Chapter 7

The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research

Context

This is a chapter in which many themes from preceding chapters come together. After an introduction and a preliminary account, I position artistic research in academia as a field of endeavour that has both kinships and contrasts with other disciplines. In the second half of the chapter, I critically examine the criteria for doing research in the new field, possibly amending or at least refining them. Such refinements will be needed as I later weigh up the assessment criteria for artistic research in terms of the reviewers' guidelines for the *Journal for Artistic Research* (chapters 10 and 11). Like the previous chapter, this one concludes with subsections on non-conceptualism, realism, and contingency in artistic research. These reflections invite additional research. The voices of Theodor W. Adorno, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and also Stanley Cavell can be heard here.

This chapter examines artistic research as a form of knowledge production. It will conclude, however, by saying that artistic research seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather to provide a specific articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art. It thereby invites 'unfinished thinking'. Hence, it is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, through, and with art.

The reader might skip this introduction and the next section (pages 143-149) of the chapter, as it is mostly a recap of what was said before, and continue the reading with 'Affinities …'.

The expression 'artistic research' connects two domains: art and academia. Obviously the term can also be used in a general sense. Every artist does research as she works, as she tries to find the right material, the right subject, as she looks for information and techniques to use in her studio or atelier, or when she encounters something, changes something, or begins anew in the course of her work. Artistic research in the emphatic sense – and as used in this chapter – unites the artistic and the academic in an enterprise that impacts on both domains. Art thereby transcends its former limits, aiming through the research to contribute to thinking and understanding; academia, for its part, opens up its boundaries to forms of thinking and understanding that are interwoven with artistic practices. These specific 'border violations' can spark a good deal of tension. The relationship between art and academia is uneasy, but challenging. That is one reason why the issue of demarcation between the artistic and the academic has been one of the most widely discussed topics in the debate on artistic research in the past fifteen years.[1]

A related issue of demarcation is at play in the relationship between academia and 'artistic development' and 'artistic practice'. In

1. The demarcations and dichotomies employed in this chapter should not be interpreted too absolutely, but rather taken as imperfect dialectical tools to put the subject matter into perspective. See [chapter 2 of this volume] for a discussion of this problem of demarcation; and see Candlin (2000) [and chapter 3] for insights into the uneasy relationship between art and academia. The relationship between the seemingly undisciplined artistic and the ultimately disciplinary academic makes the project of artistic research into an endeavour in which that relationship is a constant focus. Is this state of uneasiness and reflexivity something to be overcome, or is it intrinsic to the place of artistic research in academia?

some quarters, one prefers to speak not of artistic research, but of 'artistic development'.[2] The word 'research' stays reserved for activities in traditional universities or industrial research centres. Indeed there is something to be said for preferring the term 'artistic development'. Artistic research certainly contributes to the development of the arts, just as all other research tries to contribute to the discipline in question. Research and development are intimately entwined, and it may sometimes make sense to highlight the developmental aspect, especially when one is inclined to question the importance of research for art practice. One issue that continually resurfaces in the debate involves where, precisely, the distinction lies between *art practice in itself* and *art practice as research.* Although I will not address this question explicitly here, it will be present in the background. The entanglement of artistic research with art practice and with artistic development is so close that a conceptual distinction often appears contrived.[3]

In discussing artistic research as a form of knowledge production, I begin by tentatively describing this type of research – in terms of subject, method, context, and outcome – as *research in and through art practice.* Embedded in artistic and academic contexts, artistic research seeks to convey and communicate content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in artistic products.

The four E's – embeddedness, enclosure, enactment, embodiment – correspond to four dimensions: the context, the reception, the production, and the artwork.

In the second section, I explore similarities and differences between artistic research and other spheres of academic research, in the domains of humanities, aesthetics, and social sciences and in fields of natural science and technology. Artistic research, so I will claim, distinguishes itself in specific respects from each of these

2. In the Netherlands, a government advisory committee has advised using the term *ontwerp en ontwikkeling* (design and development) to denote research activities in non-university professional schools. Norway uses the term *kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid* (artistic development work), Austria uses *Entwicklung und Erschließung der Künste* (development and promotion of the arts), and some people in Denmark and Germany also tend to avoid words for 'research' such as *forskning* or *Forschung*.

3. Such distinctions are usually made by people who first create a caricature of the one activity, believing they are protecting the other activity by doing so.

research traditions, whereby neither the natural science model, the humanities model, nor the social science model can serve as a benchmark for artistic research.

The third section addresses the issue of whether artistic research can be considered academic research. By virtue of its distinctive context, its studio-based research practice, the specific types of knowledge and understanding it deals with, and its unconventional forms of documentation and dissemination, artistic research occupies its own place in the realm of academic research.

I conclude the chapter with a series of observations on the epistemology and metaphysics of artistic research. The current programme of phenomenologically inspired cognitive science offers tools for examining the issue of the non-conceptual content[4] enclosed in artworks and art practices. Clearly research in and through artistic practices is partly concerned with our perception, our understanding, our relationship to the world and to other people. Art thereby invites reflection, yet it eludes any defining thought regarding its content. Artistic research is the acceptance of that paradoxical invitation. It furthermore enhances our awareness of the pre-reflective nearness of things as well as our epistemological distance from them. This makes artistic research an open undertaking, seeking the deliberate articulation of unfinished thinking in and through art.

A preliminary account of artistic research as research in and through art practice: Subject, method, context, outcome

Despite all the differences of opinion that exist within the ascendant programme of artistic research, there seems to be general agreement about one thing: the *practice* of the arts is central to artistic research. On the surface, such an assumption seems commonplace. After all, doesn't all research that engages with the arts concentrate on 'the prac-

4. The reflexivity of art – its quality of both questioning itself and giving food for thought, and of thus also showing a 'conceptual' dimension – must not be construed in opposition to the (in a philosophical sense) non-conceptual and pre-reflective or unreflective content that lies enclosed in it. For an anthology on this subject, see Gunther 2003.

tice of the arts'? Even disciplines like historical or sociological research on the arts focus on that.

In the case of artistic research, however, art practice plays a different role – and in terms of science theory a more fundamental one. Characteristic of artistic research is that art practice (the works of art, the artistic actions, the creative processes) is not just the motivating factor and the subject matter of research, but that this artistic practice – the practice of creating and performing in the atelier or studio[5] – is central to the research process itself. Methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings, and products come into being.

Another distinguishing feature is that contemporary art practice constitutes the relevant context for the research, alongside the academic forum. The research derives its significance not only from the new insights it contributes to the discourse on art, but also from the outcomes in the form of new products and experiences which are meaningful in the world of art. In part, then, the outcomes of artistic research are artworks, installations, performances, and other artistic practices; and this is another quality that differentiates it from humanities or social science research, where art practice may be the object of the research, but not the outcome. This means that art practice is paramount as the subject matter, the method, the context, and the outcome of artistic research. That is what is meant by expressions like 'practice-based' or 'studio-based' research.

In the literature on artistic research, we regularly see a distinction made between research on the arts, research for the arts, and research in the arts. This differentiation, which derives from, but also deviates from, categories proposed by Frayling (1993) [and cf. chapter 2 of the present volume], expresses different perspectives on the status of art practice. The interpretive perspective ('research on the arts') is common to the research traditions of the humanities and social sciences,

5. I use an expanded notion of 'studio', referring to artistic experimental practice in which the studio or atelier might be an element, but does not always need be. Many contemporary artists are not physically located in the studio, or they even oppose such an isolated, non-situated position and condition.

which observe a certain theoretical distance when they make art practice their object of study. The instrumental perspective ('research for the arts') is characteristic of the more applied, often technical research done in the service of art practice; this research delivers, as it were, the tools and the material knowledge that can then be applied in practice, in the artistic process, and in the artistic product itself. In this case, art practice is not the object of study, but its objective. And as we see, the place of artistic practice becomes more central to the research here.

We can justifiably speak of artistic research ('research in the arts') when that artistic practice is not only the result of the research, but also its methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing. This is a distinguishing feature of this research type within the whole of academic research.

This is not to say that viewpoints in art criticism, social and political theory, or technology play no part in artistic research. As a rule they do play a part. The discourses about art, social context, and the materiality of the medium are in fact partially constitutive of artistic practices and products. The distinctiveness of artistic research, nevertheless, derives from the paramount place that artistic practice occupies as the subject, context, method, and outcome of the research. Methodological pluralism – the view that various approaches deriving from the humanities, social sciences, or science and technology may play a part in artistic research – should be regarded as complementary to the principle that the research takes place in and through the creation of art.

Behind the four specified dimensions of artistic research – subject, method, context, and outcome – are a range of problems that require more detailed analysis. First, the content of what artistic research investigates seems to elude direct access. It has an experiential component that cannot be efficiently expressed linguistically (cf. Biggs 2004). The subject of the research is partly the *je ne sais quoi* of artistic, aesthetic experience;[6] as a matter of principle, it refuses every ex-

6. No distinction is made in this context between the artistic, aesthetic experience of the artist during the production process and the experience the audience has in receiving the artwork. Both the production and the reception of art have an experiential component that evades the conceptual grip.

planatory gaze. What ontological status does this research object have? What sort of content lies enclosed in artistic experience? And how can one articulate that content?

Second, the focus, in the research process, on the practice of creating and performing is in line with what has been called the 'practice turn in contemporary theory' (Schatzki et al. 2001). Knowledge and experiences are constituted only in and through practices, actions, and interactions. In the context of discovery, pre-reflective artistic actions embody knowledge in a form that is not directly accessible for justification. What is the methodological import of this 'enacted approach' in artistic research? Is the researcher trying to reveal something of the secrets of the creative process, of artistic practice, or is the methodological deployment of the artistic creative process best suited because it takes an unmediated route to investigate from inside what is at work in art?

Third, works of art and artistic practices are not self-contained; they are situated and embedded. The meaning of art is generated in interactions with relevant surroundings. As noted above, the context in which artistic research takes place is formed both by the art world and by academic discourse; the relevance of the subjects and the validity of the outcomes are weighed in the light of both those contexts. Yet the situatedness of artworks and art practices also raises the question of the situatedness of practice-based research done within them. Does that research always aim to shed light on the way that artworks and practices affect our relationship to the world and to other people? Or can that research also confine itself to articulations that do not go beyond the domain of the artistic and the aesthetic?

Fourth, the experiences and insights that artistic research delivers are embodied in the resulting art practices and products. In part, these material outcomes are non-conceptual and non-discursive, and their persuasive quality lies in the performative power through which they broaden our aesthetic experience, invite us to fundamentally unfinished thinking, and prompt us towards a critical perspective on what there is. What is the epistemological status of these embodied forms of experience, knowledge, and criticism? And what relation does the material-performative have to the rational-discursive and the engaged-critical in the research?

In the debate on artistic research, these ontological, method-

ological, contextual, and epistemological issues are still the subject of extensive discussion. In anticipation of a more elaborate account, the following preliminary characterisation can already be given: artistic research – embedded in artistic and academic contexts – is the articulation of the unreflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in artistic products.

Affinities and differences to other academic research traditions

Artistic research has both historical and systematic affinities to a range of philosophical and scientific research traditions. A historiography of artistic research (which remains to be undertaken) might show that, from the Renaissance to the Bauhaus, there has always been research conducted in and through artistic practices. The fact that such research in retrospect often does not qualify as 'academic research' may say less about the research itself than about what we currently understand by 'academic'.[7]

Cf. my annotation in chapter 4, page 77.

The domain of art has long been interlaced with that of academia, from the practice of the *artes* in the late medieval monastery schools right up to today's postmodern farewell to the separation between the life domains of art, knowledge, and morality that has characterised modernity since the eighteenth century. In the current discourse on art, the realm of the aesthetic has reconnected with the epistemic and the ethical. The emergence of artistic research is consistent with this movement to no longer subordinate the faculties of the human mind to one another, either theoretically or institutionally.

In the previous chapter, I examined the engagement of art and artistic research with our intellectual and moral life. The 'agenda' of *The Conflict of the Faculties* involves both the elucidation and the enhancement of the relationship between artistic research and academia.

7. Historiography needs to show modesty in two directions. The normative structure of today's academia should be neither a measure for evaluating the past nor a predictor to judge how intellectual and artistic efforts will be valued in the future. Current developments within academia, such as those involving commercialisation of academic research or the advent of hybrid transdisciplinary research programmes, show that the edifice of science is under constant reconstruction.

On the contemporary research agenda at the interface of phenomenology, cognitive sciences, and philosophy of the mind, we now encounter a theme that is also central to artistic research: non-conceptual knowledge and experience as embodied in practices and products. I will come back to this in [the] final section [of this chapter]. I shall now make a series of comparisons between artistic research and research in the humanities (cultural and arts studies in particular), philosophical aesthetics, qualitative social science research, and technology and natural science research.

Humanities

There is a self-evident kinship between artistic research and the research in musicology, art history, theatre and dance studies, comparative literature, architectural theory, and moving image and new media studies, as well as the research in cultural studies or sociology of the arts. In all such academic disciplines or programmes, art (the art world, art practice, artworks) is the subject of systematic or historical research. A wide array of conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and research strategies are employed, which one might summarise with the umbrella term 'grand theories of our culture' – among them hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, deconstruction, pragmatism, critical theory, cultural analysis. To study its research objects, each such approach has its own specific instruments available – iconography, musical analysis, source studies, ethnomethodology, actor-network theory.

Important for a comparison with artistic research is that those frameworks, perspectives, and strategies generally approach the arts with a certain theoretical distance. That is even true of fields like hermeneutics, which acknowledge that the horizons of the interpreter and the interpreted may temporarily merge, or cultural analysis, where theory may be seen as a discourse that 'that can be brought to bear on the object at the same time as the object can be brought to bear on *it*' (Bal 2002: 61; italics in original). Obviously the dividing lines cannot always be clearly drawn, and any delimitations will always be partly artificial. In the research agendas just mentioned, however, the interpretive, verbally discursive approach appears to

prevail above research strategies that are more practice-imbued. And precisely here lies a characteristic feature of artistic research: the experimental practice of creating and performing pervades the research at every turn. In this respect, artistic research has more in common with technical design research or with participatory action research than with research in the humanities.

The kinship with the humanities is often reflected in institutional proximity. Research centres, research groups, and individual researchers that engage in practice-based research in the arts are often accommodated in arts and humanities faculties and departments. Funding for their research often also comes from humanities research councils and funding agencies (and this partly explains the impassioned nature of the demarcation debate between art scholars and artist-researchers). Outside the traditional universities, at professional schools of the arts, artistic research can develop more freely, although here, too, it may be accommodated in a separate department for art theory and/or cultural studies. The importance of interpretation, theory, and reflection in artists' training cannot be emphasised too strongly, just as technical knowledge of artistry is also a *sine qua non*. But the prime focus in artistic research is on concrete creative practice. The research aims to make a substantial, preferably cutting-edge contribution to the development of that practice – a practice that is just as much saturated with histories, beliefs, and theories as it is based on skilful expert action and tacit understanding.

This is also the case with the Academy for Creative and Performing Arts at Leiden University and the PhD Research in the Arts programme of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which are accommodated in a humanities faculty or section. A contrasting example is the Committee for Artistic Research and Development of the Swedish Research Council, which broke away from the Scientific Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2010 and now continues as an independent entity under the council's executive board.

Aesthetics

A rich source for the artistic research programme is philosophical aesthetics, which has studied the non-conceptual knowledge embodied in art since the eighteenth century. I will highlight three examples from this tradition: the liberation of sensory knowledge in Baumgarten, the cultural value of the aesthetic idea in Kant, and the epistemic character of

art in Adorno.[8] The purpose of my brief review here is to show that the issue of the non-conceptual content in art has not appeared out of the blue, but has been thought through in many ways in centuries past.

Alexander Baumgarten called it *analogon rationis*: the ability of the human mind, analogous to reason, to obtain clear, but purely sensory, knowledge about reality. Great art is pre-eminently capable of manifesting that perfect sensory knowledge. In our context, the significance of Baumgarten's views lies in his accentuation of the sensory, experiential knowledge component in artistic research (cf. Kjørup 2006). In post-Baumgarten art research and aesthetics, the links to epistemology and perception became less prominent. The theme of sensory, non-discursive knowledge has regained currency in our times in research taking an embedded, enacted, and embodied approach to mind and perception.[9]

The title of the *Sensuous Knowledge* conference series in Norway (2003–2009) was inspired by Baumgarten's term (see also chapter 11, page 220).

Immanuel Kant's critical investigation of what today is called the non-conceptual content of aesthetic experience culminated in his legendary articulation of the aesthetic idea as a 'representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, namely concept, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible' (Kant 1978 [1790/93]: §49). Kant assigned greater cultural significance to this non-conceptual realm of the artistic, which in Baumgarten had remained limited to sensory knowledge. Characteristic of artistic products, processes, and experiences is that – in and through the materiality of the medium – something is presented which transcends materiality. (Kant identifies here one of the links connecting the worlds of imagination and pure reason to the 'intelligible world' – a transcendence later elevated by Hegel into the 'sensory manifestation of the Idea'. After the linguistic and pragmatic turns in philosophy, what now matters is a naturalised understanding of this tran-

8. A more extensive reconstruction of philosophical aesthetics in its relation to artistic research would draw on topics from Hegel, Heidegger, Lyotard, and others.
9. For an overview of this cognitive science agenda, see Kiverstein and Clark (2009) in a special edition of *Topoi* dedicated to the subject.

scendence; it all depends, of course, on what we mean by 'naturalised'.) Artistic research focuses both on the materiality of art – to the extent that this makes the immaterial possible – and on the immateriality of art – to the extent that this is embedded in the art world, enacted in creative processes, and embodied in the artistic material.

'Naturalised' – see chapter 6, page 136-39.

The significance of Kant's analysis lies in part in the distinction he drew in his *Critique of Judgement* between judgment of art and judgment of taste. Taste judgment (as analysed in 'Analytic of the Beautiful') focuses on the formal aspects of beauty, including disinterestedness and purposiveness without purpose. Art judgment surpasses taste or aesthetic judgment, because it focuses on the cultural value of artworks as well as on their beauty. That cultural value lies in their capacity to 'leave [something] over for reflection' and to 'dispose […] the spirit to Ideas' (Kant 1978 [1790/93]: §53, §52). This is the quality through which art gives food for thought and distinguishes itself from a mere aesthetic gratification of the senses. The content of the aesthetic experience is identified more specifically here as that which brings thinking into motion, as it were, or as that which invites to reflection. Artistic practices are therefore performative practices, in the sense that artworks and creative processes do something to us, set us in motion, alter our understanding and view of the world, also in a moral sense. We encounter this performative aspect of art in artistic research to the extent that it involves the concrete articulation of what moves and engages us.

The ability of art, as articulated in artistic research, to speak to us is compellingly present in the work of Theodor W. Adorno. Here, the cultural value of art lies in its 'epistemic character' (*Erkenntnischarakter*), through which art reveals the concealed truth about the dark reality of society. Whereas in Baumgarten the non-conceptual content of art liberates itself from explicit rational knowledge, and whereas in Kant the non-conceptual aesthetic content invites us to reflection, Adorno assigns this content an even more potent and critical valence as the only thing that is capable – because it is antithetical to societal reality – of keeping alive the utopian perspective of a better world, and of recalling the original (albeit broken) promise of happiness. As no one after him, Adorno thought through art's engagement with the world

and with our lives. Even if we distance ourselves from his dialectics and his philosophy of history, all engagement that lies enclosed in contemporary art and art criticism must take account of his legacy.

Art's epistemic character resides in its ability to offer the very reflection on who we are, on where we stand, that is obscured from sight by the discursive and conceptual procedures of scientific rationality. Noteworthy in Adorno is that thoughts and concepts are still always needed – thoughts and concepts which, as it were, assemble themselves around a work of art, in such a way that the art object itself begins to speak under the lingering gaze of the thought. Herein may lie a key to exploring the relationship between the discursive and the artistic in artistic research.[10]

'Entäußerte wirklich der Gedanke sich an die Sache […], so begänne das Object unter dem verweilenden Blick des Gedankens selber zu reden' (Adorno 1966: 36).

Social science

In the discourse about knowledge in artistic research, some observers emphasise the types of knowledge acquisition and production that derive from models of natural science explanation, quantitative analysis, and empirical logical deduction, which are encountered in the exact sciences, as well as in types of social science that follow natural science methods. Contrasting with this tradition of explanation and deduction is the academic tradition which, especially since the rise of interpretive (*verstehende*) sociology, seeks to 'understand' social and cultural phenomena. In the past hundred years, a qualitative research paradigm, inspired by hermeneutics, has developed which in many ways gives direction to social science research being done at present. It regards *verstehende* inter-

The bulk of social science research, nonetheless, is mainly quantitative.

10. Adorno 1966: 36, and cf. Borgdorff 1998a: 300. The debate on the relationship between the discursive and the artistic, between the verbal and the demonstrable, often centres on whether the research process should be documented in writing and whether a verbal interpretation can be given of the research results. A third option is perhaps more interesting: a discursive approach to the research which does not take the place of the artistic 'reasoning', but instead 'imitates', suggests, or alludes to what is being ventured in the artistic research. See also the subsection 'Documentation, Dissemination' in the third section of this chapter.

pretation and practical participation as more relevant than logical explanation and theoretical distance.

Artistic research shows a certain kinship to some of these research traditions. In ethnographic and action research in particular, strategies have been developed that can be useful to artists in their practice-based research; these include participant observation, performance ethnography, field study, autobiographical narrative, thick description, reflection in action, and collaborative inquiry. The often critical and engaged ethnographic research strategy acknowledges the mutual interpenetration of the subjects and objects of field research. It might serve as a model for some types of research in the arts, given that the artist's own practice is the 'field' of investigation.

Action research aims at transforming and enhancing practice, and as such it also has affinities with artistic research, as the latter seeks not only to increase knowledge and understanding, but also to further develop artistic practice and enrich the artistic universe with new products and practices. Artistic research is inseparably linked to artistic development. In the intimacy of experimental studio practice, we can recognise the cycle of learning in action research, where research findings give immediate cause for changes and improvements. This is also recognisable in the engaged outreach and impact of the research – artistic research delivers new experiences and insights that bear on the art world and on how we understand and relate to the world and ourselves. Artistic research is therefore not just embedded in artistic and academic contexts, and it focuses not just on what is enacted in creative processes and embodied in art products, but it also engages with who we are and where we stand.

The 'practice turn' in the humanities and social sciences not only sheds light on the constitutive role of practices, actions, and interactions. Sometimes it even represents a shift from text-centred research to performance-centred research, whereby practices and products themselves become the material-symbolic forms of expression, as opposed to the numerical and verbal forms used by quantitative and qualitative research. Artistic research also fits into this framework, since artistic practices form the core of the research in the methodological sense, as well as part of the material outcome of the research. This broadening

of qualitative social science research to include research in and through art practice has led some observers to argue for a new distinguishing paradigm (Haseman 2006).[11]

The methodological and epistemological issues of artistic research are also addressed in the key writings relating to arts-based research in the tradition of the Eisner school (Eisner 1981; Knowles and Coles 2008). In studying the role of art in educational practice and human development, these social scientists use insights from cognitive psychology to argue the importance of artistic-cognitive development of the self, in particular in primary and secondary education.

Science and technology

Art practices are technically mediated practices. Whether this involves the acoustical characteristics of musical instruments, the physical properties of art materials, the structure of a building, or the digital architecture of a virtual installation, art practices and artworks are materially anchored. Artistic practices are technically mediated at a more abstract level of materiality as well. Consider the knowledge of counterpoint in music, of colour in painting, of editing in filmmaking, or of bodily techniques in dance. Technical and material knowledge are therefore indispensable components in the professional training and practice of artists.

Research that focuses on this technical and material side of art in order to improve applications, develop innovative procedures, or explore new artistic possibilities can rightly be called applied research. The knowledge obtained in exploratory technological and scientific research is put into practice in artistic procedures and products. This is research done *in the service of* artistic practice.

In artistic research itself, by comparison, art practice is not only the test of the research, but it also plays a critical role methodologically.

11. Whether artistic research constitutes a new paradigm is not something that can be decided here and now. Biggs and Büchler (2008: 12) rightly point out that the 'criteria that define academic research per se' must be met whether research is conducted under a new or an existing paradigm. I concur with Kjørup (2011: 41) that the characteristic of artistic research is 'a specific perspective on already existing activities' – a 'new perspective [which] in the longer run [will] have consequences for the direction of the development of art.' And of academia, I would like to add.

In other words, as well as generating new or innovative art, the research is conducted *in and through* the making of art. The boundary between applied research in the arts and artistic research is thin and rather artificial, just as the dividing line between artistic research and performance studies or ethnography may also seem contrived. In the practice of artists, or even in their training, such a distinction is not always useful; the reality is more like a continuum that provides leeway for a variety of research strategies. But as argued above, methodological pluralism is merely complementary to the principle that artistic research takes place in and through the creation of art. For conceptual clarity, I would argue in this case that what sometimes does not hold true in practice may still be useful in theory.

The Dutch cartoon characters Fokke & Sukke, examining an experiment in a laboratory setting: '… very impressive, colleague … but does it also work in theory?'

I am also alluding here to Immanuel Kant's 1793 essay *On the Old Saw: That May Be Right in Theory but It Won't Work in Practice* (Ueber den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis) (Kant 1974 [1793]).

Especially in the world of design and architecture, the methodological framework of applied research seems suitable. Many of the training programmes in these fields have strong ties to technical universities, or are even part of them. At first sight, it would seem that one must choose: either an orientation to art or to science, engineering, or technology. In practice, though, most design academies and architecture schools aspire to a fruitful combination. 'Research by design' is the peer of artistic research; there, too, the debate is still underway about the methodological and epistemological foundations of the research.[12]

An artistic experiment in a studio or atelier cannot simply be equated with a controlled experiment in a laboratory. Nonetheless, in many artistic research studies we can discern an affinity with fields like engineering and technology that use methods and techniques with origins in scientific research. In that case, the empirical cycle of observation, theory and hypothesis development, prediction and testing, and the model of the controlled experiment serve as an ideal type in the of-

12. See, for example, the discussions about research by design on the PhD-Design mailing list (PhD-Design n.d.).

ten haphazard context of artistic discovery (just as such principles are often applied in empirical social science research as well). Values inherent in scientific justification – including reliability, validity, replicability, and falsifiability – are also relevant in artistic research when it is inspired by the science model.

When artistic research has technological or scientific attributes, collaboration between artists and scientists seems only natural, since artists, as a rule, have not been trained to do those types of research. Bringing together expertise from these two worlds can lead to innovative findings and inspiring insights. Collaboration between artists and other researchers does not, however, confine itself to areas like technology, engineering, and product design. Research in other fields may also serve art practice or form productive ties with art. Consider the cooperation between artists and philosophers, anthropologists, or psychologists, as well as economists and legal theorists; projects involving artists are also conducted in areas such as the life sciences, artificial intelligence, and information technology.[13]

Roughly speaking, multidisciplinary cooperation between artists and scientists can take two different forms: either the scientific research serves or illuminates the art; or the art serves or illuminates what is going on in the science. Currently there is great interest in the latter mode in particular. The assumption is that the arts will be able to elucidate, in their own unique ways, the procedures, results, and implications of scientific research. BioArt can exemplify this; this art form, whereby artists make use of biotechnological procedures like tissue and genetic engineering, leans heavily on scientific research, while often training a critical light on the ethical and social implications of research in the life sciences.

Here the artist is an 'outsider', 'visitor', or 'participant' in scientific practice. See Kitty Zijlmans, Robert Zwijnenberg, and Krien Clevis (eds), *CO-OPS: Exploring New Territories in Art and Science*, 2007; and cf. my remark in the Introduction to the present volume, page 3.

In the debate on research in the arts, these and other kinds of art-and-science collaboration are often wrongly classed together with artistic research as explored in this chapter. Although the term 'art-and-science' may imply convergence at first glance, if anything it represents a

13. For a detailed review, see Wilson 2002.

reinstatement of the partition between the domain of art and the domain of science, between the artistic and the academic, between what artists do and what scientists do. There is nothing wrong with that, of course; it can only be applauded that these oft-segregated spheres and cultures are now meeting each other in projects where people learn from one another and where critical confrontations can take place. Yet multidisciplinary research projects like these must still be understood as collaboration between different disciplines around a particular topic, whereby the theoretical premises and working methods of the separate disciplines remain intact. The scientist does her thing, and the artist does hers. Even if the artist borrows right and left from the scientist, the aesthetic evaluation of the material, the artistic decisions made in creating the artwork, and the manner in which the results are presented and documented are still, as a rule, discipline-specific. Only very rarely does such multidisciplinary research result in any real hybridisation of domains.

Whilst artistic research is not entirely at odds with these types of art-science collaboration, it should still be regarded as an academic research form of its own. The science model cannot be a benchmark here, any more than artistic research could conform to the standards of the humanities.

Artistic research as academic research

Even if one accepts that artworks somehow embody forms of knowledge or criticism, and that such knowledge and criticism is enacted in artistic practices and creative processes, and also that the knowledge and criticism is embedded in the wider context of the art world and academia, then that still does not mean that what artists do may be construed as 'research' in the emphatic sense. 'Research' is 'owned' by science; it is performed by people who have mastered 'the scientific method', in institutions dedicated to the systematic accumulation of knowledge and its application, such as universities and industrial or governmental research centres.

It is indeed the case that 'what artists do' cannot automatically be called research. In the debate about artistic research, the discussions often turn on the distinction between art practice in itself and art practice as research [cf. chapter 2 above]. Few would contend that each work

of art or every artistic practice is an outcome of research in the emphatic sense of the word. I shall confine myself here to the question of which criteria must be satisfied if artistic research is to qualify as academic research. I will show that artistic research incorporates both the interests of practice and those of academia.[14]

See also chapter 4, pages 79-80.

In the world of academia, there is broad agreement as to what should be understood by research. Briefly it amounts to the following. Research takes place when a person intends to carry out an original study to enhance knowledge and understanding. It begins with questions or issues that are relevant in the research context, and it employs methods that are appropriate to the research and which ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. An additional requirement is that the research process and the research findings be documented and disseminated in appropriate ways.

This description of academic research leaves room for a great diversity of research programmes and strategies, whether deriving from technology and natural science, social sciences, or the humanities, and whether aiming at a basic understanding of what is studied or a more practical application of the knowledge obtained. Artistic research also falls within this characterisation of academic research. Let us focus more closely on the various components of this description.[15]

14. See Biggs and Büchler 2008, who argue for a balance between academic values and artistic values. To strongly simplify the matter, I would suggest that academic values have dominated in the British discourse thus far, whilst on the European continent the emphasis has lain more on artistic values. In their analysis of values, demonstrated through actions that are meaningful and potentially significant, in relation to the two communities (practice and academia), Biggs and Büchler appear to hold 'artistic practice' and 'academic research' constant, whereas in fact our notions of what both artistic practice and academic research are become enriched under the emerging 'paradigm' of artistic research.

15. An ontological, epistemological, and methodological exploration of artistic research [in chapter 2 above] culminated in the following definition: 'Art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes. Art research begins by addressing questions that are pertinent in the research context and in the art world. Researchers employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes. Research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public.'

Intent

The research is undertaken *for the purpose of* broadening and deepening our knowledge and understanding of the discipline or disciplines in question. Artistic practices contribute first of all to the art world, the artistic universe. The production of images, installations, compositions, and performances as such is not intended primarily for enhancing our knowledge (although forms of reflection are always entwined with art). This points to an important distinction between art practice in itself and artistic research. Artistic research seeks in and through the production of art to contribute not just to the artistic universe, but to what we 'know' and 'understand'. In so doing, it goes beyond the artistic universe in two ways. First, the results of the research extend further than the personal artistic development of the artist in question. In cases where the impact of research remains confined to the artist's own oeuvre and has no significance for the wider research context, one can justifiably ask whether this qualifies as research in the true sense of the word. Second, the research is expressly intended to shift the frontiers of the discipline. Just as the contribution made by other academic research consists in uncovering new facts or relationships, or shedding new light on existing facts or relationships, artistic research likewise helps expand the frontiers of the discipline by developing cutting-edge artistic practices, products, and insights. In a material sense, then, the research impacts on the development of art practice, and in a cognitive sense on our understanding of what that art practice is.

This refers to the dual context discussed on page 165 below.

Originality

Artistic research entails *original* contributions – that is, the work should not have previously been carried out by others, and it should add new knowledge or understandings to the existing corpus. Here, too, we must distinguish between an original contribution to art practice and an original contribution to what we know and understand – between artistic and academic originality. Yet artistic and academic originality are closely related. As a rule, an original contribution in artistic research will result in an original work of art,

This criterion will later be eased during my discussion of the review guidelines for the *Journal for Artistic Research* (in chapter 11, pages 233-35).

as the relevance of the artistic outcome is one test of the adequacy of the research.[16] The reverse is not true, however; an original artwork is not necessarily an outcome of research in the emphatic sense. In the concrete practice of artistic research, one must determine case by case in what way and in what measure the research has resulted in original artistic and academic outcomes.[17] In any research study that pretends to make a difference, it is important to realise that it is hard to determine at the outset whether it will ultimately result in an original contribution. It is an inherent quality of research that 'one does not know exactly what one does not know'.[18] Consequently, guiding intuitions and chance inspirations are just as important for the motivation and dynamism of research as methodological prescriptions and discursive justifications. Contributing new knowledge to what already exists is characteristic of the open-ended nature of every research study.

Rheinberger's insights (footnote 18) will be discussed in relation to artistic research in chapter 9. ▸

Knowledge and understanding

If artistic research is an 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding',[19] then the question arises as to what kinds of knowledge and understanding this involves. Traditionally, the central focus of epistemology is on *propositional* knowledge – knowledge of facts, knowledge about the world, knowing that such and such is the case. This can be distinguished from knowledge as *skill* – knowing how to make, how to act, how to perform. A third

16. This is mainly a theoretical distinction to help clarify the principle of originality. As with other demarcations and dichotomies, it needs to be interpreted freely in the light of the diversity of practice. It is important to avoid any overly close association with the early Romantic originality principle as held by the eighteenth-century aesthetics of genius, which still haunts in the minds of many as a sort of implicit paradigm.
17. See Pakes 2003 for a more detailed critical analysis of the originality principle in artistic research.
18. Rheinberger 2007. The full quote is: 'Das Grundproblem besteht darin, dass man nicht genau weiss, was man nicht weiss. Damit ist das Wesen der Forschung kurz, aber bündig ausgesprochen.' ('The basic problem is that one does not know exactly what one does not know. Put succinctly, that is the essence of research' (my translation)). Cf. also Dallow 2003: 49, 56.
19. This is the wording used by the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK; for the full RAE definition of research, see RAE 2005: 34.

form of knowledge may be described as *acquaintance*: familiarity and receptiveness with respect to persons, conditions, or situations – 'I know this person', 'I know that situation'. In the history of epistemology, these types of knowledge have been thematised in a variety of ways, ranging from Aristotle's distinction between theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and wisdom to Polanyi's (1958) contrast between focal and tacit knowledge. Different notions exist as to the relationships between the three types of knowledge – notions which are also identifiable in the debate about artistic research. Sometimes the emphasis lies on propositional knowledge, sometimes on knowledge as skill, and sometimes on 'understanding' as a form of knowledge in which theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and acquaintance may intersect.

In the case of artistic research, we can add to the knowledge and understanding duo the synonyms 'insight' and 'comprehension', in order to emphasise that a perceptive, receptive, and *verstehende* engagement with the subject matter is often more important to the research than getting an 'explanatory grip'. Such an investigation also seeks to enhance our experience, in the rich sense of the word 'experience': the knowledge and skills accumulated through action and practice, plus apprehension through the senses. In the debate on the status of the experiential component of artistic research, disagreement exists as to whether this component is non-conceptual, and therefore non-discursive, or whether it is a cognitive component that definitely resides in the 'space of reasons' (cf. Biggs 2004). The dispute between epistemological foundationalism and coherentism, which mainly concerns propositional knowledge, does not figure at all in the debate about artistic research. Many observers, though, do not view knowledge primarily as 'justified true belief' or 'warranted assertibility', but as a form of world disclosure (a hermeneutic perspective) or world constitution (a constructivist perspective). I shall return to these epistemological questions in the final section below.

The Norwegian fellowship programme requires, in addition to critical reflection on the research process and its outcomes, that 'the work [of art] must contribute to new insight, knowledge and/or experience'.

This expression from Wilfrid Sellars is used by John McDowell (see page 170 below).

Constructivist realism

Questions, issues, problems

The requirement that a research study should set out with well-defined questions, topics, or problems is often at odds with the actual course of events in artistic research. Formulating a question implies delimiting the space in which a possible answer may be found. Yet research (and not only artistic research) often resembles an uncertain quest in which the questions or topics only materialise during the journey, and may often change as well. Besides not knowing exactly what one does not know, one also does not know how to delimit the space where potential answers are located. As a rule, artistic research is not hypothesis-led, but discovery-led (Rubidge 2005: 8), whereby the artist undertakes a search on the basis of intuition, guesses, and hunches, and possibly stumbles across some unexpected issues or surprising questions on the way.

In the light of the actual dynamics of current academic research, the prevailing format for research design (such as that required in funding applications) is basically inadequate. Especially in artistic research – and entirely in line with the creative process – the artist's tacit understandings and her accumulated experience, expertise, and sensitivity in exploring uncharted territory are more crucial in identifying challenges and solutions than an ability to delimit the study and put research questions into words at an early stage. The latter can be more a burden than a boon.

I am fully aware that we have to live with this inadequacy. In the practice of research training it is useful to learn to formulate research questions.

As we have seen, research studies done in and through art may be oriented to science and technology or more to interpretation and social criticism, and they may avail themselves of a diversity of methodological instruments. By the same token, the topics and questions addressed by the research can vary from those focusing purely on the artistic material or the creative process to those that touch on other life domains or even have their *locus* and their *telos* there. The subject matter of the research is enclosed, as it were, in the artistic material, or in the creative process, or in the transdisciplinary space that connects the artistic practices to meaningful contexts. The research, then, seeks to explore the often non-conceptual content that is em-

bodied in art, enacted in the creative process, or embedded in the transdisciplinary context.

Context

Contexts are constitutive factors in both art practice and artistic research. Artistic practices do not stand on their own; they are always situated and embedded. Artworks and artistic actions acquire their meaning in interchange with relevant environments. Research in the arts will remain naive unless it acknowledges and confronts this embeddedness and situatedness in history, in culture (society, economy, everyday life), as well as in the discourse on art; herein lies the merit of relational aesthetics and of all constructivist approaches in artistic research.

Contexts figure in artistic research in another way too. The relevance and urgency of the research questions and topics is determined in part *within* the research context, where the intersubjective forum of peers defines the state of the art. This formally invested, or abstractly internalised, normative forum assesses what potential contribution the research will make to the current body of knowledge and understanding, and in what relationship the research stands to other research in the area. Every artistic research study must justify its own importance to the academic forum, which, like the artistic forum, looks over the researcher's shoulder, as it were.

To emphasise the equilibrium between these two contexts, I would now phrase it more adequately:

'… what potential contribution the research will make to the art world and to the current body of knowledge and understanding …'

'… justify its own potential to the academic forum and the art forum, which look over the researcher's shoulder …'

Methods

I have commented above on the distinctive nature of artistic research in terms of methodology. This is characterised by the use, within the research process, of art practice, artistic actions, creation, and performance. Experimental art practice is integral to the research, just as the active involvement of the artist is an essential component of the research strategy. Here lies the similarity of artistic research to both laboratory-based technical research and ethnographic field study. The erratic nature of creative discovery – of which unsystematic drifting, serendipity, chance inspirations, and clues form an integral part – is

such that a methodological justification is not easy to codify. Just as in many other academic research studies, it involves doing unpredictable things, and this implies intuition and some measure of randomness. Research is more like exploration than like following a firm path.[20]

Much artistic research does not limit itself to an investigation into material aspects of art or an exploration of the creative process, but pretends to reach further in the transdisciplinary context. Experimental and interpretive research strategies thus transect one another here in an undertaking whose purpose is to articulate the connectedness of art to who we are and where we stand. Much of today's visual and performing art is critically engaged with other life domains, such as gender, globalisation, identity, environment, or activism; philosophical or psychological issues might be addressed in artistic research projects as well. The difference between artistic research and social or political science, critical theory, or cultural analysis lies in the central place which *art practice* occupies in both the research process and the research outcome. This makes research in the arts distinct from that in other academic disciplines engaging with the same issues. In assessing the research, it is important to keep in mind that the specific contribution it makes to our knowledge, understanding, insight, and experience lies in the ways these issues are articulated, expressed, and communicated *through art*.

Documentation, dissemination

The academic requirement that the research process and the research findings be documented and disseminated in appropriate ways raises a number of questions when it comes to artistic research. What does 'appropriate' mean here? What kinds of documentation would do justice to research that is guided by an intuitive creative process and by tacit understandings? What value does a rational reconstruction have if it is far removed from the actual, often erratic course taken by the research? What are the best ways to report non-conceptual artistic findings? And what is the relationship between the artistic and the discursive, between what is presented and displayed and what is described? What audience does the research want to target, and what impact does it hope to achieve? And which com-

20. Theoretical physicist Robbert Dijkgraaf (2007: 31) in an interview.

munication channels are best-suited for putting the research results into the limelight? Questions like these have been the subject of ongoing discussion for the past fifteen years in the debate on practice-based research in the creative and performing arts and design – not least in the context of academic degree programmes and funding schemes, which demand clear answers in their admission and assessment procedures.

Because artistic research addresses itself both to the academic forum and to the forum of the arts, the research documentation, as well as the presentation and dissemination of the findings, needs to conform to the prevailing standards in both forums. Usually, though, a double-blind reviewed academic journal will not be the most appropriate publication medium; the material and discursive outcomes of the research will be directed first of all to the art world and the art discourse, one that extends beyond academia. But a discursive justification of the research will be necessary with the academic discourse in mind, while the artistic findings will have to convince the art world as well. Even so, the discursive space of reasons need not remain confined to that of traditional scholarly writings. The artist can also use other, perhaps innovative forms of discursivity that stand closer to the artistic work than a written text, such as an artistic portfolio that maps the line of artistic reasoning, or argumentations coded in scores, scripts, videos, or diagrams. What matters most is the cogency of the documentation with respect to both intersubjective forums. For all that, language does remain a highly functional complementary medium to help get across to others what is at issue in the research – provided one keeps in mind that there will always be a gap between what is displayed and what is put into words. Or more precisely: given that the meaning of words often remains limited to their use in the language, a certain modesty is due here in view of the performative power of the material outcomes.[21]

The founding of the *Journal for Artistic Research* is one response to this issue.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958: §43) in *Philosophical Investigations*: 'The meaning of a word is its use in the language.'

21. Language-based creative practice (poetry, prose) is a challenge in this respect. Here the performative power of the art is intermingled with and indissolubly connected to the play with the meaning of the words.

The written, verbal, or discursive component that accompanies the material research outcome may go in three directions.[22] Many people place emphasis on a rational reconstruction of the research process, clarifying how the results were achieved. Others use language to provide interpretive access to the findings – the material products and the practices generated by the research. A third possibility is to express something in and with language which can be understood as a 'verbalisation' or 'conceptual mimesis' of the artistic outcome. The concepts, thoughts, and utterances 'assemble themselves' around the artwork, so that the artwork begins to speak.[23] In contrast to an interpretation of the artistic work or a reconstruction of the artistic process, the latter option involves an emulation or imitation of, or an allusion to, the non-conceptual content embodied in the art.

Some remarks on the epistemology and metaphysics of artistic research: Non-conceptualism, realism, contingency

Non-conceptualism

To begin this final section of the chapter, I return to the provisional description of artistic research I proposed at the beginning. Artistic research – as embedded in artistic and academic contexts – is the articulation of the unreflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in artistic products. The theme of unreflective action, non-conceptual content, and embodied knowledge is explored in phenomenology, which, starting with Husserl and continuing via Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, has focused attention on the nature of perception and the constitution of intentionality and normativity, beyond an ontology in which the world was thought to be independent of our situatedness.

In the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, embodied knowledge is

22. I decline to discuss here any numerical ratio of the verbal to the material. Any general prescription of the number of words to be required for an artistic PhD does no justice to the subject. An adequate and suitable relationship between the two needs to be determined separately for each artistic research project.
23. Cf. note 10 in this chapter.

also concretely 'bodily knowledge'. The *a priori* of the body assumes the place of the *a priori* of intellectual knowledge, making the pre-reflective bodily intimacy with the world around us into the foundation of our thinking and acting. By virtue of our bodily constitution and our bodily situatedness in the world, we are capable of 'getting a grip on reality' as we observe, learn, and act, and of 'acting in flow' prior to any reflection and without following rules.[24] Conversely, pre-reflective knowledge and understanding already lie enclosed in how we understand and engage with reality.[25] That is why the world is familiar to us, even before we gain access to it via concepts and language.

Part of the significance and singularity of artistic research seems to lie in its appraisal and articulation of this pre-reflective knowledge as embodied in art practices and products. Some argue that artistic research targets these non-conceptual forms of knowledge and understanding, which emerge in and through the creation of art, without wanting or being able to explicate them further. Others feel that it seeks to give explicit discursive (that is, verbal) expression to the knowledge that is embodied and enacted in works and practices of art.

It would be beyond the scope of this book to delve more deeply into the phenomenological tradition, its impact on the cognitive sciences, and the criticisms that might be made of it.

If the artistic research programme were to confine itself solely to explicating this non-propositional knowledge, it would, as a consequence of its epistemological gaze, risk losing the research object along the way. It would risk shrinking the programme into a sort of decoding exercise, rendering it doubtful whether the research would even be useful at all to art practice and our understanding of it. After all, the dynamic of art practice seems to be inseparably bound to its categori-

24. In the current debate, key Merleau-Pontian notions as 'maximum grip', 'intentional arc', or 'motor intentionality' play an important part. Merleau-Ponty's insights have had strong influence in theatre studies, particularly dance studies; see e.g. Parviainen 2002. But the voices of post-structuralist and neo-Marxist critiques of phenomenology can also be heard in the debate on artistic research. The pre-reflective engagement with the world is a theme often encountered in the writings of philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations'.

25. Charles Taylor (2005: 34), in discussing the importance of the phenomenological heritage for contemporary philosophy of mind, speaks in this connection of 'pre-understanding'.

cal *je ne sais quoi*; secrets have a constitutive function both in the creative process and in the artistic outcome. For this reason, many observers argue for not making these secrets explicit at all, but for articulating and communicating them solely in and through the production of art. Clearly the standpoint we adopt here will partly determine which demands we put on the content and form of the documentation in contexts such as doctoral research in the arts.

The implicit, pre-reflective knowledge and understanding embodied and enacted in art practice is also at issue in that particular strand of post-Heideggerian cognitive science that distances itself from the predominant physicalism. A recent dialogue between Hubert Dreyfus (2005, 2007a, 2007b) and John McDowell (2007a, 2007b) has compellingly highlighted the core issue here: Does the phenomenological account of our embodied coping skills and our immediate expert intuitive understanding (which are also pre-eminent issues in art practice) point to an essentially non-conceptual, and hence non-discursive, content in research? Or is a smooth transition conceivable between pre-reflective forms of knowledge and experience and their linguistic-conceptual translation or conversion within the space of reasons?[26]

The same question re-emerges here which has been pivotal to the debate on artistic research from the very outset. Is it possible to achieve a linguistic-conceptual articulation of the embedded, enacted, and embodied content of artistic research? The significance of the current discussion at the intersection of phenomenology, cognitive sciences, and philosophy of mind lies in the prospects it may open for liberating the content of research in and through artistic practices from the explicit, explanatory, descriptive, or interpretive approaches that are so common in other research in the arts. Artistic research might just prove to be an ideal sphere for testing the scope and fecundity of this contemporary phenomenological research agenda. And conversely, artistic research might benefit from the insights that the phenomenological agenda has to offer.

26. See Rietveld 2008; cf. also the debate between Luntley (2003) and Säätelä (2005) on aesthetic experiences and non-conceptual content.

Realism

A distinctive characteristic of artistic research is that it articulates both our familiarity with the world and our distance from it. It owes this ability to a special quality of art practice, which at once elicits and evades our epistemic stance. This Kantian theme links the programme of artistic research to the current broader interest in theories of knowledge and strategies of research which leave room for our implicit, tacit, non-conceptual, non-discursive relations with the world and with ourselves. Artistic research articulates the fact that our natural relationship with things we encounter is more intimate than what we can know. At the same time, it also familiarises us with the fact that those things are in some way foreign to us. In art, we sense something of our pre-reflective intimacy with the world, while realising simultaneously that we will never explicitly understand what lies there in such plain view. When we listen to music, look at images, or identify with body movements, we are brought into touch with a reality that precedes any representation in the space of the conceptual. That is the abstractness of all art, even after the long farewell to the aesthetics of early Romanticism. In a certain sense, this reality is more real, and nearer to us, than the reality we try to approach with our epistemological projects. This is the concreteness of all art, even in its most abstract forms and contents. In the critical and aesthetic distance to the world of representations that arises in the unfinished process of material thinking in and through art, art invites us to think, 'without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. concept, being adequate to it'.

'Our natural relation to the world's existence […] is closer, or more intimate, than the ideas of believing and knowing are made to convey.'
'Our relation to the world as a whole […] is not one of knowing.'
Stanley Cavell 1996: 25 and 1979: 45.

'We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand.'
Ludwig Wittgenstein 1958: §89.

Artistic research is the acceptance of that paradoxical invitation. The artistic, pre-reflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, embodied in art works, and enacted in artistic practices is articulated, amplified, contextualised, and thought through in the research. That content encompasses more than just the tacit knowledge embodied in the skilfulness of artistic work. This 'more' is

Constructivist realism

the ability of art – deliberately articulated in artistic research – to impart and evoke fundamental ideas and perspectives that disclose the world for us and, at the same time, render that world into what it is or can be. If some form of mimesis does exist in art, it is here: in the force – at once performative and perspectivist – by which art offers us new experiences, outlooks, and insights that bear on our relationship to the world and to ourselves. Artistic research concerns and affects the foundations of our perception, our understanding, our relationship to the world and to other people, as well as our perspective on what is or should be. This articulation of the world we live in is what we may call the realism of artistic research.

Contingency

The non-conceptual content that is addressed in artistic research is by nature undefined. Although it is materially anchored (in a broad sense of the word 'material'), it simultaneously transcends the materiality of the medium. Here lies not only the *je ne sais quoi* of the aesthetic experience, but also a call to reflection. Artistic research provides room for a multidimensional unfolding of this undefined content – in and through creating and performing, in and through discursive approaches, revelations, or paraphrasings, in and through criticism encountered in the artistic and academic research environment.

Constructivist realism

At least two perspectives can be adopted on what artistic research has to offer: a constructivist and a hermeneutic perspective. The constructivist perspective holds that objects and events actually become constituted in and through artworks and artistic actions. Only in and through art do we see what landscapes, soundworlds, histories, emotions, relations, interests, or movements really are or could be. Here lies the performative and critical power of art. It does not represent things; it presents them, thereby making the world into what it is or could be. The hermeneutic perspective assumes that artistic practices and artworks disclose the world to us. The world-revealing power of art lies in its ability to offer us those new vistas, experiences, and insights that affect our relationship with the world and with ourselves. Artistic research addresses this

world-constituting and world-revealing power of art – the ways in which we constitute and understand the world in and through art.

The fundamentally non-conceptual nature of this act of constitution and revelation – which comes before any theoretical reflection about the world – is what enables art to set our thinking into motion, inviting us to unfinished reflection. Artistic research is the deliberate articulation of such unfinished thinking. It reinforces the contingent perspectives and world disclosures which art imparts. Artistic research therefore does not really involve theory building or knowledge production in the usual sense of those terms. Its primary importance lies not in explicating the implicit or non-implicit knowledge enclosed in art. It is more directed at a not-knowing, or a not-yet-knowing. It creates room for that which is unthought, that which is unexpected – the idea that all things could be different. Especially pertinent to artistic research is the realisation that we do not yet know what we don't know. Art invites us and allows us to linger at the frontier of what there is, and it gives us an outlook on what might be. Artistic research is the deliberate articulation of these contingent perspectives.

This points ahead to chapter 9, where I discuss this as the 'epistemic thing' in artistic research.