

**Artistic
Research
+
(Academic
Research)**

Master's Thesis Seminar 1
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Task 1 for this time 6.11.

Familiarize your self with aalto docs:<https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/> or aalto primo:
<https://primo.aalto.fi/>

- Pick 2 MA theses from your own field and browse through them for next time (since production design only has a few options, feel free to look at others as well)
- The main idea is to become familiar what type of theses have been done in our programme.
- Prepare to introduce the thesis to our group briefly in our next meeting :
 - *What is the topic*
 - *How is the research conducted in the thesis*
 - *What is the aim of the thesis?*

What is Research?

Short definition:

- A systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. (Oxford Dictionary, 2019)
- **Professional research:** geared more towards solving a specific problem for an organization, a business, or its customers
- **Academic research:** usually intended for the sole purpose of creating knowledge

What is Academic Research?

- Making a rigorous and relevant contribution to knowledge
- Understanding of a cause and effect relationship of a given phenomenon or uncovering a new phenomenon
- follows the **scientific method** as a way to ensure that objectivity is kept at all times
- definitions of **objectivity/reliability** vary between research fields

Common research approaches used at Aalto ARTS

- Art (or practice) -led: The research leads primarily to new understandings about practice -> *where practice leads to broader considerations and theorization*
- Art (or practice) –based: The creative artefact or production is the basis of the contribution to knowledge

Common research approaches used at Aalto ARTS

- Applied research: problems tend to be more practical. Seeks to find solutions to immediate problems and issues. Tends to be organizationally focused.
- Theoretical (or academic) research: Questions tend to be more conceptual. Seeks to add to the larger "body of knowledge". Tends to be theoretically focused.

It is important to note that your research could fit in many categories.

Artistic Research



Practice *as* Research

Artistic research / Art as research / Practice as research

-> ***refers to art/practice as the means for conducting research***

- It is not art research, which generally defines art as its object ->
- Rather ***art is the medium*** for conducting research ***through*** and ***with*** the practice.
- Often a discovery-led process

Artistic research / Art as research / Practice as research

- Art offers both a **premise and an aim** for research: **motive, field, context, method and outcome**
- is able to produce an abundance of new knowledge, understanding or expand on existing concepts through its practice
- usually carried out by practitioners in various fields of art - artists → more precisely **artist-researchers**, (not all art is research)

Artistic activities can be considered research only when they are done within a critical community:

-> *it is the critical community* that defines, shapes and renews the criteria for its own research frameworks and practices in interaction with the surrounding society

Established frameworks / criteria for artistic research:

- all research should be assessed and peer-reviewed.
- research is conducted in manner that contributes to and derives from the field of artistic research
- personal and subjective experience should be articulated into shared experience (to be a tool for others)

- Subjective knowledge that is constructed through individual artistic practice / experience becomes research through reflective and critical analysis
- Researching *with* the art making (not making it first or separately)

- The creative process forms the path (or part of it) through which new insight, understandings and products come into being
- The outcomes of artistic research are artworks, installations, performances and other artistic practices & the articulated knowledge (=written component)

Background

Artistic research started developing in the Academia in the 1990's

Throughout its development the art as research practice has had to:

- argue and define its methodologies in relation to the “more traditional sciences”
- develop its own traditions for providing precise research results from fields that generally rely on subjective knowledge which is not measurable in the same manner.

- Increasing/developing importance during the past twenty years in the performing arts (drama, theatre, dance, music) and related disciplines involving performance media (film, video, television, radio)
- Towards the end of the 2000s artistic research has become a well-established approach to using creative performance as a method of inquiry in universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, South Africa and elsewhere

Practical turn

In the 1980s philosophical, historical and social studies of science underwent a change which later evolved into a turn to practice.

- The main emphasis of this turn was a shift in perspective away from abstract theorizing and scientific rationality towards action-based investigations oriented toward practical engagement in the world.
- Huge impact e.g., in social and humanist sciences

Background

- This is based on the historically “uneasy” relationship between the academics and the practitioners
 - > the conflict between the head and the heart, mind and the body, science and arts, culture and nature etc.
- > these topics tend to merge in artistic research**

This division is also partly due to the differences in what type of knowledge is regarded as accurate:

Traditional sciences require explicit knowledge production:

- Explicit -> Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt.
- Research has historically been understood as a process that generates explicit knowledge and where knowledge is an understood given.

Art as research relies on more implicit systems for knowledge production:

- Implicit -> Suggested though not directly expressed
- The idea of knowledge itself is often unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional

- aims to provide a specific articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art
- invites 'unfinished thinking' -> thinking in, through and with art
- often based on a process of not yet knowing instead of specific hypothesis

Practical turn

This has affected on how things are perceived and what is considered important:

- activity (rather than structure),
- process (rather than fixity),
- action (rather than representation),
- collectiveness (rather than individualism),
- reflexivity (rather than self-consciousness) and more.



ARTISTIC RESEARCH APPROACHES

Some methods/methodologies or approaches to art as research:

- practice as research or practice-based research
- practice-led research or research through practice
- research by practice
- performance as research
- arts-based research
- or simply **artistic research**

Practice as Research (PaR)

- A specific artistic research method
- Has become an established methodology for conducting artistic research.
- PaR projects require more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research inquiry than more traditional research processes
- When done well, demonstrate an equivalent rigour

Practice as Research (PaR)

PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry where, a practice is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry.

- (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice: e.g., specific working method, approach etc.)

Documentation and reflection in Artistic Research

In practice-led research context, documentation can function as a **research tool** for capturing reflection *on* and *in* action.

- When artist-researchers document their practice-led research processes, they consciously reflect on the current experiences during the process (reflection-in-action) and on the documented experiences after the entire process (reflection-on-action).

(Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018)

REFLECTION AS RESEARCH TOOL

In practice-led research documentation is what makes the reflection possible (e.g. diary writing, photographing/video/audio, drawing: diagrams, mind maps etc...)

- (I) Reflection-in-action:** functions as an inherent method for collecting information about the creative processes related to the study on the go.
- (II) Reflection-on-action:** is used in later steps of the study, when bringing the data in connection with the relevant research literature, the collected data elicit insights and understanding for the study.

(Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018)

Links

Research Catalogue – a database for artistic research

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/>

SAR / Society For Artistic Research

<https://societyforartisticresearch.org/about/what-we-do/>

JAR / Journal For Artistic Research

<https://www.jar-online.net/>

RUUKKU / Studies in Artistic Research

<http://ruukku-journal.fi/>

Research in Arts and Education

<https://researtsedu.com/>

EXAMPLE
OF AN ARTISTIC
RESEARCH
APPROACH
IN FILM DESIGN

Ways of expression: the impact of VFX technology on modern storytelling in film and interactive media production.

RAFAL HANZL The Norwegian Film School, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/556665/556666>

References

- Henk Borgdorff, 2011. 'The production of Knowledge in Artistic Research', in M. Biggs & H. Karlsson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, London: Routledge, pp. 44-63.
- Baz Kershaw - A Historiographic Perspective on Practice as Research, <http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/tap.htm#1>
- Baz Kershaw. 'Practice as Research through Performance', in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, edited by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, pp. 104-125
- Figure 1.1 : Iterative cyclic web in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, edited by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, p. 21
- Robin Nelson, 2013. *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, pp.8-9
- Johanna Oksanen, Research practices lecture material
- Sofia Pantouvaki, MA seminar lecture material
- Uniarts, 2020. What is artistic research? Available at: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/general-info/what-is-artistic-research/>
- <https://artifacts.ai/what-is-academic-research/>
- <https://research.com/tutorials/definition-of-academic-research>
- Mäkelä, Maarit & Nimkulrat, Nithikul (2018). *Documentation as practice-led research tool for reflection on experiential knowledge*. FORMakademisk 11 (1), article 5, 1-16.

Task 2

Think of a topic or subject you are interested in and prepare to present *the core idea in one or two sentences (draft statement)*:

Compose a simple sentence or two in which you state your area of curiosity and explain why the topic is significant, relevant, and worthy of study.

Task 2...

Think of the following questions in connection to own work/interests when preparing your statement (esp. if the MA Film or practice aspect of your thesis is unclear):

- What is the subject? Why did you choose this topic?
- What do you want to investigate in this project?
 1. What is your own interest in it?
 2. and more broadly, how is it related to your own field of practice/study?
- Is there a more specific aspect that interests you in this topic?

Task 2

Remember that this is a practice assignment and the topic you now choose does not have to be your final topic.

Rather you can use the topic to rehearse how to plan for your thesis and the research you will conduct, if it turns out that you wish to change your topic later on.

Task 2

Remember that