

*Artistic Research Methodology* argues for artistic research as a context-aware and historical process that works inside-in, beginning and ending with acts committed within an artistic practice. An artistic researcher has three intertwined tasks. First, she needs to develop and perfect her own artistic skills, vision and conceptual thinking. This happens by developing a vocabulary for not only making but also writing and speaking about art. Second, an artistic researcher has to contribute to academia and the "invisible colleges" around the world by proposing an argument in the form of a thesis, a narrative, and in so doing helping to build a community of artistic research and the bodies of knowledge these communities rely on. Third, she must communicate with practicing artists and the larger public, performing what one could call "audience education." There is no way of being an engaged and committed partner in a community without taking sides, without getting entangled in issues of power. Consequently, the methodology of artistic research has to be responsive both to the requirements of the practice and the traditions of science. Here the embedded nature of the knowledge produced through artistic research becomes evident. *Artistic Research Methodology* is essential reading for university courses in art, art education, media and social sciences.

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ISSN 978-3-0391-8666-5



ARTISTIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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# ARTISTIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Narrative, Power and the Public

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critical qualitative research

PETER LANG

## PART I

### FAIL AGAIN, FAIL BETTER

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## 1. Artistic Research Inside-In

Methods? Methods of qualitative research? Or even more focused on a specific group of actors and agents: methods of artistic research? Who needs them? And why? What are they for?

This book continues the collaboration among three researchers working hands-on with students in various fields of cultural production. It is a tentative next step that follows from the previous joint effort, *Artistic Research—Theories, Methods and Practices*, in 2005. It is not an update, or a revision, but a new collection of thoughts and desires that emerge and evolve from the day-to-day acts of doing, teaching and facilitating research both in social sciences and in art universities.

To call this ongoing process a lifelong commitment would be preposterous, but nevertheless, there is evidently something intriguing and in the deepest sense challenging in the questions and issues of what is research and why and how it is supposed to be done that keeps all three of us returning to them, not as an institutional position or power game but as a self-reflective and open-ended practice.

What we return to is vividly, consciously and encouragingly a set of topics and themes that need to be labelled as productive dilemmas. They are dilemmas that should never ever be finalized or solved. They are constantly in great need of actualization—in and through the given site and situation, their locally situated discursive and physical geographies and genealogies. We return to these dilemmas because they do not leave us at peace. We also return because we enjoy the challenge—and the possibility of meeting classical issues and topics of social and human sciences again and again. In a very particular way, it is like returning to meet good old friends whom you are very fond of but at the same time who are rather annoying and even impossible to stay with. But, well, you stay, and keep on keeping on, because you have realized that you cannot get rid of them anyway.

But who does the how and what? In the inherent and internal logic of practice-based, open-ended and self-critical historical context-aware research, the one who does research does so from inside-in. The research is done inside the practice, by doing acts that are a part of the practice. This is not done within a closed-up entity but in and through the acts—conscious of their connection to the history of effects through the past, present and future—of doing the thing, that collection and recollection of acts that make and shape the practice. And, yes, one is allowed to push the envelope, to explore the limits of the practice. Thus, (this kind of) artistic research is characteristically

not research about or of but a participatory act and reflection with a strong performative element.

This participatory character leads us to a planned, but eventually discarded, subtitle for this book: “Artistic Research Methodology—It Ain’t No Fun When the Rabbit’s Got the Gun.” The saying comes from the wonderful world of cartoons and, we would claim, is helpful here due to its focus both on the issue of perspective (who is the one doing things) and how this perspective often alternates and changes its position of articulation within the given practice—also strongly guiding how we see and approach a practice and its possibilities. The insider/outsider alternation in the perspectives is a topic often discussed in indigenous research methodology (see Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), and we will return to it in Chapter 5. To put this in another way: within a given practice, we must be both-and, both readers and writers, the ones who talk and the ones who listen, the ones who do and who are there to relate to and discuss what others in the same and similar practices are doing. It is about talking to and listening to, and arguing back—constantly willing and able to face a rebound.

Whether to call these ongoing changes of perspective (and the need to keep track of them) a “gun,” or with a slightly upgraded metaphor, a “smoking gun,” is a matter of taste. However, what is not a matter of taste are the consequences of the fact that the one who does things performs in and through the practice of doing the acts that constitute that practice. What this means is that the role and the self-evident authority of an outsider’s position is no longer in itself relevant. Criteria for the acts of the practice stem from the practice itself in connection to its histories and present articulations. Again, here the practice is not interpreted as a cleaned-up or closed-up box but as an open-ended, internally conflictual enterprise that is always anchored within its structures.

This perspective brings with it a combination that is called the duality of freedom and responsibility. The act of doing research must have the freedom of choices and the risks that it needs to take. At the same time, the researcher has to be personally present and take the responsibility for the choices and the interpretation of the conditions of conditions and the materials that he or she gathers and talks and walks with while turning that information into a work of art of any type or any other kind of cultural product. What do we mean by conditions of conditions? The doubling is intended to highlight the fact that the conditions are themselves conditioned, which means that they are always contested, actualized, reinterpreted and so on. Taking the situation and site as something means actualizing one set of conditions and challenging, changing others and messing with the conditions of the conditions.

Freedom and responsibility: the words are big and they might sound scary, but they are real and necessary. In the previous book, this was translated and transformed into two metaphors: democracy of experiences and methodological abundance. The former, in short, states this: a priori, there is no hierarchy among different kinds or types of experience within the same site and situation. There is, in other words, no inherent inequality between interpreting the same and similar phenomena with the means, let’s say, of artistic production or with the means of economical or sociological data. This leads to a plurality of takes on a reality, a plurality of traditions and values.

The latter metaphor is related to the writings of the philosopher Paul Feyerabend. With Feyerabend in *Against Method* (2010), the metaphor is turned and tuned into a slogan that is as provocative as it is productive: “anything goes.” It is rather obviously usable for motives of any kind and colour. But what it says is that at the start of any process, there must be no limitations on where the process might take us. “Anything goes” is the ultimate recognition that things must stay open and potential. As a starting point, it also underlines that research hardly ever begins with a clearly clarified and stated problem, but instead, kicks off with fooling around with the matters, playing around, experimenting and trying things out (Feyerabend, 2010, p. 157).

Feyerabend’s slogan is easy and open for misunderstandings if and when it is taken out of the recognizable boundaries of the acts constituting a practice. Once it is situated, anchored and embedded, and once it is seen through the lens of an identifiable practice, the demands and the gravity internal to the practice, the slogan stresses the freedom and responsibility inherent in any act of interpretation. “Being able to ‘read’ a certain style also includes knowledge of what features are irrelevant” (Feyerabend, 2010, p. 180). It states the necessity of embeddedness of practice-based research: how, in order for them to make sense, the acts we do have to “take place within a certain specified and historically well-entrenched framework” (Feyerabend, 2010, p. 178).

This framework has a shorthand name: context. As contextual, the research happens on a site and in a situation that never is a priori but is always in great need of being articulated, formed, discussed, maintained and renewed. It is made, not found. It is in a process, not static. It is situated, not stale.

The slogan “anything goes” is a useful symbol because it attracts both extremes. From one side, it awakens the fear of losing the illusion that there is a neutral and natural solid ground upon which our arguments are built. From the other side, it awakens the wish, so deeply anchored in our human nature, of wanting to believe that anything and everything is possible, always and

anywhere, and not only that, but also that anything and everything is great, magnificent and mesmerizing.

How do we strike a balance between the extremes? How do we keep the dilemma productive? In his critical reading of our two guiding principles, democracy of experience and methodological abundance, the godfather of methodological debate in Finland, professor emeritus Antti Eskola, states that the principles are well worth accepting as starting points: "It is not rational to exclude any form of critique or methodological principles of inquiry at the start" (Eskola & Kurki, 2004, p. 223). But in the final analysis, when different methods and approaches will be assessed, one should state clearly which ones are better than others: "One has to dare to declare the winner, for the debate does not stop here, but continues with such questions as who were the judges, and what were their principles of justification" (Eskola & Kurki, 2004, p. 223).

Declaring the winner does not mean taking final and total positions but simply stating the reasons and arguments for having been committed to one perspective, one conclusion, so that the debate can go on. As Eskola's formulation points out, the reverse side, failing to declare the winner, more often than not means disengagement with critique, turning away from the peers. We are back at the conditions of the conditions, mucking about.

This wish draws our attention to one of the most central dangers and problems of any type or kind of practice-based research. To be absolutely straightforward, it is this: everybody hates tourists. However, before going into the dangers inherent in the promise and proposition of a process-based and practice-driven research, let us shape the framework for the task—let us contextualize the issue first from a macro perspective.

For the sake of having an example of an expression of economic clarity, let us turn to a quotation from Alasdair MacIntyre (2006b), discussing the needs and necessities of the acts we act that are located within the structures where we act:

What is most urgently needed is a politics of self-defence for all those local societies that aspire to achieve some relatively self-sufficient and independent form of participatory practice-based community and that therefore need to protect themselves from the corrosive effects of capitalism and the depredations of state power. (p. 155)

With MacIntyre (2006a, pp. 11–12), and in connection to the freedom and responsibility of a situated interpretation, we are also very effectively reminded of these two aspects of our acts: (1) what constitutes a tradition is a conflict of interpretation (here, replacing "tradition" with "practice" or any other name for long-term committed activity is not only possible but

recommended), and (2) questioning and doubting by necessity take place within the context of a tradition.

Both Feyerabend and MacIntyre serve a distinct purpose here. This is not to say that they are "used" or instrumentalised. Instead, both of them provide tools that are taken up in order to shape and make the argument for the context—serious and committed—of a practice-based research activity. Approached from another angle, they are needed to address one of the main dangers of practice-based artistic research that has demonstrated itself, happily and loudly, throughout the last decade, articulated amazingly uniformly in different universities and nations.

This danger actively despises the historicity and context-boundedness of Feyerabend's claim that "anything goes." Not that the manifestations of the dangers are either openly or subconsciously aware of Feyerabend, but their positioning has striking similarities to the slogan. Instead of Feyerabend, or any other figure of discourse, the danger is centered around the wishing well called "artistic activity." This wishing well, to follow up the vocabulary used earlier, functions as a rationalization for taking a nonattached version of freedom and, well, just leaving aside and forgetting the part of responsibility included in an act and an interpretation.

In its most naked form, this attitude is sported like this: because I am an artist, and because I need to experiment, and because all materials and possibilities are accessible and open for me, I can do anything with everything and that anything I do, because I am an artist, is, in itself, interesting and significant. Amen.

Is this a caricature? Based on individual and collective experiences during the last decade teaching art and social sciences, taking part in numerous conferences on the topic of artistic research both domestically and internationally, and reading and seeing art in discourse and practice, you would wish it would be a caricature. But it is not a full-blown reality, either. Let us say, then, that it is a very strong and often visible tendency.

The problem with this wishing well is that it is unwilling and unable to locate itself within a practice and to feel how the past, present and future of that framework for any act really does pull and push it around. To state this in another vernacular, the wishing well that everything is possible and that it would make sense to wish that anything would be possible anywhere and always is to be unable to make the distinction between what in itself is truly possible and what in itself is realistically meaningful. It is a distinction between something general and abstract and something particular and potentially singular.



Thus, it is a confrontation, not only between an act that is surface-happy and an act that is aware of its situatedness, but also a confrontation that highlights the difference between something being a potentiality and it being actualized within a discourse. The metaphor accentuated here is this: are we willing to just put on the costume or are we willing and able to really play the part?

To stay with this hurting feeling, and really using the occasion to rub it in, for real, the dangers for unattached and unbound practice-based artistic research come down to two additional issues. These are (1) saying it ain't doing it—the hope of the miracle of labeling: the often used strategy of hoping that the sheer naming of an act as something would make the act happen as that particular something, and (2) self-congratulatory feel-goodism—the belief that because what one does, one does as an artist, and, therefore, whatever one does is always in itself good and interesting.

To sum this up, it is beneficial to appropriate an old saying from the land of bumper stickers, with the idea of collecting together the 12 most dangerous words in the English language. What we get is a slogan that brings the performative drama to its peak—the dangers parked amidst and ahead of us: “I am an artist doing artistic research and I am here to help you.”

Thus, while everything within the context of a situated practice might indeed be potentially possible and very much worth trying out and experimenting with, this does not mean that any act in itself is always meaningful and substantial. Sure, it could be, but there is no automatic pleasure, no guarantee of success. And well, just guessing here, this realization that not everything makes sense and is of great quality—that does suck, right? It might be even colossally unfair, but, well, it is the very difference between doing the dirty deed and pretending to do it.

This blatant naivety, too often verging on obsessive and self-congratulatory stupidity, is not only supported by false beliefs about the conditions of conditions of creative activity. It is also supported by a misunderstanding of the structures of research activity.

Here, the difference is between two versions of vertically placing that symbol of a building called a pyramid. In the first version, it stands on its head, and in the other one, its long side is on the bottom. The former stance depicts an approach that starts from one's original position and then goes on with the task of gathering and collecting everything and anything that fits or seems to fit the task—whatever the topic of the research is. This is the act of looking toward the topic with a wish for and a belief in a chance of having a 360-degree view and vision.

Contrary to this strategy of all and everything, the pyramid that looks, well, like the pyramid we are used to, locates itself in the vast land of context and works itself through the various potentialities and tries to move toward a perspective, an edited view and vision of the chosen subject and the topic that is no longer even 90 degrees, or 45, not even 25, but when done with seriousness and stamina, is able to create a focus that is aware of its larger ramifications but is talking with and saying something within 3–4 degrees.

This editing out and choosing in is an interesting enough act that comes very close to the act of telling stories. Here, a comparison, for example, with the way Paul Ricoeur (2007) conceptualized storytelling, is both attractive and productive in a critical yet constructive manner. For Ricoeur, “narrativity is to mark, organize, and clarify temporal experience” (p. 3). This is then the collecting of acts that delimits, orders and makes things explicit. Thus, the point is not to state that research and narration are the same procedures but rather to underline that the needed and wanted structural guidelines for both acts are very similar.

But, we go back to the ancient symbols that we try to reactivate for our own purposes. The former pyramid, the one having both great fun and admirable difficulty in balancing on its pointed head, is the act of mapping the terrain. It is the first, start-up step that any research must achieve and activate. But it is not research itself. There is no interpretation; there is just the beginning of a beginning, trying to fathom what needs to be understood in order to be able to distinguish what is relevant, and what is not, and well, why that is so.

The latter pyramid, admittedly having the unfair advantage of looking like we think a real pyramid should, states the need for mapping the terrain but adds the necessity of the next steps, of working through what's relevant and why—moving toward a focused and edited interpretation of the subject and the topic. It is the act of excluding, but with a set of argued-for reasons that stems from the acts of doing the practice. To repeat: research is not an act of filling the bags, the constant semihysterical including and attaching of a wide variety of interconnected perspectives. With the help of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2004), the need to locate oneself is made clear by the facts that (1) “things we perceive make sense only when perceived from a certain point of view” (p. 499), and (2) “to be born is to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted” (p. 527).

A danger connected to the wishing well, that anything in itself is both possible and meaningful, is a lack of awareness of the histories and present conditions of a given practice. This is another phenomenon in the self-image

of certain artists, often further supported by the attitude that the less one knows about the others and their works and acts in the field, the more one has a chance of linking to and digging deeper into one's pure and creative self—with less knowledge, fewer intruders, fewer influences. The acid-free irony of the ghost of a heroic genius is that it is actively used and wished for in the processes that claim to be doing research—which funnily enough, in fact, violently contradicts itself and excludes possibilities, genius and research.

When doing research, however lost and lonely, please, please, please, don't look back in anger, and please, please, please, do not be afraid of influences.

The intensified problem is not the silliness of the image of an artist as a vacuum-packed genius that still keeps haunting us. The problem is in the ease with which this image is supported by a lack of attaching oneself onto the historically bound and situated practices of which one is nominally part.

This danger is highlighted in the aspects of how much and what kind of connection to and knowledge of their context, its past, present and future, the agents claiming to be doing practice-based artistic research have. It is highlighted in the use of materials for and with the research. This is the danger of maintaining a fantasy that everything is available for one as an artistic researcher and the not so well camouflaged disgust that one feels when getting close to the other agents doing artistic research. Thus, the further away other artistic research is from oneself and one's acts of doing the practice, the better it seems to be for the self-image of a detached genius actor of make-believe research.

But, what do we do? Are there any words of advice, *bitte schön*?

The repetitive and somehow perfidious dilemma of most kinds of research is how it tends to have a strong prejudice and even abhorrence toward its own kind and its own contested histories. One of the main tasks of any type of serious and committed research is to turn this strangely beloved attitude completely around and simply force each of us to pay all the attention that we can muster to what is going on within our own field and in adjoining fields.

As a collective and structurally enforced program, this means nothing more special than to read, see, hear and discuss what others have done and are currently doing within their projects—and to do that in a repeated fashion, returning to the issue with a long-term commitment. Get together and stay together, help each other and challenge one another. The most beneficial act for any research is not to try to reach out and get something from somewhere else but to stay with and within the positions and frames of one's own practices. It is peer-to-peer, colleague-to-colleague. This means to take advantage of and to make the best use of what is already accessible and close to

oneself—instead of dreaming of something out there that can have a shiny effect but is not connected to what you are trying to do and achieve.

Reading, seeing, feeling and talking with and within one's own peer group is ridiculously underrated and must be rescued and returned to the core of any research action and activity. To do contextually aware practice-based artistic research means to come together and to stay together and (1) to recognize what are the inherent chances and challenges of one's oeuvre and genre, its contested internal logics and the strategies of its survival, and (2) to enjoy those contextual freedoms and responsibilities that come down both as openings and as restrictions and impossibilities, but, most important, as focused dilemmas to be addressed and articulated.

Research is propelled by knowing your own history and being curious about and interested in it—not because of altruistic reasons but due to the fact that without this involvement and both mental and physical investment there will be no context, no platform, no trampoline; there will be no sites and situations of give and take, push and pull. Without this acute sense and sensibility with the reinterpretation and even reenactment of the past as a plural entity, what else is there?

In one respectable sense, what we have and what we must have are links to the tools and the cases of thinking about who we are, where we are, how we are and what could we possibly do to be able to make some sense of the conditions of our currently demanding conditions. These links are relationships with writers and case studies that highlight the one notion that remarkably often is either forgotten or at least goes unrecognized. In one word, it is imagination.

The lack of imaginative drive and imaginative impressions and involvements is somehow very strange, especially within the field of artistic research. Partly, this can be connected to the tendency of more or less blindly hoping that following the normalized criteria of other versions of academic research would both provide content and solve insistent problems of authority and credibility. But forms and formats are not themselves the content, even if they are needed for the organization and presentation, and also preservation, of content. The terrible deep-seated angst in the face of the possibility of making mistakes and being laughed at is nevertheless only a partial reason. The other is the true blue classic one: ignorance. And this is ignorance, as in the state of not knowing and not really caring what has been going on through the years and the decades of experimental acts of thinking with—whether these acts now take place under the label of sociology, biology or even performances for camera.

Here is not the place to dwell on all the aspirations that the open door called social and political imagination might raise, but it is worthwhile to mention just three examples, examples that function as teasers, as appetizers that are also taken up and taken further in the chapters that follow.

Beginning with the concept of imagination, and the great need for it in any kind of serious research, we have no better head start position than the book by C. Wright Mills, dating back to the year of 1959. It is handy due to its title: *Sociological Imagination*. This is what Mills was asking for and demanding, and this is also what he found achingly and acutely missing at the time. But society of what, and imagination how?

Linking Feyerabend with Mills, sociology is just one name for acts that are many, inherently plural and in conflict with one another. It is an attempt to stay with that essential notion of trying to figure out what, how, where, why and why not. There is nothing magical or mystical about it and nothing that the label in itself should cause too much attention to or admiration about. For imagination, Mills's advice is that if it intends to be anything, it must begin by making itself aware and by connecting itself to the ties between one's social context and one's current biographical situation. It has to trace and recognize connections but also contradictions within the sites where we are and try to behave the best or the worst way possible. This is the ongoing modern dilemma of a human being as a part of his or her histories and institutions, articulated within the daily structures. At its core, imagination itself is nothing more than the willingness and ability to alternate perspectives.

In the words of Mills (2000b), just to use one sound bite at this moment, social imagination "in considerable part consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and of its components" (p. 211). The unfortunate use of the word "total" should not make us worried, since what Mills means is the overall situation that we find ourselves in. Mills is careful to point out is that it is the potentiality of changing perspectives, of thinking and seeing, feeling and being, with differently, that makes the distinction between a participatory researcher and a mere technician. What's more, the perspectives and their alterations are not guarantees, and they are not symmetrical but often enough characterized by inherent incongruities. Nevertheless, they are perspectives that have to be brought next to each other and to be bounced on and off each other.

Another available sound bite from the recent history of social imagination is yet another book that tells it all so beautifully in its title, a less known classic of contemporary social thinking by Robert Nisbet (1976) called *Sociology as an Art Form*. Nisbet is at pains to try to get closer to creative processes and their sustenance. Even if the results, and Nisbet's clarification, seem to be overtly

abstract and close to common knowledge, it is worth being reminded of the phenomenon of creativity. It is especially beneficial to be reminded that what creativity and imagination are as abstract forms, they are not more than, well, abstract descriptions, always in a magnificent need of specific cases and contextualisations.

What Nisbet (1976) is after is illumination of reality, which is, in sum, "exploration of the unknown and, far from least, the interpretation of physical and human worlds" (p. 11). This is, in other words, the creative imagination that is needed in any kind and type of human activity, from music to manufacturing. Nisbet argues that what unites all of these strategies is a "form and intensity of imagination, a utilization of intuition" (p. 10). This is not to say that, for example, art and science are the same, but that their separation in the name of creativity and discoveries is false. On the whole, what Nisbet was most concerned with was the need for a social scientist, not only to get rid of the naïve rituals of proof and verification but also to acknowledge creative imagination as a practice that is drawn from experience and observation.

The third sound bite follows again the logic of getting the name of a cultural product to tell what it is about. This is then perhaps—we would claim—the most effective and amazing account of what a body is and how the body is connected to a soul. What we have in mind is a short but concise book by Italo Calvino (1952/1998), *The Cloven Viscount*, originally published in Italian. To get into the nuances and the brilliant breathtaking richness of the imagination of this particularly short—not much over 100 pages, regardless of how it is designed and printed—book, you need to do the reading all by yourself.

What is sufficient here is to recall its certainly silly plot, a creative and amazingly funny plot that also is something of a wonder due to its immense clarity of both structure and language. It is about a certain unlucky viscount living in the middle ages, forced to take part in a strange unfathomable war that he returns from as halves, in body and in person. First only one half, the extremely evil and bad half, comes back to rule his possessions, but soon enough the other half, the extremely good and hyper-altruistic one, also comes into the spiel, forcing the diametrical opposites to clash and collide. The book was written within the era when bipolarity of the world was about to be shared and cherished as yet another unfulfilled totalitarian answer. And it is a reminder that when two extremes collide, everyone else around is having a pretty miserable time.

But, if Mills and Nisbet, and also Calvino—or so many others in this field of trying to make sense of who we are, where and how—would ever have been asked, they and anyone else that has a situated and embedded practice would

have underlined that there is no imagination without a sense of context, a sense of structure and a sense of the inherent limitations of any activity. And as a reminder at the end of this introduction, it is important to recall one of the pioneers of social imagination, a figure also so often forgotten that it is a shame—and also someone whose works and writings are a pleasure: Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), holder of the chair of philosophy at Humboldt University.

We do not want to make too much of a fuss over the fact that it was Dilthey who came up with the inherent distinction between qualitative and quantitative research and that it was he who made the difference between the aim of explanation and understanding. However, it is also from and with Dilthey (1910/2012) that we can collect some of the main—not all, but quite a few—necessities of any and every kind of serious and long-term committed research practice. It is a short list dating from plus or minus 100 years back and counting, but it is very effective in its implications and demands.

The list should be shared here—as a pointer toward the really beneficial reasons to be cheerful. Any knowledge must be lead by the following:

- Organization
- Stability
- Coherence
- Economy of expression
- Logical consistency

These are the things that need to be taken care of. Not detached, not universally, but realized and articulated, in their particular and locally driven and bound versions, in and through the needs and challenges of the given practice. Research is then done inside-in, while reaching out and getting out of one's box in order to return to it again, not superimposed from outside but developed and taken care of from within. It is a collection of acts that are called not a progress but a never-ending self-reflective and critical, creative process.

And yes, this is then not creative as in new public management, and it is also not creative consultant prophecy. This is the act of creativity that is constantly bitren and bitten again by curiosity and the never ceasing need to wonder: what is going on? In the words borrowed from one of the pioneers of documentary filmmaking, the British John Grierson (1971), it is, as a task, as a disposition, as a promise and as a demand, about this: creative treatment of actuality.

## 2. Basic Formula of Artistic Research

Let us try to sum up this view of artistic research as an open-ended, historical, context-aware and narrative enterprise. The goal of the following crystallization in terms of an oversimplified equation is not to look at artistic research from above, as if trying to explain or legitimate it, but to give a basic skeleton of something that otherwise can appear rather nebulous and amoebic, also on these pages. The forms and ways of doing artistic research are genuinely open and should stay that way. Let us not lock them up or tie them down. At the same time, we want to present our view in a nutshell for two simple reasons. First, as the saying goes, if you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything. Second, while the identity of artistic research should be open and contested, we feel also that doing artistic research does not necessarily have to start from agonizing over the unclear nature and identity of the field vis-à-vis the established disciplines in science, since some sort of basic form is available and can be utilized.

As the second reason indicates, the purpose is also propagandistic. So let us borrow a formula from a master of that form of art, V. I. Lenin, who once summed up the following: “socialism = the power of soviets + electrification.” Borrowing the form of the equation, we get this: “artistic research = artistic process (acts inside the practice) + arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work)” (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Basic Formula of Artistic Research

Artistic Process: Acts Inside the Practice	Arguing for a Point of View (Context, Tradition, and Their Interpretation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committed with an eye on the conditions of the practice</li> <li>▪ Documenting the acts</li> <li>▪ Moving between insider and outsider positions</li> <li>▪ Preparing works of art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social and theoretical imagination</li> <li>▪ Hermeneutics</li> <li>▪ Conceptual, linguistic and argumentative innovations</li> <li>▪ Verbalization</li> </ul>



### Artistic Process

Let us unpack the elements. By artistic process, we mean acts done inside the practice, as discussed earlier, acts that possibly question the conditions of that practice, push the envelope, but still are in some relevant relationship with that practice, with its internal values, goods, commitments and so on. Of course, the practice can be anything, but in the case of artistic research, the practice is in some sense artistic. (If not, we would prefer talking about practice-based research.) Here, the researcher works as an insider, as a participant in the practice, as one of its embodiments, so to speak. But that is not all. In the practice itself, one also takes a step of minimal distance toward the practice, reflecting on it and on one's acts. It is a question of semantics whether this distance-taking and reflection are a natural part of the practice itself (as someone like Aristotle implies with his concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom in *Nicomachean Ethics* [Chapter 5, Book 6]: "Practical wisdom, then, must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods") or if we conceptualize it as taking up the position of a relative outsider. Whichever way we want to describe it, taking part in the practice, being engaged in an artistic process means moving back and forth between periods of intensive (insider) engagement and more reflective (outsider) distance-taking. The need to adopt some minimal distance is one of the reasons why artistic research often pushes the boundaries of the artistic practice in question.

This process consists of acts: performances, works of art, periods of working, drafts, plans and so on. All of this either already leaves a material track in terms of paintings, videos, photographs, audiotapes, texts, objects and so on, or can be made to do so by writing a research diary, documenting audiovisually and so on. Thus the process creates a body of material that can be used as the publicly available record of the phenomena that one wants to talk about in one's research. In reporting on the research, in making it available to others, this material provides means for arguing, showing, detailing, explicating, implying, connoting, being ironical and so on. It can also function more straightforwardly as the data of the research that is then analysed. But more often part of the analysis and theoretical thinking happens in the process itself, so the distinction between process and contextual/conceptual work in the equation is not the distinction between data gathering and analysis.

### Conceptual Work

The second part is harder to name, since it contains many elements, and none of the elements is characteristic of the overall whole as such. Let us start with contextualization. Research means taking part in a research tradition, in a discussion that has started before the particular piece of research and will continue after it. In its very basic form, contextualization means situating the research in this tradition. Often it means choosing and arguing for a particular point of view. This, in turn, often means the use of some classical texts, works or interpretations as launching pads, as tools and teammates and discussion partners in one's own endeavour. Contextualization is also another name for giving content to concepts, for the actualization of preexisting frameworks and notions. How are particular concepts—say, for example, "body"—understood and actualized in this particular research? Through this kind of work, we slide seamlessly into interpretation and imagination.

If and when the research contains a written part, if it contains some texts (including texts in the wide sense of the term), the second part contains conceptual work. We return to verbalization and writing later, but let us note here that the verbalization in an open-ended and contextualized research is itself open-ended and contextual. As a practice, it is on a par with any other type of practice: it takes skill, commitment, freedom and responsibility. And it may contain linguistic and conceptual innovations: ways of saying, ideas, notions and concepts that introduce something new (relatively speaking) into the discourse. Forming a story, however fragmented and postmodern, is a part of verbalization. Therefore, at the most general level, contextualization and interpretation mean or add up to narration. Or, vice versa: the narration of one's research findings is dependent on how one situates, interprets and conceptualizes its parts.

Let us take up a couple of important points about the equation. The separation between the two parts is not the separation between practice and theory, of data gathering and analysis. This is because practice and theory happen in both parts. Often the artistic process is motivated by an intuition that arises from some theoretical considerations. Often the process also contains outright theoretical and conceptual interventions. Likewise, the contextualizing and conceptualizing part is creative: often one finds out how one thinks about something only by and after writing it up. Or to put it another way, writing is a way of thinking and discovering things.

The separation is therefore not the distinction between the context of justification and context of discovery. In philosophy of science, these two are separated in order to point out that the way in which researchers come up



### 3. Back to the Future: Democracy of Experiences, Methodological Abundance and Verbalization

The point of the metaphor of “democracy of experiences” is not to claim that in fact different types or areas of experience are equipotential when approaching a given phenomenon. It is certainly true that all kinds of psychological, social and economic conditioning affects how we interpret and contextualize anything we encounter. It is hard not to give greater emphasis to knowledge of physics than to knowledge of cooking when building a bridge. Hard, but not impossible. Likewise, it is hard not to use some kind of aesthetic criteria when addressing an exhibition. We habitually do, in fact, give more credence to certain types of criteria when approaching certain types of experience. Moreover, there is sometimes good reason to do so. The metaphor is not intended to deny either of these two facts.

Rather, the metaphor tries to point out that there is the possibility of putting the conditioning in brackets and of accepting that different areas of experience—also unexpected ones—may have something interesting to say. Striving toward that possibility is not frivolous play. To be pathetic: if we knew for certain what life is about, what is its so-called meaning, then we could, in principle, be sure about how to prioritize different kinds of experience and how to let one area of experience (let’s say biological knowledge of survival or practical knowledge of meditation) legislate over the others. But insofar as we do not know this, we should, in principle, be open to the possibility that experience gained through meditation may challenge experience gained in the science of biology, that artistic experience may challenge international law, and so on. This is especially true in broadly speaking humanistic research settings, where one of the preconditions is to be open with regard to the question of what it means to be human.

Moreover, the metaphor relies on the belief that such a state is actual: both in various kinds of everyday experience as well as in sophisticated synaesthetic and selfless experiences, the experiential whole contains many intertwined layers with no labels indicating which aspects of the experiential whole are more important than the others. There is a skill of being sensitive and open toward this multilayered and multifaceted nature of human experience, and that skill can manifest itself in fields like art. As a skill, it can be cultivated.

As such, the metaphor of democracy of experiences is closely connected to the core principles of hermeneutics. Experience is a whole, in which you cannot change one thing without changing others—generally in an unpredictable manner. Likewise, as the principle of the hermeneutic circle points out, it is not possible to understand a part of the experience without understanding the whole, and vice versa. Consequently, a basic condition for artistic research (as broadly speaking humanistic research) is to be aware of this holistic, bottomless and endless circularity of experience.

Does this mean that artistic research should not aim at laser-precision specialization? Are artistic researchers not allowed to omit cognitive science, chemistry and health sciences just as biologists are allowed to omit art history, literature and political science? Certainly they are. Focus is as essential for research as hermeneutic sensibility. The metaphor of democracy of experiences does not operate on this level. However, it does mean that—again generally speaking—any kind of humanistic research gets better when it gets better contextualized, better embedded in the environment of the phenomenon it describes, better at displaying the complexities, tensions and even contradictions that are inherent in the phenomenon. We are back at the notions of situatedness, commitment and actualizing the context, discussed earlier.

The metaphor is intended to operate on two levels. First, it has to do with the microlevel of staying with the acts of doing research. Being committed and actualizing a context takes time. You have to be present, have to be with, alongside, by, for long periods. And in that tarrying-with, there is the possibility of attending to areas of experience that would be neglected if one would just rush by. In themselves, being present and taking time are experiential dimensions that widen perspectives. But even more than that, artistic research gives the possibility, for instance, for a sense-driven and material encounter with the world, as opposed to an abstractly intellectual one. And it is here, in the receptivity and sensitivity for the aesthetic—meaning all that is available through all the senses and the body—that democracy of experiences has its meaning in the context of research: the sensuous and the bodily are valid sources of research, as well as, say, the readings of laboratory instruments or the results of a survey.

Second, the point of the word “democracy” is to emphasise that research should not be driven (a) by what we might call physics envy, where everything is measured on the supposed rigour and success of natural science and especially modern physics, its formalism and technological advances; or (b) by ivory-tower dreams of the unquestioned sanctity of one’s own field, whatever that may be. The boundaries among different disciplines, schools and

paradigms seem more and more ridiculous and contrived as one moves away from the sheltered hothouses of the academia. Again, this does not mean that differentiation or even militantly positional research would not make sense. What it means is that such partisanship happens on a more fundamental basis of democracy, where differences are negotiated and argued, not posited or given from above.

This brings us to our second favourite, methodological abundance. The notion is first intended as a simple acknowledgement of facts. Just a few decades ago, the situation in many universities and academies was that particular departments and schools had very clear ideas about what methods were the right ones. There were sometimes raging debates over methodology, but generally one worked with the limited set of tools handed down from above. But the situation has changed. Now the methodological field is wide open. Not only is a wider array of different methods used and available in any given field, but new innovative methods and ways of gathering data are being developed.

The arrival of methodological abundance can be connected to wider tendencies, such as the battle between what have been characterized as qualitative and quantitative research methods, the birth of postcolonial and subaltern studies, the development of new research methods in various fields connected to new media and so on. Together these developments have meant that the methodological field is, in academic settings, much more pluralistic than a few decades ago. The birth of artistic research has, in itself, contributed to this trend.

However, perhaps the notion of methodological abundance has a new application, too. Here and there we hear voices indicating that “the” way of doing artistic research has been found and that the age of insecurity and methodological vacillation is—or at least should be—over. While we certainly appreciate the desire and even the need for some stability in a field that is under considerable internal and external pressure, we see methodological abundance not only as a general fact but as something positive for artistic research itself.

Living in a situation of methodological abundance produces different difficulties compared to a situation of methodological scarcity. How do we orient our own methodological thinking and how do we choose a method for a piece of research when “anything goes”? One initial metaphor is that the method and the research question should fit together like a hand and a glove. The method—in general, the way of going about doing research—is going to determine what kinds of questions the research can address and possibly answer. And the other way around: if you know what kinds of questions you

need to ask, then you already know what kinds of knowledge, information and data you need, which sets you about designing the research methodology. Thus, with this pincer movement, thinking about the question and thinking about the possible ways of approaching the question, the method gets crystallized. In this way, abundance starts to be a helpful phenomenon, again.

There is, however, a possible problem with the analogy of hand and glove. The analogy presupposes a separation between form and content, between research methodology as a tool for obtaining and analysing data, and the data itself. That separation does not often describe the reality of practice-based artistic research, since, as noted earlier, it happens inside-in, by practising the practice that the research is about. For instance, let us say that one produces a work of art as a part of the research. The production, the work, the reactions to it and so on may certainly function as some kind of “data” or information for the research, but at the same time, they also involve the researcher as an insider in the particular field of art—otherwise the work could not be (recognized as) a work of art. The data is produced through an insider position, through a commitment to a practice, and its analysis also has to bring it back to that position, make it available to the committed practitioners for whom the research is meaningful. The hand and the glove are, in a sense, inseparable, or rather, they are the same thing seen from two parallel perspectives: now as a way of doing, now as a way of thinking about that doing.

This is not as odd or as radical (in comparison to received ideas of objectivity and outsider perspectives in research) as it may sound. In broadly speaking humanistic research (literature, history, philosophy and so on), it is often the case that the way of doing research and the research itself are a unified whole. Think, for example, of Plato’s dialogues with their so-called Socratic method. Here the dialogue is the research, the rhetoric and method are a significant part of the content. In humanistic research, there might be materials and data and their analyses that are in a sense “objective” (such as historical records, texts and so on) and not in any way produced by the researcher. But the situation is similar to artistic research in that the ways in which the humanist argues, writes, uses rhetoric and so on, are, in fact, not external to the research but an integral part of it. Humanistic writing, like verbal reports of artistic research, offers open-ended but argued-for views that gain their traction from how relevant the views are for the practice at hand and how well they are contextualized. As Stephen Toulmin emphasised in his book *Cosmopolis* (1990, cited in Naukkarinen, 2012, p. 96), this implies the classic humanistic virtues of tolerating uncertainty and respecting the place and time-bound nature of knowledge.

In fact, in context-aware and historical practice-based research, there are two different fusions. First, there is the fusion between the doing and the thinking about the doing. One has to be an insider in a practice, one has to practice that practice, do acts internal to it, and some of these acts then function as research, as thinking about that practice. Second, the practice and the thinking have to be fused with the public part of the research, let's say a text, a research report or a PhD thesis. Here, too, the way of writing, the way of arguing, the rhetoric, the presentation, are part of the thinking, the content of the research.

In other ways, too, artistic research may learn from humanistic writing. Verbalization is one way of sharing, making things public and vulnerable, that is, systematically open for criticism. This may very well happen in ways that are at the same time open-ended and disciplined. Ossi Naukkarinen (2012) has elegantly crystallized the key points of writing humanistic research. First, verbalization is done so that other people can access the materials (openness). Second, verbalization is done by arguing for a view or a thesis. In a nutshell, this kind of research writing is open and open-ended, arguing for a view:

The humanist openly displays the route which runs from certain startingpoints to an argued-for conclusion. One must tell clearly and in an articulate language what one wants to say (about humanity), i.e., one must verbalise the core message, and reveal how that message has been arrived at. One must describe the background of the analysis and explain why people should think like the research says they should think (about the topic), one must motivate the project and explain its relevance. (Naukkarinen, 2012, p. 77)

There are several ways of doing this in writing. Again, as examples, one can think about the very different stylistic decisions by humanistic classics such as Montraigne, Auerbach, Weil or Sartre. The trick is to find a way of writing that suits not only the topic but also the researcher doing the writing.

And here we encounter an important practical matter. To say that in artistic research the doing of acts, the thinking about the acts and the writing/reporting are all intertwined and partially inseparable already sets the bar relatively high. To then add examples of classic humanistic writing is to raise the bar even higher. But to cite the examples is not to demand that everyone write a classic or produce prose that shines through the ages. Such a goal is not even reasonable, for instance, in a PhD thesis that often is intended for and stays within the attention of a severely limited audience. Even more important, the fusion between the way of writing and what one is writing about can be effected more or less directly.

There are two separate matters here. One is the fusion between doing, thinking and writing. This is, in context-aware historical artistic research, a necessity, up to a point, as it is in humanistic research, in general. One has to stay inside the practice, work inside it and bring the results back there. The rhetoric and the matter, the form and the content cannot be completely separated. The other is the fusion between the language one uses in writing and the language or semiotic universe of the phenomenon that one writes about. Here there are many variables to play with. To crudely illustrate the matter, at one extreme we have the "full money," that is, a poetic expression where every word is necessary, and the text has been polished to maximum economy of expression: it is at the same time aphoristic and informative, a work of art in itself, so that the text does not "speak about" something but is that something. At the other extreme, we have a research report that is written in a metalanguage that talks about the phenomena that it wants to describe but does not in itself emulate what it is talking about. It is possible to write in a very fruitful and illuminative way about, say, Tolstoy, in a language that does not resemble Tolstoy's writing at all. Likewise, it is possible to write about a given artistic experience in a fruitful and illuminative way in a way that does not emulate that particular artistic experience in its sensuous or bodily qualities. Of course, both extremes, the full money and the maximal distance (as in Brechtian alienation or distance), are very hard to do. Therefore, it may be advisable to aim at somewhere between the extremes: making sure that one's language is in overall harmony with the conditions, possibilities and new features of the phenomena one is talking about, while at the same time giving place to a metalanguage that talks about the acts and experiences of the research without trying to be those acts and experiences.

The verbalization cannot function in a register that annihilates the phenomena under discussion. Crudely, one cannot use the language of behaviourist psychology if one wants to discuss experience, or one cannot use Foucault's language of biopolitics if one wants to discuss repression. The language, its register, vocabulary, style, even grammar should be geared to accommodate relevant parts of that which one is talking about so far as is needed. There is no necessity of going for the full money—unless, well, unless it is necessary.

In most cases, what one needs to do is relatively straightforward. Naukkarinen (2012) provided a concise list of what has to be written down:

- What is the topic and the question?
- What kind of materials (books, artefacts, interviews, etc.) are used in addressing the question?



- How are the materials used? How are they read, interpreted?
- On what viewpoints, theories and concepts is the approach based? (feminist, psychoanalytic, hermeneutic, etc.)
- Why are these viewpoints used?
- How can the results, the method, the material and the viewpoints be criticized? (p. 78)

The list holds up well in the case of artistic research, too, if we add “acts internal to the practice” to the list of possible materials. Often the methodologically crucial point is the last one: one has to anticipate criticisms and show the weak spots in one’s own research. This is what it means to systematically provide access for criticism.

To return to the rabbit with the gun: research methodology, its openness and criticality, is supposed to cut both ways. From the perspective of the researcher, a research method is a way of obtaining results. It is something pragmatic, utilitarian, even in some sense a guarantee of a kind: “I did not do it; it was what my methods produced!” In this sense, the method is a trusted friend. But from the point of view of the scientific community, the method is there in order to make the research as accessible and vulnerable as possible. Utilizing a method makes the problems, limitations and mistakes in a piece of research transparent, visible: it makes it possible to criticize the research in a public and intersubjective arena. From this perspective comes the simple rule of thumb to use when worrying about whether some detail or quirk in the process of the research should be mentioned in the report: if the detail, quirk or decision makes it easier for the reader to criticize the research, then yes, you should include it!

The double-edged quality of research methodology goes even further. In principle and ideally, the methodological part of research also exists in order to make the research community accountable when it evaluates and discusses a piece of research. Research evaluation should be public and based on public criteria, especially in the case of the evaluation of master’s or doctoral theses. The clearer the methodological guidelines, the easier it is also to see whether the evaluators have done their job properly. Of course, in the real world, the balance of power is heavily tilted in favour of the professors and other experts doing evaluations, but the principle is still important. If an art gallery does not want to display the works of a particular artist, there are no clear criteria of appeal. In the case of academic research, the criteria exist, at least in principle, and the clearer the methodological path in the particular piece of research, the easier it is also to hold rogue evaluators in check.

To be sure, writing in this way is a skill in itself. It needs practice. If, for instance, visual artists are sometimes despairing over the necessity of writing,

and writing well, maybe it would be good to think about turning the tables. How well would art historians or philosophers, who have been dealing with texts all their lives, be expected to visualize their findings in, say, a documentary movie? Moving from one medium of expression to another is not easy. The difficulties are genuine, the practice needed considerable.

There are models and examples that one can emulate—more of this later—but unfortunately their relevance is strictly limited. For the fusion among doing, thinking about doing and making, the thinking public has a further consequence: there is no general model for verbalizing, reporting or writing this kind of research. It has to be done on a case-by-case basis, because the committed practice of the practitioner is unique, and the research question, the way of approaching it and the writing have to be influenced by the practice. The way of writing has to be devised anew every time, at least partially. Again, this is a genuine challenge and something to be aware of. It makes artistic research one notch harder. At the same time, a similar challenge awaits any artist producing art, or any humanist going about doing research, and to an extent many social scientists, and so on.

Likewise, it is good to be aware of the limits to verbalization. Different areas of experience, different sensory modalities have different qualities, and different media have different affordances for expression. When, for instance, something visual is transposed into written language, we get a reinterpretation, a description, an enactment, but not the thing itself, if for no other reason than because by writing down or reading we are already changing our experience, moving into a new situation. This never-ceasing experiential flux, the fact that, as Heraclitus put it, you cannot step into the same river twice, already means that the verbal, the written, the text is going to be a thing of its own. Even if it has to be fused with the practice and the research on the practice, it will be a thing of some independence, giving its own experiential truth that may be partly incommensurate with other situated truths. And that is what the democracy of experiences is about: the experiential truths are multiple, and any attempt at bringing them under one rule or one sign is going to produce even further versions of them. The only way of stopping this process of multiplication is violence—symbolic, institutional, physical, as the case may be. As the anthropologist David Graeber (2011) put it, violence is the only way of having an effect on other people without having to interpret what they are about, without having any communication or “imaginative identification” going on. In this sense research—trying with all the means available to make relevant interpretations, to continue the never-stopping hermeneutic circle, trying to understand what we ourselves mean and what

others mean without the presupposition of ever getting it right—is the opposite of violence.

### Verbalization

Our general observation is that in the academic community of artistic researchers (i.e., those who teach and study art in the universities), there is still sometimes a relatively strong tendency to think that doing art is the same as researching an object of study. In practice, this means that one's art equals research, that is, the work of art or the process would somehow articulate itself: "I paint thus I research"; "I compose thus I research"; or, "My art speaks for itself." Well, as mentioned in the preface, we suggest you should narrate the process, too. Of course, we are not suggesting that artistic process and artistic artefacts could or should be reduced into words and concepts but only that words and concepts are necessary and needed in academic research, whether artistic or anything else.

No doubt making art can be serious research work in itself (in the conceptual sense, as mentioned in the previous section), but academic research, for a large part, refers to argumentation written with different styles and formats. Artistic research consists of a combination of art-making and word-making—both sides are needed. As we argue throughout the book, if there is a sense in which artistic research aims to be accessible, then we need to take conventional communication (written words) into serious consideration, no matter the form and content of art.

The fine line, a demarcation between the two—art making and artistic research—is as follows: in the former one can concentrate, indeed dwell fully on one's creative process. Art is sometimes believed to speak for itself (if it speaks at all). But in artistic research, one needs to tell (sometimes convince) others by writing about one's creations, ideas, processes, and sometimes even to refer to theories that have given insights (or not) to one's art-making, in order to explicate the artistic process and add to its academic and artistic value.

Explaining and explicating by writing is the first distinctive characteristic of artistic research compared to art-making; the second being the fact that artistic research is an academic activity that contributes to academic understanding of the subject and is, in turn, rewarded (in a successful case) by an academic degree.

Let us take an example related by professor Teemu Mäki in an open seminar about artistic research (Helsinki, May 2013). According to Mäki, John Coltrane and certain other famous jazz musicians couldn't, and perhaps didn't

want to talk about their music. They just wanted to play and by playing they learned. Thus there was no verbalization whatsoever. Were they doing artistic research? No, they were not, but in our view, they were playing terrific jazz music.

Thus, on one hand, there is art as technique, craft, movement, performance, ideology, aesthetics and so on, and on the other hand, artistic research as theoretical academic performance (given to academia as theses leading to degrees and diplomas). In the machinery of the university, artistic research is a part of the logic of science policies as well as the academic habits and traditions of any given moment.

However, we should not be too harsh in drawing distinctions between verbalization, or, more precisely, the use of conventional symbols of communication (speaking or written words) and other symbols and ways of communication, that is, being in and being with the world. Otherwise, we might fall into mythologizing their apparent differences. Differences there are, of course, but let us not overemphasize them. Instead, let us be open-minded and allow ourselves to think that words as well as spots on canvas, steps in the sand, silences on the backstage, or composing, playing or performing are also symbolic ways of world making, that is, ways of seeing and doing the world, sometimes even changing it.

More specifically, verbalization has the following tasks in artistic research, as Cazeaux (2008, summing up points in our previous book, Hannula, Suoranta, & Vadén, 2005, pp. 114–117) has pointed out:

- Clarify "what is being researched, why it is being researched, why it is of interest and what is the aim behind it."
- Specify "with whom the research converses, what traditions it can be considered to be linked with, and what relations it has to these different traditions."
- Justify "one's own focus and viewpoint in relation to what has been said and claimed previously."
- Adhere to "known literary styles and methods of presentation" primarily in order to avoid "narcissism and end[ing] up in an uninteresting vacuum."
- Form (at best) a fresh and substantiated conclusion.
- Cultivate the nascent field of artistic research by reflecting upon how the research extends the subject and suggesting how any future project by an artistic researcher might be informed by his or her work.

That is about all we want to say about the formalities of writing in artistic research, for, if anything, writing ought to be a creative part of an artistic research process.

The question follows: how do we write creatively? Or, is creativity a much too much celebrated virtue in research altogether? Should writing be as pragmatic and mechanistic as in certain parts of natural science in which scientists often write articles following a strict and universally recognized IMRD-pattern: first introduction (I), then methods (M), and results (R), and finally, discussion (D)? Perhaps taking writing in this almost mechanistic way could create a needed "alienation effect"—or a contrapunct—in relation to the artistic part of the research process. It could absolve the author from trying to be as good a writer as a painter, designer, composer or performer. Writing understood as a tool for communication and an academic medium can, and sometimes ought to be, enough.

That is only one option. The other is to understand writing more metaphorically and write like an essayist. The Finnish author Väinö Kirstinä (2005) said that the essay as a literary style provides "opportunities which science cannot perhaps reach. I am allowed to be subjective. I may use my own life experience. I have the right to be tricky and free. It is one of the great joys of artistic work" (p. 35). Most likely the same holds true in arts and humanities, in general, as well as in the work of an artistic researcher. What, then, are the (artistic) means to be tricky and free?

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, a master of the sociological essay and a refugee from Poland to the United Kingdom, once confessed that it took him a good 15 years to start to publish in English. Perhaps it has been this experience of writing in a foreign language in exile that has urged him to suggest the metaphor of thinking in travel (referring to Derrida): a writer needs to be at home in many places, owning many languages, but still always living, observing and writing as if an outsider, if not as a person *sans papiers*.

Writing in artistic research is also, and at best, a voyage into oneself and one's social surroundings from the point of view of one's art work. Without knowing oneself and the social milieu of one's artistic practices, it may happen that an artistic researcher has little to say about anything. Writing in and as travel consists of, as the Finnish poet Risto Ahri (2009) put it, a certain intellectual moment, a state of chaos, "in which words are allowed to be alive and from which anyone can discover his own language" (p. 73). However free the process of discovery and however loose the style of writing, it should be kept in mind that "the universe in which each of us lives is and cannot but be 'linguistic'—made of words," as Bauman (2000, p. 83), among many others, reminded us:

Words light the islands of visible forms in the dark sea of the invisible and mark the scattered spots of relevance in the formless mass of the insignificant. It is words that slice the world into the classes of nameable objects and bring out their kinship or enmity, closeness or distance, affinity or mutual estrangement—and as long as they stay alone in the field they raise all such artefacts to the rank of reality—the only reality there is.

An artist would rightly complain. What about my own language in my painting, in my dance, in my stage performance, in my music? Here again, we meet the problem of words and languages of arts. Perhaps it is sometimes useful to put the fundamental question aside and take a more pragmatic attitude by searching for a viable way to write about one's research or saying the same thing in a more postmodern way: to do one's research by writing.

"Should I choose a narrative form to tell the meaningful others about my research trip?" That is one fruitful option worth considering. The Nobel laureate in literature, J. M. Coetzee (2008), confessed in his semi-autobiographic essay book, *Diary of a Bad Day*, that narrative is not his style any more—he is too old to be a narrator or even to read or listen to narratives. He cannot wait for a story to evolve in his mind anymore, for a story cannot be told; it tells itself. He referred to Leo Tolstoy as a case in point. After his magnum opus *War and Peace*, Tolstoy's development took a steady decline, according to common views of the time. However, Coetzee knows his self-evaluation was different. Tolstoy probably didn't feel that he was going downhill as a writer at all, but quite the contrary; he had an experience of approaching the fundamental question: how to live?

The same holds true for other grand thinkers, too, as can be read from the testimony of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), from what is called "The Last Interview" (2004):

It is true, I am at war with myself, and you have no idea to what extent, more than you can guess, and I say things that contradict each other, that are, let's say, in real tension with each other, that compose me, that make me live, and that will make me die. This war, I see it sometimes as a terrifying and painful war, but at the same time I know that it is life. I will not find peace except in eternal rest. Therefore I cannot say that I assume this contradiction, but I know too that it is what allows me to live, and to pose the question, effectively, that you posed, "how to learn how to live?"

Indeed, to be at war with oneself, or to write things that are in contradiction with each other, is a humanist stance par excellence. It is presumably a much needed (and hopefully cherished) virtue of those who must write to live and ask the aforementioned fundamental question.

Writing can be, and often is, a fight, a struggle with the world and the words, or with oneself, as in the case of Derrida: "I am at war with myself."

Self-doubt is also a necessary ingredient in a solid writing process, as well as in an art process; so don't be afraid when there is nothing but a blank page on your laptop screen. It happens to all of us, even the big ones. Let us quote C. Wright Mills (2000c) again, who, at this time, is struggling with his book *White Collar*:

I can't write it right. I can't get what I want to say about America in it. What I want to say is what you say to an intimate friend when you are discouraged about how it all is. All of it at once: to create a little spotlighted focus where the alienation, and apathy and dry rot and immensity and razzle dazzle and bullshit and wonderfulness and how lonesome it is, really, how terribly lonesome and rich and vulgar and god I don't know. Maybe that mood, which I take now to be reality for me, is merely confusion which of course might be so and still worthwhile if one could only articulate it properly. (p. 136)

And do not forget the Slovenian gadfly Slavoj Žižek, who tries to avoid the writing process altogether by first making piles of notes until there are enough of them for him to skip writing and start the editing process. Of course, he is at least partly joking, but the point is that writing processes differ, and they ought to differ. At the same time, there is at least one common feature in all writing, namely, the different routines. Thus there is a lesson to be learnt: find and create your own. Here is one example:

The typical days—and they will continue without variation—run like this: up at 7. Write an hour. Eat breakfast 8:15. Stay in room and write 'til 1 P.M. at which time lunch. Loaf an hour after that in sun. . . . Work during afternoon but not pushing, primarily reading and revising manuscript if have done well in the morning; otherwise push. Knock off about 5:30 and fool with guitar or nap until 7. Dinner at 7:15. Then play pool and ping pong for around 2 hours. Sleep at 10 o'clock. (Mills 2000c, p. 104)

The same sort of routine is followed by many, as Pentti Saarikoski, the self-proclaimed “poet of Finland” wrote: “Breakfast—two hours of writing—two hours of work outdoors—lunch—two hours of writing—coffee—an hour of work outdoor—two hours of writing—dinner—dishes—an evening” (Berner, 2000, p. 40).

But, let us be frank and realistic here. These descriptions are gross simplifications of a writer's life. They can be true in some days at some times, but they do not nearly present the reality of most of us, who work with texts and other artefacts. Who makes the breakfast and lunch? Who pays the bills and goes for the groceries? Where are the kids? Who fetches them from the day care—providing that there is day care service available? Take the three of us as an example. We have written this text in widely variable circumstances. In total, we have seven kids, and two of us have daytime jobs in different cities than our homes, even in a different country. We have other obligations and

duties in life than writing. Nowadays we take it for granted that the moments without anything else to do but write are rare, but therefore they are also sweet.

Perhaps the metalesson to be learnt is as follows: too few artistic researchers identify themselves as writers, and too many see writing as an unproblematic mirror of their outer or inner reality, although the aim would be to write academic prose that would communicate both to the academic audience and the larger public. To write about one's artistic endeavour is to know and to be conscious of what one is doing and let others know it, too. This way the writing process, like the artistic research process as a whole, can evoke a *gay'a scienza*, or as Henk Slager (2012) put it, the pleasure of research “concentrated on artistic probing, establishing connections, associating, creating rhizomatic mutations, producing assemblages, and bringing together; including that which cannot be joined” (p. 77).