequently also to much more practical and utilitarian values than either of those. The fields of research and art can be seen as co-existing in a design institution such as UIAH.

The practice-led research projects at UIAH have not aimed at following the 'applied route'. On the contrary, they have tried to link the extremes. Mäkelä's clay was not formed to become nice tableware, nor were Ikonen's jewellery meant to be worn. The practice in these theses aimed at art with capital A, to be exhibited in art galleries. The research didn't build on practical, technical or commercial models either. Theories that are easy to apply for explaining and improving visual design were not used. No, the discussions rested upon rather conceptual philosophical sources. If there is a practical field overlapping the Fields of Art and Research – perhaps not so far away from where creative visual design, money and technology meet, this is not the place which practice-led research projects, as we have understood them, want to map.

Combinations

Some of the doctoral dissertations presented at UIAH have been briefly presented as examples illuminating the message for those whose are familiar with the projects. Many of them have been guided by the default process of practice-led theses at UIAH. This process outlined by the research board of the university assumes the candidate presents written academic research which can include an art production, a series of art productions or a product development process. If there is a production element, it has to be in a *dialogical relationship* with the written academic research. (Instructions for the examination of a doctoral dissertation 2006.) The exact number is not a strict requirement, but a model of three exhibitions has often been followed in practice – as can be seen in several examples of the works discussed in this anthology (e.g. Mäkelä 2003, Ikonen 2004, Summatavet 2005, Turpeinen 2005). The default process, if analysed with the concepts presented above, seems to be rather demanding. Interpreting art through research (1) or research through art (2) are not yet enough, but by referring to the dialogue, the process requires the research to contribute to the art (6) and it also implies the requirement of the art to affect the research (5). Uni-directional impact can hardly be called dialogue. The contributions are expected to create a succession of developed arguments and deepened insight that is visible in the art and explained in writing. Mäkelä (chapter 3) explains this kind of process with the idea of the hermeneutic circle of increased understanding. Those of us who are more familiar with product development than hermeneutics might associate with this a model of iterative development, where design starts with initial rough proposals that will be elaborated based on the increased knowledge that the early models have helped the team to acquire through formal evaluation or informal reflection. Later, the work of art has to be presented for defence in an academic forum (3) and everything presented has to be linked by common originators – the candidate, a common topic and a matching schedule (7).

Students following the default dissertation process make a courageous attempt to create a third way between art and research without remaining on the level of renaming and glorifying existing practices. The mutual contributions of research and art when properly documented build on the tradition of problem solving in design, enable cumulative gathering of knowledge and provide an original enough means for academic merits in art and design. However, creating a constructive dialogue between art and research together with producing high quality work on both of the forums is extremely challenging, especially when the doctoral candidates are supposed to accomplish this alone and when they are expected to avoid the shortcut through applied art and research.

Perhaps loosening the requirement concerning the number of links between art and research would allow us to strengthen the links of those respects that remain. Perhaps, too, aiming at excellent art and research simultaneously is not needed. Possibly something more practical done in teams might qualify. Maybe this could also be done without undermining the speciality of practice led-research.

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Fields and Acts of Art and Research

3

Maarit Mäkelä

Framing (a) Practice-led Research Project

Figure: Maarit Mäkelä, 1997, Mirror (detail), serigraphy on Finnish earthenware.

In 1995, I had just graduated as a Master of Arts and my research plan for a Doctor's degree had recently been accepted. I was sitting in the big classroom in the attic of the University of Art and Design in Helsinki with several (other) utopians who, like me, had a dream about interaction between the fields of art and research. The department of photography, being the home base for research projects that sought new ways of doing research, had organised a discussion on this topical issue. The room in the attic was packed not only with fresh doctoral students, planning their studies, but also with their teachers and other members of staff, who were (all) drafting the directions that future research could take.

There was an almost palpable feeling of great enthusiasm. The hope of creating a completely new tradition of research and of making it part of the research then recently started at the University of Art and Design was hovering in the air. An option for Doctoral research projects that could contain productions by the researcher him or herself – such as photographs, paintings or ceramic artefacts – had been opened a few years before, in 1992. Guidelines for structuring such projects, and even for their contents, were loose. We were now discussing these frames, nearly non-existent from the researcher's point of view, and the new research tradition based on them. For instance, how should one start such a doctoral research project?

To open the discussion, a student who had just finished a similar doctoral research process had been invited to talk about it. She had graduated from the Sibelius Academy, the only music university in Finland, where the opportunity to pursue artistic doctoral theses had already existed for a decade. There, a doctoral thesis can contain independent artistic parts. These can be public performances, published recordings or compositions. It is only required that the separate parts form a harmonic whole during the research process.[1] In addition to this, the doctoral student writes a text about the work. The instrument of our guest was the accordion. The artistic part of the thesis was a series of concerts with the accordion as the main instrument. We listened to excerpts of the concerts on tape, and could browse through the textual part of the thesis (Kymäläinen 1994). Most of it contained the scores for pieces of music written for the accordion that the artist-researcher had sampled from different sources.

After her presentation, a lively discussion sprung up about whether such a serial structure could also be used in the new doctoral studies at the University of Art and Design. The study requirements, however, had one central difference: in the Sibelius Academy, the written part of the thesis does not need to fulfil the formal academic requirements, whereas in the University of Art and Design, it does. We could therefore follow the same basic structure, but as far as the written element was concerned, we should find our own way.

Artistic productions as a part of doctoral dissertations

The first doctoral dissertation that contained an artistic production was completed at the University of Arts and Design Helsinki in 1998.[2] Sub-

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[1] By the turn of the millennium, doctoral theses that contain artistic productions or are based on them had become possible in all artistic universities in Finland: the Sibelius Academy, the University of Art and Design, the Theatre Academy of Finland, and the Academy of Fine Arts. An overview of the study requirements of art universities and of the development in these early years can be found in Ryynänen (1999). A doctoral degree is also abailable at the Faculty of Arts in the University of Lapland.

[2] This is the dissertation of Taneli Eskola. It consists both of the doctoral dissertation “Water Lilies and Wings of Steel: Interpreting change in the photographic imaging of Aulanko park” (Eskola 1997a) and a book that presents photographs related to the research process, taken by the author (Eskola 1997b).

sequently, the idea of displayed artefacts[3] created during the research process as a series of exhibitions has been realised in several doctoral dissertations (*e.g.* Mäkelä 2003; Pullinen 2003; Ikonen 2004; Summatavet 2005 and Turpeinen 2005). Although this practice of presenting artefacts that result from artistic practices has proved to be a useful tool, it is only one way of doing such research. Frequently, the number of exhibitions included in the doctoral theses has been three. Having three exhibitions seems to have become standard practice as it appears to be a sufficiently long process to make it possible to investigate the research question profoundly enough in a particular field of action.

My own doctoral research project, which aims at building a dialogue between art and research, is related to the discussion referred above. I completed my doctoral dissertation in 2003. The supporting structure of my dissertation is a visual creation process documented by exhibitions. A series of three exhibitions was held in Helsinki at the Laterna Magica art gallery in 1996, 1997, and 2000. The research part of the dissertation can be considered as a retrospective review of the work process and of the ceramic objects created during the process; a contextualisation of actions and a closer examination of the meanings related to the work process that happens after the creative work process has already ended. The research part thus functions as a forum for the process of meaning-producing, and as an active and innovative event, where the visual creative process and the artefacts created during it are conceptualised and put into words.

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[3] In this context, artefact refers to – broadly speaking – all objects created by human culture. An artefact can thus be a concrete object, such as a painting, a photograph or a design object, or an immaterial work such as a composition or a dance performance. This is the meaning that has been used in the research of art and design (e.g. Biggs 2003).

[4] Ann Swidler, a sociologist interested in cultural structures, introduces the idea of a hierarchic structure to the field of action and suggests that certain practices anchor other forms of practice and discourse. According to Swidler, these 'anchoring practices' play a key role in reproducing larger systems of discourse and practice (Swidler 2001, 90).

This article describes in detail the structure of my doctoral dissertation, which includes three exhibitions, and the importance of the series of exhibitions for the structure of the doctoral research process. Such a form of doctoral research process that is closely related to artistic practice seems to support the progress of the whole research process in a natural way. Later, I will describe in more detail the circular form of my doctoral dissertation, which is based on a dialogue between artistic and theoretic practices. This circular form is repeated three times during the doctoral research process as the research process includes three periods of artistic practice. Each period culminates in an exhibition of the artefacts created during such artistic practice. After each artistic work period, a research period occurred, during which the creative artistic work process and the created artefacts were reviewed in a research context.

For me, presenting the artistic practice that my research includes as a series of three exhibitions acts as an anchoring practice;[4] meanings are anchored to artefacts and can subsequently be interpreted as central information sources of the research. The series of three exhibitions thus acts as the anchoring practice for the research; it supports the separate work periods in the fields of art and research and binds them to the research. This circularly proceeding whole that consists of wider work processes is thus comparable to a hermeneutic circle, which not only unfolds the progress of the research process but also creates a dialogue between two separate fields: art and research.

In this article, I situate my doctoral dissertation in the field of women's studies and present the concept of situated knowledge proposed by woman / female researchers. Subsequently, I describe the hermeneutic circle as an anchoring practice that enables a dialogue between the fields of art and research. In conclusion, I outline a retroactive approach, *i.e.* a method that is descendent from the structure of my doctoral thesis and that can be used to review artistic work process in the research context after the work process involving artistic action has already ended.

Situated knowledge

In my doctoral dissertation, "Memories on clay: representations of subjective creation process and gender" (Mäkelä 2003), I use women's studies as a wider theoretical basis.[5] In my research based on artistic practice, I examine how the idea of radical differences of gender and femaleness as the second sex can be taken into account during artistic action that produces visual representations.[6] As an artist-researcher who has entered the artistic research process, I examine the potential of gender-aware art, in my case ceramic art, to change the prevailing representations of femininity.

By the term "politics of situatedness", feminist researchers refer to the idea that the process of theoretic thought is not abstract, universal, objective, nor separable from its context or from the researcher. Several feminist researchers consider thinking to be related to the randomness of personal experience, and therefore to be always only partial (Koli 1996, 27; Stanley & Wise 1993, 135–145). Thus partial viewpoints, and acknowledging them, are seen as integral to the process that produces knowledge. According to the American science historian, Donna Haraway, feminist objectivity is socially situated and produces knowledge from a specific speaker position (Haraway 1991, 188). The most important point is not to see the knowing and researching subject as an external observer, but as a subject who is conscious of his or her situatedness, history, and discursive nature. The knowing subject thus becomes not only participatory, but also mobile and embodied.

Teresa de Lauretis (1984), the central theoretician in post-feminist discussions, considers experience the area where continuous negotiations are held over the relationship of the external (social) and internal (psychic) world. Subjectivity, or self, is constructed from the personal experiences of an individual. The subject is formed during a never-ending process where social becomes subjective, public becomes personal, general becomes private, discourse becomes lived and experienced. According to de Lauretis, it is not a question of women "with experiences", but of femininity constructed by and through experiences. (*Ibid.* 159, 182.)

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[5] In my thesis, I use women's studies as an umbrella term that encompasses not only feminist research but also gender research and equality research. This is in line with the general usage of the term women's studies in Finland (Rantalaiho et al. 2002, 9).

[6] For example, the French psychoanalyst and central theorist of gender difference, Luce Irigaray, considers the question of gender difference the major question of our time. She suggests that the relationship between woman and man should be reconsidered from this viewpoint. Irigaray's starting point is that because there are two different types of human bodies, there must also be at least two different trajectories related to these different types of bodies in the human development. (Irigaray 1977.) However, the psychoanalytic theory admits to only one trajectory that is based on the development of a young boy. According to Irigaray, this creates a logic of sameness, which rejects the differences between men and women. This thinking in turn supports the patriarchal order, which is manifested as hierarchic power structures and male power over women in gender roles. Female sexuality is thus always compared with male sexuality, and because of the missing penis, it is always reduced to absence, deficiency, and incompleteness. (Moi 1985, 132–134.)

This femininity that is implicit in the process is also drawn and written on my clay tiles during the research process.[7] Representations of femininity can thus be read from the clay tiles – representations of femininity that are based on the personal experience of a female artist. By using the term representation,[8] I underline the importance of the visual work process and artistic action in my research: creating images not only produces new images but also places these images in a context. According to Griselda Pollock (1988), pioneer of feminist art history, representation bears the wider meaning of analysing something or some phenomenon, giving it meaning, and making it understandable in relation to other representations. It emphasises the meaning-producing nature of saying, presenting, thinking, and knowing. (*Ibid.* 6.)

The starting point of my doctoral research is to consider personal experience, and the subject defined and formed through it, as an integral part of the process of producing knowledge. At the centre of this research, you find a female artist who creates ceramic representations of femininity.[9] In the following sections, I will outline the place and meaning of artistic action in my research process.

The research process as a hermeneutic circle

By a hermeneutic approach in my research, I mean a general methodology that has helped me to follow the progress of the research process and to interpret and understand the artefacts of human culture that were created during this process. It is a comprehensive method of thinking and working based on creativity and (self-)criticism that has allowed me to build a dialogue between the practices of art and research in my research process. Thus, a hermeneutic circle operates as a framework for my research within which the artist-researcher carries on the research process.

The thoughts central to my research have been derived from the most important representative of philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer specialises in the contemplation of the general principles of understanding, interpretation, and meaning-giving. In Gadamer's thinking, understanding means primarily the understanding of a particular issue under consideration (Gadamer 2004, 36). As one of the first representatives of a new research approach, I feel

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7 Clay is a material that is converted to ceramics when it is fired. When clay is fired, the crystal water contained in clay particles evaporates and the clay becomes its final, solid form. When speaking about clay, I refer to the material that is a part of the creative work process and on which I draft moving and changing meanings. When speaking about ceramics, I refer to the complete works of art, on which certain meanings have fastened when the clay was fired: the moving and changing meanings drafted on the clay have, in a way, been halted and captured on ceramics by using heat.

8 Stuart Hall, an art historian who has contemplated postmodernism, defines representation as meaning-producing by using language. Meaning is produced both within and via different representative structures that are called "languages" for reasons of convenience. By "languages", Hall (1997) refers not only to a system of writing or speaking a particular language but also to other systems that bear and express meaning. Therefore, visual images produced by using different methods – manually, mechanically, electronically, digitally, or perhaps by using ceramics – can also be considered "languages". Hall links representation directly to practice. According to him, meaning is produced through practice: as a 'work', a presentation. Thus, it is constructed through meaning-producing processes. (Ibid. 18–19, 28.)

9 During my research process I have worked with a previously-existing collection of female images: either culturally embedded pictures of woman, or photos taken from my own family album. I have used the silk screen technique (figure 1) and, in the most recent work, video technology (figure 3) to transform the images on a ceramic surface and copy them on a number of clay tiles. During this process, the familiar prints radically change their shape, although the main themes still remain recognisable. These images bring their cultural meaning into the new ceramic pictures: Marilyn in her corporality and Madonna in her saintliness.

that this Gadamerian basic question is an integral part of my research task. As an artist-researcher, I must understand the ontology of my own research process and its relationship with knowledge, or rather with issues of epistemology.

In hermeneutics, it can be considered that phenomena occur and the studied material are digested, understood, and interpreted during a process that proceeds in a spiral. A hermeneutic circle has been described as a symbol of the spiral form of information. Accordingly, the information is taken to move ahead, returning to the starting point over again, but the information does not return as it was, it has reached a 'higher level'. The circular form of the information is at the same time necessary and apparent. It is necessary to form a structure for the way of thinking, so that one can better understand what one is doing, whereas it is apparent in the fact that it does not guarantee an increase in the understanding as such. The history of affect is a circle of interpretations following one another. The continuity of the interpretations is secured when the interpretative subject adopts the previous interpretations as her prior understanding. The historical reality consists of the interpretative glances that one's own reality makes on its past. Therefore, historical reality is always open, never finally completed. (Töttö 1982, 172–179.)

Prior understanding has been considered an essential precondition for understanding during this circle of interpretation. In my doctoral research, prior understanding is primarily based on the artistic practice of the researcher. As an artist-researcher, I would not have been able to produce the artefacts that are essential for the research process – the ceramic representations of femininity – without my prior activity as an artist who works on female imagery in an area situated between ceramic and visual art. As an artist doing research, my prior understanding thus includes certain previously learned skills and actions. In my case, these skills and actions are related to aesthetic thought, visual expression, and hands-on work on clay.

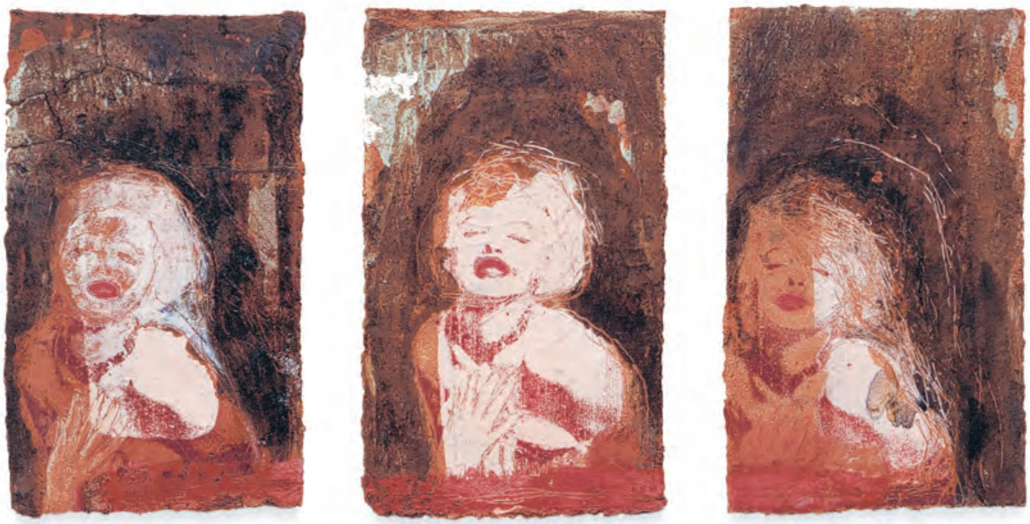

Figure 1. Maarit Mäkelä, 1996, Mirrorplay (detail), work from exhibition I, serigraphy on Finnish earhenware. Photo: Rauno Träskelin.

Some of the skills related to hands-on experience on creating art are by nature unarticulated, so-called 'tacit knowledge'.[10] The research is thus based on the assumption that competent practitioners usually know more than they can say. They exhibit a kind of knowing-in-practice, which is mostly tacit. For example, Schön's core idea is that, starting with actual performance, it is possible to construct and test these kinds of models of knowing (Schön 1991, viii). It is obvious that several researchers at the University of Art and Design, who have first acquired professional skills in a particular field of industrial art – such as ceramics, jewellery, or fashion design – and only then taken up research, share this view (for example, Mäkelä 2003; Ikonen 2004; Nuutinen 2004).

The dialogue between art and research

The hermeneutic circle described in the previous section was realised in my research on the borderline between two fields, art and research. During this dialectic process, I burrowed ever deeper into the central theme of my research – femininity – by developing and examining the representations of femininity that I produced during the research process. This happened especially in relation to ideas of gender as a continuing process of produced representations that have sprung up in the field of post-feminist research. During my research process, I both produced personal representations of femininity and placed these representations in context. Thereby, I learnt to situate my own female images within cultural (female) imagery and to understand the meaning of the produced images as a practice of representation that on the one hand deconstructs this imagery and on the other hand reconstructs it.

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[10] Here I refer to the idea by the Hungarian Michael Polanyi, who originally practiced medical research, of something that we know but that we cannot express precisely or put into words (Polanyi 1969). The most important example that Polanyi gives is riding a bicycle. The physics of riding a bicycle is complex. However, we learn to ride a bicycle even though we do not understand the physical principles behind it.

The figure below (figure 2) illustrates how the research process proceeds as a dialogue between the fields of art and research. The research process proceeds spirally; the arrow indicates both the progress of the process and an increase in understanding. From the point of view of my argumentation, it is relevant that the process begins with hands-on actions – in my case, with creating images from clay and arranging the first exhibition. Only by examining this artistic process that has already ended can I begin a dialogue with the research literature and ideas that explain and relate to the process. I have selected this dialogue which aims for interaction between the fields of art and research as the central method of my doctoral research and named it the 'retro-

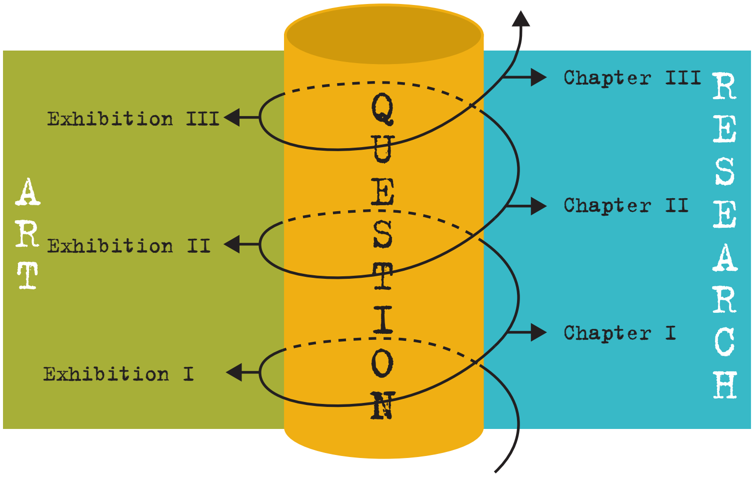

Figure 2. Practice-led research dialogue.

active approach'. I describe the building blocks of retroactive research in more detail in the following section of this article.

One of the primary functions of hermeneutics is to study how understanding occurs in a dialogue and what are the preconditions for it to occur. Thus, any symbolic entities – existing texts, as well as different visual representations – can act as the starting point for a hermeneutic dialogue. For example, in his doctoral thesis, the graphic artist-researcher, Jouko Pullinen, uses a hermeneutic framework while he contemplates the dialectics of the proofs that he produced during his research process with respect to some of the most important works by Albrecht Dürer. His starting point is the idea that an artist can be seen as a practitioner of hermeneutics who studies culture (Pullinen 2003).[11]

As my doctoral research proceeds, the dialogue between art and research becomes the structure that carries the whole doctoral research process. In my research process, the dialogue is located in an area between my art and feminist research. Turkka Keinonen (this volume) reads my research as a process in which research creates art. His interpretation has its obvious merits, especially in respect to the latter parts of the process, even though I personally mostly interpret my research process from the opposite direction.

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[11] In the context of hermeneutics, Jouko Pullinen refers to the Greek origin of the verb 'hermeneuo', which means expressing and explaining as well as making something understood (Pullinen 2003, 34). Gadamer (2005) attaches several layers of contemplation to the word hermeneutics. According to him, it refers to a practical skill: the skill of preaching, explanation, and interpretation. This includes and is based upon the skill of understanding, because the skill of understanding is always needed when the meaning of something is not perfectly obvious and unambiguous. The word also refers to the messenger of gods in Greek mythology, Hermes, whose task it was to announce the messages of the gods to humans. Often this task involved interpretation, since it was Hermes' task to make understandable by all what was presented in a strange or complex way. (For more information, see Gadamer 2005, 40–42.)

The retroactive approach as a research method

The framework for my research is thus a research process reducible to the form of a hermeneutic circle consisting of three exhibitions and the retroactive approach to these exhibitions. This framework seems to offer suitable borders within which – or against which – the contemplation of the research problem within a suitable research context becomes not only possible but also sufficiently profound. I thus wish to participate in – as well as to offer a concrete proposal to – the methodologically-orientated discussion about how to structure a research process that is based on artistic practice.

In my research (Mäkelä 2003), the structure of the written part of the doctoral thesis follows the structure of the three exhibitions. The doctoral thesis thus contains three main chapters, each of which has one of the three exhibitions or their central themes as its starting point. The three main chapters of the doctoral thesis can be seen as brief examination at these exhibitions. Each exhibition forms a spatial entity in which a specific order reigns. In the chapters, the themes of the exhibitions are represented in relation with the works of art, the exhibition space, and the other exhibitions in the series. Even though the main chapters can each be considered an independent unit, they do form a thematically and chronologically proceeding whole – a narrative of the creative process that was the starting point for the doctoral thesis. *(Ibid.* 38.)

As I have previously stated, at the turn of the millennium the personal experiences of the researcher were given more and more importance as a part of the research. This seems to be related to the idea of the crucial importance of the effect that the personality and situatedness of the researcher has on the research. Attempts at situated research have, for their part, led to several self-reflective research projects; to researchers using their own experience and feelings as a part of their own research. (Ellis & Bochner 2000.) [12]

I have undertaken to build a bridge between art and research by following certain routes that have entered my own experience as a female artist and researcher. I have grasped my experience as a Finnish female ceramic artist and a female artist practising in the field of visual art. By writing about my own experiences, I have made visible, in writing, the reality of a ceramic artist.

In my written thesis (Mäkelä 2003), I reference several written sources to direct and form three different viewpoints on the artistic part of the research and on the artefacts created during the artistic work process. The chosen three viewpoints become concrete in the three main chapters of my doctoral thesis. I have written the main chapters only after the visual work process has ended, giving a retrospective glance at my artistic work process as an artist-researcher and placing my actions into the context of feminist theories. The speaker in my thesis is therefore the artist-researcher, who is reviewing her intuitive work process in retrospect. To support her during this review, the artist-researcher uses her own experience recorded in a work diary during the work process and the artefacts created during the process.

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[12] Such research projects have been called, for example, personal narrative, ethnography, and ethical autobiography. A common denominator for these projects is collecting information and making it visible by using certain strategies. The strategies used include systematic sociological introspection, narrative research, and different experimental biographical methods and analyses. During recent years, these research conventions have started to be grouped together as a separate research trend called autoethnography. (Ellis & Bochner 2000, 739–740.) In addition to female researchers, the autoethnographic approach to research has been adopted by representatives of qualitative research who agree not only on the contextual nature of research and all understanding but also on its situatedness and time-relatedness. For example, the leading figures of the American authoethnographic research, Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, have published writings in this field (Ellis & Bochner 1996 and Bochner & Ellis 2002) since the beginning of the 1990s. In addition, the journals "Qualitative Inquiry" and "Qualitative Research" publish ethnographic articles.

During the research process, the artist-researcher reviews her artistic work process and the created artefacts from a retrospective viewpoint and creates a dialogue between her observations and interpretations on the one hand, and research literature on the other; in this case, the research literature is mainly the ideas and viewpoints influential in the field of women studies. The creative artistic work process thereby carries on a dialogue with such theoretical texts that can in some way reveal something about the process or the subject matter that is confronted during the process.

Artefacts as delimiters of themes and inspiration for writing

The retroactive approach allows one to distinguish certain themes from the work process that are meaningful to the research. This is done by contemplating the artefacts created during the artistic work process and by naming their central themes. The ceramic works created during the research process thus come to somehow delimit the themes that are then studied. In my research, such central themes, appearing throughout the thesis, are gender, experience, representation, and space. The works of art not only illustrate these themes, but also provide inspiration for writing the text. In my case, the works of art created during the research process pointed the researcher towards research literature that, in relation to the works of art, had something relevant to say about femininity. Together with these texts, the works of art have inspired the artist-researcher to produce autoethnographic writings that deal with forming an identity as a woman, the symbolism of femininity, and the basis for her own femininity.

The retroactive approach thus consists of several backward glances. It collects cumulative knowledge,[13] because the eye is repeatedly caught by the essential elements. However, the viewpoint changes with each glance. Consequently, the retroactive approach is not only formed, but also forms itself during the process – that is, while the thesis is being written. In practice, this means that certain themes are repeatedly revisited during the research process, while the subject matter deepens and widens. Therefore, the hermeneutic circle not only provides a framework for my research but also forms an integral part of the structure of the retroactive method that I use in the thesis. The retroactive approach operates like the hermeneutic circle, as knowledge and understanding advance and deepen as the spiral process of interpretation proceeds.

The retroactive approach is the most important innovation of my doctoral thesis: a method[14] that was formed and that emerged from the structure of the research process during its final stages. Anu Koivunen (2004), one of the authors in the first Finnish publication that discusses the methods and methodology of feminist research, states that speaking about methods and methodology is always narration after the fact. It is a narrative where the researcher presents herself as the subject of her research, defines the time and space of the research, names the object of the research and the other actors, determines the turns of the plot and the course of the drama, and sets the scene for the ending. Reflection on the methodology in its turn means that the researcher contextualises and frames herself by using narration. The narration gives form to problems of desire and fear as well as those of remembering and forgetting. Koivunen states that accepting these conditions and understanding their presence forms an integral part of the process of producing knowledge. (*Ibid.* 228.)

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[13] In this context, cumulation is not understood in its traditional positivist meaning, where accumulation of knowledge means that the amount of existing knowledge increases. Here, the term is rather used to refer to the deepening of knowledge.

[14] The term method is derived from the Greek word methodos, which means "the way to reach something". The possibility of following the same road in the same direction that has been taken before is methodological and therefore characteristic to science (Gadamer 2005, 17).

According to Gadamer (2005), the language that we speak and live in is of the utmost importance. The language is predefined and thus directs the conclusions of all our logical thought. In addition, the language defines the content of the conclusions of our analysis. Gadamer considers this a problem and raises the idea that language can be a limiting factor in the context of research. In his opinion, the main problem is whether everything is visible so that it can be expressed in speech. Or could it be the case that when we bring up those issues that we can bring up, we fail to recognise other issues that exist, but that can only be experienced and perceived in ways that cannot be expressed by speech? (*Ibid.* 20.) Gadamer calls for researchers who can perceive (research) problems over and beyond this problem. By perceiving problems, Gadamer means the ability to break away from preconceptions that govern our thinking and knowledge. According to Gadamer, only the ability to break away from preconceptions so that one can see new questions and find new answers makes one a real researcher (*ibid.* 23).

From the viewpoint of research projects that include different concrete practices in the fields of art and design, Gadamer's thoughts encourage the researcher to move forward with this new kind of research. In addition, they motivate the researcher to ponder how the central issues of doing research – such as the ability to see the research problem – appear in this field. Of the writers in this publication, Michael Biggs (2004) has contemplated the meaning of questions

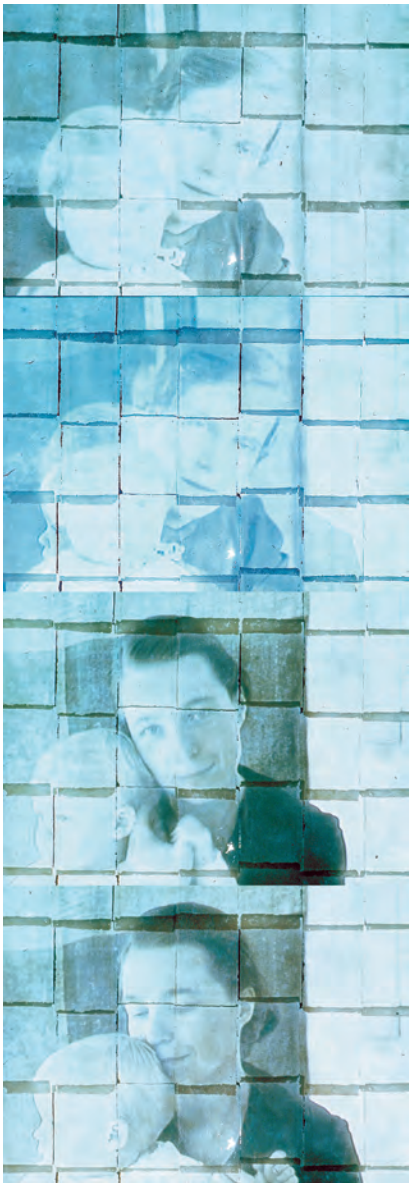

Figure 3. Maarit Mäkelä, 2000, four details from video Female genealogy, work from exhibition III, video projection through porcelain screen. Photo: Rauno Träskelin.

and answers in a practice-led research context. According to him, the questions that arise in the field of practice-led research, as well as the answers to them, are closely related to practices of art and design: the questions arise from artistic practice or as a result of artistic practice. Some questions are pluralistic by nature and several answers can be given to them. One of the major challenges that practice-led design faces is related to how the researcher can prove the connection between a research question and its answer. (*Ibid.* 12–14.)

Above, I have outlined the framework and routes on which the retroactive approach is based. It is an act of interpretation, where the artist-researcher subsequently reviews her artistic work process and the artefacts created during the process. Using retroactive glances as a research method seems helpful in the situation described by Biggs, *i.e.* when searching for an answer to a particular research problem after a particular operational process has ended. The subsequent review of the research process and artefacts, which was described in this chapter, helps to create a connection between the research question and its answer, for in practice-led research projects the answers to the questions seem to be available by interpreting artefacts and/or the processes of creating them.

Conclusions

In 2006, over a decade after the event in the attic described at the beginning of this article, I was ending a lecture on artistic research at the department of Art Education at the University of Art and Design. The audience found my subject matter interesting, and I was happy to be able to answer the different questions posed to me. However, I found that I do not as yet have answers to all the questions, at least not of the clarity that the students wish for.

One such question concerns the methods that I use in my research. I explained to the audience that my research is a process that includes a series of three exhibitions and a written part that interprets the process. I also explained how the whole research process is built on concrete art practice; how the research question acts as a guiding light for the progress of the research process; how the contemplation of the exhibitions held during the research process and the works of art exhibited points me towards the research literature that I must familiarise myself with. Further, I told them how I collected feedback for the exhibitions by asking the visitors to write letters to me, and how I used written reviews by art critics in my doctoral thesis. In addition, I referred to the hermeneutic circle: the form that the progress of my research process took and the form in which my understanding about my thesis accumulated and deepened. In conclusion, I named my retrospective approach to the research problem – the 'retroactive approach'– my way of understanding and interpreting a creative artistic process and the artefacts created during it.

However, the true answer to the question about the methods is that it is in fact the basic question in my mind, too, at the moment, and that even though I have tested and approved of certain practices and methods during my research process, I still ponder how and in whose name I should argue in favour of my 'findings'. This article is an attempt to outline and define these issues concerning research methodology.

In this article, I have named and situated my experience in, knowledge of, and understanding about doing research by using concepts central to doing research, such as 'framework', 'method', and 'approach'. This is my attempt to place the knowledge and understanding accumulated during one research process in the hands of the research community: for review, testing, and further development.

Acknowledgments
I wish to express my gratitude to Toni Ryynänen for the in-depth discussions regarding hermeneutics. I will thank Leena Salmi and Leena Miettinen for translating the article from Finnish to English.

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4

Kärt Summatavet

Tradition, Inspiration and Artistic Innovation

Figure: Kärt Summatavet, 2001, Midwife, gold/transparent enamel.

Introduction

Estonian oral tradition and traditional crafts are the sources of artistic inspiration in my research. The research itself consists of three elements: fieldwork, artistic production and a written thesis,[1] and I obtained a good knowledge of traditional jewellery and crafts in order to support my creative work. I hoped the research would root my art work in tradition and help me to find themes in the living oral tradition in Estonia that might inspire me. Earlier studies (Kurrik 1938; Kaarma & Voolmaa 1981; Vaserik 1993; Ränk 1996; Viires & Vunder 1998; Viires 2000; Viires 2001) do not provide sufficient answers to questions about the autobiographical creative practice of members of Estonian traditional communities, nor is this necessary information available in the ethnographic archives. Yet, these questions are of vital importance to an artist, and as such they were the driving force for my study. This situation gave rise to an artist-researcher whose path is the theme of this article.

In the course of my dissertation, I conducted fieldwork in Estonian villages, interviewing outstanding bearers of tradition. Through recorded interviews with the artisans, I attempted to uncover answers to the question of the manner in which oral tradition and traditional crafts were connected to the life experience of a woman belonging to that traditional community. This material became a basis for three jewellery exhibitions as I looked for ways to generate inspiration.

Ornaments came to play a pivotal role in gaining artistic inspiration through participant observation and comparative research. In Estonian, the word for an ornament, *ehe*, stems from a root meaning 'whole', 'solid' and 'sound'. An ornament[2] is one of the most mysterious and telling elements attached to our bodies and costumes. These meanings exist here and now among us, and the need to do research came from an urge to search for something deeper than can be seen on the surface. I focussed on information gathered in the course of my fieldwork, and discovered the main themes that inspired me in local folklore and traditional ornaments.

An ornamental jeweller, who is able to make jewellery, founds her work in contact with both traditional handicraft techniques and innovative technologies. As an artisan, in addition to solving technological problems, I drew on my own life experiences and created practices based on the autobiography of the members of the traditional community. I combined my research and creative self-expression as an artist, searching for connections between tradition and the modern art of jewellery. In my artist's project, I explored new opportunities to get to know traditional jewellery and crafts, associating them with the spirit of the new design. This, too, created new challenges for my own creative work. In addition to traditional jewellery, I also studied the patterns of traditional crafts, probing what could be achieved in orna-

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1 This article is based on my doctoral dissertation (Summatavet 2005), which I defended in October, 2005 at the University of Art and Design Helsinki.

2 Ornament refers to 'adoring' or 'being adorned' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English 1988), or 'decoration' or embellishment' (The New Penguin English Dictionary 1986). Kiri is the name of the decoration in traditional art (Ränk 1996) and kiri represents in Estonian the traditional ornament, pattern and design on textiles and woodcrafts (Viires 2000). The etymological background of the word ehe (ornament) proved difficult to define, since linguistically it belongs together with such Finnish words as 'eheä', 'ehyt' and 'ehiä' 'whole, solid, unbroken'. (Mägiste 2000, 165). According to the orthological dictionary the group of words also includes ehis, meaning a decoration, an ornament. (ÕS 1980, 99) Andrus Saareste in his thesaurus of the Estonian language has defined the word ehe as a decoration worn on the human body or on an object (Saareste 1958, 286). According to Johannes Silvet, an ornament is a decoration, and kiri is an embellishment (ethnol.) (Silvet 2002, 800). In the present article, I use the term kiri as 'pattern' and the term ehe as 'ornament'.

mental jewellery using contemporary technology and the digitalization technique.

Background

In the beginning of the 20th century, some animated and strained discussions about folk art took place in Estonia, and in the first half of the century two attitudes took shape. Several outstanding artists, the cultural figures involved in the Young Estonia (“Noor-Eesti”) group and politicians held heated discussions about the interpretation of the place and the role of tradition in the new century and in the changed cultural environment. There were basically two main schools of thought. Stunningly, both sides reproached each other for romanticizing peasant culture and old values or scoffed at the limitations of professional art gaining its inspiration from peasant art.

Several prominent artists of the beginning of the 20th century have thought that Estonian artists should strive for the level of the so-called ‘European school’ and that art relying on ancient relics is not able to achieve this. Artists Ants Laikmaa and Kristjan Raud, on the other hand, were convinced that our ancestors expressed in their creative work old mental values, deep feelings and the experience of their everyday life. Raud emphasized that you could not build ‘modern art’ on empty air – a strong future had to be based on a foundation consisting of what was best in the past. (Kangro-Pool 1961, 61; Pihlak 1970, 53.)

The connections of the Estonian professional art education with folklore and tradition on one hand go back to these discussions held at the beginning of the last century and on the other hand are based on the contemporary research of the scientific community, according to which both oral and material folklore keeps us in touch with certain values worth remembering. After World War II, ‘a folk motif’ became an important trend in the production of Estonian applied art and art education and interpretation of traditional art could be seen as a kind of survival course. (Kuma 2001, 26–27.) In the frame of Estonian professional art education of the 20th century, the artists[3], art teachers and students collected artefacts and folklore in villages, studied them, and made drawings and copies as well as used them as a source of inspiration.

The contents and the purposes of the practical training in ethnography changed, and from the 1980s practical training in villages was no longer considered important.[4] Drawing and measuring was mostly done in the collections of museums and at the end of the 20th century ethnographical training was carried out only by some chairs of the design faculty of the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA).[5] An outstanding exception is the artist Kaljo Põllu who had a different approach to the tradition,[6] taking students since 1978 on study expeditions to various Finno-Ugric peoples in order to record their heritage.[7] This form of practical work created by him exists to this day and the study trips are very popular with students.[8] The Chair of Folk Art and Cultural Anthropology[9] has in recent years also co-ordinated the practi-

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3 The most prominent of whom were Mari Adamson and Elgi Reemets.

4 By 1982–1987, when I studied at the Estonian Academy of Arts, training in villages was done only by few teachers, the most significant of whom were Kaljo Põllu, Leila Pärtelpoeg and Anu Raud.

5 These were the Chair of Jewellery and Blacksmithing and the Department of Ceramics at several Estonian villages and local museums, the Department of Textile Design at Kihnu Island, and the Departments of Leather Art and Fashion Design at the Estonian National Museum.

6 According to my own experiences in 1983 at the village of Voguls and in 1984 in Karelia.

7 See the published books about the study expeditions of EAA (Põllu 1990; Põllu 1999.)

8 The practical training in ethnography and study expeditions carried out in Estonian villages and the villages of other Finno-Ugric people have partly preserved the form of study founded by the artists Ants Laikmaa and Kristjan Raud in the beginning of the 20th century.

9 founded by the author and Anu Raud in 2002.

cal training of other chairs and departments in EAA, but this is quite superficial and after the short practical training contact with genuine traditional art usually ends.

The previous expeditions and practical training of Estonian artists are mainly journeys in art history. In the course of these journeys, the artists get to know the visual tradition of a community and a social or ethnic group. The aim of these journeys is to gather data, to record and describe the material culture of an existing traditional community at a given moment. Drawings and photographs portray the present situation of a traditional community and its material culture from a one-sided point of view, and the people involved in it aim at the short-time frontal fixing of the heritage depicted.

This is a fixing–preserving approach, and during a visit a certain traditional phenomenon or situation is conserved in a relatively short period of time. The journeys of not only artists but also ethnographers are short and the researchers generally do not make several visits to their informants. If, on the other hand, it were possible to study the bearers of the tradition over a longer time frame, applying the interest of the artist-researcher in the specific field situation, new facets might emerge in the working methods of a professional artist.

My own experience concerning research and artistic work is closely intertwined with traditions and local beliefs. At first glance, the visual communication of traditional community is hidden from the curious artist and researcher. However, when I became more familiar with the informant and our conversations became more confidential, I discovered a set of master texts of oral culture that was different from the popular stereotypes.[10] In the frame of my artistic production and written thesis, I focused first as an artist-researcher on the members of a traditional community in Estonia, and then went on to characterize the long term fieldwork and combine the results of research with practice in the field of art and design.

The artist's fieldwork

Fieldwork is a method used in ethnography and cultural anthropology. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the aim of the ethnographer is to attempt to put himself or herself in the place of the people from another culture, to understand the essence and the rhythm of their aspirations, to comprehend an epoch or a culture as a meaningful whole (Lévi-Strauss 2001, 368). As he goes on to point out, the artist simultaneously represents a researcher and a master of crafts: he/she makes with a craftsman's tools a material object which is simultaneously also an intellectual object (*ibid.* 46). The fieldwork done by an artist is a kind of springboard that helps to create a traditional groundwork for contemporary ornamental jewellery.

I quite consciously decided to do the fieldwork in order to meet bearers of tradition. I wanted to study issues interesting for a professional artist that folklorists have only touched upon in their work dealing with other problems. Written information is no substitute for the influence of the bearers of tradition on an artist, her art and the new knowledge acquired in the course of interviews made possible by the method of fieldwork. The art-led fieldwork was carried out in two loca-

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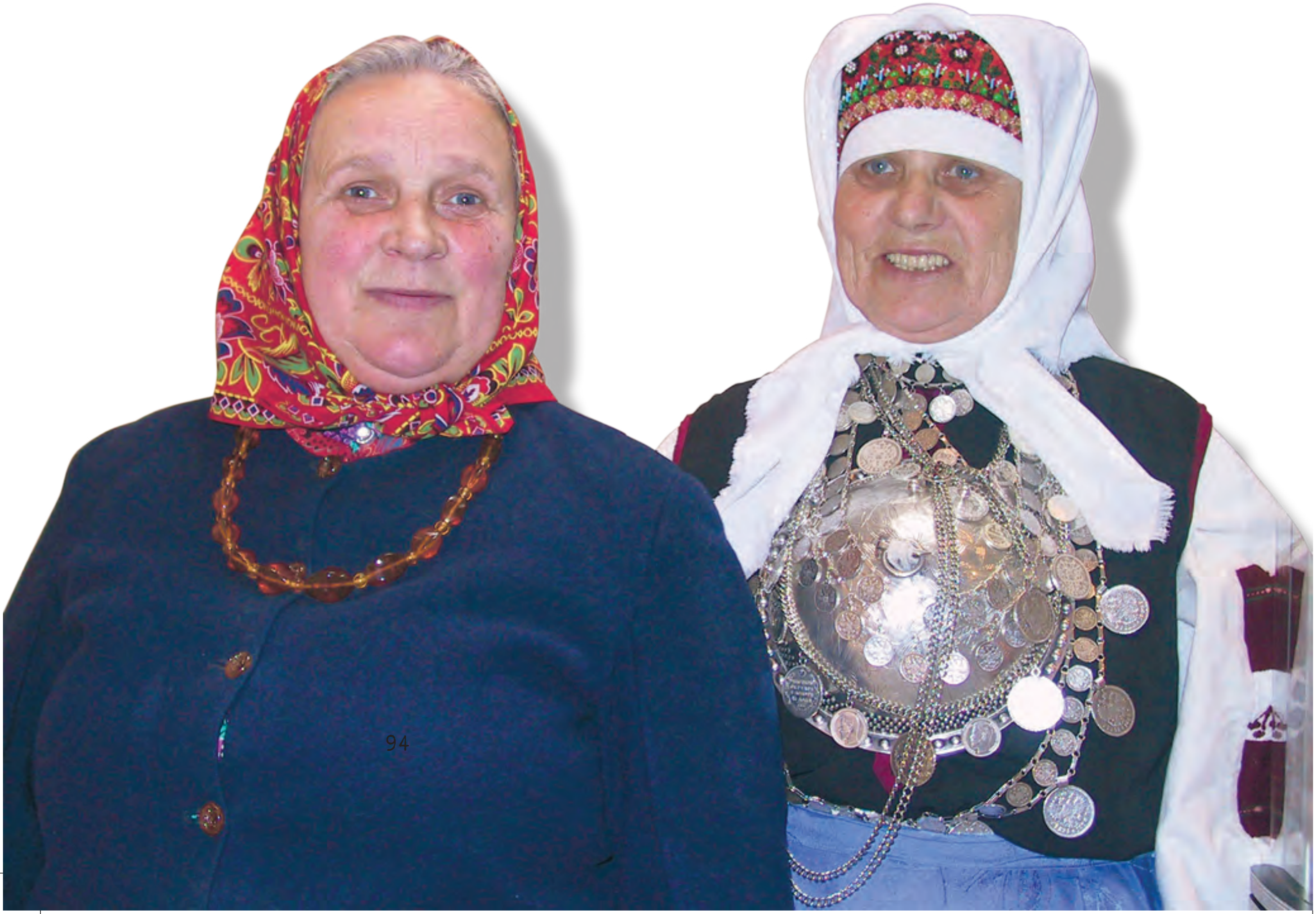
[10] According to ethnologist Ants Viires, a certain patronizing attitude detectable by the end of the 20th century has been shaped by the understanding going back to the Soviet period that the folk art collected since the end of the 19th century is merely a body of aesthetic values. Viires believes that the Estonian general public has accepted the popular stereotype of folk art as essentially old peasant art that is finished, belongs to the past and should be stored in museums (Viires 1992, 8). I would agree that there have been no theoretical discussions about the nature and limits of folk art in Estonia until today, and this dissertation is one of the first attempts to shed light upon this complex phenomenon from a new perspective.

tions: in Setumaa and in Kihnu Island.[11] These locations were chosen because the Estonian traditions have been preserved and are alive there. Both traditional communities have been closed and conservative and that is one of the main reasons why such a unique traditional culture has been preserved until the present day. This is probably due to the fact that both of these areas have had limited contact with the mainstream culture and its modernization.

My key informants are two elderly women (figure 1). The fieldwork is based on interviews with the prominent Setu singer and master craftswoman Anne Kõivo. A significant part of my research

Figure 1. Roosi Karjam and Anne Kõivo. Photo: Leena-Liisa Lehikoinen.



is also based on communication with master craftswoman Rosaalie Karjam (Roosi) and her private collection on Kihnu Island. Karjam's letters and her pattern books are in my keeping and they have been archived as systematized material. However, work in the archives of a museum cannot replace the interaction that takes place in fieldwork and the relationship of an artist and an informant. The fieldwork for collecting the material for the artist's project took place in 1999–2004 in Setumaa with Anne Kõivo, and on Kihnu Island at Roosi Karjam's home.[12] Through recorded interviews with these artisans, I attempted to uncover answers to the question of how the oral tradition and traditional crafts were connected to the life experience of a woman belonging to that traditional community.

In my study, I observed the relationship which two bearers of tradition, who are also innovators, have with traditional handicraft. One of the aims was to seek the impulse to take up a handicraft that is reflected in the person's life story and to encourage me to create contemporary works with the background given by the bearers of the tradition. The use of interviews has made it possible to avoid repetition of the motifs/themes dealt with in earlier general studies. Here I, as a researcher, was the activator of the process[13] and the reason why the bearer of the tradition shares her knowledge.

Although mainly Anne and Roosi were interviewed in the course of the fieldwork, they were not mere objects of research, but directly

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11 Setumaa is located in the South East of Estonia and the Setus have been able to live a life separated both from the Russians in the East and the Estonians in the West. The Kihnu islanders have lived for centuries in the middle of the sea, cut off from the mainland.

12 I met Roosi on my second visit to Kihnu Island in 1998; I went to Setumaa with no prior knowledge of the tradition in 1999.

13 Viidalepp 1965; Viidalepp 2004, 122–138; Pentikäinen 1971.

influenced both the artist's work and the recorded source materials. Anne's personality was revealed to be so fascinating that she became the key informant for the artist's project. Roosi's active participation as a 'co-researcher' mostly influenced the preservation of authenticity in the written work and her materials are dealt with at length there.

How does one portray the interaction between an artist and a bearer of a tradition during fieldwork? Both women in this study are strong and creative personalities, and therefore the relationship between the artist and the informants defied habitual conversation models. An artist-researcher becomes the means and the mediator to whom it is possible to interpret one's cultural reality and system of values.[14] Fieldwork in practice-led research is both a dialogue and an opposition between an artist-researcher and an informant. During the fieldwork, an artist forms a picture of the traditional reality, a kind of fragment of the informant's life pattern. On the other hand, because of the time distance, in the course of the conversation the bearer of the tradition also analyses her experiences in a new light. The signs and patterns created or composed by an informant in her traditional reality are judged in the course of conversations anew, in a contemporary context. At the same time, the most important values of the informant's traditional reality are preserved and highlighted. An artist should not become involved in this interpretation process; he or she should document the memory of the informant as accurately as possible, avoiding interfering in the self-analysis of the inner memory structures of a member of the traditional community. Thus, the artist shares the expert's viewpoint, although neither has been aware of the existence of the other. As examples, during the fieldwork, Anne concentrated on instructing me and attempted to help by thinking about the interpretation of Setu women's arc of life for my three exhibitions. Roosi, on the other hand, would not have started such a thorough documentation of her mitten patterns without the stimulus from the researcher. During the fieldwork, I first of all noticed the creative process and the variety of the methods of self-expression used by my informants as well as individuals and as the members of a traditional community.

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[14] During my fieldwork, I faced a number of ethical problems connected to my background as a professional artist who lives in the city interviewing the members of traditional community from two villages. According to Lauri Honko, our knowledge of any traditional phenomenon comes from two sources: members of the studied traditional community and the researcher standing outside this community. A member of the traditional community represents this 'other' culture that people want to know and say something about. Honko mentions that the definition of the 'other' means that the wish to know comes from an environment differing from the real environment of the studied phenomenon. This creates a special subordinating relationship. The outside community, represented by the researcher, subordinates the knowledge of the traditional community, cutting a piece of a certain size and shape from it, and begins to shape it, using it as reflection of the reality of the traditional community for its own purpose. Honko points out that the reality of the studied phenomenon really exists in the traditional community and the knowledge received in the research has some value only if it gives a reliable picture of this 'other' reality. (Honko 1992, 123.)

I approach traditional phenomena through people because my professional training includes the art of portraying and examination of one's personality and look. I also make things with 'my own hands' and I see behind traditional artefacts both the maker and the process of making of these objects. In order to better understand the influence of those carrying on the tradition of the work of a professional artist, I studied manuscripts, ethnographic collections and folklore in the archives of the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian National Museum in Tartu.

Documentation of the fieldwork

The recording of the field interviews took place over the course of several years. During the documentation process, I did not try to adapt to or identify with the studied traditional communities, nor did I wait for most suitable moments for interviews. I concentrated on the cyclic recording of Anne's knowledge. Roosi sent her letters and note-books over several years at her convenience. In this way, I had sufficient time to study the collected material and note the details that needed further treatment in conversations and letters.

This period of waiting and the fact that the collected material was studied repeatedly provided the preconditions for the ripening and development of fieldwork and the emergence of new questions. As noted above, the information discovered in the material helped to prepare for new cycles of the fieldwork. New questions took shape in the course of repeated listenings to the taped material and reading. The cyclic character and the lengthy period of the fieldwork made it possible to examine Anne's and Roosi's information in practice, and to ensure that the information had been understood correctly. The repetition of the topics also aided in checking and improving the validity of statements.

It is also remarkable that the traditional folklore information that inspired my artist's project impressed me at once, and did not lose its emotional impact and freshness even in the course of repeated interviews. The inspiration received from the fieldwork developed into a symbiosis of the documented knowledge and the strong emotions received in the field situation. Biggs (in this volume) points out the subjectivity, experiential and aesthetic aspects that most characterise the field of arts. He says that the transformational process of unpacking the subjective representation is both creative and revelatory. Since my fieldwork took place in cycles over the period 1999–2004, I had the opportunity to study in the intervals between the interviews the newly collected and impressive narratives by the means of my own creative process as I shall now explain.

A practice-led research project can be formed in alternative ways and so far there are no official rules regarding which model should be used (see Mäkelä and Turpeinen in this volume). My study process was cyclical, and the fieldwork and three jewellery exhibitions took place as an intertwined process where the studied processes supported the creative work and the creative process produced new tasks for the fieldwork. First of all, I made several field trips, examining the subjects that had inspired me in my creative process. New questions were raised in the making of jewellery and I had to search for answers in my new interviews with the informants. The analyzing of the new inspiring material gathered in the course of the fieldwork gave me innovative and creative ideas needing new technical solutions. While preparing for my three exhibitions, I repeatedly used fieldwork, later systemizing and transcribing the taped interviews and the patterns necessary for my research at home. I finally wrote the textual element of my research only after finishing my third exhibition in 2003–2004.

From Field to Artistic Inspiration

The fieldwork material eventually served as inspiration for three jewellery exhibitions followed by and mingled with my interpretative writing. I studied the bearers of the tradition, applying the interest of the artist-researcher in the specific field situation. I explored the methods of visual communication of the members of a traditional community which you just cannot see without going deeply into the context of gathered data and studying it thoroughly.

Estonian traditional ornaments form a natural element of clothing and they are worn according to certain norms. The ornaments are not in a random position on the wearer’s body or clothes (Summatavet 2001, 38; Summatavet 2002, 100); every ornament has a position regulated with strict rules and norms, which the members of the community will not break. As an artisan, I can say that every single line and dot has its purpose in the composition of an artefact and the whole structure of an ornament and costume is created by joining minute details. On the one hand, an ornament is a separate work of art, on the other hand it belongs together with clothes and its wearer.

Fieldwork enabled me to 'spring into the unknown' and let the experts in traditional culture tell me about their ideas. An ornamental jeweller may find herself in a similar situation to the artisans of all previous generations, whereas the expert is able to provide her with certain landmarks, helping her to find the 'right' way in the landscape of traditional visual communication.

In my study, one of the aims was to look for the impulse to take up handicraft that is reflected in the person's life story in order to provide me with the inspiration to create contemporary works with the background given by the bearers of the tradition. The use of interviews has made it possible avoid repetition of themes dealt with in earlier general studies.

The art project enabled me to interpret the information gathered during the fieldwork in a new way as a basis for my three exhibitions *Childhood and Girlhood*[15], *Young Woman, Motherhood*[16] and *Wise Old Woman*[17]. I read artefacts as a visual text and in a sense I have an advantage in the study of these objects. As Scrivener assumes (in this volume), art's purpose is to endow insight into human experience. Scrivener's starting point is that the professionalisation of the academic artworld serves the artworld's transformational function. As I see it, my work is an example of precisely such a transformational function. There, artworks are not statements but phenomena to be understood. They provide insight into the human experience, but as a possibility, not as a logical or scientific truth.

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[15] 2000, The Design Museum of Helsinki (Helsinki, Finland), The Estonian National Library (Tallinn, Estonia).

[16] 2001, The Estonian National Library (Tallinn, Estonia), 2002 Kultakeskus OY (Hämeenlinna, Finland).

[17] 2003, The Innogalleria of the Finnish Patent Office (Helsinki, Finland), 2004 Estonian National Library (Tallinn, Estonia).

In my own experience of fieldwork, I have noticed that women of traditional communities use in their handicraft at least two methods. One means dependence on ready-made models and making a precise copy of an existing pattern. The other method involves spontaneity, the existing pattern is changed, some details are cast aside, and new elements are added. In the latter case, the artefact is born in the course of its making and the existing example serves only as a source of inspiration. Something new and creative is made as the result of this impulse. Details change but the nature and the traditional composition logic of the object are preserved. The new artefact created by such a process follows the community rules, but it gives birth to new versions inside the heritage.

As I see it, the creative process of the maker of an artefact inside the tradition is a natural integral system for the artist, consisting of the personal experience and skills of the member of the traditional community and the influence of the tradition on his or her work. Gathering the data for my exhibitions required first the abandoning of my personal opinions and judgement and then concentration on my conversation partner and artefacts as a model or a still life. In addition, I was faced with one important problem of an artist-researcher, also pointed out by another author in this collection of articles, Michael Biggs. He draws attention to the fact that one problem that seems to accompany artists is the problem of epistemic subjectivity, *i.e.* the essential role of the perceiving subject in the formation of knowledge. He says that such subjectivity seems to be a counter-indicator to the normal "objective" expectations of research. Such ideas regarding knowledge formation and transfer had importance for me in my research.

As an artist-researcher, I had to make clear choices and set clearly defined tasks and limits to my work, taking into account the aims of the research. Here, I could refer to Scrivener, who points out that artworks do not convey knowledge in the classical philosophical sense – but they serve instead as a source of knowledge. I decided to divide the material gathered by interview into two parts, publishing one part of the new information in my written thesis and the other part in my art project. In the working process of the three exhibitions and using professional methods of jewellery art, I worked with some subjects from the information gathered that led directly to a new quality in my own art and design in jewellery making. Here, I fully agree with Scrivener, who remarks that reflective practice equips practitioners to induct novices into that practice.

Gaining visual literacy

I found inspiration in the information collected during the fieldwork and in particular the multitude and variety of autobiographical elements. It appeared that in fieldwork, during the short time available, it is not possible to tell the visual texts containing autobiographical elements from other methods of decoration. In order to discover and interpret the contents of such 'writings' (patterns – *kirjad, kirjutused*), the artist needs a translator who is able to read the ideas hidden in ornaments. The best translators are the makers of artefacts, clothes and songs themselves. Visual traditional and folklore texts do not merely reflect the autobiographical background of their makers, they also reveal the intricate system of relationships between the members of the traditional community.

Through their work Anne and Roosi remember women's secrets. In their creative work, they arrange emotionally potent narratives in the patterns on clothing and in songs. Mothers and grandmothers have taught them to visualize these experiences and to hide them in the lyrics of songs and handicraft. The creative methods and secrets of a traditional community, handed down from one generation to another, have been passed on to daughters. Such a psychological and social 'adoption' by passing on their knowledge directly influenced me and my work.

Fieldwork is necessary for learning to read the visual 'writings' of the traditional community because the artist usually does not have the knowledge required (Summatavet 2001, 35). The artist sees in artefacts first and foremost the compositional ideas, technological realization, functional design solutions, colours and materials chosen by their makers. Honko (1998) points out that contemporary research in tradition pays considerable attention to the level of ideas, and the form and use of objects.[18] The human presence in objects is the one of the main reasons why fieldwork must also be done by artists and designers.

According to my own experience, I can say that a scientific text is an inspiring source material because the results of previous field research help to create a firm base for the artist's further work. In the initial stage of the study, the creative work is also influenced by wider cultural studies which help to find new possibilities for understanding the future of the tradition and for shaping one's own opinions (Summatavet 1997, 17; Summatavet 2001, 38; Summatavet 2002, 102). Researchers, however, approach their informants with aims that also differ from those of an artist. Often enough, the gathered data cannot answer specific questions concerning the relationship between an artefact and its maker. The most important issues that an artist can explore and explicate as a result of fieldwork are the creativity and variety of visual communication employed by the members of the traditional community.

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[18] According to Honko, it is no less important to study the feelings, opinions and behaviour associated with these object. In other words, the human presence in objects (Honko 1998, 63).

The making of artefacts in the light of tradition

A woman's arc of life

It is difficult to limit the powerful emotions experienced in the fieldwork to verbal expression only. The aim of my art project was to give form to the invisible and to the mysterious. It was to understand and visually organize the knowledge, experience and feelings collected under the influence of the fieldwork and then to 'think' visual thoughts dealing with the traditional reality. The art projects in my thesis provided me with the opportunity to examine modern technical possibilities and to find new ways to combine tradition, inspiration and innovation. The bridges between tradition and my artwork were the carriers of the living tradition and the interviews with them during the fieldwork reflecting the methods of visual communication of traditional community. In the productive part of my doctoral work, I exploited the artist's freedom to choose different ways of applying the collected information and of realizing my own creative aims.

The ornament created without a draft was the crucial test of my abilities. An ornament as the final result is not the only important outcome – the process itself gains in significance. It is simultaneous pain and pleasure, self-discipline and the living development of an idea. An ornamental jeweller who is able to make jewellery, has contact with both traditional handicraft techniques and innovative technologies. As an artisan, in addition to technological problems, I encountered several other aspects that an outsider is unable to notice.

I combined my research work and the creative self-expression of the artist in the search for connections between tradition and the modern art of jewellery. In my artist's project, I explored new opportunities to learn to know the language of the traditional jewellery and crafts, and to bring them into contact with the spirit of the new epoch. This also created new challenges for my own creative work. In addition to traditional jewellery, I also studied the ornaments of traditional crafts, probing what could be achieved in ornamental jewellery using contemporary technology and the technique of digitalization.

The technological aims of making the jewellery of my first exhibition *Childhood and Girlhood* were to achieve considerable skill in the traditional craft techniques, learn the ability to cover big convex copper areas with a fine and thin enamel layer and gain the knowledge of how to use the technique of enamel painting. In my next two exhibitions, *Young Woman, Motherhood* and *Wise Old Woman*, I explored new possibilities for conveying my sensitive hand-drawing on silver and gold jewellery. For making this jewellery, I worked with a new technological solution, using the help of a computer engineer in 3D digitalization and the preparation of jewellery models and tools: 1) drawing; 2) scanning; 3) making the CAD-geometry of the model; 4) making the model with NC-tool.

I explored the traditional local embroidery and why the artisans of traditional communities look for perfect results from both sides of the artefact – the façade and the reverse side. The beliefs and norms following the ritual function of the traditional embroidery inspired me to develop the novel method and concept for decorating modern pieces of gold and silver jewellery from both sides as well as the hollow medallion from both inside and outside with spontaneous artist's drawings. I even used some early drawings by my sons in my jewellery design.

It appeared that it was possible to convey the hand-drawing on silver and gold jewellery in a very sensitive way. The drawings are modelled and designed to be raised 0.1–0.5mm from the surface of the piece. It also appeared that it was possible to use a very thin transparent layer of enamel on gold for painting, as with water colours. On the

basis of my own experience, I quite understand why mostly gold was used in the work by Carl Fabergé and his workshop.[19] On steel plates, I experimented with graphite pencil drawings on enamel – the technique that I had learned as a student some 20 years ago, although I had used it only on jewellery. The drawings on enamel and the results of gold enamelling were my biggest success in the course of this project.

In summary, I examined the ways Folk Tradition and Artistic Inspiration are associated with each other, and how the oral tradition in the Crafts is related to tradition and creativity. A researcher reveals the

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[19] The best qualities of transparent enamels only reveal themselves on gold. The glowing and high quality gold surface can be clearly seen under the extremely thin layer of enamel and this kind of 'painting' on gold makes it possible to make the ornament more expressive.

sources of his or her thesis and presents it at the disposal of the scientific community. I revealed the sources of my written thesis but in the course of my work I understood that in my art some important things could remain unrevealed. I did this for ethical reasons, wishing to protect the privacy of my informants. I gave the reasons why an artist should carry out fieldwork and what the difference actually is between ornaments and jewellery.

An Ornament speaks

My ornaments are miniature works of art. Here it is not even millimetres but micro-millimetres that are in question. Most people cannot even notice something that small. A jewellery-maker focuses on a very small space and becomes absorbed in it. Those who see ornaments or wear them do not have to see the extremely precise and fine work, thousands of hammer blows and several hundred hours of work – they have only to see and know the ornament as it is.

Tradition is one of the fascinating sources for ideas regarding innovative technological solutions. The idea of the artist's project to make a dual ornament grew out of the respect for handicraft and adornment prevalent in the tradition of Finno-Ugric people (including Estonians). Women embroider or sew intricate ornaments for clothes and the patterns, which frequently demand enormous amount of work, are perfect on both sides. The reverse side, hidden from other people, is as important as the right side and as diligently made. In the popular mass-production of jewellery, it has to be impressive and the emphasis is on its façade; the respect for and even dedication to the integrity of an artefact in the traditional community can be taken as basis for the idea of thoroughly reasoned and imagined ornaments. For that purpose, a contemporary technological basis can be used. New technologies help us to overcome the shortcomings of traditional handicraft methods and avoid the 'mistakes' occurring in the enamelling process. An artist can convey a sensitive hand drawing unchanged to the miniature surface of an ornament without being constrained by the limits of traditional ways of doing it. Contemporary technologies encourage us to experiment with the inspiration coming from traditional handicraft, create new solutions and find new forms.

Conclusion

I am most interested in the members of a traditional community – in those women who wear the jewellery and work with handicrafts, and in the motifs of their work and in their way of thinking. Without the natural environment, context and the presence of human beings, the artefacts collected for museums are merely beautiful mute objects. Their visual language and messages do not reach viewers, yet even the first superficial contact with them raises the following question: Why have the makers of the objects taken so much trouble?

The work done by members of a traditional community is closely intertwined with traditions and local beliefs. At a first glance, these associations are hidden from a curious artist-researcher. Oral folklore, dances, beliefs, the images of protective and healing magic and the rites of passage seem to be separate from artefacts. I discovered a set of master texts of oral culture that is different from the popular attitudes. The mental level of artefacts emerges next to the everyday practical aspect – the level that you simply cannot see without going deeply into the issue and studying it thoroughly.

The co-operation between the bearer of the tradition and the artist made it possible for me to glance at the ideas shaping the nature of inspiring traditional phenomena through the eyes of the informant. I am able to speak about tradition on a level that in that traditional community is usually attainable only by an expert. Anne and Roosi are such experts in their tradition.

Why should a contemporary artist be carried away with the study of anything that is old and not useful anymore? Could the information gathered in the field research restrain and limit the artist's creativity and freedom? What has a traditional community to offer to a contemporary artist and the international art community? During my art project, I explored new possibilities of conveying sensitive hand-drawings to silver and gold jewellery with the help of a computer engineer, 3D digitalization and the preparation of jewellery models and tools. I had the opportunity to enamel silver, gold and copper using traditional and novel methods.

As an artist, I received inspiration for my original work, my world expanded and our co-operation was not unilateral – Anne and Roosi had a chance to display their work and that inspired them to go deeper into their subject. This in turn encourages them to preserve their tradition. We also cannot underestimate the consequences of the 'other's', the outsider's interest on the other members of the community, in particular on young people for whom the bearer of the tradition and her knowledge become valuable and attractive.

Through the artist's project that grew out of the fieldwork, I seemed to take a magnifying glass to a very small territory – the traditional reality and the traditional handicraft of two women. That is a microscopic part of a larger cultural entity. I do not separate it from the whole, although I fence off the area that I proceed to study. In a way, it is similar to ornamental jewellery in that I have to work with a tiny area – my study is also a tiny micro-millimetre part of a larger entity. The results of the study allow me to make generalizations on all women, but most of all they gave me expert knowledge in the world of two people.

There are new ideas and technical solutions, the roots of which are in the tradition. I have begun to apply these ideas. These two women's way of thinking has deepened my creative process. In combining fieldwork and the artist's project, both artistic inspiration and the ability to synthesize are needed. As a result of the ideas inspired by the tradition, I have completed a collection of ornaments and put together a series of exhibitions. Through creative and innovative interpretation of local practices, we adapt to the contemporary world something that creates new common depths and extensions, a source of inspiration and it offers different possibilities to enjoy each other's roots and shape the new living environment.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the Estonian Academy of Arts, which provided financial support that has made it possible for this article to be translated by Krista Kaer. The jewellery were photographed by Märt Summatavet.

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5

Outi Turpeinen

The Interplay of Art and Research

Figure: Outi Turpeinen, 2003, The evolution rate of an unknown ritual object I (detail).

Experiential knowledge is one of the key issues in practice-led research, as is the way in which this knowledge relates to the research question. This, however, itself generates an elementary question: how does one study experiential knowledge? In this article, I will propose one possible approach as a contribution to the theme of this book. In this approach, practice-led research is seen as a process. Experiential knowledge can be achieved via a thorough description of the research process, where two central concepts can be found: transparency and interdisciplinary analysis. In my view, the aim in practice-led research is to achieve interpretative knowledge of the researched subject matter, which can then provide new insight and discussion to it. Interpretative knowledge lays importance upon subjective view points and is thus experiential in its nature.

The article is based on my own Doctor of Arts (DA) work,[1] which was concerned with exhibition design of cultural history museums (Turpeinen 2005a). The main research question for my research was: How are meanings represented as visual signs by exhibition design? Therefore, I studied visual elements, such as lighting, colour, materials, forms, spatial compositions and their various combinations, in a spatial construction. In my research, I strove to question the objective nature of knowledge, which cultural history museum exhibitions seem to embody.[2] In contrast, my approach as practice-led research, places importance upon experiential and interpretative knowledge, which is subjective and embodied in nature. In my research, I defined this approach with the term *critical visuality*. In this article, I will mainly concentrate on the methodological and structural aspects of practice-led research and will only give some examples from my research for the purpose of clarifying my methodological ideas further.

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[1] The Finnish academic degree of Doctor of Arts in the University of Art and Design Helsinki (UIAH) is parallel with the degree of PhD. In this book, the researchers Mäkela, Summatavet and Turpeinen also have included artistic work into their DA research, but including artistic work into a DA degree in UIAH is not obligatory.

[2] I question the notion of modernistic museums, where knowledge is seen as unified, objective and transferable (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 127), or where the aim for the museums is towards "the truth" (Aurasmaa 2002, 28).

[3] In the University of Art and Design Helsinki, the DA research is evaluated by referees nominated by the research board of the university. Finally the dissertation is evaluated by the opponent, also nominated by the research board of the university. This evaluation process takes a minimum 6 months to be completed, but when there are artistic productions involved, it can take several years.

Combining passion and knowledge

Academic research aims first of all at new insights and it contributes to knowledge. So, too, does practice-led research: when combining academic research traditions with artistic practices, the aims are still new insights and knowledge. However, a difference might be found in the nature of the knowledge that results. As I see it, practice-led research can provide experiential knowledge. This knowledge can be seen as a result of combining passion with knowledge. Artistic working methods appear in this process; however, they are not relevant alone but need to be informed by other disciplines. To achieve this, methods are selected based upon their relevance to a research question. In my case, the relevant questions concerned exhibition design.

The approach I am suggesting in this article is strongly affected by my background as an artist and a designer; this background influences the interpretation of visual culture. Furthermore, the new interpretations of visual culture contribute new knowledge, when the arguments and analysis are explicit enough.[3] In the process, the aim is not only to produce new artefacts, but mainly to produce new knowledge about the formation of these new artefacts and of the particular research subject. The viewpoint is openly affected by the researcher's experience as a practitioner of art. However, the viewpoint is not only affected but also accounted for and interpreted during the process of conducting the research.

In practice-led research, a passion for the arts and the research subject form a dialogue which, in turn, results in experiential knowledge. Similarly, as in all qualitative research, one of the main tasks during the research process is to formulate the research question, which is done with the help of additional questions in order to develop a viewpoint. Relevant questions for practice-led research are, for example, the following: What is the motive to combine one's own artistic work with research? Is it necessary to have art or design work as part of research? What is the aim? Can artistic practices inform the researched field? How? These questions are all intertwined with each other and also with the following, which is crucial also for the theme of this book: How can one combine art and design practices with research?

For an answer to the question above, it is relevant to look at other work carried out in the field. Is this research subject relevant for the art and design research field? Obviously the researcher needs to know the field of research to be able to relate his or her work to themes that make a difference in the field. Therefore, the research question may also develop during the research process. For example, my own research aimed at shedding light on the formation of meanings of exhibitions. The main research questions were: How are meanings constructed for cultural history museums' exhibition design? How are meanings represented as visual signs by the exhibition design? How does the relationship between exhibition design and museum objects, especially their visuality, affect interpretation?

These questions can also be transformed into more general ones: How does one research visual elements or even product design? How are meanings represented as visual signs? How do various visual elements affect the interpretation process? The answers to these questions are obviously affected by the researcher's viewpoint and they may change during the research process. As in qualitative research in general, it is important to reassess the research question during the various stages of the research as this can also alter the research question.

Practice-led research as a process

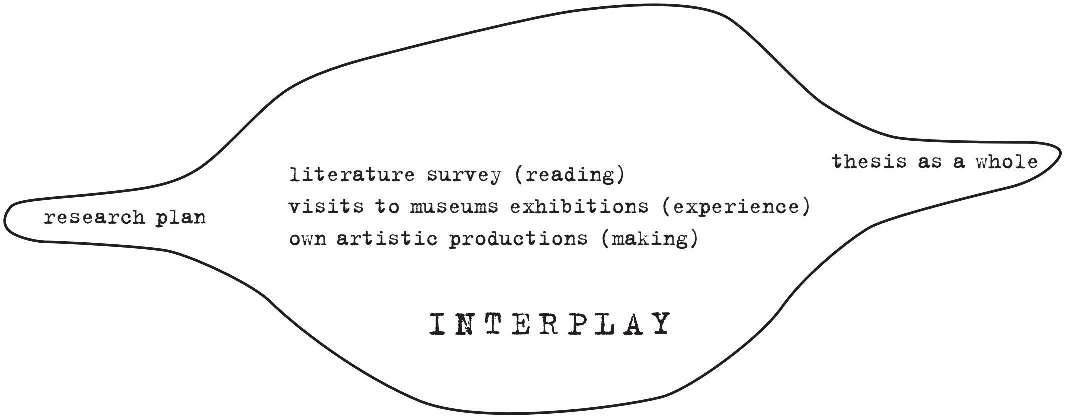
research plan
literature survey (reading)
visits to museums exhibitions (experience)
own artistic productions (making)
INTERPLAY
thesis as a whole

Figure 1. Practice-led research as a process.

Figure 1 sketches practice-led research as an amoeba, an amorphous process in which experiential knowledge can be achieved. First, there is the research plan. Next, the actual research process collates reading, experiencing and making; it is based on observation of visual elements ('experience'), literary survey, conversations with supervisors and colleagues, supporting courses (conceived together as 'reading') and one's own artistic productions ('making'). These different ways of gaining knowledge take place in an interplay and preferably support each other. Furthermore, I wish to pay attention to the connecting verb *interplay*. An alternative for the word *interplay* could also have been the verb *interaction*. However, there is a small difference between the words interplay and interaction, which reveals in an interesting way the nature of practice-led research. 'Interaction' emphasises activity and operational functions in research, which are doubtlessly essential. The word ‘interplay’, however, lays importance upon the aspect of play. In my view, playing as a method for thought and action is part of the core of practice-led research. The element of play is connected to experiments. This aspect of method gives the researcher space and time for creative work, but also the possibility of testing various ways of thought in concrete practice. The research is a process, where the end result is not known before the process is followed through. This is visualised in the figure with the amoeba-like shape, where the shape is not known before the process is systematically followed through.

The questions relevant for practice-led research are often pluralistic in nature (Mäkelä and Laakso in this volume). Therefore, practice-led research does not aim at one singular and objective truth, but rather at an analysis of the process of meaning construction. This process may then be conducted as an interpretative exploration on the given questions, for example: How are meanings constructed in a visual surrounding?

The discussion of visual elements and their analysis is a question of the process of interpretation. It is semiotic in nature. From a Peircean (Peirce, 1839-1914)[4] semantic point of view, interpretation is seen as a thought process where meanings are in constant movement – in other words, meanings are not fixed (Vihma 1995, 87). In the theory of design semiotics, meanings are formed with the help of signs, and these signs are produced with associations made from visual elements, such as light, colour, forms *etc*.

As Figure 1 further suggests, the art works are not emphasised as such, rather the artistic methods (for example, constructing exhibitions) act as one method in the interdisciplinary study. The main question here is: What kind of knowledge can the artistic productions provide which provides new insight to the research question? For example, my own DA study included three installations which were shown in three art and design museums in the Helsinki area between

2000 and 2003.[5] During my research process, I discovered that my research questions could be studied by making actual test spaces and analysing their semantic meanings. Only through making these installations, was I able to analyse the production of meanings with visual elements (such as light, colour, spatial structures, placement of artefacts *etc.*). Solving these practical questions affected the visual formation of exhibition design and also the meanings it proposed. At the core of experiential knowledge are all artistic practical issues, including the visual details mentioned above, and it was therefore through the examination of all these elements that the research analysis was made.

The theoretical knowledge gained from research literature (reading) combined with observations in museums (experience) and artistic work (making) formed the process to gain new research knowledge. The amoeba-like shape in Figure 1 is also a metaphor of research as a holistic process, where everything interplays with everything and where interpretation happens in a context. The end of the process requires narrowing down the research interest in order to be able to write the thesis.[6] The end result of practice-led research resides then in the artistic productions and the thesis as a whole, including a written

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[4] For Peirce´s philosophy, see for example Peirce (1998) or http://www.iupui.edu/~peirce/ep/ep2/ep2book/ch02/ep2ch2.htm, http://members.door.net/arisbe/arisbe.htm and http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce/. For more on his philosophy and its applications to design research, see www.uiah.fi/sefun, Karjalainen 2004 and Vihma 1995, 1998. On a general level look at his philosophy, see, for example, Merrell 1995 or Nöth 1995.

[5] "Imprisoned setting" in Design Museum (Helsinki 2000), "Memories from a curiosity cabinet" in Vantaa Art Museum (Vantaa 2001) and "The collection of a British Noble Woman from 19th century India", in Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma (Helsinki 2003).

[6] I am referring to the form of monograph dissertation; in the case of an article dissertation this route might be different.

report of the research process. Consequently, knowledge is not only embodied in the artefacts, but also gained in the process of making them and reflected upon in the verbal format.

Interdisciplinary methods for practice-led research

Installations acted as test spaces for my exploration of the relationship between a museum object and a cultural history museum. I approached these issues through reading, experiencing and making. From these three different angles of examining the area of exhibition design, the study created a wide analysis of the topic, which was biased towards visuality.

The subject of my research – the cultural history museum – is by nature a complex historical institution. Using methods from various disciplines, I particularly tried to grasp a view of museums and their visuality. To fully understand the subject, I wanted to read and discuss recent museological theories related to my own analysis. Luckily, museums have been examined from several viewpoints, including the pedagogical, the historical and the ideological (for example, Aurasmaa 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004, Bennett 1995, Forgan 1994, Impey & MacGregor 1985/2001, Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000, 2004, Pomian 1990 and Spalding 2002). However, in the case of cultural history museums, often these viewpoints do not take into account the question of visuality. This provided a niche for my own study. Therefore, the approach in my research was formed on the basis of my background education as an artist and a designer. The installations played their part as research tools as they were a series of exhibitions, connected to each other through the research.

There are many ways to a doctoral degree within practice-led research. Doctor of Arts Maarit Mäkelä develops the notion of a “retrospective gaze” in her thesis (Mäkelä 2003). This approach looks at artistic productions after they were completed, and only then analyses them. In contrast, what was characteristic in the amoeba-shaped process reported here is simultaneity. Emphasis is laid on simultaneous writing and analysing during the process, not only after each artistic production (see also Turpeinen 2005b, 2005c, 2007). The research questions are reworked from different perspectives repeatedly during and after the process of making art productions until they form a unity. The learning process for the researcher is hermeneutic[7] in nature, and this basis forms a platform to analyse the researched subject. However, the hermeneutic process is just a start for analysis. In the semiotic approach, the aim is not to produce singular “truths” about the issue, but rather to analyse the process of meaning creation. This testing of how to construct meanings with visual elements provides new information on, for example, exhibition design. The emphasis is then on experiential knowledge, which is emotional and embodied in nature.[8]

As I see it, my work contributes to decision making in exhibition design and adds new insights regarding the process of creating meanings for exhibitions. As I discuss in the thesis (Turpeinen 2005a), it is also important that a cultural history museum engages in art, increased play and experiments, thus keeping the cultural history museum exhibition up to date. My analysis created an impact during the times of changes in the museum field at the turn of the 21st century. Museums were in deep crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, when the meanings associated with the museum objects did not correspond with the newly-posed analytical questions of what was presented in museums, whose history it represents and from what perspective (Corrin 1994, 1,

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[7] For a good example of a table of the hermeneutic circle, see the illustration in Karjalainen 2004, 238. Mäkelä also writes about the hermeneutic circle in her article elsewhere in this present publication.

[8] For more on emotional knowledge, see Desmet 2002, and for the philosophy of embodied knowledge, see Lakoff & Johnson 1999.

Karp 1996, 265). This debate on the role of museums in today's society is still ongoing.[9]

Transparency in research

As practice-based research is concerned with experiential knowledge, which is subjective in nature, it is of vital importance that the research process is transparent in nature. This should be seen in the written thesis, in order that the choices made during the process can be readily followed by the reader. All research choices need to be explained and justified by means of argumentation and with the help of comments and criticism.

Choices made during the process of making art are essential in practice-led research. Transparency happens through the documentation of these choices. A researcher (and an artist or designer) always needs to choose between options, ranging from details to bigger structural choices. These choices in practice-based research form the subjective view point, which is based on interpretation. Interpretation is always closely connected to the background and position which the researcher is taking. This research tendency has also changed with new research knowledge.[10] A researcher needs to be aware of this perspective, so as not to repeat certain stereotypes,[11] but to genuinely push forward for innovative and creative interpretations.

Spatial analysis may serve as an example of transparency. A space is the context in which an installation is planned, realised and experienced. I exhibited all my three installation in art museum context for particular research reasons.[12] In my fictive[13] museum installations, spatiality was part of the meaning creation process. The exhibited artefacts, made by the artist-researcher, were created to be fictive museum objects from the beginning. This idea departs from the working model of most cultural history museums, where museum objects are originally made for another context than an exhibition. An

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9 For example, in a World Forum Conference "The Museum" in Leicester University in April 2006, where I presented a paper "Artifacts in Context. The use of artistic representation practices in exhibition design". The main aim of the conference was to discuss the role of the museum in the 21st century. There will also be a publication "The Twenty-First Century Museum" ed. by Simon Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson from the conference (forthcoming).

10 Feminist studies have showed that research is never objective in nature, but rather knowledge is situated. Mäkela writes about this in her article in this current publication. For more on the feminist approach in museum studies, see Porter 2004 (1996).

11 A Finnish history researcher Jorma Kalela writes about history research, which includes stereotypic thinking (Kalela 2000, 102–103). It is an accustomed way of talking about things or phenomena. According to Kalela, it is important to separate stereotypical thinking from subjective interpretation (Ibid).

12 Firstly, I wanted to rejoin the art museum with my fictive cultural history museums, as these museum types were together before the 19th century, for example, as curiosity cabinets. Secondly, by creating a historical atmosphere in an art museum context, I was able to test changes of atmosphere in varying spaces. Thirdly, spatiality also needs to be taken into consideration, in that most chosen spaces have restrictions or requirements set by the management, for example, in relation to costs.

13 I use the word fictive in the context of my museum installations as I have invented and created the fictive collector characters and the museum artefacts. On the other hand, however, they are also created with the knowledge of certain historical time periods, so it is really a question of a subjective interpretation. Thus, ultimately the question is about mixing historical knowledge with my own imagination and artistic creativity.

artefact can have very different meanings associated with it when it is presented in different surroundings.[14] Meanings are closely linked to the context and can vary when the context changes. This problem has been one central discussion theme concerning, for example, artefacts from one culture in another context.[15]

An exhibition is tied to a place and time, and it is not possible to view the written analysis at the same time as the actual art work. This makes practice-led research demanding for the reader (and also to those who experience the art works). On the one hand, the art work needs to be able to exist on its own in the art scene, yet nevertheless, on the other, the written research also needs to survive on its own. The spatial art experience may well be over before the written analysis is ready. Therefore, documenting is particularly relevant in practice-led research, where the artistic productions made during the research process change in time and place or even disappear all together.[16] Therefore, the artistic productions need to be documented well,[17] as is required in other experimental research, too, such as in the natural sciences. Only thorough documentation of what was done and analysis of the results makes the research transparent, and open for further discussion and evaluation of the subject. The aim of research, from the semantic perspective, is to gain understanding of how meanings are produced.

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[14] In my research (Turpeinen 2005a, 84–106), I studied the influence of context in a case study of a wé mask from Ivory Coast. I analysed various surroundings in which it was presented, such as the tribal context, auction context, home museum, ethnographic museum and as a conservation target.

[15] One of the most famous cases concerns the Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum. (www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/newsroom/current2003/parsculpt.htm) For more on anthropological approach on the question of context (Appadurai 1986).

[16] For example, in environmental art the art pieces change in time. This is the nature of this kind of art work. Installations exist only in connection to a particular context, and are tied to the time when they are installed. See, for example, Johansson (2005).

[17] Documenting in the form of, for example, photographs, videos, notes.

The visitor experience in a museum is embodied in nature, where information is received not only by the eyes, but by the whole body. On the other hand, the role of the research text is different. The aim is for the installations and the research text to form a unity, although they cannot be perceived simultaneously. Thus, the nature of temporary spatial constructions as part of research can also be problematic. A space is different in nature to linear text. It has many meanings layered three-dimensionally, which can be interpreted as a spatial experience. In contrast, the research text needs to exist independently, with only the help of photographs, in a manner similar to any academic research. The presentation demands care in explaining the research objects to readers, as the exhibitions no longer exist in their original form. This problematic situation particularly resembles art historical analysis, where the academic text is often separate from the research target. The difference here is that the author herself is the artist, whose work is the target of analysis. Therefore, the task for the writing process is: How does one ensure correspondence to spatial installations in a written format? How does one organise the spatial elements from the physical space into a linear format as a text?

The vitrine as a metaphor of transparency

A vitrine is a transparent entity widely used in museums. It also is a central spatial element in exhibitions. Moreover, I have analysed visual elements in exhibitions, as exhibitions embody power constellations through selection and categorisation (Turpeinen 2005a, 45–80). One of the concrete means of selection and categorisation is the vitrine. A vitrine becomes a noteworthy symbol, which encloses a selection of museum artefacts. In the design process for cultural history museum exhibitions, certain objects are selected to act as examples or important representations, others will be dismissed. In addition, in a cultural history museum exhibition, museum artefacts are grouped in certain ways and displayed according to the story of the exhibition.

A vitrine, a container placed in the museum space, [18] can vary in shape, size and material. Hence, various interpretations of the vitrines are discussed from historical and artistic viewpoints in my research (Turpeinen 2005a, 69–80, 96–99, 113–121, 204–206, and 215–218). The role of the vitrine is to protect museum objects, but also to raise the cultural value of the artefact. A vitrine has tight connection to the object, as many objects are never shown in a museum except inside a vitrine. In museums, the internal categorisations are presented

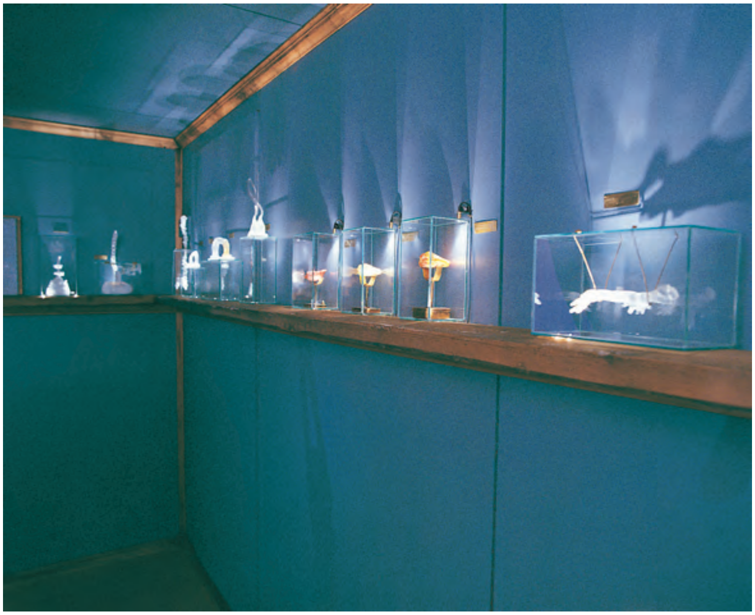

Figure 2. Outi Turpeinen, 2001, Memories from curiosity cabinet. Photo: Jefynne Gimpel.

through exhibition design.[19] A show case is an everyday and common part of exhibition design, but there has been little research into it as a carrier of meaning.

Nonetheless, many artists have also used the vitrine in their own art works.[20] In other words, they have adapted the visual elements from museums into their artistic contexts and thus changed or added new meanings to the vitrine. For example, a British artist, Damien Hirst (b. 1965), has used the vitrine in order to apply some aspects of laboratory and museum connotations to his artistic work. Art, museums and laboratories actually possess a common historical connection, as museums adapted operational models from laboratory forms, too, in the 19th century (Forgan 1994). In contemporary art, the vitrine is a tool for representation. The glass of the vitrine forms both a surface and a space. The vitrine represents an artificial opportunity

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18 Categories can be conceptualised metaphorically as containers, which hold, for example, knowledge, feelings and social structures. An interesting parallel to this idea is the notion by American philosophers Lakoff & Johnson, who claim that in general what they regard as Primary metaphor theory, categories are regarded as containers (Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 51).

[19] By internal categories, I mean different sections inside a museum exhibition. For example, in the Enlightenment Gallery in The British Museum in London, which was opened in 2003, there are seven sections: trade and discovery, religion and ritual, ancient scripts, classifying the world, art and civilization, the birth of archaeology and the natural world.

[20] For example, Joseph Beuyes (1921-1986) “Untitled (Vitrine)” 1983, Barbara Bloom (b. 1951) “The Reign of Narcissism” 1988–89, Mark Dion (b. 1961) “Tate Thames Dig” 1999, Hans Haacke (b. 1936) “Mixed messages” 2001, Annaleena Hakatie (b. 1965) in the work “Stilllife 1–3”, 1998, Eva Hesse (1936–1970) “Untitled” (LeWitt Glass Case) 1967–68, Damien Hirst (b. 1965) “Still” 1994, Susann Hiller (b. 1942) “From The Freud Museum” 1991–1996, Antero Kare (b. 1946) “Kapova ja koirat” 2000, Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929) “Mouse Museum” 1965–77, Marc Quinn (b. 1964) “Eternal Spring (Sunflowers) I” 1998 and Gavin Turk (b. 1967) “Gavin Turk Right Hand and Forearm” 1992.

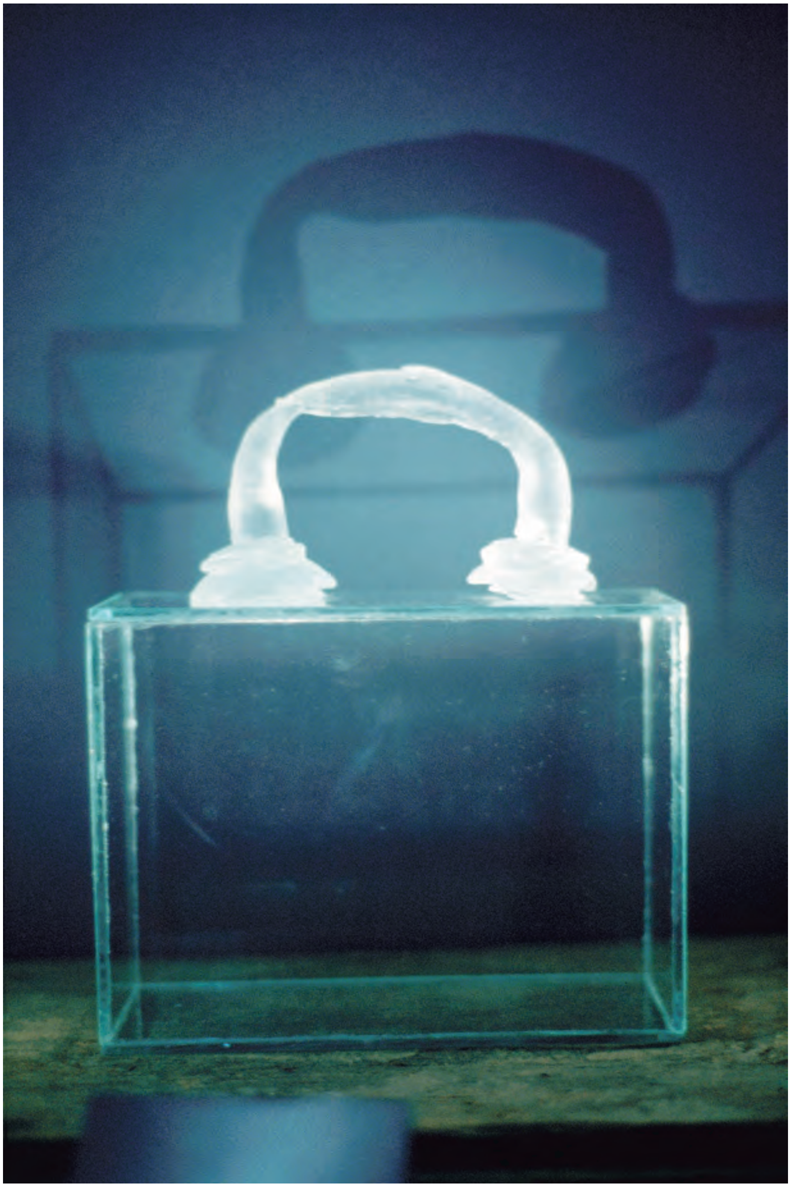

Figure 3. Outi Turpeinen, 2001, On the way to the museum I, work from exhibition II, lost wax technique and cut flat glass, 20 x 20 x 5 cm. Photo: Outi Turpeinen.

to categorise chosen artifacts in the chosen way, where they are conceived to be significant.

In my own art work, I have focused on the vitrine from a semiotic point of view, for example by playing with its conventional roles in my artwork. In the second installation of my research, “Memories from a Curiosity Cabinet”, the vitrine took on an active role by being physically part of the object and creating new meanings in the relationship between museum and object. In the fictive museum object “On the Way to the Museum” (2001), the vitrine defines the borders of the iconic suitcase and marks it with transparent glass edges. Only the handle represents the original cultural history museum artefact (figure 3).

Interpretation as knowledge

In an exhibition, a designer makes the visual layout for an exhibition and the exhibition proposes certain meanings to the visitor. These meanings are created for the space by choosing and arranging visual elements according to the story of the exhibition (Turpeinen 2007/ forthcoming). In other words, the story of the exhibition is communicated visually with the spatial elements in the exhibition. Once an installation or exhibition design is opened for the visitors, it suggests certain meanings, which visitors interpret from their own perspectives. Meanings are not fixed in semantic thinking, but they are visible in visual elements and might suggest certain concepts, as I gave a brief example of in the previous analysis of the concept of vitrine. The process of communication as interpretational knowledge is complex and multilayered, as in a three-dimensional space there are many spatial elements present in the same time.

Interpretation is connected to knowledge. “To know must therefore be to interpret: to find a way from the visible mark to that which is being said by it and which, without that mark, would lie like unspoken speech, dormant within things" (Foucault 1970, 32). Interpretation also changes in time. Each visitor has his/her own background education, culture and situation, which affects the interpretation process. Therefore, one of my main research arguments is that museums cannot have a single goal in their exhibition design, even though the story of the exhibition might suggest certain meanings. If exhibition design were likened to a metaphor, it would not be important to aim for a single interpretation; metaphors allow different interpretations from different people (Vihma 1995, 87). This kind of thinking can be applied both generally to exhibition design in cultural history museums and also specifically to my own fictive museum installations. In my analysis, I gave examples from contemporary art, which particularly supports the creation of multiple interpretations. This kind of thinking is not, however, encouraged in cultural history museums. Art is traditionally connected to emotions, whereas historical texts, for instance, relate to academic knowledge. Consequently, both inevitably change with time.

My own installations were temporary in nature,[21] which gave me the chance to use them as test spaces. The temporary nature and the use of a series of three exhibitions enabled me to avoid the feeling of authority which marks the meanings and working habits of cultural history museums. Temporary installations do not have the same authority as permanent monuments or exhibitions, which stay unchanged for years. In art, it is also possible to mix fictional elements with what are considered facts; this is relatively easy, as art has achieved a subjective status, unlike, for example, the museum as an institution. In my research, I strove to question the objective nature of knowledge cultural history museum exhibitions embody. In research, I define this approach using the term *critical visuality*.

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[21] Temporary here means that the installations were only visible for a restricted time period. Each installation lasted for approximately one month as part of my DA research.

[22] Associations are being made with constant movement, as in a hermeneutic circle. From these associations meanings are produced. Look also Karjalainen (2004, 208–213).

The story of the exhibition leads the visitor through the museum space, which thus embodies movement. A three-dimensional space requires movement and observation from various perspectives to grasp the spatiality. Often, a space can look completely different from the far end. When I visited existing museum exhibitions as part of my research process, I moved around in the space in order to find interesting points of view for making notes. In general, spatial constructions can lead the visitor's movement in a certain way and often in exhibitions there is even a suggested route for visitors. In my own installations, I wanted to manipulate the spatial experience for the visitor by playing around with the space.

The associations come from the spatial setting. It is possible to form and direct the visual elements in the space (*e.g.* light, colour, structures), yet it is not possible to fix meanings. In Peircean design semantics, the emphasis is on the constant movement of meanings between the sign and the interpreter.[22] An exhibition as a whole acts as a sign, and it is an active producer of meanings. From the researched subject, in this case from spatial settings, the research analysis can produce experiential knowledge. However, this knowledge in filtered through the researcher and it can vary according to the perspective of the researcher. As a result, the experiential knowledge is also interpretative in nature.

To resume, there are many ways to conduct practice-led research, and here I gave some insights to my own research. I have given one possible structure and method for practice-led research. In the reported research case, ideas based on museum visits and theoretical literature have inspired construction of the installations. The installations demonstrated, questioned and tested ideas in a three-dimensional space, and could be analysed together with theoretical texts and notes from museum exhibitions as a transparent and interdisciplinary research. In other words, from the research plan, the research question is reworked continuously with three interdisciplinary methods: reading, experiencing and making. This process ends in art works and a written thesis, which together create the whole. With this kind of research approach, it is possible to find new kinds of knowledge (experiential and interpretative) concerning the researched subject matter, as I showed, for example, with the brief synopsis of my vitrine analysis. Practice-led work can widen the knowledge of the researched area, or at the very least it can offer another kind of view point, but this needs to be done in a transparent manner.

Acknowledgments

This DA (Doctor of Arts) research has been funded by the University of Art and Design, Helsinki (www.uiah.fi), and the writing of this article has been made possible with the funding of the SeFun (Semiotic Product Functions) Research Project (www.uiah.fi/sefun) financed by The Academy of Finland. I am grateful to both of these bodies for funding my work.

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6

Harri Laakso

Imaginary Research

Figure: Taneli Eskola, 1996,
Landscape tourist at the top of the tower.

Introduction

Two often invisible principles that govern the production of doctoral works in art universities are the a priori separation of art and research practices and the emphasis on the manufacture of material artefacts. Hence, it has become customary to speak in such terms as the *interaction* of art and research as well as *practice-based* research. From a layman's perspective, both of these viewpoints are highly motivated: Truly, research in the fields of natural science or humanities occupies a conceptual and institutional field of activity far removed from the production of art works. According to this commonly shared view, art is a practice that does not comply with the rigour and aims of scientific research. Art remains something separate that has to be integrated, put in interaction or combined with research practices. Likewise, the one distinguishing mark of any art practice is surely the artefact, be it produced of any material – a piece of music, a sculpture, an image. The artefact represents the point of adjustment, the locus of fixation.

This paper attempts to reinterpret and elucidate the notions of research, artwork and artefact as they pertain to the creative process. This is not to undermine the aims of any form of research conducted according to the above-mentioned valid principles, and even less to belittle the production of material artworks as part of research projects. Instead, the aim of this paper is rather – by way of a literary detour – to remind ourselves of an alternative view of art making, artworks and research, and to illuminate a frequently underexposed but significant shadow.

According to this alternative idea, the character of the art work is not that of an "accomplishment" or a production as such, a *work* of bringing to light, but instead it has an imaginary centre that opens in "unworking" (*désoeuvrement*), as French thinker Maurice Blanchot (1907–2003) has suggested of literary works. This has consequences for the understanding of artworks (of *thinking* artworks) as well as for the powers of research – and especially for any effort to try to find their common ground.

Neutral research

The proposed alternative viewpoint – of an artwork as "unworking" – stems from the way in which Maurice Blanchot reworked Hegel's ideas of negativity to formulate his own understanding of literature.[1] For Hegel, negativity was the moving force of the dialectic. This labour of negation or "death at work" was the source and power of history's deeds and the realisation of man's possibilities. This work meant the accomplishment of tasks, the assigning of meanings, the resolution of mysteries. All areas unknown were to be grasped, "killed" in themselves, mediating the immediate for consciousness. Such is the work of naming, of language: "For me to be able to say 'this woman' I must somehow take her flesh and blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her. The word gives me the being, but it gives it to me deprived of being." (Blanchot 1999, 379.)[2]

Blanchot explores the various consequences of this "death speaking in me" for literary language. Firstly, the power of speech is also linked to the absence of the speaker; speech denies the existence of the things it names, but also the existence of the speaker.[3] In language, it is this nothing that speaks. Usually, in ordinary language, this absence is covered by the ideas the words express, which refer back to the things negated. A destruction is covered over by positive terms.

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[1] Blanchot's views on Hegel – like those of many of his contemporaries – were largely based on the lectures of Alexander Kojève.

[2] "Of course my language does not kill anyone. And yet: when I say, 'This woman,' real death has been announced and is already present in my language; my language means that this person, who is here right now can be detached from herself, removed from her existence and her presence and suddenly plunged into nothingness in which there is no existence or presence; my language essentially signifies the possibility of this destruction; it is a constant , bold allusion to such an event." (Blanchot 1999, 380.)

For Blanchot, literary language is not about communicating and interpreting messages, but about being suspended in this annihilating disappearance of language wrought about by language, at a distance from things. For a true language to begin it is necessary for this nothingness to have been felt, to endure the double absence of the thing *and* of the idea. Literary language tries to preserve this negativity and absence or deferral of meaning at the very centre of language. (In this way literary language is also closer to the essence of language than language understood as a mere exchange of meanings.) Literature does not seek to name things, to grasp them by the use of language, but *desires* them *prior* to this naming.

One of the ways in which Blanchot alludes to this in his texts is through his interpretation of the Orpheus myth. In his reading, Orpheus (~the artist) does not desire to bring Eurydice (~the work) to the light of day, but to gaze at her *in the darkness* – a movement of desire, a necessary “failure” or “eclipse” at the centre of the art experience.[4] Orpheus wants, not to make the invisible visible, but to see the *invisible as invisible,* which is an impossible task. In Blanchot’s view,

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[3] Blanchot writes: “Clearly, in me, the power to speak is also linked to my absence from being. I say my name, and it is as thought I were chanting my own dirge: I separate myself from myself,” (...) “if my speech reveals being in its nonexistence, it also affirms that this revelation is made on the basis of the nonexistence of the person making it (...)” (Blanchot 1999, 380.)

[4] See “Orpheus’s Gaze” (Blanchot 1982, 171–176).

[5] Il y a is a radical “neutrality of Being”, which Blanchot takes from the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas (Ibid. 46).

Orpheus sacrifices the work for "the origin of the work" towards which he still unknowingly moves. (*Ibid*. 174.)

The negativity at the heart of the literary work Blanchot calls *désoeuvrement*, 'unworking' or 'worklessness' (sometimes also translated as 'inertia'). It is a depth, where nothing is accomplished, a kind of *primal scene*, where the work declares *il y a*, there is.[5] *Désoeuvrement* is not about the work being destroyed, or becoming impossible, or being lost, but about an interruption which enables what Blanchot calls "plural speech". It is about the outside of language opening only from within language. In this opening, the role of the 'image' (language as image) is central, as something that reminds thinking of what cannot be thought. (Blanchot 1993, 25–32.)

But is it not the case that here – to phrase this another way – the separation of the art work *from* research is taken to an extreme? Surely, in Blanchot's view, the art work is here given a singular status severed from any research operating in positive terms.

This apparent difficulty is resolved by the fact that research itself, and not only the work of art, is newly understood by Blanchot. For Blanchot "research" is not only to be understood as a mere academic theoretical and intellectual enterprise, but as work inside the creative space, on behalf of that space – research as an investigation of the conditions of possibility of the art experience. In Blanchot's view, research – not unlike Orpheus wanting to see the *invisible as invisible* – also relates to the *unknown as unknown*. The same forces are exerted on the art work and research, they share a space of thinking. Blanchot writes:

> Research – poetry, thought – relates to the unknown as unknown. This relation discloses the unknown, but by an uncovering that leaves it under cover; through this relation there is a "presence" of the unknown; in this "presence" the unknown is rendered present, but always as unknown. This relation must leave intact – untouched

> – what it conveys and not unveil what it discloses. This relation will not consist in an unveiling. The unknown will not be revealed, but indicated. (Blanchot 1993, 300.)

For Blanchot, the unknown is neutral, a *neutre*, neither object nor subject. The unknown does not refer to something not yet known, to something that has not yet become the object of knowledge. Instead, in research, both poetry (the art work) and thinking "affirm themselves in a space that is proper to them, separate, inseparable". (*Ibid.*) A centre of the art work is not to be found by the act of research as it is understood here.

In *The Infinite Conversation*, Blanchot repeatedly refers to research as a "turning", establishing a similarity between the earlier French meanings of 'finding' [*trouver*] as a "turning about" or "going around" and 'seeking' [*chercher*] which means to "take a turn around". "The centre allows finding and turning, but the centre is not to be found," Blanchot (1993, 26) notes. He continues:

> It is true that the turning movement of research resembles the movement of a dog that, when its prey is motionless and menacing, believes it has captured its prey by encircling it, while it in fact remains solely under the fascination of the centre to whose attraction it submits.
>
> – The centre, as centre, is always safe. (*Ibid.*)

Hence, in this view, the artist and the researcher have not only similar, but in fact inseparable, aims. It is no longer even possible to speak of interaction between the two.

The potential that such thinking offers to what is often called practice-based research (maybe to act as its impractically-based other) has not yet been widely or thoroughly explored, but neither has it gone totally unnoticed. For example, in his article "The Aestheticization of Research in the Thought of Maurice Blanchot", Gary Peters explores precisely this dimension as a method (and not a methodology) that speaks *from* the experience of the artist, and not on behalf of an academic will-to-knowledge. Peters maintains that "the very thought of such an Other mode of research may yet prove to mark an important and necessary shift in what "counts" as research within an academic culture that must increasingly familiarize itself with the alterity of art… and then take it seriously (as research.)" (Peters 2003.)

The shared space of photographic art

Naturally it will not suffice simply to point out the potential embedded in Blanchot's thinking. What remains to be done is, firstly, to expand this thinking beyond its emphasis on literature (to photographic art works, for example) and, secondly, to explore the possibilities of developing the forms of the newly orientated ways of writing research, beyond Blanchot's own oeuvre and its singular force and methods. The *apparent* insularity of this thought (arising from the singular status of the artwork) has to be shaken to show that Blanchot's "affirmative" research aesthetic is persuasive beyond its literary home and beyond the fragmentary ways in which it unfolds in Blanchot's own texts.

Thinking of this in the context of photographic art means focussing on discovering new ways in which the experiences and knowledge associated with photographic art practices can be conceived of theoretically and can become shared by the research community of photographic *artists* (or – to put it another way – the community of photographic artists understood as researchers). New areas of shared space for thought have to be established for the conceptual dimension of art making and the aesthetic dimensions of theory.

This perhaps also necessitates a fresh dual understanding of 'community' – as an exploration of what can actually become shared in the experience of *singular* photographic works of art and as a simultaneous founding of new areas of connection between actual photographic artists and/as researchers.

Firstly, to facilitate the not unproblematic, and even paradoxical, *sharing of singularity*, 'community' has to be understood – in accordance with the above mentioned views of art works – as being based on a radical calling into question or confronting of the conditions of possibility. In *The Unavowable Community* Blanchot (1988, 5) writes, following Georges Bataille, that "[t]here exists a principle of insufficiency at the root of each being", which is the true basis of community. Blanchot also finds that the experience of literature is based on such exposure to the "pure relation" of the incommensurable (ultimately, for Blanchot, to someone else's death). Literature is, therefore, not based on a community of exchanged messages, but on one of shared limits. Similarly photographic art *shares a concern* for that which cannot be imaged. Photographic art seeks the invisible within itself and the limits of its own possibility. The *thinking* of the limit and the condition of possibility of photographic images is what unites the work of photographic artists.[6]

The second understanding of 'community' is the more general one, as a quality of being held in common by active social intercourse, *i.e.*

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[6] My own dissertation "Valokuvan tapahtuma, The Event of Photography", opened and elucidated such connections between photographic theory, philosophy and literary theory. In it, I suggested new ways of approaching photographic art (as thinking). The ideas of Blanchot had an important presence in this study. By examining Blanchot's thought in the context of photography, I suggested that photographic art can also (like literature for Blanchot) be characterised by the way in which it explores its own singularity as a photographic image. This, in turn, entails a wide understanding of the meaning of both 'photographic' as well as 'image'. (Laakso 2003.)

the actions and communication between people. Proceeding from this understanding, it is necessary to explore the work of actual photographic artists *as research* (be that work completed in an academic setting or not), to point out that the underlying research in photographic art making occurs not only on the level of practical perfection of expression and artistic mastery, but also in a more profound area of (unmastered) thinking.

These understandings enable the way in which photographic art can at one and the same time be comprised of singular, irreducible events *and* create a community of a sort.

Author figures

Maurice Blanchot's thinking (on aesthetics) has later been developed further and transferred to the realm of audiovisual media by such thinkers as Jean-Luc Nancy (1940–) and recently also Federico Ferrari (1969–). This has meant both the examination of the ethos of various different visual media and also the consequences of such thought for artistic authorship. As an example of this second consequence, in the book *Iconographie de l'auteur*, which Ferrari and Nancy wrote in collaboration, Blanchot's ideas regarding differentiating between the writer of the book (a signatory being) and the author of the *oeuvre* (an image or figure embedded in the work) open the possibility for a new "iconography of the author". (Ferrari and Nancy 2005.)

According to this view, works of art can be said to have a "productive" maker of the work (*l'ouvrier*) and an author (*l'auteur*), who is responsible for the singular possibility of the work of art. The artistic process is thus composed – according to Ferrari and Nancy – of the mastering production of the work as well as another "part", which is alien to the horizon of production, and which operates according to (Blanchot's aforementioned) principles of worklessness (*désoeuvrement*).

The ‘community’ of photographic art could also be considered to be a community of such elusive “author figures” (figures – thereby imaginary), embedded *within* the works of photographic art. The two communities produce two different kinds of authors. There exists the maker of the work and the author of the work of art.

The necessity of visual images

The work of two contemporary Finnish photographers, Sanna Kannisto and Mikko Mälkki, exemplify well the various aspects of research-orientated thinking embedded in individual artists’ work. Sanna Kannisto photographs near the quintessential scenes of science: in tropical rainforests alongside biologists and other natural scientists. She does her own visually-orientated form of research and collecting specimens – appropriating and examining the ways in which a scientific quest for knowledge works differently from artistic work, where bringing to light is coupled also by its limits and necessary failures (in the orphic sense).

Kannisto examines the act of collecting, for example. In her work, gathering is not yet burdened by the obligation of comparison, only by its possibility. Natural sciences collect to inspect more closely, to classify and then to return the collected items as examples and illustrations to the service of public knowledge. Science finds meaning in things. Collecting, in the artistic sense, means being fascinated by the capacity for possession and acknowledging its limits.

Kannisto’s images also play incessantly with the analogies of knowledge and light. One may detect a direct reference to the metaphoric use of clarity and visibility in the photograph *Private collection* (Figure 1). In this image, the head light beam visually connects the researcher’s attention and focus with her hand as she picks moths from the surface of a lit rectangular cloth. The white sheet is itself a kind of screen; a spectacular and inverse screen, one that does not present projected

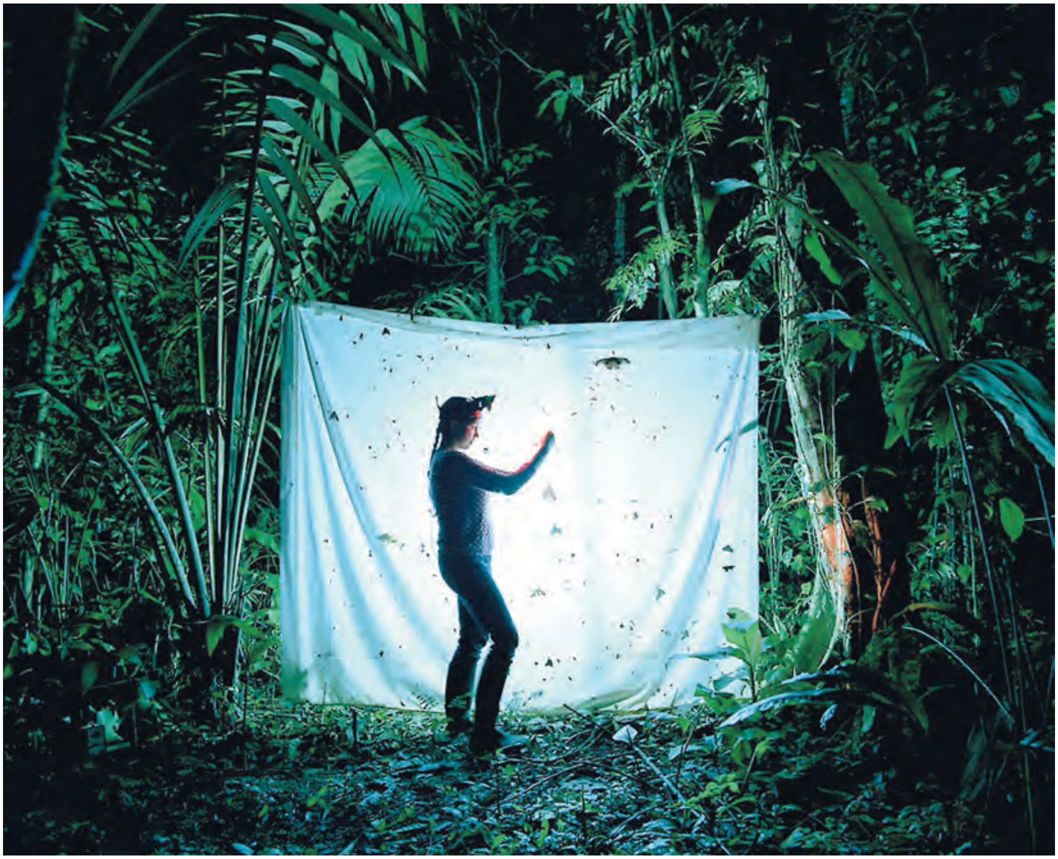

Figure 1. Sanna Kannisto, Private Collection, 2003, C- print, 130 x 161 cm.

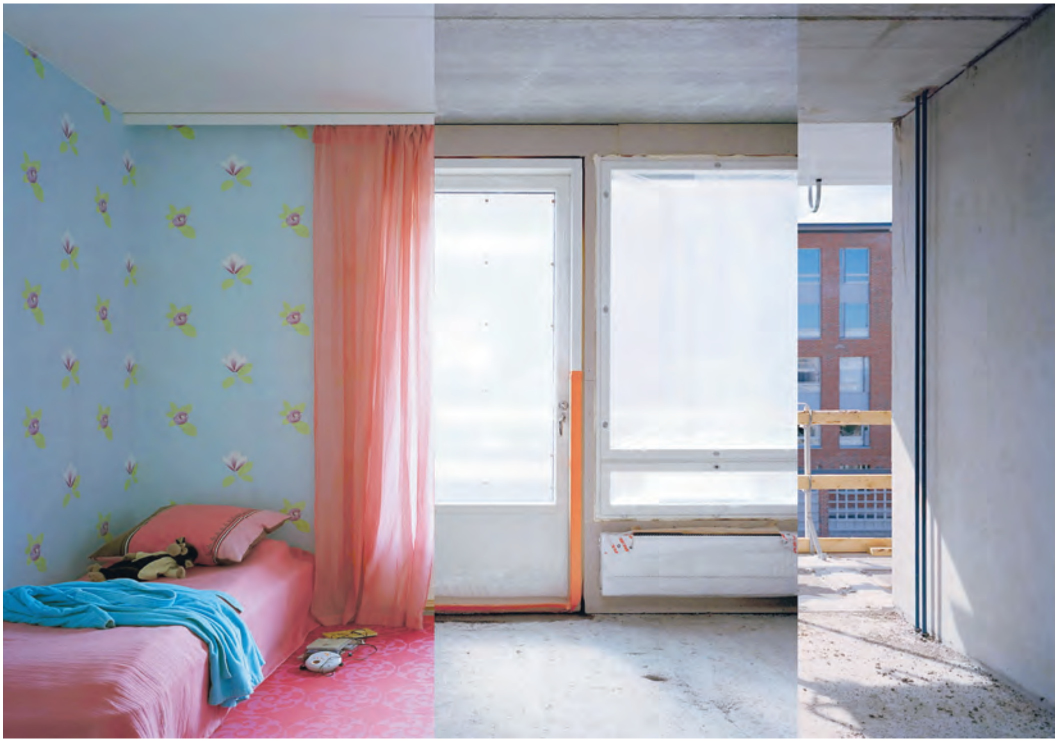

Figure 2. Mikko Mälkki, Layers (pink curtain), 2005, C-print on aluminium, 100 cm X 70 cm.

images, but instead collects them. Onto the surface the moths adhere themselves, their own image, as if on a film's emulsion.

This white screen, in front of which the researcher performs her nocturnal play, also reminds one of the limits of the area of registration and its vast outside. Light does not escape far from the cloth: unexplored darkness begins only a few feet away. In the image, there are hints of three types of visibility, three available but limited views: the narrow and oblique sector of the researcher's head lamp gaze, the flatness of the white sheet's adhesive surface and the withdrawn and anonymous perspective of the photograph itself.[7]

In the work of photographer and architect Mikko Mälkki, on the other hand, the guiding metaphor is construction – of actual buildings, of time and space, and most significantly of sight itself (figures 2 & 3).

For Mälkki the image has a potential depth, it is a reserve for virtual events, past and present. Mälkki has photographed rooms and spaces under construction at different points in time, witnessing their transformation from spaces into places. By visually dividing the image into vertical sections Mälkki has enabled some of these different times to come to life in the same place – or layers of different space to come alive at the same time.

Mälkki's images fail to rest. In a way, Mälkki proves a view set forth by Ferrari and Nancy that nothing is further from reality than the stereotypical view that an image fixes bodies in time: On the contrary, an image lets a body present its force incessantly. The image is a stage

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[7] This passage about Sanna Kannisto's work has earlier been published in a slightly different form in Sanna Kannisto, Private Collection. Helsinki, Paris: Galerie La Ferronnerie, 2004.

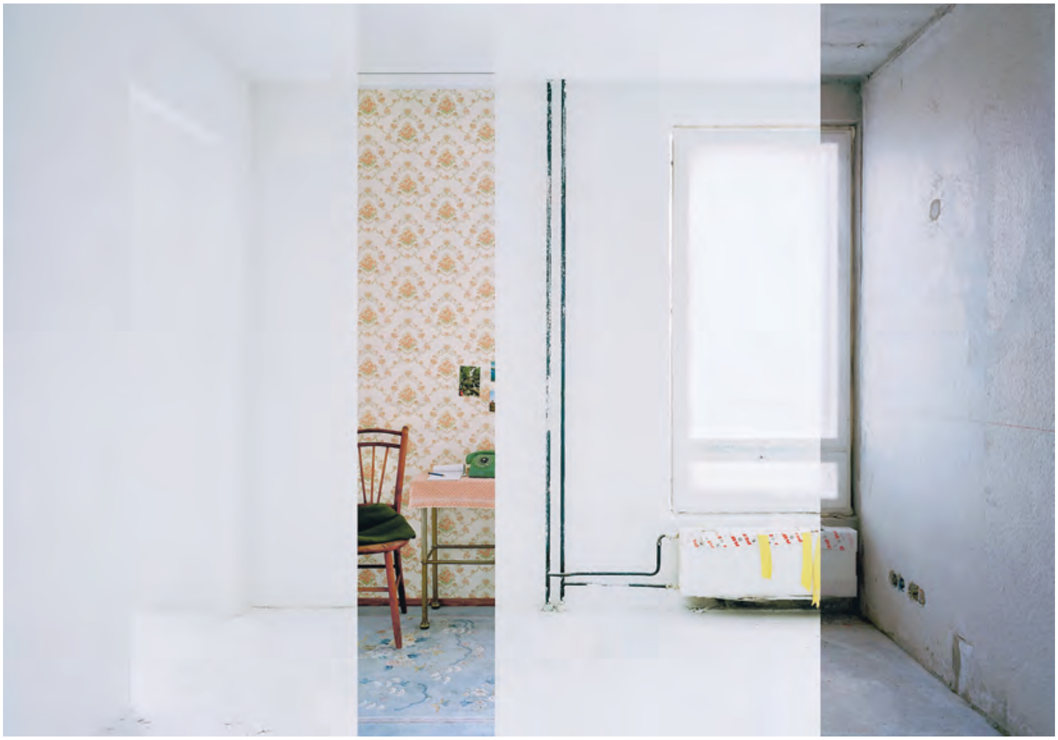

Figure 3. Mikko Mälkki, Layers (flowered carpet), 2005, C-print on aluminium, 100 cm X 70 cm.

of creation, before anything else. (Ferrari and Nancy 2005, 9.) Mälkki's works exhibit this creative force, where the gaze and thought align themselves with the photograph, always yet to come.

A construction site exemplifies all that cities themselves have in common with photography: As Jean-Luc Nancy notes in another text, "Trafic/Déclic", not only is the history of photography closely tied to that of urban environments, cities *themselves* are akin to photographs; places of preserving the movement of things, of offering hospitality to travellers, eternally mobile halts – images of a kind. (Nancy 2004.) Construction sites demonstrate, at the same time, the exacting ideals supported by invisible plans and the various unpredictable forms of their execution. Photographs depicting this process survey the movements of construction as well as the *construction of sight* itself, constantly at work in the act of seeking, anchoring and letting go.

Imaginary research

The works of Kannisto and Mälkki suggest something about the inadequacies of photography, about its inability to record and contain the abundance of a tropical forest, the layers of a construction site. In their work, the invisible as well as the various discords of vision are present. Neither of the photographers is a researcher in the traditional academic sense, however, their work certainly is critical *thinking* in visual form. One can say that the work creates of them produces them as "researcher authors" in the sense discussed above, of an unknowing research community. While the image presents itself in photographic artefacts, the work opens in thinking – in their works "a photograph is the place where thinking is", as Jean-Luc Nancy has remarked in another context. (Nancy 2005.)

There exists a need to develop (and especially to recognise) new ways of *thinking* the experiences of visual art. A common space for thought has to be established for the conceptual dimension of art making and the aesthetic dimensions of theory. Then new research environments and cultures will evolve, ones that are in many ways close to the images themselves and respectful towards the deeper commitments of art-making processes; an imaginary research – research as an image – that is as seductive, as challenging as the art it shares the space with.

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7

Stephen AR Scrivener

Visual Art Practice Reconsidered: Transformational Practice and the Academy

Figure: Jouko Pullinen, 2000, Der Himmel über Berlin.

Introduction

The nineteen nineties saw radical change in the UK Higher Education system. During this period the proportion of eighteen-year-olds undertaking degree education more than doubled while the unit of funding per student decreased, forcing efficiencies that put pressure on the time available to staff to engage in scholarly, professional and research activities. In 1992, the binary divide was removed, polytechnics became universities and the academic artworld found itself firmly embedded as an "equal" player in the world of the university. Additionally, the UK academic artworld[1] became entitled to research funding, distributed via the Research Assessment Exercise and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Not surprisingly, the word 'research' has become part of the vocabulary of the academic artworld, which has committed itself wholeheartedly to the competition for research funds. This is not a purely UK phenomenon: worldwide, academe is exploring the issue of research in the creative visual arts.

Of course, this is understandable, since in the sciences, technology and the humanities, research is a central feature of university life: researchers are trained in academe, and many remain academics for their entire research careers. Put bluntly, the academic artworld has to be doing research, or something which is understood as research, if it is to participate fully and equally in the university, *e.g.*, in university research committees. If it is not doing research and therefore cannot offer doctoral degree programmes, then it cannot function at the academic level that distinguishes the university from other educational establishments: the power of the university to award doctoral research degrees.

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[1] In this chapter, the term academic artworld will be used to refer exclusively to artists, or practitioners: to those who make art, or know from experience how to make art. So the chapter is concerned with artist doing research and not art critics, art historians, curators, etc., doing research. Currently, in the UK at least, artists or practitioners represent the great majority of the population of the wider academic artworld, i.e., that which includes art critics, art historians, etc.

However, this internal turmoil is not reflected externally. Outside of the academic artworld, the issue would appear to have raised little sense of urgency or heat. And why should it. After all, at various points in the history of ideas, art has been viewed by philosophers as superior to philosophy in its power to reveal truth. When Einstein and Picasso met, did they not meet as equals: do we not view them as equals in their respective fields? Clearly, in the historical debate about human significance and the relevance of different intellectual and creative activities, opinions change, but this does not mean that art has always been seen, is seen and will continue to be seen as inferior, say, to science or philosophy. There is little to suggest that the artworld is in the midst of a crisis, or that even if it is, that it does not contain within itself the intellectual resources to resolve that crisis. No, I think we have to accept that we are dealing with a crisis located largely within the academic artworld.

Of course, the academic artworld is perfectly at liberty to make the case for there being a crisis in the artworld that can only be resolved through research, but no such case is being made. Indeed, there is very little discussion within the academic debate around the value of research to the artworld. Neither is there much discussion around academic duty: that is to say, reflection on the extent to which the academic artworld is fulfilling its duty to enable academics and to prepare students to participate in the artworld. In the absence of such reasons, the cynical might view the push toward research in the academic artworld as merely being the struggle for equality, status, power and money within academe.

However, if there is a struggle, it is not primarily about how one discipline is valued by another: about science, say, regarding itself as more important than art. It is more about what disciplines do and what that doing means. Most disciplines do research and do it for a reason, *i.e.*, to advance understanding. This advancing transforms a discipline and, transformed, the discipline is better able to fulfil its purpose: that is to say, with greater understanding a discipline becomes fitter for purpose. Art does not seem to do research, so how does it advance understanding?

This is a question that the academic artworld should be able to answer and the struggle noted above, as recorded in the ongoing debate about practice-led research, can be viewed as being about how this question is answered. Since the debate is typically about types of research, it might be concluded that art makers do not ordinarily engage in research and, by implication that understanding in the artworld is not advanced through art making. I do not want to answer the question in this way. Instead, I will argue that the artworld transforms itself to meet purpose, as framed at different points in history, through art making, and therefore that the artworld embodies a transformational function equivalent to research, as named by other disciplines.

However, it will be argued that what the artworld has not done, in contrast to most other disciplines, is to professionalise this transformational function. Yet, we appear to have started on a path that will ultimately lead to a professional transformational class in the academic artworld: a research class, aimed at equipping the artworld to better serve its purpose, but in ways others than those characteristic of the artworld. However, because I wish to argue that art already embodies a transformational function that is fit for purpose, the question for me is not what kind of research should the academic artworld undertake, because this would be to suggest that the artworld does not already do something equivalent to research, as understood by other intellectual and creative cultures. Rather, accepting that the artworld already embodies a transformational function, the question is, "How might the academic artworld enhance its contribution to this transformational function?"

In this chapter, I will first argue for framing the question in this way by exploring different intellectual and creative cultures, their purposes, and how purpose and how fitness for purpose are advanced through research and the institutionalisation of this transformation function in academe. It will be concluded that although embodying such a transformational function, the artworld has not professionalised the activity. Having arrived at this point, the question of how such a professional class might be built is examined next. As indicated above, the idea of a transformational class realised through the appropriation of research paradigms from other creative and intellectual cultures is rejected. The chapter then proceeds to explore how the doctoral degree might be structured so as to enhance the artworld's transformational function. Finally, it is concluded that if, as for other intellectual and creative cultures, the doctoral degree becomes not the last educational step before entering the artworld, but a passport into a community of transformational practice operating largely within academe, then this will challenge contemporary understanding of what it means to be a professional artist.

Intellectual and creative cultures

In considering how a design culture might be built, Banathy (1994) starts by comparing design to the cultures of science and the humanities. Design, he argues (*ibid.)* focuses on the natural world (including social systems) seeking to describe what is through focused problem finding activity. The humanities focus on understanding, discussing and portraying human experience. Design, on the other hand, he argues (*ibid.)* focuses on solution finding, and creating objects and systems that do not yet exist. Scientific methods include experimentation, classification, pattern recognition, analysis and deduction. In the humanities analogy, metaphor, criticism and evaluation are applied. In design, alternatives and patterns are formed using conjecture and modelling. Science values objectivity, rationality, and neutrality in the search for "truth", the humanities value subjectivity, imagination and commitment, and have a concern for "justice", whereas design values practicality, ingenuity, creativity and empathy, and has a concern for "goodness of fit". Whilst we might want to argue for or against the particular characterisations of each culture as defined by Banathy (*ibid.*), or even to propose different cultures, we can probably all accept that different intellectual and creative cultures exist.

Culture and purpose

We might also be happy to agree with Banathy (*ibid.*) that the three (or more) cultures jointly constitute the wholeness of human intellectual and creative experience. In agreeing with this proposition, we are also accepting that each culture does something different to the other, since if this were not the case they would merely be redundant. A corollary of this is that each discipline does as it does for a different purpose.

According to Banathy (*idid.*), the purposes of the three identified cultures might be described as follows. The purpose of Science is to describe what is in the natural world.[2] The purpose of Design, in contrast is to propose what should be in the artificial world. Finally, the purpose of the Humanities is to understand and to portray the human experience. Although Banathy does not explicitly mention the creative arts, he must have intended them to be included within his model, because he claims (*ibid.*) that it constitutes wholeness. We might take it that art is subsumed within the humanities, as its purpose, as defined, sits comfortably with the idea that art endows insight into human experience. For the purposes of discussion, it will be assumed that art's purpose is to endow insight into human experience.[3]

Advancing purpose

The science culture advances, becomes fitter for purpose, by acquiring new knowledge of the natural world. The process of acquiring this new knowledge is defined as research and the person responsible for its acquisition is called a researcher. New knowledge here means that which the culture currently does not possess. For example, let us assume that the science culture knows that acid released into a river will kill fish above a certain level of concentration, but does not know how to measure acid concentration levels in a river. This being the case, the researcher who provides such knowledge will be deemed by the science culture to have contributed to understanding. Similarly, the person who contributes new understanding in the humanities culture is nowadays described as a researcher. However, in respect of both science and the humanities, it is important to recognise that there was a time when knowledge was advanced in the absence of notions of research and the researcher. The creation and institutionalisation of research can be viewed as cultural self-regulation toward goal satisfaction, *i.e.*, advancement of, or contribution to[4] fitness for purpose.

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[2] Science might want to claim more than this, but we do not need to dwell on this point here.

[3] In fact, there is an argument for saying that understanding what is, endowing insight into human experience and proposing what should be in the artificial world are not, respectively, the ultimate purposes of science, art, or design, as they stop short of human action. Rather, for example, we might say that the purpose of the science culture is to predict and control the natural world and to achieve this we need to understand it. Indeed, we could go further to argue that the purpose of science is to maintain human equilibrium, which requires prediction and control.

[4] Some cultures, such as science, are comfortable with the idea that understanding advances. In contemporary artworlds (cf. Young (2001) for a discussion of the idea of artworlds), the idea of advancement has much less credibility. This points to a claim for difference between the cultures, which is still the subject of debate. Not wishing here to engage directly with this debate, henceforth when referring the arts, or specifically the visual arts, I will use the terms contribution or transformation to denote change events, and the term contributor to denote agents of change.

‘Researchers’ then are the professional practitioners in each culture whose task it is to contribute what enables it to become fitter for purpose, *i.e.*, understanding of the natural world in the case of Science.

However, though practising artists break new ground in the visual creative arts, the culture has not identified a particular practice for transformation. The fact that the visual creative arts culture has not separated “everyday” practice from that which contributes to the culture does not mean that the culture does not change, clearly it has and continues to do so: researchers emerge, if not in name then in action, and are recognised as having made a special contribution. In this sense, these individuals do for the visual creative arts what the researcher does for other cultures. What the artworld has not yet done is to professionalise this activity, at least in terms of art making. Unlike most other intellectual and creative endeavours, the artworld has not conferred responsibility for transformation to a professional class.

Building a professional contributor class

So, I would claim that there is nothing essentially wrong with the visual arts culture. It has changed in the past, it is changing now and we can expect it to change in the future. Furthermore, it is capable of recognising those who have contributed to this change. To the public, these are artists such as Leonardo, Durer, Rubens, Goya, Constable, Monet, and Picasso. Artists, critics, art historians and curators would list others as contributors to the development of the visual arts culture. All of this has occurred in the absence of a research class.

However, as noted above, things are changing in the academic artworld: an experiment is underway that could ultimately lead to a professional research class. Although this is essentially an academic exercise, in that the academic artworld is not primarily responding to obvious artworld imperatives, the interconnectedness of artworld constituents and the formative nature of education suggest that its effects will be far reaching. The hypothesis being tested in this experiment, if implicitly, is that the artworld culture has not recognised a need: the need for a research class. To say that we in academe are engaged in an experiment is not to suggest that academe is capricious, or cynical, or irresponsible: reasons can and are being found for undertaking the experiment. Nevertheless, experiments involve risks and in weighing risks and benefits we in academe should ensure that the scales favour the likelihood of contribution to the wider artworld.

At present, the experiment is being prosecuted in two primary ways: professional artists are engaging with research, and nascent professionals are being trained as researchers, by undertaking doctoral degrees. Existing professionals, educated according to the tradition of the visual arts culture, have a choice. They can choose to contribute to fitness for cultural purpose by practicing according to tradition or research dictates, however they might be framed. Those who do choose to research and find it useful, directly or indirectly, to making art will continue to engage in it and those who do not find it useful probably will not.[5] In this sense, the research experiment's effect on the overall workings of the culture will be self-regulating.

Doctoral programmes, in contrast, have the potential to interfere greatly with the visual arts culture, especially if a doctoral degree becomes, as it has in other intellectual and creative cultures, a passport to teaching, and hence the model of practice imposed on masters and undergraduate students. Furthermore, the ideology institutionalised and regulated through a doctoral degree programme framework binds the student into a situation over which they have little influence or control. In many cases, once committed to a programme of study, the student will be changed by it, for better or for worse. Once changed by it, the student will become an advocate of the experience, as to do otherwise would be to devalue it. The nature of the doctoral degree in the visual arts is therefore of particular significance to the visual arts culture. With this in mind, what should the doctoral programme be?

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[5] Of course, this assumes that the artist-educator's self identity is determined primarily in terms of art making.

Some scholars in the field hold that research and art making are different activities undertaken for different purposes. A corollary of this statement is that when the artist does research, what he or she does is not doing art or being an artist. To undertake a doctoral programme where research and art making are seen as distinct is to step into another part of the artworld or another creative or intellectual culture.[6] From this position, any artist opting to undertake a research degree should be prepared to keep art and research separate. If this position becomes the norm, and if the doctoral degree becomes the passport to university teaching, then one might ask whether such teachers will remain equipped to prepare students as visual arts practitioners.[7] This scenario is perhaps unlikely, however, as most artists will probably not be prepared to sacrifice art making for research.

Other scholars accept that art making can occur within research. In key respects, this is to take the same position as the separationalist, described above, since art making is not seen as an end in itself but as a means to research ends. Nevertheless, compared to the separationalist, this is perhaps the more dangerous position because it offers the beguiling prospect of undertaking a higher degree while apparently maintaining art making. By so doing, this approach to visual arts research runs a twofold risk of failing to prepare students as visual arts practitioners and compromising what preparation they have already had.

Neither of these approaches is inherently wrong and each prescribes a kind of research that can produce interesting and useful results, but each requires acceptance as fact that art does not directly contribute to the understanding of human experience. Yet, this belief runs contrary to the view that artists do contribute to visual arts culture through the production and presentation of artworks. If one holds this view, as I do, then there is little point in exploring these options further because their contribution to transformation in the visual arts culture is unclear.[8] Instead, the question for the academic artworld is: "how might the professionalisation of transformational practice better serve the artworld's transformational function?"

Stated in this way, preparing a professional contributor class for the artworld begins with the doctoral degree,[9] the explicit goal of which should be to imbue nascent practitioners with the competencies to produce works of art that transform visual arts culture. But what competencies should we imbue? We could look to past masters for guidance, but for the most part their competencies can only be inferred through their artworks. We could undertake a study of contemporary masters, but there are many students undertaking doctoral programmes now. In the absence of empirical evidence, then, we are forced to propose and justify desired competencies. With this in mind, the next section focuses on describing a proposed doctoral degree framework in the visual arts.

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[6] This is the case because research is not an absolute term; disciplinary perspectives determine its meaning and methods.

[7] It is not claimed here that research in another domain and art making cannot be progressed simultaneously to the same professional level. However, time, resources and context are likely to lead to one activity being prioritised over the other.

[8] No compelling reasons have been offered in the practice-led research debate for believing that research viewed as separate to, or combined with, art-making practice offers any obvious benefits over contemporary arts practice in terms of contributing insight into the human experience.

[9] If we accept that the educational framework up to MA has not established such an academic class, then we need to add to the framework such that it does.

Framing a doctoral programme for contribution to the visual arts

Background

In Scrivener (2002a), I presented a set of norms, or expectations, as part of an endeavour to frame an academic programme designed to contribute to the purpose of the visual arts. These were slightly modified in the light of experience in Scrivener and Chapman (2004a), Table 1. Scrivener (2002a) represented a point in a train of thought that I had embarked upon in response to problems encountered when supervising visual artists undertaking PhD programmes. At that time, I had supervised to completion around twenty PhD students and examined a similar number, over a relatively wide range of projects. Most of these could be best described as technological research projects. Technology and visual art share a common concern for generating artefacts that transform: both are concerned with intervention, innovation and change. For this reason, I saw visual arts as being closer to technological, than scientific or humanities research.

From my experience of technology research projects, I had formed, if unconsciously, a set of cultural norms, which enabled me to evaluate the design, execution and outcomes of such a project (*cf.* Scrivener, 2002a). What characterises this type of project is a focus on problem identification and problem solving, and when working with a new student my natural tendency was to try and frame the student's project in such a way that it offered the potential to exhibit the features of a problem-solving project. However, I found that the proposed visual arts work could not be pressed into this mould. In these situations, the problem-solving research frame didn't seem to fit and in Schön's (1983) terms I was forced to surface and criticise the understanding implicit in my usual supervisory stance in order to reframe the problem. I could have simply said at this point that if these students could not find a way of working within conventional paradigms, then perhaps they should give up: research was research and art making was art making. In retrospect, I think I couldn't accept this option for three primary reasons. First, I felt that the problems presented by students reflected something fundamental to art making as compared to other modes of intellectual and creative endeavour. Second, as noted above, to ignore this phenomenon and to insist that only research of accepted kinds could be undertaken would be to damage the students I supervised, particularly in respect to their practice as artists. Third, that by damaging students, whom I accepted had the potential to contribute to the visual arts, I would be damaging the visual arts culture. The following sections explain how the norms presented in Table 1 were framed in response to apparent differences and similarities between the visual arts and technology.

Table 1. Norms of a creative production research project (source: Scrivener and Chapman, 2004a).

1	Artefact(s) are produced.
2	Artefact(s) are of high quality and original in a cultural, social, political or (and) aesthetic, *etc.*, context.
3	Artefact(s) are a response to issues, concerns and interests.
4	Artefact(s) manifests these issues, concerns and interests.
5	These issues, concerns and interests reflect cultural, social, political or (and) aesthetic, *etc.*, preoccupations.
6	Artefact(s) generate apprehension.
7	Artefact(s) are central to the process of apprehension.
8	The creative-production process is self-conscious, reasoned and reflective.

Purpose and achievement of contribution

It would be simplistic to suggest that the purpose of science culture is merely to gain new knowledge of the natural world or that the purpose of the humanities culture is merely to gain new understanding of the human experience. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that each culture has such a transformational function and that the role of its transformational class is to satisfy this function. As noted above, most cultures satisfy this function through research, as defined, for example, by the Higher Education Funding Council of England (2005):

"'Research' for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction…"

For those who see art making and research as separate activities, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding is in no way dependent on the creation of works of art. If we accept that in the visual arts, insight into the human condition is transformed through the creation and reception of works of art, research, viewed in this way, cannot directly realise a transforming artefact, because the step of creating artworks still has to be taken.

If, alternatively, art making in visual arts research is seen as contributing to methods in acquiring new knowledge, this relegates creative arts practice to that of a means to an end. Both propositions seem to be saying that the visual arts culture advances by acquiring new knowledge and that the artworks themselves are not central to the apprehension of this new knowledge: they are either not relevant at all or merely there as a support for that which can be expressed by other means, *e.g.*, linguistic statements. Both positions seem to run contrary to the practice of the visual arts culture, where artworks are at the centre of what is presented, absorbed and interpreted.

As noted above, my starting point is the idea that the visual arts culture possesses and has always possessed a transformational function. Furthermore, I hold the position that this is achieved through the production, presentation and acceptance of artworks. The belief that visual arts practice achieves this by generating new knowledge is consistent with the above, as long as one can show that artworks convey new knowledge and understanding. However, I have argued elsewhere (Scrivener, 2002b) that artworks do not convey knowledge in the classical philosophical sense. Rather, I suggest that they can be a source of knowledge. In short, art is one of those modes of experiencing that, rather than providing givens, offers apprehensions that provide potential ways of seeing situations. The experience of artworks provides material for seeing-as and the experience of knowledge artefacts provides material for knowing-that. Each material contributes in its own way to our behaviour, the former dealing with the known world (in the sense of current knowledge) and the later the unfamiliar, or unknown world (in the sense of a situation that confounds current understanding). It is argued that one is not a substitute for the other and each needs to be garnered for survival (Scrivener, *ibid.*). In this sense, artworks are not statements but phenomena to be understood. Artworks can and do provide insight into the human experience, but as possibility, not logical or scientific truth: as claim rather than certainty.

On the basis of the above, in any institutionalised practice, artworks (artefacts) will be produced (Table 1, norm 1); they will be central to the transformational function (Table 1, norm 7); they will be perplexing in respect of current understanding (Table 1, norm 6); and this perplexity will be recognisable by the wider artworld (Table 1, norm 2).

The context of creation

Science maintains the results of its endeavours in books, journals, archives, collections, *etc*. This resource embodies the history of science and current understanding concerning, in Banathy's (1994) terms, foci, methods and values. It provides a resource for deriving new questions, for ensuring that these questions are indeed new, for ways of thinking, working, and evaluating one's action as a member of the science culture. Since, this material does not account for the natural world as a whole, science is always seeking new understanding, *i.e.*, researching.

We might posit that this search is essentially a dialogue between the researcher and the records of science. However, scientific research takes place in a living culture in which researchers meet, talk, dispute and debate in university departments, societies, seminars, conferences, proceedings, journals, and informal interactions between researchers working on related topics. A scientist working entirely alone, completely disengaged from the living discourse, might achieve a major scientific breakthrough, but this is not the general case. Even in this case, the discourse cannot be avoided, as the science culture is gatekeeper of its knowledge base. As such, the living scientific discourse provides the context in which the world as known and the world as presented are brought into opposition. Each intellectual and creative culture, including the visual arts, records and systematises past achievements and understanding and maintains a living dialogue between past and present.

This is reflected in norms 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Table 1, which assume that challenging artworks emerge from such a context, *i.e.*, the artworld and the wider cultural worlds. Much painting, for example, has been produced in a studio occupied by an individual artist. Therefore, it is not too difficult to understand the popular idea of the lone creator, locked away in a garret, responding to some intrinsic property of self, out of genius, madness or divine inspiration. However, if we take a painting, such as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907 by Picasso, the idea that the painting looks as it does, not like a Michelangelo, not like a Goya, a Turner, a Monet, or any other preceding artist because of the uniqueness of Picasso seems absurd: like ascribing personal behaviour entirely to nature, thereby denying nurture. Surely, it must be that Picasso understood the art of the past, understood contemporary art, and understood past and contemporary ideas about the world and human experience. Surely, this understanding influenced the creation of the work. In other words, creation takes place in a context (Table 1, norm 2) and much art history is concerned with both describing and explaining the influence of context (*cf.* Read, 1968: 68–70). If the creation of art work is influenced by context, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the work produced is, in some sense, a response to this context (Table 1, norm 3) and that the things responded to will be manifested in the artworks produced (Table 1, norm 4). Since the visual arts, as defined in this chapter, concern the human condition, art will necessarily engage with cultural, social, political and aesthetic concerns (Table 1, norms 2 and 5).

Getting started

Research in other intellectual and creative endeavours begins with the identification of a question or problem, the answer or solution to which would comprise new knowledge, thereby adding to current understanding. In contrast, when working with visual arts students, I have found it very difficult to identify a problem as such. For example, one of my research students, a photographer, was interested in producing work that dealt with the subject of breast cancer. Among the many and complex reasons for undertaking the work, it was his hope that photography could contribute to awareness and understanding of how breast cancer affects the sufferer, the family, *etc*. However, the primary purpose of the project was not to test photography's contribution to understanding but to produce photographs dealing with the subject of breast cancer, or rather to discover, or learn, how to produce them such that they made a contribution to human experience. Hence, while the programme could have been framed as a hypothesis-testing project this would have been of little practical interest to the candidate. Nor was the work concerned with producing a solution to a known problem, thereby contributing to knowledge and understanding. Had this project been the first to deal with the topic this, of itself, would not have provided a justification for undertaking the work. Nor would the fact that it had been done before have been a reason for not doing it. The justification for undertaking the work was that the photographer was motivated to undertake it. Similarly, the student would have had little interest in taking identified 'weaknesses' in the work of other photographers as his starting point, as the resolution of those 'weaknesses' would not necessarily have related at all to his underlying interest in undertaking the work. Rather, the work might be original, but not necessarily in the sense of new-to-the-world or an improvement on existing works, or of resolving an externally defined problem.

In such a situation, what one is dealing with is a topic of interest (*e.g.*, breast cancer) and creative objectives (*e.g.*, work dealing with breast cancer) that resist, throughout the programme of work, reduction to a single problem and its solution. Furthermore, the selection of topic and goal are made on the basis of personal rather than collective recognition. This is not to suggest that the selection is self-indulgent. Of course, it can be, but, while individually unique, every person has much in common with others, sharing with them cultural and social space. As such, what interests one person is likely to be of interest to others. Nevertheless, although artefacts are produced, their novelty, shared interest and usefulness may not be easily demonstrated or assessed.

It is for these reasons that norms 3 and 4 in Table 1 refer to issues, concerns and interests, rather than questions or problems as the drivers of activity, and the manifestation of these issues, concerns and interests in the artworks, rather than answers and solutions.

Reasoned creation

If the above is reasonable, then it is impossible to maintain that intuition guides the realisation of an artwork in its entirety. Although some of the process may occur intuitively or tacitly, much of the process must be conscious, planned, thought out, informed by contextual understanding and cognition in all its dimensions. Norm 8, Table 1, acknowledges this rationality, whilst accepting the need for reflection in surfacing intuitive or tacit knowledge and processing (*cf.* Scrivener, 2002a for a more detailed discussion of the art making).

Institutionalising transformational practice

The norms shown in Table 1, in Scrivener (2002a) set up a number of expectations of the doctoral visual arts student, expressed in Table 2 as questions to be asked of the material submitted for examination by the doctoral candidate.

Table 2. Questions to be asked of material submitted for examination – Does this material... (adapted from Scrivener, 2002a).

1	…describe the issues, concerns and interests stimulating the work?
2	…show that the issues, concerns and interests reflect cultural preoccupations?
3	…show that the response to these stimulants is likely to be culturally original?
4	…show the relationship between the artefact(s) and those issues, concerns, and interests?
5	…offer an artefact(s) that generates novel apprehension(s)?
6	…communicate any knowledge, learning or insight resulting from the programme of work?
7	…show the candidate to be a self-conscious, systematic and reflective practitioner?

The above norms and tests prescribe an institutional definition of transformational visual arts practice to which the doctoral student must adhere. Unlike the doctoral student, in the 'wild' the artist need not subscribe to these norms, nor evidence the realisation of these norms (typically in the form of a thesis or exigesis) as implied in Table 2. Indeed, having completed a doctoral programme, an artist might choose to ignore the norms.

However, it is important to recognise that this is not what is anticipated. In other intellectual and creative endeavours, the doctoral degree is an induction into a community of practice, largely embodied within academe, *i.e.*, it is the start of professional research career in an educational context not the end of an educational process. If doctoral programmes are to have a similar function within the visual arts, then as framed here, we are actually embarking on a process of institutionalising transformational visual arts practice.

The value of institutionalising transformational visual arts practice

The primary burden that the institutionalisation of transformational visual arts practice has on the visual arts practice is the requirement that the transformational imperative is evidenced, as per Table 2. Regardless of how this evidence is provided, whether visual or textual, this is a something that is not normally required by the artworld. Rather it is something the academic artworld imposes on the artist in order for his or her practice to be acknowledged as transformational. What reasons, then, might we have for thinking that this additional burden might better serve the artworld's transformational function?

According to Scrivener (2004b), the "academic exercise" above is worth pursuing on the basis of a number of values, that:

- There is a positive relation between productive excellence, *i.e.*, innovative artefact production, and reflective practice;
- Reflective practice is a productive mode of personal creative development;
- Reflective practice yields practitioners who can give accounts of their work, which, *e.g.*, explicate the overarching theory, appreciative system and the norms used to evaluate the unintended and unexpected consequences;
- These accounts are a valuable resource for other practitioners and interested parties, providing, amongst other things, 'examples, images, understandings' (Schön, 1983: 138) and strategies for action that other practitioners may employ to extend their own repertoires;
- Reflective practice equips practitioners to induct novices into that practice.

Currently, these represent assumed values and we will have to wait and see whether they materialise as actual benefits.

Conclusion

It has been argued that there are different intellectual and creative cultures and that each has a different purpose. Most of these cultures have identified a professional class responsible for advancing purpose. Typically, members of this class are called researchers and for the most part exercise their practice within academe. In contrast, it has been suggested that the artworld has not identified a distinct transformational class.

Notwithstanding tradition, a change process is underway in the academic artworld that is likely to result in a professional visual arts research class. However, what kind should this be? In this chapter, the idea of a transformational class realised through the appropriation of research paradigms from other creative and intellectual cultures is rejected. Instead, it is argued that the artworld has always embodied and continues to embody a transformational function, and if anything is to be professionalized, this should be it. The chapter then postulates norms, tests and the value of such a practice in terms of features of the artworld.

The ideas presented in this chapter can be accepted or rejected. Whatever choice we make appears problematic. Dispute about the precise framing of the norms and tests of transformational practice need not concern us here, but what if we reject the idea that the artworld embodies a transformational (research) function that is realised through the creation and presentation of artworks? Alternatively, accepting this claim, what are the consequences of rejecting the idea that this function should be the focus of a professional research (transformational) class? Both rejections seems to lead inevitably to modes of activity that are something other than art making and in the long term to the population of art school faculty by non art makers. We will need to clearly articulate the benefits and ways of assessing the benefits of such change to the artworld. However, insofar as academe can still deliver transformational artists to the artworld, it will be largely unaffected.

On the other hand, accepting both of the above ideas means that a hugely significant experiment is underway. This experiment is not simply about what kind of doctoral degrees we might offer. If the doctoral degree is seen not as the last step in the journey from the academic artworld into the artworld, but as a passport into a community of transformational practice operating largely within academe, then this will put into question what it means to be a professional artist.

Acknowledgments

The research reported in this paper was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, under grant number 112155.

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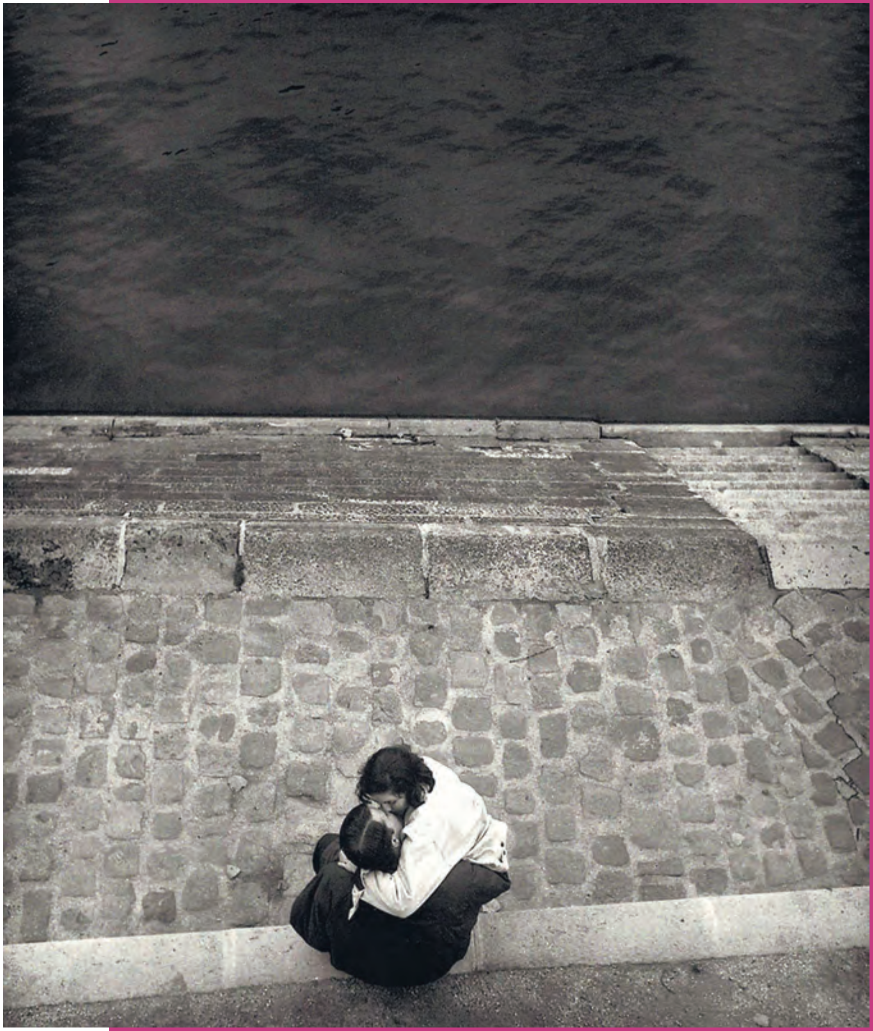

Michael A R Biggs

Modelling Experiential Knowledge for Research

Figure: Christoffer Albrecht, 1996, Paris.

This paper addresses an issue in art and design research. The art and design community is not homogeneous, and there are artists who feel that research in art is very different from research in design, and deserves to be analysed separately. Likewise, there are designers who feel that design is distinctive and warrants a separate treatment. The fundamental issue in this paper is something that is common to both, and indeed, is also common to architecture and the performing arts, for example. Finding a term that includes these disciplines and satisfies those who occupy them is difficult. The area is sometimes referred to as 'the creative and performing arts' (UKCGE 2003), but the word 'arts' can be provocative to designers. Alternatively, 'creative and cultural industries'[1] may be making assumptions about how knowledge is applied and valued. This paper tries to find what is common to these areas rather than what is different between them. As a result, the paper uses the term 'art and design' to identify a broad range of creative practices that share, in this case, an interest in the role of experience in knowledge generation.

The paper is an ontological enquiry: meaning that it examines the problem of how experience can be accommodated in art and design research, not by looking at examples but by looking at what the term 'research' means, and therefore how one might reconceptualise the term 'experience' in order to make them more compatible. It looks at this problem 'in principle' rather than 'in practice', which is what characterises an ontological enquiry. The conclusion is that the experiential feelings we have merely represent something called 'experiential content', and it is this content that is relevant to research. The paper does not attempt to demonstrate the existence of experiential content in practice. This may be dissatisfying to some readers, but it is not the objective of ontological enquiries to identify answers, but instead to point the reader in a direction where answers seem most likely to be found.

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[1] A term favoured by Tony Blair's New Labour Party in UK.

Problem Statement

The context for this paper is the vexed question of the role that experience can or should play in research in art and design, and in particular whether we can clarify what is meant by 'experiential knowledge'. The reason this is a vexed question is that there seems to be an inherent contradiction between the nature of experience and the requirements of research, which arises from the more general problem of subjectivity and objectivity. This paper treats the term 'subjective' in the philosophical sense of 'pertaining to the perceiving subject'. Experience is essentially subjective because it 'belongs' to the perceiving subject and cannot be shared by someone else. There are at least two consequences of this subjectivity: it leads to variable interpretation of meaning and significance by different perceiving subjects; and it leads to difficulties in the communication of content because that content is part of the perceiver's personal and private experience. The inherent contradiction arises because of the converse expectation of 'objectivity' in research. This paper accepts that there are limits to 'objectivity' resulting from epistemological scepticism described in an earlier paper (Biggs 2000). As a result the term 'objective' is reframed so that concepts are 'defensible' rather than 'independent', because the latter implies some kind of philosophical Idealism. There are at least two consequences of this objectivity: the need for unambiguous content, thereby describing a specific and bounded parcel of knowledge; and the need for unambiguous communication, thereby laying a claim to this parcel by the author. Therefore, the consequences of experiential subjectivity appear to contradict the requirements of research objectivity.

In response to this vexed question and apparent contradiction, this paper investigates whether there can still be a place for experiential knowledge in art and design research, or whether the contradiction is actual rather than apparent and is therefore an indication that there is no possible place for such knowledge. The method employed to analyse this contradiction is concept analysis in the context of philosophical aesthetics.

The term 'aesthetics' refers to the analysis of a certain class of experience rather than the theory of beauty. 'Aesthetic response' refers to a reaction that we have to a meaningful sensory experience. It is sometimes felt as a physical response such as having goose-bumps, or being moved to tears by emotion. Having such physical symptoms is not a criterion of having an aesthetic response, but serves to show that we can and do have a special kind of reaction to certain stimuli associated with pleasure. In extreme circumstances, we may manifest physical symptoms, but at a lower level we may simply have preferences that are not necessarily backed by conscious judgements. This paper assumes that this ability to react to pleasurable stimuli is something commonplace, and not the kind of rare ecstatic reaction that has formerly been a focus in aesthetics, known as 'the sublime'. The 'aesthetic response' can also be described as a certain category of interpretation, which is familiar to us if we know how to view *objecs trouvés* in the art gallery. We try to have an aesthetic response to such objects, as opposed to the everyday response we might normally have to something like a pile of bricks.[2] We are also having an aesthetic response when we express a preference between equally functional designed objects. Having claimed that an aesthetic response is commonplace, we can return to the question of whether there can be a role for experience in research in art and design, and use the aesthetic response as an indicator of the presence of a relevant experience.

Contextualising the Problem

Practice-based research is the focus of a great deal of attention in art and design at the moment. In the UK, the Arts and Humanities Research Council [AHRC] has commissioned a survey of both practice-based research and practice-based doctorates in order to obtain an overview of the range of activities that are encompassed by the term.[3] In Sweden, the government has introduced a Bill that extends the scope of national research,[4] and in response the Vetenskapsrådet [Swedish Research Council] has established a series of international guest professorships through which to develop practice-based research (Sundbaum 2006, 30). In Brazil, there continues to be a divide between research and professional practice at the highest level, and academic research. This is evidenced by the impossibility of reconciling the two areas in the national research database of Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa [CNPq].[5] These examples show that the boundary between research and practice is unclear to national funding agencies. Even the terminology had yet to be standardised, as recognised by the AHRC in their survey briefing. Although 'practice-based research' is probably the most widely used expression, it does little to clarify what is special about this activity since most research could be said to be based somehow in practice, or to have a relationship to the practical world (Langrish 2000, 303). The AHRC currently prefers the term 'practice-led research' and others have used 'practice-based', 'process-led', 'studio-based' or 'studio-led' research. What all these expressions have in common is a reference to the way in which the field of

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[2] E.g. Carl Andre, Equivalent VIII, 1966. Collection of Tate Modern, London.

[3] AHRC Research Review Practice-Led Research in Art, Design and Architecture. Commissioned Summer 2005.

[4] Bill: "Research for a Better Life", 2005.

[5] CNPq Plataforma Lattes. URL http://lattes.cnpq.br/index.htm

art and design is advanced though the creation of artefacts. This in turn assumes a number of different relationships, a few of which will be the focus of this paper. In particular, there is an assumption that the knowledge base of art and design in some way includes either the artefacts themselves or the knowledge that is embodied in them. This assumption is manifest in the cultural practice of the display and conservation of these artefacts instead of preserving only secondary literature about them. Finally, there is a tendency for theory to be about these artefacts, and to constitute critical commentary on them.

Artefacts and Theories

The claim in art and design that knowledge is embodied in artefacts is different from the claim of scientists and engineers in relation to knowledge demonstrated in their experiments. Although some experimental processes result in artefacts such as particle accelerators, nonetheless, research in these fields mainly aims to produce principles and theories that are then used to guide the construction of artefacts, *e.g.* bridges. One could say that the artefacts were the practical verification of the validity or value of the preceding theoretical outcomes of research. If we compare this with the embodiment claim in art and design, we can see that there is a difference in the relationship of theory and experience.

art	practice	→	theory
science	theory	→	practice

This generalised description illustrates that in art and design the artefact is not normally produced as a result of applying a theoretical or critical model. Indeed, the chronology is somewhat the reverse. Arts theorisation and criticism follows from an analysis of the artefacts that have already been produced and this chronology encourages us to think that the role of artefacts in art and design research may indeed be different from the role of artefacts in science and engineering. We can also see that there is a political difference between art and design on the one hand, and science and engineering on the other because in the latter researchers are in a different category of worker to the former. In art and design, we confuse the practitioner who generates the experience with the science researcher who generates theory. This contributes to the current problem concerning practice-led research and its relationship to studio practice. The mere fact that chronologically the studio practitioner and the science researcher are in the same antecedent relationship to art theory does not necessarily imply that all antecedent work in the studio is therefore research. When Ryle (1949, 30) said 'efficient practice precedes the theory of it' he was not making a claim about the status of practice as pre-linguistic research, rather he was making an assertion about the relationship of theory as commentary on efficient practice. The differentiation is also supported by Keinonen in the present volume, in his separation of the 'Field of Research (FR)' from the 'Field of Art (FA)'.

Returning to the issue of the knowledge base of art and design, we need to consider the nature of the claim that it is in some way embodied in artefacts. This might be the weak claim that artefacts are useful, interesting, aesthetic bearers of meaning, and that this use of artefacts is in some way sympathetic to the overall aims of art and design. Alternatively, art and design practice-led researchers may be making a stronger claim. Their claim could be that artefacts are an essential part of either the process or the communication of its outcomes (*cf*. Scrivener in this volume: Table 2). It is not difficult to identify at least one key feature of art and design artefacts that is indeed related to this claim, and that is the ability to evoke an aesthetic response through for example visual, aural, or gustatory sensation. Thus, we are essentially interested in the experience of the artefact and our reception of it. Aesthetic theories describe the nature of the aesthetic response as a particular kind of experience, and the reason we value it as more than just a particular form of sensory excitement, and why we give it additional social and cultural value. Because the aesthetic response is intimately linked to the artefact itself, it is clear that we must have artefacts and not just theories about artefacts in order to stimulate the aesthetic response. Here we can also see a familiar pattern: the aesthetic experience precedes aesthetic theorisation. The normal model is therefore experience first, and theorisation and knowledge second. This accords with the earlier observation that the practice of artefact production in the studio is usually not predicated on an explicit theory.

Let us stay for the moment with the insight that an aesthetic response is stimulated by an experience, and that experience is made available to us because of the existence of the artefact that has been made by the artist or designer. If we consider the illusive notion of ‘intention’, we might venture to suggest that the artist or designer intended us to have a certain experience and, as it were, embodied that intention in the artefact (Diaz-Kommonen 2004). This is, I believe, the nature of the argument given by practitioners to defend their role as researchers. The artist or designer embodies an idea in an artefact through their personal skill. This embodied idea then becomes the object of experiential reception and critical analysis. Because critical analysis and experiential reception both generate forms of new knowledge then, the claim goes, that was the intention of the artist/designer, who should have the credit as the researcher. This claim would seem to have some legitimacy if considered as a type of collaborative research, in which some of the work is done by the artist/designer and some is perhaps done by the critic.

We have observed that one of the functions of the critic is to extract theoretical notions from the analysis of artefacts. In addition, we can observe that there is also a modal transformation from the visual or sensual reception of objects into language. This is noteworthy because aspects of non-linguistic artefacts are represented in language by the critic, and that in terms of form if not in terms of content, this is the moment at which the claimed outcomes of art and design research achieve a presentation that is similar to the outcomes of research in other fields.

Earlier in this paper, it was suggested that we might use the expression 'intention'. Apart from the dangers of the so-called 'intentional fallacy' (Wimsatt 1954, IV), it is probably not the claim of all artists/designers that they have an explicit intention that they wish to communicate, but instead to put before the viewer a number of experiences and to admit, indeed encourage, a pluralistic approach to the significances of those experiences (cf. reference to Blanchot in Laakso's paper in the present volume). Such interpretations are situated and benefit from pluralism rather than being weakened by it. The reason why we may be tempted by the notion of artistic intention is that we have already noted that research includes at least two objective expectations that seem to require directed approaches. The first is that something new has been gained: not just a novel artefact that has not existed before, but new knowledge that has not existed before. In order to give credit to the artist for the production of this new knowledge, we must attribute to the artist an awareness of what they have achieved, and the claim that they had purposively embodied this knowledge in the artefact. Secondly, we also need to attribute intention [in the sense of purposiveness] to the artist, not just of manifesting the knowledge through this embodiment, but also of having the express intention of communicating it to others. Thus, we could say that the first intention legitimises the intellectual property as being, at least in part, owned by the artist. Secondly, we could say that the knowledge is disseminated by the artist, as is required if this new knowledge is to contribute to the field and not just to the personal development of the artist.

We have now identified the two core claims of practice-led research. The first of these is that the artefact is essential because it has the potential not just to evoke experiences in the viewer but also to evoke particular experiences that have been embodied in it by the artist researcher. Second, that through this process of embodiment, the artefact becomes the vehicle of communication, and repeated exposure to persons will have the effect of disseminating the experiential content that has something to do with the research value of the artefact. Practice-based researchers may be claiming one or both aspects.

Unfortunately, it is still unclear the extent to which embodiment in an artefact is part of communicating experiences and the extent to which it is part of a research process prior to its communication. In other words, is the artefact the equivalent of a report that neatly summarises experimental and speculative work that has gone on elsewhere, or is the artefact more like an experiment: raw process or raw data that may or may not be summarised linguistically elsewhere, for example, by a critic? The stronger claim is that the artefact is the equivalent of a report. This is a strong claim because it implies that an alternative form of summary would not be possible, *i.e.* that art and design research produces something non-linguistic, and this is why the outcome must be an artefact and not a piece of writing by a critic. As we have seen, this is intimately bound up with the notion that the aesthetic response is important in the field of art and design. This stronger claim also subsumes the weaker one because there would be no reason to have a non-linguistic communication at the end of a linguistic process. It is therefore coherent for the non-linguistic claims of art and design research that the need for an artefact-based communication of the outcomes of art and design research arises from the non-linguistic nature of the process as a whole. This would also be true for other forms of expression, such as music, architecture, *etc.*

At this point, it might be useful to clarify the meaning of newness and originality in art and design research, because the value that is embodied in the outcome lies not in its non-linguistic mode but in its original contribution to what is known or understood in the field. It would be easy, and indeed trivial, to create experiences that are new in the sense that they have never been experienced before. Every creative production is new: even the drawings of 5-year-old children have never been seen before in exactly this arrangement. This has caused some confusion in the past since all production from the studio is by this token new and apparently making a new contribution to the world. But that which is new in such cases is an experience, whereas what is required in research is new knowledge. Whether the new experience can be connected to new knowledge is something that is being discussed in this paper. What can already be stated is that the mere newness of the experience is not necessarily an indicator that it is connected to new knowledge.

There is something else that we can observe about the nature of the embodied experiential content. Since every creative production entails newness, what the art and design researcher needs to claim for experience is less about newness and more about instrumentality (Biggs 2002). Thus, there is an implicit claim: that we need to attend to the artefact because the experience of it is instrumental in the building or creation of the new knowledge that is its claimed value. Such a claim would begin to explain the role of the artefact, and our experience of it, in the communication of content.

The instrumentality, the claim of a causal link between the experience and the subsequent knowledge, at first sight seems to be a difficult connection to establish. To illustrate the possibility of such a connection: we generally accept the social and cultural phenomenon of aesthetic reception in which an artefact, including intangibles such as music, creates a particular kind of reaction in the perceiving subject, over and above the apperception of the mere sense data or however else one might wish to model the basic sensory mechanism. The aesthetic response requires something more: a kind of resonance between the perceptual and the cognitive faculties that causes us to categorise certain objects as affective and to give them social and cultural value.

Although it is true that these values change, the general principle that certain objects are capable of causing this resonant affect is one that is generally accepted (*e.g.* Scruton 1983). This reinforces the earlier observation that this paper bases its account of the relationship of studio production to research in the tradition of philosophical aesthetics, that is to say, not just the aesthetic response per se, but the significance of the aesthetic response to the social construct of meaning, significance and communication.

Experience

An aspect that has thus far passed by without comment is the relationship between experience and experiential content. These two are not synonymous. The word 'experience' focuses on the sensation and feelings we get when exposed to certain objects and situations, whereas experiential content is that which can be extracted from the moment and therefore has the possibility to form the basis for something else, such as knowledge. Finding some common ground in what are inevitably subjective [sic] judgements has long been a goal in aesthetics, for example Kant's differentiation between individual preferences and common judgements of taste (Kant 1980, §VII). Nonetheless, it is not clear whether such a separation is possible in contemporary practice and therefore whether there can be such a thing as experiential content. Perhaps as soon as we remove ourselves from sensation, or analyse it, then its essence escapes and experiential content becomes simply some abstracted reflection on what has happened. This would be a significant objection, and it is broadly the objection of Phenomenology. Phenomenology strives to maintain a direct relationship, a pre-cognitive relationship, with experience but accepts, for example in Sartre, that one will inevitably be in 'bad faith' with one's own feelings and actions because at the very moment of their reception such feelings are subject to a local historicism in which they are instantaneously recruited into one's personal self-perception and world-view (Sartre 1969, 47ff.). It is an interesting symptom of the complexity of maintaining an authentic relationship with phenomena that the language used to describe it seems so indirect and complex. One might explain this as a symptom not of the complexity of the relationship, but of the complexity of describing sensory experience in linguistic form. However, the fact that chronologically the account comes after the experience is also an indicator that one is already in the historicising moment and the complexity of the language is a symptom of one recognising the inauthenticity of our relationship to what one is trying to describe.

The purpose of this discussion of Phenomenology is to consider the difference between experience and experiential content. What Phenomenology demonstrates is that maintaining a direct relationship with experience is difficult. This paper suggests that it is not only difficult, but in the present context, pointless, since it is what we do with its significance that matters. Although experience is something we value because it is so intimately related to the characteristic nature of the outcomes of art and design, in art and design research we need to step beyond that into the knowledge base of the subject. To do this, there needs to be a bridge, and the bridge that has been suggested, problematised, but perhaps as yet not substantiated, is the concept of experiential content.

Although experiences may be regarded as one element that particularly characterises the reception of art and design, they bring with them an important limitation as far as research is concerned and that is their subjectivity. Experiences are necessarily first-person: it is I who has the experience and nobody else can have the experience for me. As a result, I must build my own bank of experiences and I can learn only indirectly from what others tell me of theirs. This concept can be unpacked a little more. It is quite common for us to speak of experiences: when we come back from holiday we tell our friends of the experiences that we have had. But these are descriptions of what we have done, and perhaps descriptions of feelings that we have had. We do not anticipate or intend that those we tell will have surrogate experiences of exactly the kind that we have had. Our descriptions may cause our listeners to have feelings and experiences but they will be different from the experiences they would have had if they were directly exposed to the original stimuli as we were. Furthermore, even if they were exposed to the same stimuli at the same time, they would not necessarily have the same experience because of it being personal and subjective. That is what is wrong with the expression "if I were you I would have done…". If "I were you" I would have done exactly what you did, it is only if "I were me" that I would have done something different: but in that case the situation tells us very little. Language can be misleading because although we use expressions such as 'let me tell you about my experiences', there is no implication that the experience is communicated but rather 'let me tell you what happened to me' or 'what I saw', *etc*.

This clarifies the two difficulties above regarding the inclusion of experiences in research. These difficulties need to be taken into account in the description of what constitutes art and design research. The first difficulty is that as I build my bank of experiences everything that is new is new-for-me. Whilst having experiences that are new-for-me is important for me and my personal development, it has been shown that this is not the kind of newness and originality that is significant for research. In research, one is concerned with new knowledge that has hitherto been unknown to anybody. Because I must have these experiences myself and be directly exposed to the stimuli that cause them, I am locked into a very direct one-to-one first-person relationship with 'objects of acquaintance' (Russell 1912, Chap.5). The reason why I am forced into this kind of relationship is part of the second difficulty: that experiences per se cannot be communicated to others. In telling of my experiences I do not evoke the same experiences in others. Indeed a third difficulty is that I have no way of knowing whether, if others were exposed to the same stimuli, they would have the same experience.

Thus experiences are necessarily private (Wittgenstein 1968, 299) and subjective in the philosophical sense of belonging to the perceiving subject and affected by their agency.

These difficulties are all counter-indicators to the possibility that experiences per se could be an integral part of art and design research, because of the requirement that the outcomes of research must be communicable and disseminated. Even if one accepts a certain plurality in the way in which individuals receive and make use of experiences, still the research context requires a purposiveness and directed quality to the transmission of knowledge from the researcher to the audience. It is this requirement that focuses our attention on the content of the experience rather than the experience itself. In other words, what content have we gained as a result of an experience once the immediate feelings and sensations have passed?

In an earlier paper (Biggs 2004, 9), it was proposed that it might be useful to consider the relationship between experiential content and experience or experiential feeling as being a representational relationship. The purpose of an alternative representation is either to overcome some difficulty in the perception of certain qualities in the original, or to facilitate its communication. The alternative form is therefore chosen because it does not suffer from the difficulties of the original. There must be some difference between the representation and the original, or we cannot say that one represents the other. For example, an object cannot represent itself, it simply is itself. The word ‘representation’ would be inappropriate in such circumstances.[6]

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[6] Naturally, a lot more could be said about these statements, e.g. linguistic semantics is based on this distinction. Even the mimetic theory of representation relies on at least a small difference between the representation and the representamen in order to identify the process of mimesis. The constructionist theory of representation concentrates on this difference. The representational theory of cognition suggests that this difference is inescapable.

Therefore, in evoking representation, this paper asserts that experiential content is distinct from experience or experiential feeling.

We have seen that the form of experiential feeling presents certain difficulties for research because of its inherent subjectivity and problems of communication. Therefore changing the form of experience might overcome some of these difficulties. Using this approach, we might anticipate that experiential content is not especially like experience, but in some way analogous to it. In an analogy, certain qualities of one thing are compared with certain qualities of another, but in other respects the two things compared are quite different. As a result, we could hypothesise that experiential content might not be especially like experiential feeling in the way in which we experience it, so much as the way in which we understand it. As a result of this transformation, experiential content need no longer have the undesirable qualities of experience and therefore need not bring with it notions of epistemic subjectivity. Nor need experiential content be a strange hybrid of experience and cognition.

Proposal

This paper therefore proposes that experiential feelings should be regarded as representations of experiential content. There are several reasons for suggesting this. Experiential feelings are very powerful and are characteristic of, and often essential to, the reception of artefacts in art and design. But these feelings are subjective: they are trapped within the perceiving subject, and we cannot be sure that all people experience these artefacts in the same way. This makes communication and dissemination difficult. If these qualities were regarded as representations of something else more fundamental, then these difficulties might be overcome. Two questions remain if we take this path. Firstly, what kind of form would this content have, and secondly, how desirable is it that we maintain and communicate these experiential qualities?

It is difficult to imagine a represented content that in some way refers to the qualities of experiential feeling that interest us, without it continuing to suffer from the same problems of subjectivity and communication that we have already encountered. However, this problem can be avoided because these qualities, although they are characteristic, are not the core qualities that concern us and therefore we are not obliged to seek a form that has these qualities. This paper proposes that the presence of the problems of subjectivity and communication are merely indicators of the presence of a certain kind of artefact: an aesthetic artefact. These qualities cue us to interpret the artefact in a particular way: as an object of art and design. Having cued the adoption of an appropriate mode of interpretation, we can dispense with the notion of experiential feeling and concentrate on the more significant and transferable aspect of experiential content. Therefore, although the representation may be characterised by experiential feeling, what it represents need not have these characteristics.

The fact that we do attempt to describe our experiences to others perhaps suggests another way of conceptualising experiential content. When we speak about experiences, we know that we cannot evoke the same experience in others as we had ourselves. We rely on two things in the listener. The first is that the listener may recognise in what we say some equivalent experience that they have had themselves. Both parties know that the degree of agreement in the nature of this experience is likely to be unpredictable but where there is a willingness, a ‘suspension of disbelief’, to be tolerant of the degree of agreement or disagreement, then communication can occur. We describe such listeners as ‘sympathetic’. The second way that communication can occur is if we have a listener who is ‘empathic’. The empathic listener need not have experienced what we describe, but is prepared and able to ‘put themselves in our shoes’ and creatively imagine what it might have been like in that situation and what feelings that situation might have evoked. The most empathic listeners go further and appear to understand what it would have been like for the speaker in that situation rather than themselves. The concepts of sympathy and empathy show that there are surrogate ways of having experiences that are linguistically and socially institutionalised and point towards a notion of experiential content. In this context of sharing it is clear that the experiences themselves cannot be shared. The experiences stimulate a description and the sympathetic or empathic listener uses this description to anticipate something about that experience and recreates a surrogate experience for themselves, knowing that this is not the same as that which would be caused by direct acquaintance with the stimulus. In this description, something has bridged the gap between the speaker and the listener and this bridge is once again the concept of experiential content.

Other examples can be given in which we are more concerned with content than with the accompanying feeling, even though it is a feeling that cues our response. Figure 1 is an example of simultaneous brightness contrast from colour theory (Itten 1964).

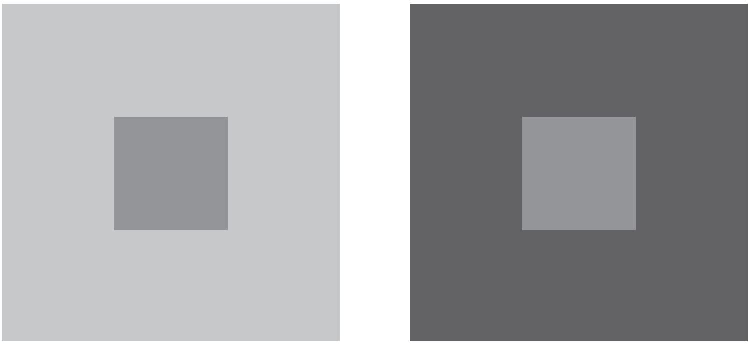

Figure 1. Simultaneous Brightness Contrast.

It is clear that one must engage with the phenomenological experience of seeing these colours and not just reading about them. Someone who has been blind from birth could not have direct knowledge of this phenomenon: it would not be an 'object of acquaintance' in Russell's terms. But there are many things about which we do not have knowledge, even regarding objects with which we are acquainted. It was my experience during colour theory classes at art school, that many students did not seem to be experiencing the phenomena that were being described. I had that experience myself, that I did not always 'see' what I was supposed to see.

Gregory and Heard (1979 §1.1), as a second example, claim that subjects will consistently experience the horizontal lines in the Münsterberg Figure as crooked. This is also a phenomenon with which we must have direct acquaintance in order to have the associated experience; of a conflict between our conceptual and perceptual knowledge.

As a final example, experiments were conducted by Fechner in the 19th century in which subjects were asked to express a preference for the proportions of rectangles, and those experiments seemed to rein-

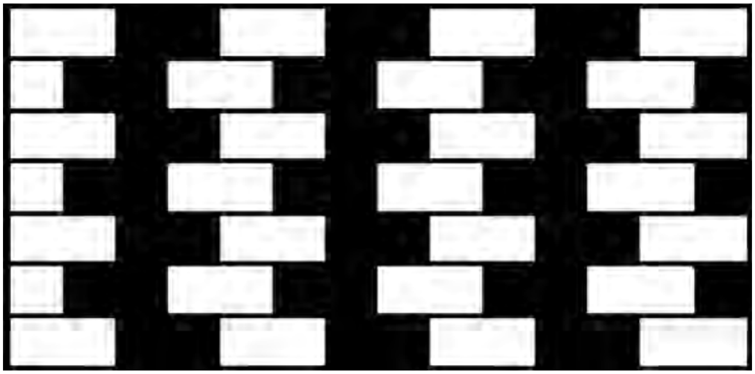

Figure 2. Münsterberg Figure.

force the claim that the Golden Section is perceived as a particularly harmonious and preferred ratio (Frings 2002, 19). All three of these examples: simultaneous brightness contrast, visual illusion, and harmonious proportions; although based on perceptual experience, can be summarised linguistically. In all cases it is necessary to have a perceptual experience, but the outcome is a rule from which one could construct examples that demonstrate the phenomenon in question. Even the example from colour theory could be specified in terms of the wavelengths of the light involved, *etc*. This shows three things: that there is a content that is separable from the experience; that it can be summarised and communicated linguistically; and that the conditions for these experiences are replicable. As a result, this paper claims that it should be the purpose of art and design research to disembody the content from the experience and thereby render transferable what was formerly subjective and non-transferable. Art and design research should use the experiential feeling aroused in the viewer as an indicator of the presence of experiential content that might otherwise be hidden in the plethora of objects in the world. Making this separation makes the conditions of the experience, rather than the subjective experiential feeling itself, replicable and hence comparable to one of the important criteria of research in the sciences.

Conclusion

We now have a model of how to address experience in art and design research, and extract from it experiential knowledge. Not all research in this field needs to have this as a central issue, but when it does, this paper suggests a solution as to how it may be addressed. The model frames the problem as a representational one in which content is initially indicated by the presence of certain experiences and feelings, and it is the task of the researcher to make explicit the content of which these experiences and feelings are a representation. The underlying problem will always be of the type: 'of what is this a representation?' As a consequence, one might ask whether experiential content could itself be an artefact that evokes feelings. It would be attractive to artists for the answer to this question to be 'yes' because that would mean it was possible to have a research outcome consisting solely of visual artefacts without any additional texts, *i.e.* to have experiential feelings as representations of experiential feelings as content. However, this paper now proposes an answer, and, to the disappointment of the artist, it is 'no'. The reason why the outcome of the research cannot be constituted by an artefact that evokes particular experiences is because all experiences are subjective and non-transferable, and therefore can only be indicators of the presence of something needing to be unpacked. This paper does not propose that the implication of unpacking is that one must be able to specify the content linguistically, and communicate it linguistically. However, it is making the requirement that to be an outcome rather than part of the process of research one must face the issue of subjectivity and communication. Therefore, the outcome cannot itself be intrinsically subjective and non-transferable, and if there is an aspect of experiential feeling to the representation then it must not be essential to the appropriate interpretation of the representation. This is comparable to the questions of psychological research into perception, which do not simply demonstrate phenomena, but attempt to explain why these phenomena occur (cf. Gregory & Heard 1979). In psychological research, the experience is a means to an end, and that is how it needs to be in art and design research, too. Experiential feelings per se cannot be the outcome of research, and even though experiential feelings are important in the reception of art and design, they are merely an accompaniment to content.

This modelling of the role of experiential feeling in research in art and design should still be attractive to researchers because it leaves open the possibility that part of the research process might legitimately be involved with experiential feeling. What is now perhaps less attractive is that experiential content is only indicated by, and not explicitly communicated through, embodiment in artefacts. Experiential content must, therefore, be extracted and alternatively represented. Making art and design research into a representational problem does not diminish the importance of this experiential component. According to this paper, content is initially indicated by the very experiential and aesthetic aspects that most characterise the field. That is an important role for experience. Following this initial identification, the transformational process of unpacking the representation is also both creative and revelatory. It allows us to see aspects and to make connections that were hitherto invisible and unknown. We might compare this to the sciences that also seek to find new insights and to make new connections in the existing material world, not just to add new artefacts to it. In a similar way, this paper has concentrated not on the newness of the artefacts that are the products of studio practice in art and design, but the insights and connections that arise from them as a result of art and design research, and the way that can contribute knowledge.

Finally, conceptualising the act of research in art and design in this way substantially reduces the apparent differences between the sciences and the arts. We have seen that both aspire to make ‘objective’, transferable and communicable judgements about the material world. The collection of judgements that are accepted by the respective communities as meaningful and upon which further work may be based forms the knowledge-base of the field (Biggs 2005). The knowledge-base is what the contemporary practitioner needs to know in order to function effectively and to address the current issues and questions in ways that are relevant and meaningful to others, and through so doing is able to add to that knowledge base.

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