Research Fellowship project

Research Fellowship project

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut piloted the 'Research Fellowship project' in 2018. The Research Fellowship project is an annual event that supports staff, alumni and third parties in the development of their artistic practice by emphasising the field of Artistic Research. In the first iteration, each department at the Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut were asked to put forth candidates; to which many proposals poured in. Of the ten proposals that were honoured, the Research Fellowship project 2018 appointed three fellows from the Rietveld Academie: Riet Wijnen, Aliki van der Kruijs and Beny Wagner. The Sandberg Instituut appointed six fellows: Angie Keefer, the duo Eurico Sá Fernandes and Gamze Baray, Flavia Dzodan, NXS WORLD, Jules Sturm and Bitnik. The fellows received funding to develop their project two days a week for three months.

The Research Fellowship project was set up by the Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut because of its wish to further develop Artistic Research practices within the institution. Besides this, the motivation for the Research Fellowship project is threefold:

First, it aims to inspire their alumni and staff.

Secondly, the Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut hope that the fellows' newfound knowledge, in turn, influences education.

Third, to actively support Artistic Research practices, as it offers visibility to students about different kinds of research attitudes (should they want to organise their practice in such a way.)

The Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut acknowledge that there is importance in establishing and nurturing a research environment. To conclude the first round of the Research Fellowship project and to showcase the fellow's findings, the exhibition and symposium hybrid 'What is research?' took place on April 12th 2019, organised by curator and writer Angela Jerardi. This afternoon sought to accentuate the polyphonic nature of the fellows, and offered an afternoon of presentations, talks, performances and a small exhibition.

Featured within this publication are several interviews conducted with a selection of the 2018 fellows:

Riet Wijnen, artist and teacher at the Graphic Design department.

Angie Keefer, artist and lecturer at the Werkplaats Typografie and Sandberg Instituut.

Jules Sturm, cultural analyst and Sandberg lecturer.

NXS WORLD (Karolien Buurman, Florian Mecklenburg & Monika Grūzīte) alumni and collaborative research platform.

Eurico Sá Fernandes and Gamze Baray, artist duo and Sandberg Instituut alumni.

For several of the fellows this was an introduction to the practice of doing artistic research. In the interviews they explain their research processes and their perspectives on what Artistic Research is.

This publication also includes a roundtable talk with the Rietveld Academie's Artistic Research experts Jeroen Boomgaard and Paula Albuquerque. Jeroen Boomgaard is the lector of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and head of the Kenniskring. For the Research Fellowship project he supervised the Rietveld fellows. Head of honours programme Art & Research and supervisor of the research group Making Things Public, Paula Albuquerque spoke with each Sandberg fellow when asked to write a report on the project. These skilled researchers offer their individual perspectives on research.

by Rosanne Jonkhout, Project Coordinator at the Research Institute for Art and Public Space

Conversation with Paula Albuquerque and Jeroen Boomgaard

Jeroen Boomgaard and Paula Albuquerque are two major pillars in the establishing Artistic Research community at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut. Boomgaard is lector at the Research Institute for Art & Public Space (LAPS) of the Rietveld Academie. He obtained his PhD in Art History in 1995, leads the Research Group at the Rietveld Academie (Kenniskring), and creates and supervises multiple research projects. Albuquerque is an experimental filmmaker and researcher, and obtained her PhD in Artistic Research from the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in 2016. At the Rietveld Academie Albuquerque is the supervisor of the research group Making Things Public and heads the honours programme Art & Research. Through different capacities both Albuquerque and Boomgaard were involved in the Research Fellowship project 2018. Albuquerque was asked by the Sandberg Instituut to write a report on the Research Fellowship project 2018 and had individual talks with the fellows that were put forth by the departments of the Sandberg Instituut. Boomgaard was, together with artist-researcher Sher Doruff, supervisor for the fellows that were put forth by the departments of the Rietveld Academie. Through their differences and similarities Boomgaard and Albuquerque discussed their 'research' journies. By talking through their takes on 'research' their conversation offers proof towards the different kinds of attitudes that exist within a research context.

by Rosanne Jonkhout

Paula Albuquerque

I was introduced to doing research during a four-year journalism BA in Coimbra. There I studied law, history, political economy, film studies and other subjects. At the same time, I was already a photographer and closely working with several artists, which meant that my research mainly consisted of reading the writings of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag and Rosalind Krauss. This is where my research in the arts started. For me, those two trajectories, art and research, were always there from the beginning.

Jeroen Boomgaard

Whereas I studied Art History, and research is at the basis of what people learn in Art History. I was given certain views, interpretations or

perspectives during my study and my attitude has always been to question if they were true. Though, I never saw myself as a researcher in that sense, it was only towards the end of my study I found out that other people thought what I was doing was interesting, and they called it research. From that point on I said: "Ok, so probably I am an academic."

That is interesting, because for me academics were always present. I come from a family of academics and engineers, and I was involved with optics and machines from an early age. My father was developing his own photos, so I also had an introduction to a photographer's point of view. That making, that understanding of what an image is from a material point of view was always there. It was only later, whilst relating images to semiotics and the understanding of what it means to capture light and movement and how that process produced meaning.

For me, an important fact is that I was able to write, could easily formulate things and I enjoyed it. This is a very important part of doing research; to be able to communicate it.

I could say that was the same for me, up until I entered the Rietveld Academie, where it was completely beaten out of me. I didn't even notice it happening until after I graduated. My capability for forming thought was just all over the place. It was great, I could make films and installations, but I was too fragmented in my thinking processes. Then a great shift happened when it became obvious to my mentor at the time that my work was triggering media theory. I needed to be knowledgeable and reacquaint myself with theory and academia.

For me this shift happened in the exact opposite direction. When I did my PhD and was trained as an academic researcher, I thought, okay so this is my future. One of the parts that made it bleak is that, to be honest, I found the academic world very boring. Going to conferences, sitting there, listening to people that are talking to others that all speak a language that is very inward-looking. I couldn't deal with that. I was

Paula Albuquerque

Jeroen Boomgaard

much more interested in public debates; the notion of the public, or the artwork and its relation to the outside world. To start working at the Rietveld Academie, where there was absolutely no academic tradition, and people couldn't formulate their thoughts very well, that was a very interesting shift for me. It meant that something new could happen. To be in between the world of art and academia as a research position has been good for me.

In my case it was especially interesting to turn to academics and to do a PhD. After the Rietveld Academie I had gone back to Portugal where I worked in the film industry with some incredibly knowledgeable people. They got me back to reading philosophy and film theory, which started reflecting back upon my work. Not that I agree with everything that theorists like Susan Sontag or Ronald Barthes were saying because they themselves were not makers and I have always missed that aspect in their texts somehow. But that showed me my path, and I wanted to cultivate it. I had been traveling frequently, making site-specific work, presenting at exhibitions, conferences. It was time to stop being all over the place and to really look at what it was I had in my hands to try and understand it. So, I talked to you…

…and the rest is history.

Yes, the rest is history. You told me: "Great, you want to do a PhD, but then why don't you do it 50-50, with your artwork and this more theoretical study that you want to do?" So, I did a PhD, together with you, Patricia Pisters and Antonis Pittas as supervisors. It was incredible for me to engage with that academic world that you were talking about, and that now I also find boring at times. At the time though, it was a very eye-opening experience. Also, because I was not an academic (even though I could argue quite well with the little that I knew). My experience with working in material terms and also in the film industry somehow earned me a specific position among

the other scholars. That opened so many doors for me. I travelled frequently for conferences, and met brilliant scholars at MIT, Pratt Institute, LA School of Cinematic Arts, etc. It's interesting that the most brilliant scholars are the ones that are the least academic. They are in very high positions, but they engage in forms of hybridity as well when it comes to knowledge production.

That's because they can, they are established and have been through the whole thing.

Yes, you're right. They have been through the mill, but they are not necessarily the oldest. They are brilliant because they manage to navigate without losing all their creative energy. The exchange between disciplines, as well as between artists, scholars and technical experts can be very productive. Especially if you're an artist working with temporary, constantly evolving concepts, as artificial intelligence for example. You can read the newspapers, but you might as well go straight to the programmers and understand on the level of the code what is happening right now. That gives you the opportunity to work on visualisations of algorithmic behaviours that would otherwise be represented by clusters of data on academic papers.

It is for this reason that I think it's important for Artistic Research to also reflect on "who do you reach?" and "how to reach?". The academic world is a specialised world that talks to small audiences and academic papers are read by insiders. In that sense it is compara- ble to artist-based institutions that run small shows with young artists that only insiders visit; that is also an inside group. This applies to Artistic Research as well. It is often not shared, or you can share it with a big public, but then only a small group will be interested in it. Still, I think it should not be an excuse to be completely hermetic. One of the interesting aspects of Artistic Research is that art is able to communi- cate on different levels, which academics and language usually cannot. Only very great scientists are able to write also for a larger audience. I think we should really take care of this more communicative side of Artistic Research. This communication does not necessarily have to happen through text, but can happen through the artwork itself.

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Paula Albuquerque

Jeroen Boomgaard

I agree, but I also think this can be done on very different levels.

Yes sure, not necessarily just with exhibitions.

There are books, exhibitions, classes, all these different channels that can be used. In an exhibition there can be an element of Artistic Research, but it's still just an exhibition. Then there are also these "in-betweens". I presented my work at The Visible Evidence, which is a documentary film festival/conference. I was in the same panel as an African American lawyer who uses surveillance footage in her court cases to highlight police racism, and an academic, who is analysing the work of an artist who works with surveillance. It was super interesting because the three of us were full of respect for each other, and really engaging with each other's works. For me it's really important to know how surveillance footage is used in courts, and there she was! Next to me working on this issue. I wouldn't get this in a solo show. I think it's correct that you say that Artistic Research is quite specific, but in another way, it is not. I wanted to know how it is to work with a lawyer, but I'm also interested in talking with the police in Amsterdam. At the same time, I'm inviting someone from Santa Cruz to discuss instances of metadata extraction, and someone that works with films made during colonial times in Portugal to talk about the relation between film representation and racial stereotypes. So it is specific, but it also isn't. There are so many domains that can get crossed, which can create something new, and those domains wouldn't get crossed if I wouldn't be making these films. It's not so much the constant dichotomy between the art practice and the theoretical research that we discuss in Artistic Research as a discipline. All these other domains can be involved. I find that the potential is there, and it shouldn't be restricted to just the academic realm.

And that is exactly what we want to nurture at the Rietveld Academie. That's what we have to offer.

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Sure. We also have access to theory, but also academic and technical resources. That's what we're trying to reflect with this first round of research fellows. What we have to offer at the Rietveld Academie is the knowledge of actually engaging with materiality, technique and methodologies of art-making. It's very rich throughout the whole academy. Also, the teachers have a practice themselves; most theory teachers are artists. This you do not have at the university. At the University of Amsterdam, you have other practitioners such as writers or curators, but I am the only artist in my department, which is Art History.

Yes, I agree, and it should be the most important thing, these exchanges. We are working on implementing this as part of the Research Fellowship project programme but also at the Rietveld Academie in general. To have these exchanges is extremely important. The researchers are all fellows at doing research, but their connections are very different. Bringing researchers together to create a space where they can learn from each other, benefits the education at the school. It really is a great research environment, and we are starting a research culture. But there is no funding, no positions, no structure.

It could use more funding and structure, but for a pilot, I think it was a positive experience. There were many people present during the symposium where the results of this first round were presented, which shows interest in further developing these artistic research practices.

Yes, I thought all in all, the Research Fellowship project 2018 was quite successful. The fellows really worked hard on their research and something came out of it that they did not expect, or that we didn't expect. When we evaluated the project with the fellows and the heads of the department, we found that the fellows thought that the research period was quite short and very hard, but also really interesting. It really shifted their perspective on what they were doing, and that is exactly the point. I think that was good, because for most of them this was their first encounter with doing research in this way, so that is the moment you have to find out what it means to do

Paula Albuquerque

                                    Jeroen Boomgaard

research, and that was an important moment for them. Especially the exchanges were beneficial, where researchers and advisers came together to discuss the research, because they learned a lot from each other. I would like to see a research organisation that covers both the Sandberg Instituut and the Rietveld Academie, and where we all start working together.

Yes, it is a concentration of efforts. The potential is in the diversity.

Research Fellows 2018

Gamze Baray and Eurico Sá Fernandes

(Working) title of research project:

An Indifferent Conduct

What is your project about?

When at first we were offered to work with technology and artificial intelligence (AI) for the Research Fellowship project, we, Eurico Sá Fernandes (artist, designer and web developer) and Gamze Baray (artist and social psychologist), shared an interest for two main aspects in the recent advancements of AI and technology. The first question we came up with was about the meaning making of intelligence and consciousness. Did we know enough about human intelligence and the language through which the advancements on AI are being communicated, especially in the mainstream media?

Our project secondly addressed our fascination for the current level of (in)distinguishable features between humans and machines. To that end, we aimed to design and expand a different version of the original Turing test. Guided by the psychological measures that are normally used for humans, such as alexithymia (emotional blindness), depression, self-awareness, this project speculated on current abilities to tell the difference between humans and machines.

Throughout our research process we have been particularly interested in the intersection between AI and psychology. Emotions are one of the crucial elements that demarcate the difference between humans and machines. Early in our research we looked into the methods of measuring used in behavioural psychology and how AI, in particular artificial neural networks, are built and operate. We soon found out that current applications in AI have been deeply influenced by the functioning and structure of the human brain. We started to be interested in the mechanics of emotions. For example, emotional outrage is a combination of disgust, anger and surprise. By analysing

Detail at *Hypnoquonomagia* (group show), Combo, Venice IT, November 2019

how emotions can be measured in psychology and their possibility to be coded into systems, we became interested in finding the *humanity* behind these systems. We started to question if machines could be prescribed with psychological and neurological conditions such as emotional blindness or alexithymia.

For the first outcome of this project we created a sound piece and a dictionary of basic emotions which we showed during the group show *Hypnequinomagia* in November 2019 at Combo, Venice.

At the moment we are planning to continue working on the project with a specific focus on human emotions and the ways in which they function. Currently we are producing a three-channel video piece as a part of a new artwork/multi-media installation.

When does it become research?

We both have experience with academic research, and therefore we had the notion of this conventional research process when we started the project. In the beginning, the artistic research process was difficult because we wanted to understand how and why it differs from academic research. In the end, we felt that the research started to happen when our work was discussed with others, and when being confronted with questions outside of our thought process.

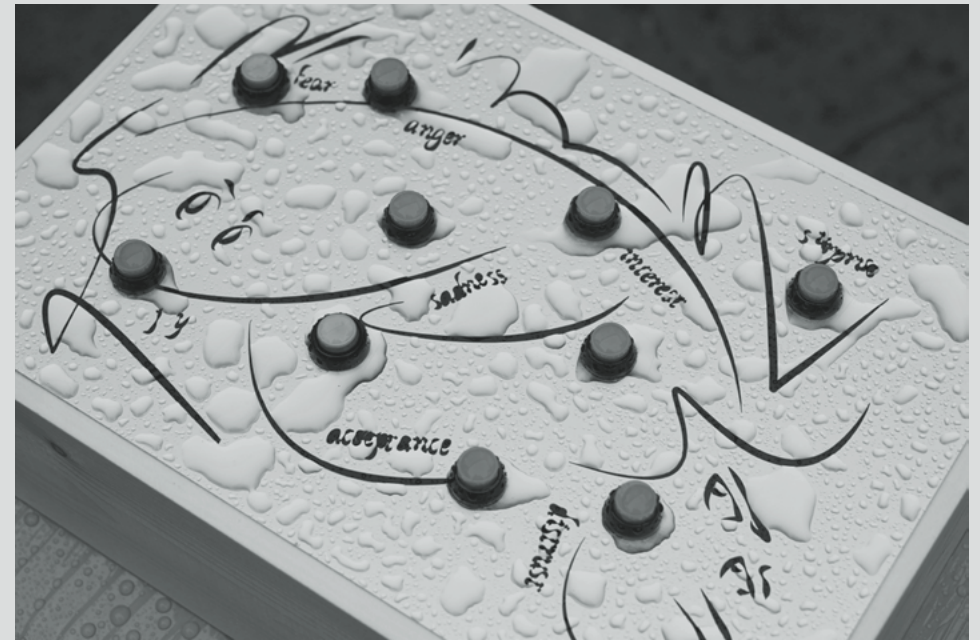What is the potential of research in the realm of art and design according to you?

Research in the realm of art and design is not that very different from research within an academic environment. Research is still carried out with similar stages. One difference is that the academic research process is relatively linear and predictable compared to the artistic research process. In our opinion, the major role of research within the realm of art and design is to help generate more questions while trying to answer the ones at hand.

What role can Artistic Research play and what can it do?

Artistic Research might be devalued in the academic context because it is outside the system of conventional research: for example the production of research papers, peer reviews, etc. One might say that Artistic Research projects have not such literal outcomes, and their conclusions beget more questions instead of providing concrete answers. This perspective is one with which we do not necessarily agree. We as artistic researchers are interested in giving answers, multiple answers, without delineating which is more likely. The role of the researcher in art and design is to work through an unknown territory. Artistic Research might not carry with it certain elements found in traditional research methodologies, but still, art can art-explain. Art can give answers in a way that written language cannot, and this is more accessible to an external public.

Detail at *Hypnoquonomagia* (group show), Combo, Venice IT, November 2019

Gamze Baray is an artist, a social psychologist and an independent researcher, and studied at Dirty Art Department, Sandberg Instituut. She is interested in the ways in which ideologies shape the definition of self and other, and erode or accentuate the difference between the two.

Eurico Sá Fernandes is an artist, designer, a web developer, a member of the artists collective Soft Landings and studied at Dirty Art Department, Sandberg Instituut. He is interested in the systems of reason and interaction with a particular focus on ecology, language, encryption and artificial intelligence.

Jules Sturm
(in collaboration with Angelo Custódio)

(Working) title of research project:

Bodies of Knowledge:
A dialogic Exercise in Embodied Theory Making,
i.e. "Underbelly Resonances"

What is your project about?

The project for the Research Fellowship project is based on my earlier academic research on critical concepts of embodiment and bodily practices. I there challenge traditional models of cognitive thinking by arguing that conceptual forms of knowing are always grounded in sensory and motor experiences as well as in cultural practices, such as looking, reading, speaking, or listening. Theories of embodied knowing, as they have been formulated by contemporary theorists and artists alike, are bound to employ alternative methodologies. They offer ways of reconstructing and further developing practices of writing, thinking and making, which question common scientific approaches to knowledge production. Embodied theories form the basis of this project, which orientates itself towards the intersection of divergent theory making strategies and strives to expand the current discourse on what counts as research in the arts. It also aims to spur debate on the specific types of knowledge produced in the arts academy.

The project started out as a one-person process, through which I became critically aware of the impossibility to do this research alone. The collaboration with Angelo Custódio (a research-based artist, trained in classical singing) began as an experimental dialogue between himself as a performing artist and I as a theorist who both desired to overcome, yet productively re-use, our different disciplinary practices by challenging each other's bodily and cognitive working process. We did not work with specific research methods, but instead attempted to expose the mechanisms of our respectively acquired

methodological disciplining in thinking and writing. Our approach is driven by the experimental practice of "research-creation", developed by Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman, 2016.[1] In practice, we engage in shared reading sessions of theoretical texts, which are relevant to the theme of embodied knowledge production and which critically reflect about their own process of creation. From conversations about the shared readings, we develop bodily as well as writing exercises, which are not designed to produce anything other than a mutual sense of confusion, de-stabilisation, and potentially performative effects on our ways of writing, breathing, reading, sensing, and thinking about specific themes and questions.

Several invitations to present our work in different settings[2] serve as crucial elements in the development of the research process, as they force the twosome dialogue to interact with an audience. One of the results of this collaborative work (Underbelly Resonances) is a publication of our ongoing performative dialogue in textual and auditory form where the processual character of our research practice is as much part of the outcome, as its temporary "arrest" through documentation.[3]

The main insight we gained from the presentations and the publication, was that the context, location, audience, theme, and time-frame of the planned presentations have a determining influence on the effects of our performance on ourselves and our spectators/listeners. Despite such, arguably desired, destabilisation of our thinking and doing, we also became aware of some unwanted and as yet unresolved effects: One is the loss of intimacy in Angelo's and my shared dialogue in a public situation, which seems to result in a flattening

or weakening of the desired resonances in the research process. Another is the experienced discrepancy between the rehearsed and artificial role (as academic speaker, classical singer, performing artist) and the spontaneous personal and bodily response between Angelo and I in conversation. These insights made us more critically aware, not only of the mode of production *in* the research process, but also of the mode of presentation *for* this process. The next step in the process will be to explore forms of research-creation-presentation-documentation, which allow for more intimate and sensible exposures of ourselves as embodied researchers.

When is something research?

The greatest challenge in the beginning of the project was to accept that my academic research habits were so deeply invested in larger academic structures. Such as, my use of language, the systematic choice and the interpretation of research materials, the linear forms of writing, and most extremely, the repression of bodily impacts on my writing: habits that I felt an urge to 'un-learn' or re-train. Despite the fact that this insight was already conceptualised from the beginning, I knew no means of implementing and practicing such un-learning. As a consequence, I refused to begin my research without having found ways to disrupt my acquired research structures. It was in this refusal that my research started taking shape: the frustration with old practices and the simultaneous incapacity to (ex)change them was the initial spark for the choice of the dialogic format, which took place in regular Skype sessions with Angelo across Europe and in sporadic three-day gatherings in different locations (Amsterdam, Berlin, Biel).

The desire to collaborate with Angelo was initiated by the fact that he had read my earlier academic work on body theory[4] and had expressed strong connections to his own thinking. This connection, as well as the overlap between our works' recurring themes of queer, imperfect, vulnerable, invisible, and crip forms of embodied knowledges, were as important to our collaborative experimentation. We experienced a strong intersection of language, sympathy, social empathy, and the urgency for alternative ways of knowledge production through and with the body.

1   "Research-creation" is located at the complex intersection of art practice, theoretical concepts, and research; it is an experimental practice that is not fully determined in advance; and it focuses on processes rather than on the communication of results and final products. See more on the 6 propositions for research-creation: https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/research-methodologies/

2   End of Year Program at Critical Studies on June 14, 2019 at Sandberg Instituut; "Reading Bodies! Cruising Corpoliteracy in Arts, Education and Everyday Life", September 14, 2019 at HKW Berlin; Lecture Series "Critically Commited Pedagogies" at Piet Zwart Institute, March 2020; Spring Academy "Theorie-Experimente" at Zurich University of the Arts, April 2020.

3   Choreographic Unrest, ed. Joerg Franzbecker, Suza Husse, Yvonne Wilhelm, Archive Books, 2019.

4   Sturm, Jules. Bodies we fail: productive embodiments of imperfection. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014.

Embodied exercise at Critical Studies' End of Year Program, 2019
© Alize Wachto

Audience members following instructions for the embodied exercise at *Underbelly Resonances*. © Silke Briel/HKW

Research can here be simultaneously defined by the researcher's partial incapacity or apathy as by probing acts of (un)learning. I also identify the dialogic process as research practice, as it not only brings to the work the situatedness of the involved researchers, but also acknowledges the temporary, moving, and dynamic characteristic of all knowledge production.

What is the potential of research in the realm of art and design according to you?

Research in the realm of art, and specifically of art schools, is crucial, because it bridges, combines, yet also disrupts different forms of more traditional types of (academic) research. It also develops new ways of presenting this research to others: through time-based performances, installations, performative dialogues, spoken word, experimental writing, teachings, and many other forms. For example, the actual practice of writing in the arts is elementary to the process of meaning construction and not, as in academia, secondary to the resulting output of knowledge. Research practices in the arts are in constant conflict with the involved and sometimes discrepant approaches to content, materials, and structural conditions of the research project. They also often engage in a careful consideration of the effects of their own impacts on involved persons, communities, objects, discourses, and politics. Overall, research practices in the arts often necessarily and importantly establish a dialogue between the researcher's different personal and social orientations and larger cultural contexts. Research in the arts also productively relates to the labour of teaching, which is inherently a dialogic practice, based not only on social and intellectual exchange, but also on a bodily and psychological vulnerability and the potential destabilisation of a seeming fixity of meaning.

What role can Artistic Research play and what can it do?

The heterogeneity of different types of conceptualising and doing research, is precisely the strength of research in the arts. To claim consistency in and agreement on form, structure, and realisation of research is to assert neoliberal capitalist tendencies of competing, streamlining and selling the products of research processes for the sake of efficiency and optimisation of so-called research 'competencies'. To refuse and challenge such tendencies, research practices must necessarily fluctuate, transgress margins, refuse definitions, incorporate bodies, desires, pains, and socio-political conditions. There is no necessity for a mediation between the different practices, but an urgent need for inviting difference, embracing deviance, acknowledging one's own and others' vulnerability, seeking exchange, generating destabilisation, demanding openness, and sharing desires generously with people in other social and professional realms. The future of research lies not in its compatibility with or subjection to economic regimes, but on the contrary, in its resilience against these regimes; research practices will therefore bloom only by engaging in conflict as well as care, while investing in the greatest possible variety of forms, themes, structures, effects, and affects.

Jules Sturm is a cultural analyst and works at Sandberg Instituut and Zurich University of the Arts. Sturm is interested in embodied theories and alternative knowledge production.

(Working) title of research project:

Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp

What is your project about?

NXS World's Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp was a 48-hour workshop that took place from 7 until 9 December 2018 at the project space The Grey Space in the Middle, in The Hague. The international group of 26 participants collectively questioned the ever-growing force of artificial intelligence (AI) in our everyday lives in its various forms.

The mix of professional backgrounds were purposely interdisciplinary. People had backgrounds in art and design, like Social Design, Photography, Media arts, Contextual Design, Graphic Design, Information Design, Industrial Design, and also from more theoretical, technical and science oriented backgrounds, like Computer Science, History & Philosophy, Neuroscience, Psychosocial Studies and Information Systems.

Nishant Shah, dean of Research at ArtEZ University of the Arts and professor at the Institute of Culture and Aesthetics of Digital Media at Leuphana University in Lüneburg, Germany, alongside visual artist Coralie Vogelaar, gave impulse lectures that provided contextual input during the Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp. Subsequent fast-speed exercises that would generate responses that eliminate overthinking and promote production of quick associative and subconscious ideas, alternated with role-playing games and ideation sessions, provided the participants with enough content to comprise a physical database of the output of the exercises. These were then categorised in users' emotions, behaviours, relations and evolutionary developments affected by algorithmic authorities. In the production phase a specially designed workbook served as a tool to extract core statements from this archive. They were then used to develop nine speculative scenarios, each framing a future vision on a specific daily life implementation

of an algorithm. The results were collected in an interactive PDF and showed during a performative presentation. This hybrid content creation method has been developed into a customisable educational format that can be adjusted to different target groups, timeframes, and generate other outcome formats besides the digital PDF, such as publications, posters, short stories, and so on.

When is it research?

As a collaborative research project, NXS fabricates an alt-world of its own, within which emotionally-charged perspectives and subjective experiences fuel an experimental approach to investigate what we call the Self in the age of digital technology. It aims to unearth personal storylines that coexist within a platform of different voices, where objective inventory meets the subjective.

NXS uses its own distinctive method for co-creation, based on that of the 'exquisite corpse'. The platform, or world, unfolds as a constellation of personal viewpoints, experiences and stories by letting contributors from various backgrounds and disciplines respond to another in written word or via visual interpretations.

The Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp, although being a stand-alone project, set off the research process for the fourth issue of NXS' biannual publication. The idea behind the bootcamp was to create an intensified co-creative and investigative format, that is adaptable and non-linear, and that takes place within a relatively short time frame in a physical space. By setting up the framework, we questioned what kind of methods could allow the acceleration of idea-finding processes and the exchange between participants with different backgrounds. This led to the set-up of a test environment with different exercises that applied NXS' responsive method.

The participants went through a dense collective parcourse that was meant to stimulate intuition and associative research approaches, and eliminate over-thinking and tendencies to explain. This experimental approach is highly accessible, as it does not require highly developed skills or background knowledge. It is also deeply emotive: personal

NXS World's Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp, 7–9 December 2018, The Hague
© Anna Kieblesz

stories and experiences of digitally mediated selves are open-dialogue and speculative, as an openly accessible and non-hierarchical archive allows the build-up of novel narratives.

What is the potential of research in the realm of art and design according to you?

Design research in educational and professional environments helps to form critical perspectives and create new knowledge through systematic, yet intuitive and speculative methods. What makes the system of the Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp unique is that it is about creating a collective cloud of personal experiences and references that are accessible for all participants. It allows participants to step beyond their own vision and link to other streams of thoughts and ideas.

The process of discovering, collecting ideas and building a theoretical framework to explore concepts that are related, raise different questions to each individual. The fast exchange of these questions produce a faster learning curve. We have observed that research, especially in the realm of design and art, is often taking place in a more hidden, or self-censored way. The fear of being too referential, not being innovative or unique enough blocks certain kinds of processes. It is important to open up and relearn methods of linking research materials to one's own practice and sets of references. It is essential to the creation of something new.

NXS' research method draws from, and complements, rationality and objectivity as a tool of research with the anti-rational and subjective. Urgent questions on how to make sense of our Self in this world seem to be requiring other levels of understanding and therefore another kind of seeing, sensing and measuring than the rational one. In that way, this method adds a more qualitative layer to the scientific and quantitative research discourse that includes the emotional, the irrational, the subjective, the individual, intuition or instinct. It is playful and it is poetic – it connects those things that are not necessarily related and therefore it creates something new, something imaginative. It stimulates speculation on alternatives for the present we are in, on self-deconstruction and -reconstruction.

What role can Artistic Research play and what can it do?

NXS constantly shifts between academic and experience-based, intuitive, embodied research modes. In the context of Algorithmic Anxiety Bootcamp, alternative (beyond rational) and collective knowledge creation was the main research goal. The lectures given by Nishant Shah and Coralie Vogelaar offered brief academic input, but also several of the exercises were derived from methods and assignments used in experimental scientific research, combined with more artistic approaches. The exercises included associative drawing, prototype building, speedwriting, fast-paced responses, performative elements, role-play, and so on, all taking place in controlled settings. The eventual combination of the physical results with the accompanying ephemeral processes and experiences were important to document. Documentation was done through creating a common database and by using workbooks that could later serve as a base for reflection and further interpretation.

Riet Wijnen

(Working) title of research project:

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What is your project about?

The original proposal for the Research Fellowship project was to focus on the relation between abstract modernist art, language, and war, as a triangle. More specifically, it was to look closer at artistic practices in war times, and question if abstract painting and sculpting was and is an alternative language that replaces written and spoken language. Could these artistic practices speak in, to, and about a society in war?

I wanted to research this by focusing on the practice and life of the Lebanese painter and sculptor Saloua Raouda Choucair (1916–2017). She is said to have been the first abstract artist in Lebanon. The research into Choucair through this specific triangular question was a first step into adding more under- and unrecognised female key figures in modernism to my artworks *Conversation Six: Double-Lines, a conversation between modernist artist Marlow Moss (1889–1958) and Grace Crowley (1890–1979)*, and the most recent fictional conversation in the cycle *Sixteen Conversations on Abstraction*, which I started in 2015. Through comparing different relational biographical narratives I wanted to build an expanding and complex map of feminist genealogies within early modernism.

Visiting the estate of Choucair (located in an apartment in the Qantari neighborhood of Beirut and run by her daughter) complicated the research question. I learned that Choucair resisted being categorised as a 'female artist'. On top of that I quickly realised that most of her archive and the discourse around her practice is mainly in French and Arabic. These are languages I cannot read or speak, and the narrative that exists around her practice in English just merely goes beyond 'female', 'Arabic', 'war' and 'trip to France'. Choucair had her first international solo exhibition at the age of 97 in the London Tate Modern. Unfortunately, this exhibition came without an expansive discourse.

Her identity was underlined instead of elaborations on her working methodologies or the art (historical) context in which she was operating. The exhibition and its (linguistic) framing reinforced orientalist ideals and the assumption of mimicking European masters.

This anti-discourse led me to try and understand the opaqueness, suggested through the triangular proposition, in a deeper way. How do I work with the such opaqueness that Choucair chose so consciously? Questions such as "Is abstraction a space of relative freedom to speak, precisely by rejecting representation with all its demands and constraints?" and "who has the right to abstraction?" then became the centre of my research.

I've always had difficulties with questions such as "what is research?" or definitions such as 'Artistic Research', as it suggests some sort of defined or separated island. For me, research is an integral part of work and life, as it is about asking questions, and engaging with and in those questions. This subsequently determines a constant mode of 'being' and of moving through life. 'Research' happens during the making of a sculpture, writing of a text, in formulating an assignment for class. It informs decisions on how to run domestic life. Questions find place in different realms, even as they come from, or circle around, the same point of departure, the same interest, ideology or political stance.

What is the potential of research in the realm of art and design according to you?

I would argue that research is a part of art and design, and not in relation to them a separate entity. An important aspect of the curriculum is in learning to see structures, patterns and context, and learning how to analyse them, make connections, and formulate questions in different mediums, and then engaging with all these different aspects.
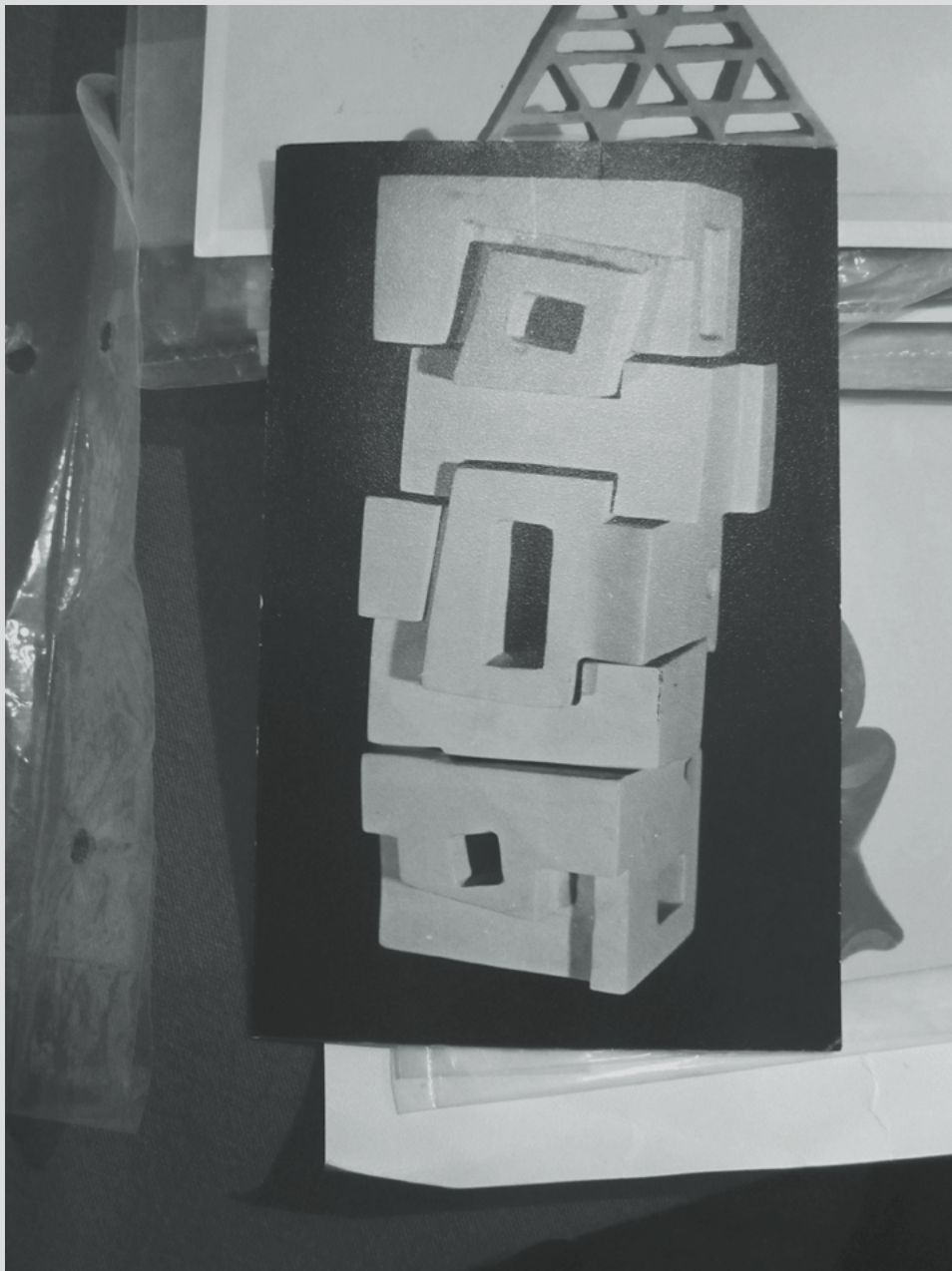
I think that the separation of art and research during education can create an estranged relation to language, which becomes apparent in the writing of a thesis. What often happens is that students all of a sudden start to abide to the language of academia, instead of approaching language and writing as yet another medium – like painting,

sculpting or graphic design – to approach the questions that are presented in their practices.

What role can Artistic Research play and what can it do?

We mediate or communicate non-linguistic forms of knowledge and knowing in linguistic forms of language (with linguistic-language I mean words, letters, sentences etc.). A good example of this was the symposium in April, in which all the fellows affiliated with the Research Fellowship project presented their research. Linguistic-language, through for instance presentations, is still a dominant tool for transferring knowledge, even if it is non-linguistic knowledge. Openness towards, and experimenting with non-linguistic forms of communicating when relating is important, in order for linguistic-language to become one of many tools to communicate. In intimate relations we are used to leaning into non-linguistic forms of communication, in contrast to more professional and institutional situations. The very first step in this is to be more aware and transparent of what language is for the different conversation partners. For example, language is often the medium for an academic or writer, while for an artist language is often a tool to speak about their medium.

This makes me think of my visit to the 10th Berlin Biennale *We don't need another hero* by Gabi Ngcobo, which consisted of mainly non-European art. Forms of written-language were minimised in the exhibition. The 'small' gesture of leaving out any biographical information on where and when the makers of the works where born initially aggravated me as it felt inaccessible. Very quickly this aggravation became a shameful mirror, physically showing me the limitations of the visual language that I was able to read with my eyes. My invisible lens of reading the world became so apparent. The fact that I rationally understand via written-based forms of language, is something that I had never experienced so physically, which is precisely another way of knowing.

Documentation of material from the Estate of Saloua Raouda Choucair in Beirut Lebanon.

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Documentation of material from the Estate of Saloua Raouda Choucair in Beirut Lebanon.

Riet Wijnen is an artist who works mostly in the media of photography, sculptures, and text writing. She is interested in exploring links between abstraction, perception, language, and structures through the historiography of abstraction in different fields such as early modernism in art, science, philosophy and activism. This research comes together in the cycle *Sixteen Conversations on Abstraction* which Wijnen started in 2015.

Angie Keefer

(Working) title of research project:

AI

What is your project about?

The project considers artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool for rethinking value formation within the field of art. It began as a seminar in the Fine Arts department last year and continues to develop this year in conversation with students and other artists, as well as through public talks and a forthcoming online publication. The initial class-room work required establishing general conceptual literacy in AI, considering that we were a group without any prior specialisation in the field of computer science. This included tracing a centuries-long history of the concept of AI and a history of its applications (pre- and post-networked computing), then gradually building up to current research areas and debates in AI where these intersect with art. The initial course also incorporated case studies specific to the arts, particularly the development (by artists) of related organisations and tools—from a digital resource-sharing platform (Are.na) to data gathering around the economic activity of artists (W.A.G.E. for work artist's fee calculator)—that stand to impact the workings of the field on a systemic level as an industry and a culture. During the first year, this open-ended, seminar-based pro-cess brought us from the concept of 'value' to that of 'trust' as one that may be illuminated or rethought through further consideration of AI in relation to art. So, this year, in direct response to student feedback, we are considering the problem of trust as a subtopic, while focusing the year's case studies on specific artworks that pertain to this question, rather than on artists' organisations.

When is it research?

Artistic Research is a vague category, and I'm resistant to embracing it as a capitalised term, as if we have already established consensus about what it means. To be honest, I'm not sure I'm doing artistic research now. But I was doing more or less what I'm doing now before I ever heard the term. Like most artists I know, I am curious about a lot of different things, people, fields, cultures, events, and ways of knowing. Part of exploring these interests involves looking, listening, reading, digging, and discussing, and this activity feeds back into production, whether that means things like objects and images, texts and all varieties of publishing, or performances, which include teaching and exhibiting. In my experience, there is no clear distinction between one supposed mode (research) and another (artworks), though it is obvious on a case-by-case basis that some artists see their working processes as more or less intuitive as opposed to more or less discursive, and I believe the designation of 'artistic research' or 'research-based practice' is typically applied to those more discursive processes.

What role can Artistic Research play and what can it do?

One obvious difference between so-called artistic research and academic research is the relative flexibility of research protocols, if not a total lack thereof. Since the arts have evolved as the professionalised fields in which members are expected to challenge social norms and expectations, this flexibility makes sense, except that "challenging social norms and expectations" may become a protocol in itself. Artists may serve as caricatures of dissent, fulfilling a need for the larger culture by signalling resistance in a superficial way, meanwhile submitting to terms and values that are quite the opposite. For example, the willing exploitation of artistic labour is well-documented. (That data collection and analysis may illuminate this fact and that making such data visible may help to change labour conditions for artists was a topic of one of our initial case studies last year, regarding the work of the artists' organization W.A.G.E. an acronym for "Working Artists in the Greater Economy.") There may be a potential for something

like capital-A 'Artistic Research' to mediate this dichotomy and contribute conscientiously to systemic change.

An activity related to the questions of what artistic research is, what it might do, or what its emergence might indicate about the field of art, which I sometimes conduct with art students in seminar settings, involves working with cultural theorist Raymond Williams' keyword entry for 'Art.' Williams, who is considered a progenitor of cultural studies, traced the use of some common but ambiguous terms, including 'art,' from their first appearances in English up through modern day, which in his case was the middle of the 20th century. This is when *Keywords* was first published, noting the drastic changes in the meanings of these words over time. That is, Williams traced the evolution of basic terms—'art' being one—that are common points of reference, and which, given our limited historical perspective, we often assume to be fixed, and he found that in fact these words have had no stable meanings over time. According to Williams' research, the term 'art' which first appeared in English in the 13th century, has meant many surprisingly different things, even 'angling,' which literally means 'fishing.' Other categories of knowledge, including what we now think of as the sciences and the humanities, branched off from this primary trunk of 'art' over several centuries. So, what we currently recognise as the relatively narrow category of art, which today we even distinguish from, for example, entertainment, has been rendered only gradually over a long period of time as finer and finer categorical distinctions of knowledge have been created. An important inference is that the concept and category of art, which has never long been fixed, continues to evolve. Inevitably, the work we do in the field contributes to this story of ongoing, perhaps inadvertent, change. In the seminar, the students work together as a group to update the definition themselves, considering that another half century has already passed since Williams' time, and 'art' already means something quite different now than it did 40 or 50 years ago. Curiously, 'Artistic Research' seems to promise some recombination of previously distinguished categories of knowledge (e.g. art and science). What might this development tell us about our historical moment?

Angie Keefer is an artist and writer. She teaches regularly at the Sandberg Instituut, the Werkplaats Typografie, and Yale University. She is interested in Artificial Intelligence.

Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut