



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Artistic research: the difference that makes a difference

Amarai, H.; Santos, J.C.; Vianna, A.; Soares, C.E.; Cobussen, M.A.

Citation

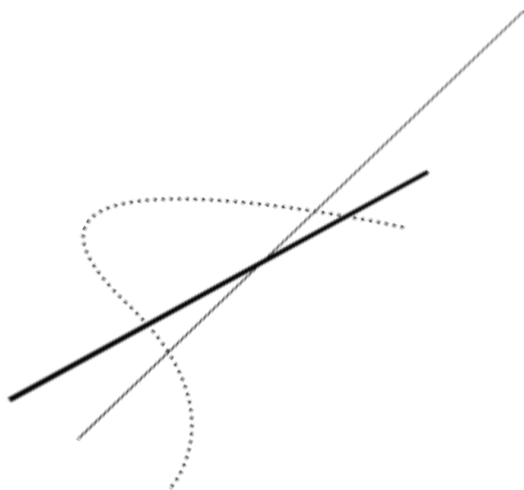
Amarai, H., Santos, J. C., Vianna, A., Soares, C. E., & Cobussen, M. A. (2022). Artistic research: the difference that makes a difference. *Debates*, 26(1), 74-91. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3721414>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3721414>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



ARTISTIC RESEARCH – THE DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

**Heloisa Amaral¹, João Carlos Santos², Alieksey Vianna³, Carlos Eduardo Soares⁴,
Marcel Cobussen⁵**

Palavras-chave: pesquisa artística, pluralismo metodológico, experimentação, conhecimento incorporado, impacto social.

Keywords: *artistic research, methodological pluralism, experimentation, embodied knowledge, societal impact.*

¹ Heloisa Amaral is a pianist and curator. She is a doctoral researcher at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (Leiden University, the Netherlands) and lectures in curatorial practices and artistic research at The Royal Conservatoire in The Hague.

² João Carlos Santos is a musician working in the field of historical music making, including historical performance practice, composition, and improvisation. His PhD project focuses on how musicians can benefit from the study of historical acting techniques.

³ Alieksey Vianna is a guitarist active in both classical music and jazz worlds. He is also a PhD candidate at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (Leiden University, the Netherlands).

⁴ Carlos Eduardo Soares (aka Caeso) is a musician, sound and multimedia artist, and a PhD candidate on artistic research in music at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (Leiden University, the Netherlands).

⁵ Marcel Cobussen is a music philosopher, field recordist, and pianist and works as Full Professor of Auditory Culture, Music Philosophy, and Artistic Research at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (Leiden University, the Netherlands).

1. Introduction

Already in 1993, cultural theorist Christopher Frayling in *Research in Art and Design* introduced a distinction between three types of arts research: research into art, research for art, and research through art (Frayling 1993). In 2006, the Dutch philosopher and social scientist Henk Borgdorff adopted this trichotomy, albeit slightly rethought and reformulated. He distinguished between research *on* the arts (investigating the arts from a theoretical distance), research *for* the arts (research providing insights and instruments that could possibly find their way into concrete art practices), and, finally, research *in* the arts (Borgdorff 2006). This last, nowadays known as *Artistic Research*, no longer assumes the separation of subject and object or a distance between a researcher and their art practice. Instead, the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and its outcomes.

Over the past 20 years or so, Artistic Research has gradually become an accepted form of research with its own, specific contribution to knowledge production. Many Artistic Research programs have been established at universities (and universities of the arts) all over the world, and many artistic researchers who obtained their PhD title in the previous decades have found employment in the arts, in higher educational programs, in research institutes or in management boards.

It is clear that Artistic Research has contributed a great deal to what is called “the academization” of professional arts education as well as to a rethinking of what knowledge is (and how it can be disseminated) in the academic world: ideas on embodied knowledge, practice-based knowledge, and tacit knowledge have gained more prominence thanks to Artistic Research.⁶ Employing Gregory Bateson’s famous words, we could state that Artistic Research can be characterized as a difference which makes a difference. But does this also apply to its prevailing research methods? And can Artistic Research be regarded as a difference which makes a difference when it comes to its societal impact, its outreach, its concrete contribution to other disciplines and socio-cultural fields? These two questions will be key in this text and, in order to start formulating tentative answers, insights will be gained through an inquiry into concrete examples from current research in and through music. Research projects of four PhD candidates in Artistic Research from Leiden University (the Netherlands) will be used as

⁶ See also Cobussen, Marcel (2007). “[The Trojan Horse. Epistemological Explorations Concerning Practice Based Research.](#)” *Dutch Journal for Music Theory* 12/1: 18-33.

a starting point to discuss methodological issues as well as to reflect on the added societal value of this rather young discipline.

2. Methods of Artistic Research

Which methods are appropriate to Artistic Research? Does Artistic Research have its own specific methodology? As usual, questions such as these cannot be answered with a definitive list or simple “yes” or “no.” It becomes clear when analyzing projects presented under the denominator of Artistic Research that using methods from other disciplines and sciences is common practice. Hermeneutics, cultural analysis, and critical theory, grounded in the humanities, are proven methods used by artist-researchers to reflect on their own art practice, on the art practices of colleagues or important predecessors, and/or on applied concepts and theories. And from the social sciences, methods such as action research, participant observation, and field studies are borrowed. The instrumentality of these methods is obvious, as artist-researchers regularly use their own work within the art world as case studies; they become participant and observer in one. Another method derived from the social sciences and proving very useful for artist-researchers is reflection-in-action. Coined by the American philosopher and urban planner Donald Schön, the term indicates the simultaneous occurrence of pondering and doing: thinking while doing – which can be considered common practice for performers, perhaps especially when improvising. Applied research – more specifically, action research and research and development – is a method derived from the exact sciences and utilized by artist-researchers in order to develop practical solutions to concrete problems (e.g. improving certain materials or techniques) or to design new instruments. However, perhaps more prevalent than applied research is the method of experimentation, that is, engaging in processes of searching for new theoretical and/or practical insights, applications, etc., through testing, through trial and error, and by carrying out experiments.

However, from a methodological point of view, next to the frequent use artist-researchers make of methods developed in other disciplines, Artistic Research is, first of all, characterized by the fact that the art practice is an integral part of research process; the practice itself, making (new) art, is a principal research activity. Artistic Research takes place in and through the creation of art; exploring, developing, modifying, and expanding the creative process is a pathway through which new knowledge as well as new artistic events, works, and interventions come into being. In a way, the role of art

in Artistic Research projects can be understood as analogous to John L. Austin's performative speech acts: making art does not express the research; it becomes the research itself.

In short, Artistic Research takes advantage of what might be called methodological pluralism (Borgdorff 2012: 23). Most research projects use a combination or selection of methods coming from the humanities or the social or hard sciences. However, an essential aspect of this type of research remains that it is one's artistic practice through which the research takes place; this is what makes Artistic Research new, innovative, and relevant, as it poses questions different to those posed by other disciplines – a difference that makes a difference!

3. Four Case Studies

Instead of continuing, on a metalevel, a more or less theoretical investigation into methodological issues connected to Artistic Research, this article will now concentrate on four case studies from four PhD candidates currently working on their thesis at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts of Leiden University, the Netherlands. The candidates are at various stages in their research projects, all working on different topics and, therefore, applying quite different research methods. Questions that will be answered in these brief portrayals are: *What* are their research topics and questions? *How* do they investigate their specific topics? *Which* research methods do they deploy? And *how* does their artistic practice determine their research process?

3.1 Heloisa Amaral – Metaxical Amplification

My research started with the question: Why is classical music usually performed in a silent environment? We know, of course, that “real” silence does not really exist. However, the history of the classical concert is marked by efforts to sanitize the acoustic environment, removing or minimizing all sounds extraneous to the music, in order to create a background of silence from which the music can shine undisturbed. As an alternative model, I investigate the artistic and perceptual potentials of performing in a non-silenced environment.

At the beginning of my doctoral trajectory, I assembled loose theoretical references and rough ideas about possible performance concepts, and cultivated a

desire to explore new relationships with musical works from the past. Indeed, my greatest motivation for engaging with Artistic Research in the first place was a need to "think in-and-through" my practice and to engage with it theoretically and philosophically in a deeper way than is possible in daily professional life. I had been concerned with the relevance of classical and contemporary repertoire for a while, to the point of devoting a significant part of my professional life to developing discursive, artistic, and pedagogical strategies of mediation, with the aim of engaging a diverse audience and to better understand what these works can mean today. Therefore, the initial plan for my research was to work towards the creation of a musical theater performance in which classical works would be interpreted in a contemporary fashion, such as is often done in theater or opera.

How did I carry out my research? What was my method? The first piece I explored was Franz Schubert's *Piano Sonata in B-flat Major D960*, approaching this work rather conventionally: practicing the sonata, dissecting its history, and analyzing its harmony and form as a "regular" interpreter would. What stood out from my analysis was the formal treatment of the main theme. Constantly repeated, it ceases after a while to be perceived as a central protagonist; instead, it shines light on the figurations, rhythmical variations, motives and harmonic modulations that surround it. So, while the many repetitions cause listeners to become familiar with it, after a while their attention will shift toward becoming more engaged with what takes place around the theme. Therefore, the idea of perspective reversal established itself as a key element that could be worked on further in the decoding of the sonata. In a second phase of the research, working with other artists, including a photographer and a scenographer, another important idea came up: I should consider the contexts and conditions in which I performed these works, the concert halls, the rituals, the etiquette. Were they not crucial as well for the way these works came across and for how I interpret them? I gradually realized that the estrangement between classical music and today's world might have less to do with content – with *what* is played – and more with *how* this content is performed and under which conditions it is presented.

Among the impulses for this new insight was a workshop with pinhole photographer Karen Stuke. As is characteristic of pinhole photography, the longer the opening time of the shutter, the more light enters the camera, causing all that moves in a given situation to become blurred. In Stuke's photos of me performing Schubert, I can be seen vanishing behind the piano and the score. Observing these pictures made me sensitive to the physical environment of the performance. The question of the relevance

of the work became a question of the relevance of the context in which I presented it. From this point on, the research evolved as a tight but achronological feedback loop between theoretical and artistic material, artistic creation, and the observation of former artistic experiences and work by myself and others.

Historical research on silent practices in the concert hall led me to study mediation more broadly, through literature spanning across several disciplines, through conversations with other artists and researchers, and by comparing and being inspired by mediation strategies used in art forms, such as theater and the visual arts. In terms of artistic creation, the initial idea of creating music theater gradually metamorphosed into developing a system that would help one hear the familiar concert situation anew. Drawing on my experiences with the use of ambient noises and electronic amplification in my practice as a contemporary music performer and curator, I developed the idea of *metaxical amplification*, that is, somehow intensifying the always already present “noises” during a classical music performance, strengthening the sounds that are typically unwanted – the creaking of floors and chairs, the coughing of the audience, the murmur of the ventilation system, and so on.⁷ Metaxically amplified performances consider the performance environment of classical music as a necessary agent for the perception of a musical work. In conventional performances, all decisions work toward minimizing this environment. The metaxically amplified environment, on the other hand, remains perceptible during the performance as an idiosyncratic agent with which the performer actively engages.

While developing this idea theoretically, I concurrently tested metaxical amplification in a first project in 2018, *touchez des yeux*. Thorough reflections on the artistic results of *touchez des yeux* led me to a second performance project, *Interferences*, in 2019. This work was more concise and allowed me to gather fruitful insights into the consequences of metaxical amplification for the attention of performer and listener as well as for the function and position of the musical work. The latter becomes a pretext for new and differentiated perceptual experiences rather than the end goal of a performance. New literature served to strengthen my findings and insights while I reflected critically on recent musical performances and artworks from other fields, either to draw comparisons with my own work or to develop new perspectives on the theoretical material.

⁷ The concept is inspired by Aristotle’s writings on sensory perception and his use of the term *metaxy* (the in-between) to designate that which is in-between the one who senses and the sensed object.

What is the main outcome of this project? Artistic Research activates the interplay between practice and theory. As a result, the musician becomes more than their musical skills (D'Errico 2021). My research has created an arena in which I can develop and integrate my musical practice, varied skills, interests, and knowledge, extending beyond the purely musical or the purely practical. My practice now expands beyond the mastery of an instrument: I cannot think of performing without considering the environment and the context in which I perform and how they inform and influence the artistic, perceptual, and aesthetic experience. Performing means not only playing the music but also shaping an environment and engaging with the elements of which this environment is composed.

3.2 João Carlos Santos – Passions, Declamation and Early Music

I arrived at the topic of my research through both artistic necessity as well as a musicological investigation: toward the end of my MA studies I felt the need to have a clearer idea of what it is that I want to express in each musical performance and how to arrive at this. My idea was that working with theatrical techniques could be a good entry point to deal with this issue. Meanwhile, historical sources I was coming across mentioned the importance of and necessity for musicians to study the art of acting. This was something I had never done, at least not in a conscious way. However, these texts that did mention acting only scantily detailed what it consisted of or how exactly musicians could benefit from it. In order to understand what these texts meant by “acting” or even “expression,” I would need to dig into historical sources which were more specifically concerned with the art of acting. As I was working in the field of early music, this seemed like a good research prospect: develop aspects of my playing by connecting them with techniques extracted from historical sources discussing the art of acting.

As a musician, one element that immediately appealed to me was the fact that acting practices of the 18th century made deliberate and carefully crafted use of quasi- if not entirely sung declamatory techniques, including sustained use of melody, measured rhythm, vocal registration, and many other sonic or musical elements. Even more interesting was the discovery of how actors needed to undergo a thorough study of how all of these musical elements (alongside gestures and facial expression) could be shaped in order to express specific passions.

A good part of my research consists of becoming acquainted with these techniques, extracting them from the historical sources and slowly embodying them.

This relationship between historical texts and their present-day translation into a physical, bodily practice already proves quite interesting from a methodological point of view, for various reasons. One worth mentioning here is this process of embodiment, through which many interesting discoveries can be made. For example, I began to realize how unusual it was to use my body and my voice in the way these sources were asking me to do – or, at least, how I was interpreting their requirements. I encountered many physical as well as cultural constraints that made me feel blocked and even repulsed at times. One could say this is the case – either synchronically or diachronically – with every interaction with a different culture. However, given my contemporary prejudices about acting and expression, this dialogue with the sources proved particularly confronting. Gradually, I managed to create new habits and open new technical possibilities, yet I also acquired new prejudices, all of which, regardless of their being inspired by real, imagined or misinterpreted actions of actors and musicians in the past, had nonetheless been inspired by my encounter with historical sources.

These new habits allow me to use my body in a different way and have also reshaped my view on how human sounds – especially those generated by the human phonic apparatus – can be used for the expression of passions. I have become more and more interested in how muscular tensions and relaxations that result from the activation of those passions create a *bodily filter* for the air that comes out of the body when speaking, which ends up influencing all the musical parameters of declamation, as mentioned above. I begin embodying the knowledge of a classical principle of declamation that asserts that every passion has a sound, a melody, a rhythm, a particular emphasis and accent, a timbre, etc. This can be used in music-making, both to compose melodies and to understand how certain melodies were composed based on melodic traits of affects, but also – on the level of performance – to discover sonic nuances that give these melodies the affects I wish to express through them. In short, this embodied experience leads me toward an understanding of how musical sounds can imitate human sounds in certain musical styles.

The interconnected conception of passions, body, sound, and musical imitation has led me to develop experiments in which acting, declamation, and music-making come together. For example, in one experiment I have attempted to act out a musical composition and observe what consequences the acting would have on my playing. This experiment is designed in four stages: First, I pick an instrumental musical composition and investigate which passions it might potentially express. I then leave the composition and my instrument and attempt to act out a story that conveys the composition with only

gestures and facial expressions, without sound and declamation. In this stage I try to experience all the feelings of the passions and all the muscular “filters” that that entails. I then experiment with the same affective sequence but now include a wordless declamation and, for each affect, observe how each bodily disposition influences the sonic parameters of declamation (pitch, rhythm, etc.). Finally, I pick up the piece and my instrument again and explore to what extent I can include the sonic aspects of the affects in my playing.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and instructive lessons I have drawn from this kind of experimentation is actually a negative one, namely, that I am still somewhat divorced from a bodily understanding of what passions really are and that there is a considerable discrepancy between what I can do with the flute in terms of accents, articulation, and tempo modifications and what I can hear in the sonic experience of my own declamation of passions as well as those expressed in the historical recordings of actors from the early 20th Century who might have used similar techniques to those of the 18th Century.

However, this in no way disheartens me, but leads me to a process of trying to fill in those gaps, which constantly reveals new tools and performance possibilities. Perhaps true artistic investigations only begin when the researcher has both something missing and something with which to fill in that lacuna.

3.3 Alieksey Vianna – Textural Complexity in Solo Improvisation on Classical Guitar

The main impetus of my research project goes as far back as my guitar lessons when I was a teenager in Belo Horizonte. During my classical guitar education, I spent most of the time learning to perform solo pieces. The word improvisation was rarely mentioned; in fact, within most of the classical guitar world it actually seemed irrelevant. Of course, this was radically different to my jazz study where improvisation was key. However, here the guitar was always treated as part of an ensemble, and I was generally either a soloist playing single lines or an accompanist playing chords; techniques for solo guitar improvisations were never discussed. Eventually I became interested in combining the two musical worlds: to develop my skills as an improviser but without an accompanist. At the same time, I realized that – despite my experience as an improviser in ensemble situations and the extreme complexity of the virtuoso solo classical guitar repertoire that

I had learned and performed over the years – I was incapable of improvising anything cohesive without the support of an accompanist.

This then became the point of departure for my PhD research application. Considering the rich, multi-textural nature of the classical guitar repertoire as a whole and the monophonic and homo-rhythmic nature of most improvised guitar music, I could formulate two main research questions: (a) In terms of textural diversity and complexity, why is there such a gap between the music that most performers improvise and the music that they can practice and learn to play (as in completely notated repertoire) on the classical guitar? (b) How can one develop the ability to improvise multi-texturally on the unaccompanied classical guitar?

I saw the need for a study of this kind within the guitar world when these questions led me to search for literature on this subject only to find that this was indeed very scarce. One of my methodological tools was (and still is) searching for and analyzing studies on this topic such as the method books by Ralph Towner (1985) and Dusan Bogdanovic (1996). Another method I employ is transcribing and analyzing the work of artists who have released recordings of improvised music on solo classical guitar. Some of these artists – the ones mentioned above, for example – are very prolific within the solo classical guitar format, while people such as John Scofield or Marc Ducret also made significant forays into this way of playing but are more known for other types of work. In all cases, analyzing their work has informed and inspired me to think – and to think-through-playing – of strategies to improvise multi-texturally and unaccompanied by another instrument.

Transcribing solo improvisations involves lots of reflection to decide about how to notate the rhythms (specially in rubato sections) and the distribution of voices (which show how I hear the sometimes-ambiguous functions of solo and accompaniment). However, of major importance within my research is the step of learning to play my transcriptions. It is only by performing these transcriptions in tempo that I am finally able to understand many of the specifically mechanical and musical problems that these performers were facing while improvising. These problems can vary from textural and temporal balancing of the interpolated melodic statements and interventions of accompaniment character (bass, chords, and/or countermelodies) to limitations of tessitura, voicing, and left-hand mobility when one or more notes are sustained by pressing one or more fingers of the left hand onto the fretboard (position playing). Finally, I also use composing as a method to develop a series of exercises to tackle specific problems that arise while trying to master this kind of music making.

This thesis will thus consist of a study of strategies for self-accompanied improvisation based on the wide variety of textural capabilities of the classical guitar that will serve as a guide for both classical and jazz guitarists interested in this kind of playing. Additionally, it will be a study of fretboard harmony based not only on the location of the notes in the fretboard but also the different possibilities of fingering for each note position. And finally, it will present the development, including detailed explanations of a new and personal approach to solo guitar improvisation, informed by the work of other artists who I consider important in this field but also distinct from all of them.

Once more returning to my research methods: it is clear from the envisaged outcomes of my research project that I rely on tried-and-tested methods from other disciplines such as literature survey, music theoretical analyses, and simply listening to other musicians and experimenting with their playing. However, this last part already leads me to the major methodological tool upon which my research relies, namely my own artistic practice. This research cannot take place outside the practice of music making, composing, arranging, rehearsing, testing, experimenting, performing, recording, and listening back.

3.4 Carlos Eduardo Soares – Sound Art and the Poetics of Negativity

My project is called “The Poetics of Negativity in Sound-based Artistic Practices,” and the central point of my research is to understand how this type of poetics can be explored and exploited sonically. If every criticism legitimizes even more that what is criticized (Bourdieu 1998), then the interest lies, in general terms, in producing artworks whose political facet is proposed not by a “pamphleteering” discourse – direct and objective regarding what it criticizes – but through the strangeness of something that does not concern or belong in such a hegemonic system. This type of production would then be *unalienable*, that is, and inappropriable by the same system from which it wants to distance itself, precisely because it is inappropriate according to its values. So, the idea of negativity works here as the opposite, as the opposition, but also, and perhaps mainly, as the depreciative.

One of the main reasons why the model of Artistic Research attracted me was the fact that my master’s topic – failure as creative feedstock in art – ended up unfolding in a much more theoretical than practical way. I dedicated myself mainly to understanding the “what” and “why” and not so much the “how.” This was necessary at that time

because – unlike within the visual arts, which has more obvious examples – within sound art this idea of failure is more nebulous, and the examples, especially regarding poetic content, are not so evident. My research subject is not, for example, the aesthetic results of *glitch*, but the contextualization and conceptual, philosophical, and political reflections emerging from this differentiated approach.

As a creator, therefore, it was necessary to understand how to incorporate the poetics of negativity through sound, and I believe that the best way to deepen this knowledge is precisely through applying and testing discoveries that arise during the production process, identifying essential subtleties, possible strategies, and workings that only *poiesis* can reveal. Artistic Research not only allows or stimulates this kind of approach but requires it, a methodology that has proven very fruitful to me.

Methodologically speaking, I began from a theoretical background and conceptual framework which aligned with the proposed poetics of negativity. I then experimented with and tested – on a case-by-case basis and according to these theories and concepts – possible practical approaches of such a poetics through artistic work. Sometimes this process results in simple experiments or proofs of concept, while at other times it generates an artwork. However, this experimentation continuously complements and is complemented by a more academic practice of research – writing, reading, and discussing – with the aim of deepening and expanding my understanding of the topic. An autoethnography can therefore be extrapolated, which touches on broader issues concerning art and society. These two aspects of the research feed back and forth throughout the development of the experiments and artworks. The recordings and notes made during the experiential phases are also aided by comments, opinions, interpretations, and criticism from third parties, whether they are my supervisors, my friends, or simply strangers; all this serves as material for the process in every stage, whether a given work is “finished” or not.

To make things a little less abstract, let me give a brief example. During my master studies, I acquired a CD which was left in a donation box at the University of Rio de Janeiro. By intervening directly on the physical media – drawing with permanent markers and attaching stickers to the optical side of the disc – I eventually managed to record a disrupted output of this album, a standard *glitching* technique. I found the sonic result interesting, with the remnants of the voice progressively changing from chopped bits to non-existent phonemes and then to words, generating a very specific formal arc to the track. However, most people likely do not share my interest in this type of result. A friend of mine even thought his computer had crashed and gave up listening to it. Many

potential readings and reflections came out of this act, all somehow connected to my research subject. The main question, however, was how to get an average listener to engage with this piece. And this is the “solution” I came up with: I transcribed the vocal leftovers into Portuguese, then transcribed them according to the International Phonetic Alphabet and edited an animated karaoke video for this work.

Between its conception and completion, more than building a discourse of legitimation, I developed and encountered in the work itself several questions that have to do with the poetics of negativity, guiding central decisions and details that seem essential to me. For example, exploiting marketing strategies and pop references to reach larger audiences means using mass media against itself; I took advantage of karaoke's dual functioning, that of idolizing while at the same time rendering a work ridiculous; I was prompted to reflect on authorship in this specific context and even to avoid comedic laughter. These are all issues that arose with the piece, although they are not exclusive to it. Now that the artwork itself is ready, I am trying to premiere the piece within a larger event, instead of just launching it on the internet, so that I can receive more feedback from people's reactions, thereby enriching the research even more. And, of course, by showcasing it, I also come across issues of copyright, a subject that I also need to address. Artistic Research, then, is not restricted to the production of new artworks, even though it happens in and through one's artistic practice.

4. Reflection on the Case Studies

Several observations can be made regarding each of the four case studies. Several conclusions can be drawn regarding the research methods that these four artist-researchers deploy. The most obvious one might be that the applied methods are (and should be) closely adapted to the research questions; the selected method(s) should, in the end, contribute to providing cogent answers to these initial questions. This means that the type of questions being posed determines, to a large extent, which methods need to be implemented. Second, these case studies also show that artist-researchers often make use of more than one method. This methodological pluralism may consist of, for example, a combination of experimentation, practicing and simultaneously reflecting on this practice, analysis, and critical reflecting of already existing discourses and practices. However, the main component is the centrality of one's art practice: research topic or question, methods, and outcomes are all grounded in one's own music making. Three, the projects described above are often more discovery-led than

hypothesis-led (Borgdorff 2012: 80). Although they are (of course) preceded by an entrance exam and an application form containing a research plan, the research emerges from not clearly articulated ideas, intuitive and/or embodied knowledge, from trial and error, from serendipity, and from – at least in its early stages – rather unsystematic searching. However, this should not be meant as a disqualification. On the contrary: such an open form leaves more space to discover unknown terrains, to take unexpected turns, and to encounter, explore, and be responsive to unknown unknowns. Finally, especially the emphasis on one's artistic practice as a tool through which a certain topic is investigated, implicitly invites for a rethinking of the sometimes rigid oppositions between subject and object, fact and value, or action and reflection. This, in turn, may lead to the idea that there can be “no ultimate epistemological ground for our knowledge claims” (Borgdorff 2012: 69).

5. Artistic Research: The Difference That Makes a Difference

As mentioned, several times above: although artist-researchers often borrow from methods already developed and established in other disciplines, there is one particular tool with which they distinguish themselves from other researchers, and that is the artistic practice itself. It is in and through artistic productions – and in these four case studies in and through music making – that the research is undertaken and takes shape, regardless of whether these artistic productions eventually lead to concrete, finished, and autonomous works or events (Borgdorff 2012: 166).

Although this already sets Artistic Research apart from other research – including other research that has art as its main research topic – and thereby justifies its existence, we deem it essential to situate this rather new discipline in a slightly broader context. Or, to formulate this as a question and to paraphrase Gregory Bateson: Where can Artistic Research make a difference that makes a difference? Of course, providing a satisfying, well-considered, and comprehensive answer to this question would require much more space, research, and reflection than what we can offer in this final section here. However, what we can do is briefly list a few areas where we observe that Artistic Research can contribute a voice in contemporary global issues (e.g. by defining the role the arts should play in our current society) and open up some productive and rewarding new ways of thinking, critical reflections, knowledge production, engagement, experiences, etc. It is time to further investigate the critical potential of this still new form of research and knowledge production.

First, let us briefly consider thinking or thought itself, and, closely related to this, knowledge, and knowledge production. Artistic Research in general, and the four case studies, make evident that thinking cannot be limited to the mind alone; the body and embodiment play an important role in this as well. My fingers know how to tie shoelaces; my legs know how to climb stairs; and a musician's whole body knows how to relate to a piano, a guitar, a flute. Of course, Martin Heidegger (1968: 14) already taught us that, for example, furniture makers think through their embodied skills. And Donna Haraway (1988: 583) already taught us that knowledge is situated, dependent on, and structured and restructured by the current conditions of our body and the (human as well as nonhuman) bodies that surround us. However, Artistic Research has its own specificities to add to these philosophical ideas, if only through the process of making them concrete. Musicians think in and through their bodies; their knowledge is, first, embodied knowledge, developed through specific relations with their instrument; their skills are a form of tacit knowledge, hard to translate into words and informed by intuition, experience, practice, and aesthetics.

Second, Artistic Research leaves its traces in the academic world and its discourses. Next to already established methods such as hermeneutics, critical theory, observation techniques, and qualitative or quantitative research, artists have (re)introduced research methods which are based on autoethnography, on the critical use of their senses, on concrete acting in the world, on informed intuition, and on doing-thinking instead of thinking alone. Additionally, it is important to be aware and to make explicit what artist-researchers give back to discourses from which they take information, concepts, theories, or facts. By exploring the connections between declamation, acting, and music making João's work adds new elements, a new narrative to our historical knowledge. That is, by connecting them, João establishes more than only new artistic links: the direct relationship this process has with theories about the passions can also affect the ways we understand and interpret 18th-century philosophy. And Caeso uses political and philosophical theories and concepts, but it should be clear that, in and through his art making, he also contributes something new to these theories, articulated primarily through art rather than texts alone; the concept of negativity, translated and transformed in his artistic experiments, takes on not only new forms but also new meanings.

Third, Artistic Research is not only affected by the art world but also affects it. In that sense, it has direct societal relevance, next to artistic and aesthetic impact. After all, art does not merely reflect developments in a society; it co-creates society and

contributes to its existence, to its organization, to its norms and values, to its culture and beliefs. To be more concrete: Heloisa's research project stems directly from her experiences regarding the traditions, rules, and even dogmas of the performance practice of classical music. Her new ideas, based on a feedback loop between practice and theory, directly affect the way this music can be performed today, not only on a concrete sonic level (letting ordinary sounds interact with the music), but also institutionally (literally opening the windows of a closed system). In a distinct but connected way, Alieksey's new ways of improvising on classical guitar might have a direct influence on how future jazz guitarists approach improvisation. Although Alieksey presents himself at the end of a lineage that extends from Joe Pass via Ralph Towner and John Scofield to Marc Ducret and others, his contribution to (practical) knowledge of how to improvise multi-textually might also turn out to be a new starting point for a new generation of classical guitar players.

Fourth, a question that becomes more and more important these days is whether other societal fields can also benefit from achievements and insights emerging from Artistic Research. We live in a time and age in which art and research done in and through art should fulfill public requirements that exceed the mere artistic domain. Is this feasible? Well, perhaps it is first of all the artist-researchers who are well-equipped to raise their voices in public debates, for instance to stress the fact that art is not only an inextricable but also a crucial part of our contemporary societies, if only because it presents, in its own way, alternatives to our econo-centric and technocratic thinking. Through Artistic Research, new insights to contemporary issues – some global, others very local – that involve alternative ways of thinking with an emphasis on situated knowledges informed by feelings, emotions, intuition, etc., are offered. Two brief examples should suffice here: musical improvisation can teach us much about collaboration, participation, and listening to the other, etc.; it can teach us how to deal more freely with predetermined rules and regulations that so often fail in concrete situations; improvising, regarded as acting in a space between freedom and fixity, can thus help us rethink how huge and complex institutions and even societies might be organized (and left partially unorganized). Second example: Sound artists already often participate in ecological research projects, thereby addressing and contributing new knowledge on climate change and biodiversity. One only must think of Bernie Krause's

field recordings in (tropical) forests in which he revealed – through sound – how the number of animals as well as their diversity decreased over the years.⁸

6. Epilogue

Being or becoming an artist-researcher is not simple. First, one needs to keep one's artistic skills at a very high level or improve them significantly. Second, as a young discipline, Artistic Research does not yet have stable foundations, meaning that artist-researchers need to discover a lot by themselves, for example about methodologies, about finding a good balance between practice and theory (if these two can be distinguished at all, which is another lively debate) or about the optimal dissemination of their research. Third, doing Artistic Research means that one is no longer only an artist but also a researcher, an academic, a scholar, etc., which entails extra tasks and obligations. And fourth, artist-researchers should be aware that they not only influence and transform the art world but also other societal fields, and they should also be able to articulate these influences and transformations in a clear manner, to regulate them and to expand them. While all this does not make Artistic Research easy, it does make it extremely fascinating and challenging.

⁸ Krause calls this the [niche hypothesis](#). By making sonograms of outdoor places, he is able to show how sounds, made predominantly by animals, in certain frequency spectrums disappear over the years, often due to the devastating impact of humans.

References

- AUSTIN, John L. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1955].
- BATESON, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1972].
- BOGDANOVIC, Dusan. *Counterpoint for Guitar*. Ancona: Bèrben Edizioni Musicali, 1996.
- BORGDORFF, Henk. *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012.
- BORGDORFF, Henk. *The Debate on Research in the Arts*. Sensuous Knowledge series 0.2. Bergen: Bergen National Academy of the Arts, 2007.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. O mercado de Bens Simbólicos (trans. Sergio Miceli). In Miceli, Sergio (ed.), *A economia das trocas simbólicas*, pp. 99-178. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1998.
- D'ERRICO, Lucia. What Can Artistic Research Do? [Inaugural Lecture]. Salzburg: University Mozarteum Salzburg, 2021.
- FRAYLING, Christopher. *Research in Art and Design*, Royal College of Art Research Papers series 1.1. London: Royal College of Art, 1993.
- HARAWAY, Donna. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14/3: 575–99, 1988.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin. *What Is Called Thinking?* (trans. J. Glenn Gray). New York: Harper & Row, 1968 [1954].
- KRAUSE, Bernie. The Niche Hypothesis: A virtual symphony of animal sounds, the origins of musical expression and the health of habitats. *The Soundscape Newsletter* 06, 1993. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295609070_The_niche_hypothesis [accessed October 18, 2022].
- SCHAEFFER, Pierre. *Treatise on Musical Objects. An Essay across Disciplines* (trans. Christine North and John Dack). Oakland: University of California Press, 2017 [1966].
- SCHÖN, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*. London: Temple Smith, 1983.
- TOWNER, Ralph. *Improvisation and Performance Techniques for Classical and Acoustic Guitar*. Wayne: 21st-Century Music Productions, 1985.