

The Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of Artistic Research

Darla Crispin¹

Arne Nordheim Centre for Artistic Research, Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, Norway

Abstract: In the earliest days of developing the discourses pertinent to artistic research, the apparent openness of its territory was vital in order that the varied protagonists engaging with it in the manner of pioneers could each recognise themselves within it while remaining open to the often-divergent needs and natures of others around them. This notionally deterritorialized domain had a utopian quality, serving as an idealized zone in which artists might be able to exist and work on their own terms while contributing to something new: a meta-discourse that would generate new and more inclusive kinds of 'knowing'. Responding to that potential, in 2009, Kathleen Coessens, Darla Crispin and Anne Douglas published *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*, an early analysis of the emergent artistic research field, using Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's metaphorical concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to point up some of the promises – and pitfalls – to be found within the emergent artistic research field. Ten years after the publication of that book, it seems appropriate to return to the text, to reflect on its analysis of that dualistic approach to territory and to test it against more recent developments. This is also an opportunity to point up some of the 'red flags' around potential disciplinary shortcomings in artistic research – and to make tentative suggestions as to how these might be overcome. The essay proposes a model that emphasises the rhizomic interconnectedness of the territories of artistic research. It argues that the nature of this 'saturated connectedness', free from privileged or marginalised elements and continuously dynamic in its functioning, is as crucial to an understanding of artistic research as is a proper comprehension of the separate identities of the territories themselves.

Keywords: artistic research; territory; rhizomatic; critical reflection

When new modes of thought develop and are gradually incorporated into existing structures, what are the consequences – for societies, for institutions and for individuals? How do those involved deal with the inevitable transformations, reaping the potential benefits, and avoiding the possible drawbacks? Taking Christopher Frayling's 1993 tripartite definition of arts research as an arbitrary starting point, we can now look back across an arc of almost three decades during which artistic research has grown from rather uncertain, fluid and contentious beginnings to the status of a 'field', and perhaps even a 'discipline'. Its projects are now widely funded, teams are set up to explore broad artistic research questions, artistic PhDs are valorised and senior artist-researchers are granted professorships (Frayling, 1993).² Alongside this, artists have had opportunities to rethink and reconfigure their professional lives and resituate their work in contexts that interrogate its nature in novel ways.³

Informed by insights coming from artists themselves and energized by new imperatives to 'explain' their art, participants in the work initially hoped that the artistic research phenomenon would give renewed urgency to, and a fresh perspective upon, questions of 'why art matters'.⁴ There was even a hope that this new way of uniting creative action and creative thought could have wider cultural and social impact, as well as enfranchising artists

¹ darla.m.crispin@nmh.no

² Frayling's categories of arts research work are: 'research into art and design, research through art and design and research for art and design', 5.

³ Artistic research PhDs are now established across the European space, though not uniformly in all countries, something that creates problems for the field, given that several countries restrict their universities of applied science (where most artistic research takes place) to the first and second cycles, with several other countries struggling to provide sufficient funding for educational and cultural innovation. The programmes that do exist have both regional characteristics and increasingly interwoven quality assurance mechanisms. One of the exciting aspects of the maturation of the artistic research PhD arises when good practices are shared. One example of this is the Erasmus + Strategic Partnership 'Advancing Supervision for Artistic Research Partnerships 2018-2021' <https://advancingsupervision.eu>.

⁴ The title of Chapter One of Coessens, Crispin and Douglas, 2009. Reconsideration of specific themes form the book forms the basis for this essay.

by giving them a new kind of 'voice' and new means through which they might give accounts of their experiences.

In 2009, Kathleen Coessens, Anne Douglas and I published an early analysis of the emergent artistic research field, using Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's metaphorical concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to point up some of the promises – and pitfalls – to be found within the emergent artistic research field. Ten years after the publication of that book, *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*, it feels appropriate to return to the text, to reflect on its analysis of that dualistic approach to territory and to test it against newer developments and modes of 'progress'. This is also an opportunity to point up some of the 'red flags' around potential disciplinary shortcomings in artistic research – and to make tentative suggestions as to how these might be overcome. In doing so, I would be the first to acknowledge that this critique of artistic research is rather limited both by its delineated conceptual specificity and by my own far-from-disinterested status as co-author of the book on which the critique is based. Nevertheless, I believe there are arguments that mitigate both these limitations.

Concerning the first point, the conceptual thinking of Deleuze and Guattari has proved enduringly – albeit perhaps surprisingly – attractive to many working in the field of artistic research, regardless of the nature of their artistic expertise or their fluency in twentieth century French philosophy. It is therefore apposite to reflect upon this development of a shared, but largely borrowed, conceptual vocabulary in considering the wider question of how research develops its communal meta-languages. Artistic research has given us opportunities to observe this evolution. As to the second point, that which concerns the 'disinterested' gaze versus the partiality of the researcher, self-reflexivity has become both a common mode of thought within artistic research (and even one that has been valorised by the enshrining of the reflective commentary as a component of specific artistic research PhDs). This elevation of subjectivity is a phenomenon that has, with some justification, attracted a certain amount of criticism. Nevertheless, it is an almost inevitable consequence of the bringing together of the sensibilities of the artist and the researcher. It makes sense, therefore, to employ its processes alongside critiquing them, given that this essay makes no claim to be 'objective'.⁵

Some of the artistic research production currently emergent may certainly be said to be suffering from critical shortcomings. What matters here is not merely the means through which art is argued *for*, in words, using language; it is also about the nature of the art itself, its sense of texture, of vitality, and the danger of 'flatness' that comes from the production of large quantities of work in which it can seem that nothing is at stake. Through the interrogation of deterritorialization, it may be possible both to determine whether these shortcomings are real or illusory and, if the former, how they are to be addressed in the decades to come as the field matures, and as the flexibility offered by being a relatively 'young' field gives way to the more rigid structures associated with being an established and

⁵ There is a growing interest in how both auto-ethnography and reflective practice may develop their different yet complementary roles within research in the arts. An informative research project on these interconnected areas, 'Beyond 'mesearch': autoethnography, self-reflexivity, and personal experience as academic research in music studies' is being conducted at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom. Details may be found at: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/departments/music-and-media/research/musicology>

valorised discipline.

Deterritorialization

A rhizomatic description of the domains of art and research implies dismantling the frontiers, opening the territories and deterritorializing space from the side of the arts, as well as from the side of scientific research. By borrowing the notions of territory and deterritorialization from Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 1987), we acknowledge the complexity of both realms, as all territories and their centres are shifting and dynamic. The idea of the artistic turn implies an explicit experience and recognition of these shifts.

Deterritorialization, for Deleuze and Guattari, means a process that takes the territory away from some previously existing entity, opening the frontiers and enabling otherness and difference. To deterritorialize is to free-up existing fixed relations, exposing oneself to new forms, to transformation. It is not a real escape, but more a departure – sometimes violent – from a given territory.⁶

The emergence of artistic research owed a great deal to political developments related to the funding of higher education through two streams: teaching and research. In such a duopoly, the creative and performing arts needed arguments to justify their access to both streams. Added to this, the harmonisation of European higher education through the Bologna process forced higher arts education right across the continent to adopt the three-cycle paradigm of Bachelor, Master, Doctor, in the final cycle of which research was an essential prerequisite. Responding to these funding imperatives, but also pursuing a certain philosophical ideal, those championing the concept of artistic research proposed a research space in which the artist's queries, dilemmas and exploratory journeys might be problematised as research questions to be explored and solved by artistic peers, both in relation to and through art-making and its ancillary activities. Although this was primarily driven by the need to introduce of degree structures into arts and arts-training institutions and to establish career and promotional paths for artists working in academic environments, this precipitated intense debates around the very idea of 'knowledge' and how it is conceived, preserved and communicated that continue to this day.

The first consequence of the articulation of the concept of artistic research was the claim for a broad conceptual territory that, paradoxically, would be permeable at its boundaries (thus with non-specific frontiers) and as non-prescriptive as possible in its internal nature. In the earliest days of developing the discourses pertinent to artistic research, the apparent openness of its territory was vital in order that the varied fields could each find themselves within it while remaining open to the often-divergent needs and natures of others around them. This deterritorialized domain had a utopian quality, serving as an idealized zone in which artists might be able to exist and work on their own terms while contributing to something new: a meta-discourse that would generate new kinds of 'knowing'. Some of the questions associated with this deterritorialization were articulated in this manner, painting a

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, as cited in Coessens et. al., (2009, pp. 87-88). The relationship between the work of Deleuze and Guattari and various kinds of artistic research work are explored in a biennial conference series called DARE – Deleuze and Artistic Research: <https://dareconferences.org/about/>. The open-access archive of the DARE website is a helpful resource both for those wishing to develop a knowledge of how Deleuze and Guattari pertain to the reading of the artistic research field, and how this set of relationships may be generative of new artistic research work.

vision of a fluid disciplinary zone in which artists, and others, may:

[...] wish to explore the wider space of artistic practice and consider how artistic research may inhabit this, in addition to the more traditional research spaces. One effect of this exploration will be a 'deterritorialization' of a range of space which, hitherto, have tended to be more rigidly demarcated and labelled as to ownership. As has been seen repeatedly, artistic do not live exclusively in a secluded 'artistic' world. They partake of the world of ideas and embed it idiosyncratically in their practice (Coessens et. al., 2009, p. 77).

Grasping for terminologies that could effectively articulate some aspects of the essential nature of artistic practices, artist-researchers found that the writings of Deleuze and Guattari offered a means of reflecting upon the morphology and behaviour of the field as resonant because of the process-oriented descriptive nature of the conceptualisations as reflective of the process-driven nature of art-making:

All art is, in itself, already engaged in continuous deterritorialization, in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari use this term. Artistic activity is intrinsically a 'becoming': it entails movement and the dynamism of change; it is a continuous production of unique events, each participating in its own continuity. Moreover, it operates as a line of flight, starting from a secure centre, but freeing itself from what was before, following a path of change and innovation encountering the other – be it space, symbol, idea or person. These processes imply the creative potential of an assemblage, embedding elements of the broader environment in new and different patterns (Coessens et. al., 2009, p. 92).

So far so good: the territory of art could be seen to be open, non-resistant, enfranchising and freeing for the artist, as well as the possibility opening up that artistic work might become increasingly consequential in the broader domain of research. This optimistic vision has, however, generated two severe problems, which will be the focus for the remainder of this essay. The first problem is that artistic research is extremely demanding of the artist:

Artistic research, then, requires a new kind of deterritorialization for the artist: a destabilizing movement away from his or her being involved, in a relatively routine manner, in the process; the search for and realization of each new creative assemblage. Over and above the customary dynamics of this movement through the artistic space, it demands a striking out towards different territories, colonized by different expertises. It urges artists to reflect on their own processes, to merge the practices of their artistry with new domains. It is difficult work, implying not only a recovery of the world of practices, but also a translation or an interpretation/re-interpretation of it (Coessens et. al., 2009, p. 93).

The second problem is that the claim for disciplinary territory is not neutral; it impinges upon the space – and resources – of other domains of thought and work, along with the disciplines they generate:

From the point of view of research, a deterritorialization of the research space also takes place. Not only new knowledge but also new modes of knowledge – and moreover, new actors – enter the stage of research. The territory of research has never been totally fixed or closed, even if some scientists would like it to be. Novel scientific paradigms, new disciplines and fresh discoveries have shaken the foundations of the empire of scientific research more than once...

What will the specificity of artistic research imply for the broader territory of research? In the first place, the scene of research, centred on academic and scientific communities, will encounter new actors who will have to be considered no longer as objects of study, but as inquiring subjects themselves: the artist and the artist-as-researcher. These two interconnected roles are historically embedded in art without necessarily being inscribed within the kinds of institutional practices that are currently dominant within higher education. Secondly, artistic practice as a field of research will not be the sole territory of the scientific research, as in the recent past, but a shared realm, in which different kinds of research can happen: some conducted by scientific researchers, some by artist-researchers, and some by both working together. Thirdly, the artistic manifestation, artefact, performance or intervention will no longer be something to be inserted into a social, aesthetic, interpretation, led by aesthetic and scientific experts in art, but will be embedded in an authentic artistic discourse of research led by practitioners of art. This means that, fourthly, research cultures will potentially be enriched with new narratives, discourses and modes of knowledge including knowledge of making (*techne*) and knowledge of the value systems that inform making (*phronesis*) (Coessens et. al., 2009, pp. 94 – 95).

The reaction to these two realities means that much is at stake in the field as it stands today. If they are to avoid what Deleuze and Guattari term 'overcoding', the freezing up of conceptual freedom of open territory through solidification and thought -processes and 're-territorialization', artist-researchers will need to be nimble and skilled in their conceptions, and tolerant of the conceptions of others whilst developing a more sophisticated criticality than has yet been demonstrated within the field at large. This is its next step toward maturity and, even, long-term viability.

Artistic Research and its Territories

The First Territory: the search for definition

The first, and possibly the most pervasive, re-territorialisation of artistic research is the search for an all-encompassing, unifying and enduring definition. In a sense, this fundamental challenge pertains to another problematic area for artist-researchers: the quest for language. The development of definitions has exposed the faults and fractures that tend to affect all large groups that propose to develop a consequential research thinking; disciplinary, cultural and national differences are at odds with the generation of a truly effective, unifying language. Instead, various subject groups and organisations have tended to develop a range of related but heterogeneous descriptions.⁷ In the early years of artistic

⁷ Policy documents concerning artistic research continue to proliferate. Among the most important of these include Mick Wilson and Schelte van Ruiten, eds., 'The SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education', accessible at <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/resources/share-handbook>, Research and Development in the Arts: 1995-2015: Twenty Years of Artistic Research, the Working Group of the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme: Nina Malterud, Torben Lai, Aslaug Nyrnes and Frode Thorsen, accessible under Reports: <https://diku.no/en/programmes/norwegian-artistic-research-programme>, the Arts and Humanities Council website: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/introduction/definitionofresearch/>, 'Key Concepts for AEC Members: Artistic Research: An AEC Council 'White Paper' 2015, accessible on: <https://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Key%20Concepts/White%20Paper%20AR%20-%20Key%20Concepts%20for%20AEC%20Members%20-%20EN.pdf>. Another key document for curriculum development in artistic research is *The 'Florence Principles' on the Doctorate in the Arts (2016-2017)*, accessible on <https://www.elia-artschools.org/documents/the-florence-principles>, and endorsed by: AEC - Association Européenne des Conservatoires Académiques de Musique et Musikhochschulen, CILECT - International Association of Film and Television Schools (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision), Cumulus - International Association of Universities and Colleges of Art, Design and Media, EAAE - European Association for Architectural Education and SAR - Society for Artistic Research.

research, these descriptive definitions were evolved to mark out territory, to claim institutional distinctiveness and to meet funding criteria. Partly because of the latter influence, it did not take long for aspects of the work to be seen as being resonant with national character. Compare, for example, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) outline, with the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (NARP) definition – or network of definitions:

AHRC:

The AHRC's definition of research is as follows: research activities should primarily be concerned with research processes, rather than outputs. This definition is built around three key features and your proposal must fully address all of these in order to be considered eligible for support:

1. It must define a series of research questions, issues or problems that will be addressed in the course of the research. It must also define its aims and objectives in terms of seeking to enhance knowledge and understanding relating to the questions, issues or problems to be addressed;
2. It must specify a research context for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed. You must specify why it is important that these particular questions, issues or problems should be addressed; what other research is being or has been conducted in this area; and what particular contribution this project will make to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in this area;
3. It must specify the research methods for addressing and answering the research questions, issues or problems. You must state how, in the course of the research project, you will seek to answer the questions, address the issues or solve the problems. You should also explain the rationale for your chosen research methods and why you think they provide the most appropriate means by which to address the research questions, issues or problems.⁸

NARP:

Artistic research in Norway takes the artist's special experience and reflection as its point of departure, and, as such, is in line with the category research in the arts. A high artistic standard is a key requirement for artistic research in Norway. This is part of the platform of the Artistic Research Programme and the institutions' research activities.

Artists develop work methods that prove to lead to an artistic result. The methods employed can be individual or specific to each artistic field, such as composition, design or dance. The field of art is experimental in nature, and critically testing, challenging and overturning methods are integral parts of its culture. Questions about and reflection on method are fundamentally interwoven with the artistic work itself. The reflection that is part of artistic practice, on content, process and methods, has a central place in artistic research.⁹

The AHRC definition aims for criteria that can map easily onto other research domains, as befits the organisation's situation within the UK research space, so that its research ambitions resonate clearly within that space in order for its researchers to prosper. The NARP criteria expose the quite different preoccupations of the Nordic approach, emphasising

⁸ As in the Funding section for the Arts and Humanities Council website:
<https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/introduction/definitionofresearch/>

⁹ Research and Development in the Arts: 1995-2015: Twenty Years of Artistic Research, the Working Group of the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme: Nina Malterud, Torben Lai, Aslaug Nyrrnes and Frode Thorsen. Accessible under Reports: <https://diku.no/en/programmes/norwegian-artistic-research-programme>

interdisciplinarity, social relevance and - to the highest degree possible - the centrality of the artistic production as the articulator of its own research content.

As this example illustrates, it soon became obvious that the delineating specificities of bodies at national level might have a levelling and even inhibiting effect upon the expansion of the field; the initially locally territorialized definitions and terminologies became subject to modification by international bodies, such as subject associations, with the aim of making their collective valorisation more persuasive to stakeholders who held influence over international policy and the way its purse strings might be opened. From the broad scope of the European Union to the voices of member organisations related to it, this internationalisation process was a prominent feature of the early years of the century's second decade. An example of this kind of work with definitions came in 2015 with the 'White Paper on Artistic Research', drawn up by the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) which devised the following definition and checklist of distinctions:

Artistic Research may be defined as a form of research that possesses a solid basis embedded in artistic practice and which creates new knowledge and/or insight and perspectives within the arts, contributing both to artistry and to innovation.

Artistic Research commonly displays all, or most, of the following features:

- It is usually conducted by the artist-researcher or through the collaboration of artists within a research team
- It promotes critical dialogue within the artistic field, with other relevant fields of knowledge and between the scholarly and professional domains
- It is supported by critical reflection on the content and/or context of the research topic
- It articulates and reflects on methods and work processes
- It shares relevant professional knowledge with the wider artistic community and disseminates it in the public sphere to the enrichment of cultural understanding¹⁰

While the debate concerning definitions and criteria has formed a vital part of the early evolution of the field, what has perhaps been most important is the strong engagement of varied disciplines, institutions and interest groups in the search for answers, from which, examples such as the above have emerged as nodes of good practice. Overall, these groups have energetically championed the adoption of ever-evolving and inclusive definitions that share a number of important characteristics:

- 1) The relation of the evolution of artistic research to the generation and validation of study programmes, mainly at third-cycle level, but also with an increasing focus upon second-cycle work and the possibility of foundation studies at first cycle;
- 2) The promotion of interdisciplinarity within artistic research projects, both through having artists in varied fields working in teams, and, in some institutions, by promoting the inclusion of scientists;

¹⁰ 'Key Concepts for AEC Members: Artistic Research: An AEC Council 'White Paper' 2015, accessible on: <https://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Key%20Concepts/White%20Paper%20AR%20-%20Key%20Concepts%20for%20AEC%20Members%20-%20EN.pdf>

- 3) The establishment and development of international networks as a means of supporting and promulgating the goals of artistic research, e.g. the Society for Artistic Research - [https://societyforartisticresearch.org](https://societyforartisticresearch.org;);
- 4) The generation of peer-reviewed, online platforms enabling multi-media presentation of artistic research work - e.g. JAR (the Journal for Artistic Research) - <https://jar-online.net>, Ruukku (Finnish Journal for Artistic Research) - <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en>, ÍMPAR – Online Journal for Artistic Research - <http://revistas.ua.pt/index.php/impar>, and VIS (Nordic Journal for Artistic Research) - <https://www.visjournal.nu>;
- 5) The argument for artistic research as a practice capable of generating fellows and professorial staff with viable career progression possibilities and with professionally-relevant skills.

This evolution of these logical practices and procedures has finally removed some of the urgency to find and fix upon all-encompassing definitions, moving questions instead toward the more complex development of distinctive methodologies and creating new territorial frontiers within artistic research itself. Following the lead of Deleuze and Guattari, it is noted in *The Artistic Turn* that ‘a rhizomatic description of the domains of art and research implies dismantling the frontiers and deterritorializing space from the side of the arts, as well as from the side of scientific research’ (Coessens et. al., p. 87). The implication is that the discipline faces not one but two potentially contentious frontiers and that no single defining position is likely to satisfy all constituencies and interest groups. What is required is a notion of defining itself that, paradoxically, eschews definition or, at the very least, remains resolutely multi-faceted and flexible.

The Second Territory: the illusory primacy of the Self

In research terms, the constructs of artistic research, which foreground the artist as both maker and researcher and necessitate complex, process-driven structures and practices, place its participants in challenging scenarios which they manage with varying degrees of success. One of the questions at the core of this is whether it is actually invariably the case that artistic research work can enhance the quality, merit and relevance of art-making itself. While the claim for benefit seems reasonable enough in itself – *if I deepen my understanding of what I am doing I ought to be able to do it better* - it is not always borne out in practice. Moreover, what constitutes ‘better’ in the context of artistic research is far from transparent because of the increasingly contentious debate around ‘quality’ in artistic research. Can first-rate art redeem second-rate research (or vice versa)? Is it enough for a piece of work to demonstrate first-rate art *and* research if the two do not interact in any particularly profound way? Might there actually be a ‘third species of quality in artistic research which is neither that of art nor of research? Can the traits that make one a first-rate artist and those that lead to the highest quality research ever truly co-exist in the one individual?

It is arguable that, in their eagerness to consolidate positions in the artistic research sphere, institutions and organisations have yet to develop truly rigorous systems of critical thinking through which to assess artistic research work on its own terms. One of the challenges to developing such systems is that artistic research has its basis in the generation of projects

which articulate the artist's own practice as linked to their own condition and critical stances. This means that artistic research is invariably exemplary to some degree; its criteria must shift with each new instantiation, making meta-level analysis difficult to apply and universalising extrapolations all but meaningless.

In order to develop some contexts that may enable insights within artistic research to be seen from without, some artistic research organisations require a secondary commentary or critical reflection upon a given artistic practice or project, particularly if the work is associated with the granting of a degree or the award of funding. There is ample evidence that this array of requirements combining artistic production and commentary can be disconcerting for those undertaking such work:

How [do we] put into words the experience of developing an artistic project or doing artistic work? All such attempts at articulation involve the writer [...] finding a good and expedient language with which to describe his or her experience, a language that will also make it possible to share this experience theoretically and cognitively. A language that enables not only the sharing of experience, but also the discussion and problematization of the experience, so that the creative practice, filtered through a different medium, also becomes visible to the creative subject. In this perspective, the attempts at articulation are based on an underlying literal interpretation of 'reflection' which can function as a mirror, but also as a contrasting element...(Vassenden, 2013, n.p.)

It is also true that there is, as yet, no institutional consensus around the relative weight of these components, or their ultimate merit within a holistic evaluation process. Many institutions maintain the long thesis element for the granting of a doctoral degree as an important and fair earnest of a linked artistic and intellectual merit, while others have eliminated the thesis altogether, regarding it as irrelevant to both the nature and site of most research knowledge as it exists within artistic practice.

At the centre of this array of contradictory pressures is the artist. And there can be little doubt that many artist-researchers find the forces ranged about them to be generative of anxiety, finding their artistic 'selves' to be challenged and thus, fearing for the preservation of the kinds of artistic flow or fluency they normally possess and are seeking to enhance. But this creates another potential problem. Our contemporary orientation toward 'the self' can colour responses to the requirement for 'commentary'. Oftentimes, what should be an insight into matters that illuminate the nature of art-making becomes a mere glance into the personal world of the artist and author, with the critical potential being scarce or entirely absent. What is still missing, still under-theorised and little discussed, is the means through which we can, with at least some critical distance, interrogate the artistic act in its materiality, process or instantiation, rather than the artist or their personality.

The argument at this point tends to be that the artist and the art are, to some degree at least, inseparable. Yet, this is contrary to the ways in which art itself has been assessed for centuries, and flies in the face of an academic critical tradition that, while often pilloried by artists, has had many skilful and perceptive practitioners. The many contemporary arguments against criticism – its rigid power structures, its enfranchisement of the few, its damage to the vulnerable, its cloaking of corruption – have detracted from its strong aspects:

the detection of genuine talent, the challenge to the artist's privilege, the unmasking of cant, the detection of fraud. It may be true to say that, in a sense, artistic research helpfully problematises the manner in which artistic veneration whitewashes human folly, but it cannot do so in contemporary society without massively boosting its currently tenuous relevance. The search for 'self', for 'voice', in artistic research is necessary, for all that it brings with it doubt and vulnerability; but it is, in itself, insufficient for the generation of a fully consequential, responsive and responsible artistic research work.

Alongside the territory of the 'self' must be the territories of the 'others' whose perceptions matter and whose own reflections point up the potential for a more nuanced, complex receptive space in which it is not the artist as a personality that matters, but the generation of empathic understanding that some of his or her art can offer. Furthermore, consideration of 'the other' within artistic research work has the potential to generate a kind of productive friction, a set of positive resistances that can be helpful to the work's effectiveness but that do not 'belong' to the artist. In a sense, then, one mode of diagnosis for artistic research work is the consideration as to whether there is anything 'at stake', one symptom of which would be that the work is willing to test itself again otherness.

This suggestion is far from a plea for bland acceptance; it is associated with another fair earnest of all research: that it is meaningful, in some way, to a body of peers and, possibly, to those outside the peer environment. Furthermore, for all that it posits a form or rigour, it is also potentially generative of a compassionate understanding, not merely on behalf of the reader but – significantly – on behalf of the artist. This does not mean compromise in the service of softening reception; it is a demand for critical imagination, for development of generative and receptive vocabularies that have yet to exist, for a better understanding of the nature, necessity and dangers of risk. If artists are to highlight their positions vis-à-vis artmaking as vulnerable, then the artist-researcher, it may be argued, bears the ethical responsibility inherent in the associated artwork and has a duty to acknowledge that reality for the readers. All this points to the conclusion that artistic researchers do indeed bear both artistic and research responsibility – but the nature of what this means is yet to be fully uncovered.

The Third Territory: the matter of boundaries

If art generates empathic responses and the potential for humane understanding, it is surely from this quality that we derive our enduring sense of art's vitality and relevance. But this opens up further questions around the nature of art-making and the manifold ways in which it is practised. While much art of the past had – apparently – clear boundaries in terms of possession and authorship, much contemporary art is generated precisely to question and upend these notions of ownership, as well as asking serious ethical questions concerning the illusory aspects of past practices. Indeed, these matters are less contemporary than they might seem, going back to a reconsideration of the potentially exploitative nature of much past art production, including the use of unacknowledged artists in collective works or 'schools of'; the borrowing of ideas and techniques with insufficient acknowledgement; and the deliberate infringement of personal space.

Questions around artistic ownership with respect to artistic research demonstrate how utterly

insufficient the standard research apparatus can be in allowing an artistic research project both to press boundaries and (paradoxically) to document its findings through art alone with ethical probity. Some of these problems are so extreme that it may be argued that certain forms of cultural production are hermetically sealed from artistic research practices precisely because of the array of legal mechanisms at work. This has an impact upon artists in terms of its being a professional question that, in turn, is attached to deeper matters concerning identity and status. If, say, the copyrighted professional work is completely closed to research interrogation, then it may be the case that some of the best art cannot be evaluated as artistic research. In this case, which identity is the one that matters? Or why must the choice be made at all? This points up the problem that most artistic research is obliged to exist outside the professional sphere so that the evaluation systems it requires can be enabled; but this really means that the systems themselves are insufficient, since artistic research should surely be able to articulate itself – as art and as research - in its best professional milieu.

Because, in reality, artistic research exists in two milieus – artistic and scholarly – it has both a dual requirement and a dual responsibility. Just as it needs to hold its own in the professional context, it must also display an awareness of the web of related research activity – both artistic and conventionally ‘scientific’ - into which it is launching itself. Artist researchers bear a considerable responsibility in relation to this problem. For all that artistic research PhDs generally require ample evidence of a knowledge of context, it is sometimes discouraging to see the number of projects that claim originality but instead demonstrate ignorance of context. Scientists based in the arts and humanities have no such luxury; the ‘literature search’ is the rather exacting requirement that gives evidence that the researcher has adequate knowledge and understanding of past practices and a clear idea of how their current research builds upon it. While some artistic research projects are indeed admirable in their acknowledgement of their debt to the past, far too many are derivative; they are what John Cage might have called a ‘Cheap Imitation’ (in reference to his piano composition of 1969, which he orchestrated in 1972 and transcribed into a violin version 1977 – i.e. he made his own ‘cheap imitations’). Unsurprisingly, Cage’s work is often emulated by artist-researchers, but the mechanisms through which one acknowledges the indebtedness of one kind of art-making to another remain problematic in their implementation. The interesting and far more complex matter at work here is the degree to which all creativity has a certain hybrid quality of old and new, and each new artwork has the potential to unmake art by pulling its origins to pieces. Thus, the need for research probity and the sense that art should be able to exist on its own terms are potentially in conflict. The disciplinary roles and responsibilities of the artist-researcher place them at the centre of this dilemma.

Artistic research is in an awkward situation in terms of its current geopolitical traces, the identity problems it poses for its participants and the linked exclusion and potential exploitation of those who cannot fully access its arenas and the advantages they afford. Many artist-researchers within study programmes come to their work with genuine aims to address social problems and various inequalities through their art-making, despite the fact that the discipline as a whole, together with its sub-fields, has suffered from an over-representation of the well-off and the white in all but a few cases. Regionally, artist research remains, for the most part, confined to core locations in the Low Countries, specific centres in Portugal and Spain, Austria (funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF: Programme for

Arts-Based Research PEEK) the Nordic countries, certain locations in Australia (Queensland) and a few outposts in the Far East, United Kingdom, South Africa and North America. Even as participants in these regions acknowledge the non-representative nature of the artist research community, they generally admit to their PhD and post-doc funded programmes people 'like themselves', not least because of the national pressure to demonstrate the relevance of artist research as a means of articulating national character and concerns, something that is both understandable and potentially dangerous to academic freedom. This means that artistic identities remain a potential ground for negotiation (in itself a potentially dubious matter) while those who wish to challenge norms from 'outside' will rarely gain opportunities to do so.

Can inequality and oppression be challenged by those who gain advantages from those same systems? And, in this age where so much of education is in danger of being instrumentalised, is artistic research and its training not also in danger of being entrained in a series of manifesto-based false promises, thus neutralising its potential for trenchant critique? How is artistic research to be accessed by those outside its privileged areas? And when the 'other' is invited into the artistic research world, how is their identity to be safeguarded in the face of so much privilege? Furthermore, with the institutionalised foregrounding of project groups and interdisciplinarity, how can the gatekeepers of artistic research prevent mere exploitation of one artist by another, and the generative blandness that comes when an instrumental notion (such as interdisciplinarity) takes precedence over the actual nature of the art itself as a fair earnest of quality, or a pre-requisite for a position? All these questions point to the expanding set of dilemmas around artistic research and the identities it generates.

The Fourth Territory: the matter of language

If dangers of cultural appropriation and matters of property and propriety give us pause in relation to the artistic domain, the responsibilities inherent in identifying oneself as a researcher, and developing thought within that environment whilst maintaining an artistic sensibility – whatever that may entail – are often daunting. Research has its accepted ways of working, its demands for sound argumentation and proof. Even so, it is constantly being challenged and destabilised as a result of these pressures. A recent example of this is the 'Sokal squared' or 'Grievance Studies' controversy, exemplified by a trio of scholars who submitted bogus articles to peer reviewed journals in order to test the rigour of the critical apparatus. The disciplines targeted in this scandal, among which were cultural studies and gender studies, have an uncomfortable proximity to some artist research work, and the questions of probity that the scandal revisited need to be raised within artistic research as it matures.¹¹ While it is possible, in artistic terms, to make 'work' that interrogates the matter of fakery, there is also a real problem about how the field asks itself critical questions, how it will arbitrate for quality or the lack of it, how its degree programmes must mean something in terms of being able to pose critical questions around art. In this context, that which constitutes research 'skill' may be open to question (with the concomitant debate around that

¹¹ The 'Sokal Squared' trio in question give their account in James A Lindsay, Peter Boghossian and Helen Pluckrose, 'Academic Grievance Studies and the Corruption of Scholarship' in *Aero Magazine*, October 2, 2018: <https://areomagazine.com/2018/10/02/academic-grievance-studies-and-the-corruption-of-scholarship/>. Alan Sokal's original scholarly publishing hoax took place in 1996 and can be studied in Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, 1998. *Intellectual Impostures*. London, UK: Profile Books.

which constitutes ‘de-skilling’), but the manner of its execution should leave the arbiter with no doubt as to the relevance and viability of the approach.

Artistic research is, therefore, a call to re-examine the nature of ‘method’ and to scrutinise the apparatus of the research structure and how it is to generate research that has genuine merit. We must keep asking questions around the relationship between artistic research and its sometimes erroneous reading of the ‘scientific method’ whilst being able to engage in uncomfortable discourses because of the responsibility that comes with holding funded research positions (as is the case with many who are candidates for artistic research PhDs). But these discourses are to be taken up within a field that, as yet, lacks a language that it can fully call its own. The gradual creation of such a language – both in terms of its manifold ‘dialects’ concerning methods and its ‘received version’, through which wider dissemination takes place - will take many years to unfold. The components of a language of artistic research - the words, the gestures, the scarcely tangible signs – these are starting to emerge with varying levels of fluency and eloquence and still lack the advantage of a widely-shared familiarity. As the discipline matures, its sub-languages will continue to splinter, reflecting the need to articulate, as clearly and specifically as possible the essential nature of each brand of research work. But this may well have the effect of fracturing the current emphasis upon research groups and creating, once again, the phenomenon of individuals working in silos without a sense of community. This would be unfortunate, given the many years of consolidation that have taken place, and the benefits for the field, in terms of advocacy, attaining of resources and valorisation, that have ensued.

The Fifth Territory: the artistic research sphere as eco-system, sites beyond, and fragile utopias

Artistic research work takes up both physical and cognitive space; its territories are the installation, the staged performance, the temporally extravagant recording, the sculpture, the happening. It calls upon its participants to move, to transcend, boundaries that may be conceptual, national, disciplinary and more. It generates ‘stuff’. Artistic researchers have a responsibility to communicate, but that necessitates mobility which, while taken as a sign of virtue and prized within the European Union’s definitions of quality within research and education, also present challenges to the physical environment and to the temporal environments of those within its structures. What is to be done about the debris, the criss-crossed flights, the lost time? Can we really argue that all of it is both necessary and environmentally sound? Containment is vulnerable to rupture; decay occurs, whether it is the true stuff of art, or not. Are the gatekeepers for the appropriation of artistic research space always clear in their intentions and conscious of the ecological strains they impose? What is the ecological price of the freedom of the artist, and who is to pay the bill?

Conclusion: A Rhizomatic Pentagon

The answers to these questions lie, in part, in the interconnectedness of the territories of artistic research. The diagram below presents the five territories discussed during this essay as being connected rhizomatically, in that each links directly to the other four. The nature of this ‘saturated connectedness’, free from privileged or marginalised elements and continuously dynamic in its functioning, is as crucial as the separate identities of the territories themselves.

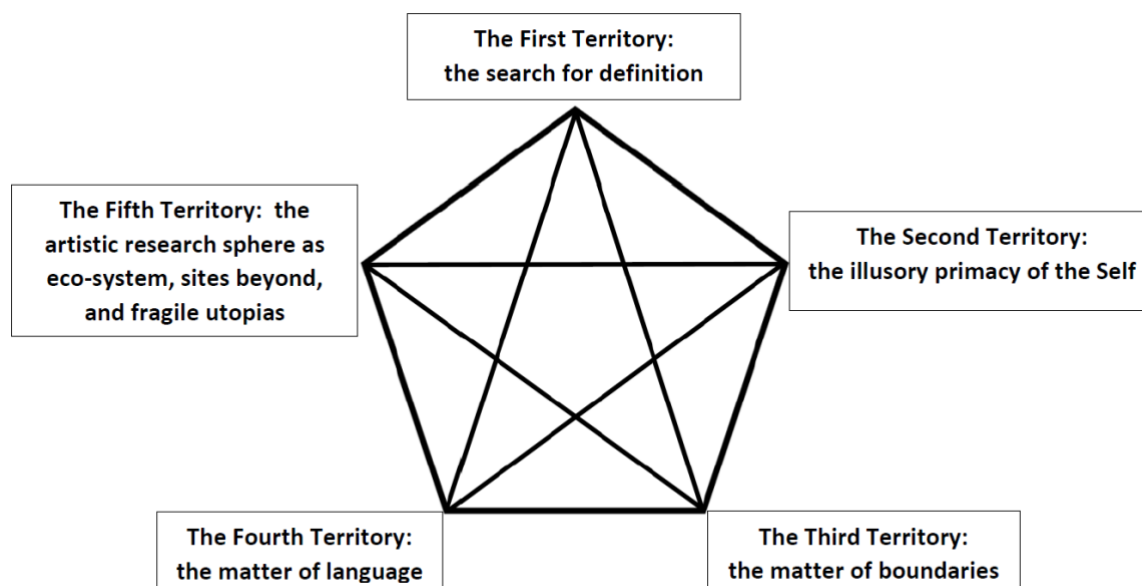


Figure 1. A Rhizomatic Pentagon

The utopia/dystopia of artistic research is that it postulates new territories of future knowing that have yet to be made, to be explored and then to be kept or discarded. It is a world suspended between that which will become second-hand and that which may be redeemed through being remade. Through all its interwoven territories - the thickets of works that form definitions, the many 'selves' generating work that is paradoxically personal and transpersonal, the frontiers and boundaries that emerge as methodological languages develop – its challenges are multiple and formidable:

Artistic creativity and, by extension, artistic research focus the possibility of infinite variability within acts of representation and interpretation. If research in general is to deal adequately with human society, it needs to embrace those aspects of knowledge production that deal with human subjectivity and relationships, not as phenomena to be deduced and re-harnessed within human control, but open-endedly, as part of a process of creative construction and interpretation that is relative, specific to context and value-driven (Coessens et. al., p. 180).

All this points to the further potential of the field, but also to the urgency to maintain its ever-transforming territories as viable, even in our uncertain political, social and cultural times and, hopefully, beyond them.

References:

- Coessens, K., Crispin, D. & Douglas, A. (2009). *The Artistic turn. A manifesto*, Ghent, Belgium: Leuven University Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1998). *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Mille Plateaux*. Paris, France: Editions de Minuit.
- Frayling, C. (1993). *Research in art and design: Royal College of Art Research Papers series vol. 1 no. 1*. London, UK: Royal College of Art.
- Lindsay, J. A., Boghossian, P. & Pluckrose, H. (2018). Academic grievance studies and the corruption of Scholarship. *Aero Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://areomagazine.com/2018/10/02/academic-grievance-studies-and-the-corruption-of-scholarship/>.
- Malterud, N., Lai, T., Nyrnes, A. & Thorsen, F. (1995-2015) Accessible under Reports: Research and Development in the Arts: Twenty Years of Artistic Research, the Working Group of the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. Retrieved from <https://diku.no/en/programmes/norwegian-artistic-research-programme>
- Sokal A. & Bricmont, J. (1998). *Intellectual impostures*. London, UK: Profile Books.
- Vassenden, E. (2013). 'What is critical reflection? A question concerning artistic research, genre and the exercise of making narratives about one's own work', for the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. Retrieved from <http://artistic-research.no/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/What-is-critical-reflection.pdf>
- Wilson M. & van Ruiten, S. (2013) The SHARE handbook for artistic research education. Retrieved from <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/resources/share-handbook>
- The United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Council website. Retrieved from <https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/introduction/definitionofresearch/>
- Key concepts for AEC members: Artistic research: An AEC Council 'white paper' (2015). Retrieved from <https://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Key%20Concepts/White%20Paper%20AR%20-%20Key%20Concepts%20for%20AEC%20Members%20-%20EN.pdf>.
- The 'Florence Principles' on the Doctorate in the Arts (2016-2017). Retrieved from <https://www.elia-artschools.org/documents/the-florence-principles>,
- Diku: Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education – link to the Artistic Research Programme. Retrieved from <https://diku.no/en/programmes?theme%5B%5D=Artistic%20research>