

# POSITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ON ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN FILM

*As editors of this issue, we have approached the dimensions of artistic research from our own personal experience as practitioners, knowing that it is significant in a research-teaching context. As a film editor Gesa Marten's approach to teaching montage through edit labs and collaborative engagement creates frameworks to work through the processes of editing, not simply as part of the production line in filmmaking but one in which editing is a continuation of the research process. Montage is conceived as a practice of critical thinking, exploring and speaking through contextualization, through de- and reconstruction, through the analysis and synthesis of sequences of images and sounds. For Jyoti Mistry, research enquiry is core to augmenting the synergy between her film practice and her pedagogic approach. She has worked extensively on experimenting with pedagogic methods that rely on facilitating research enquiry through artistic practices. These two positions as working practitioners (as editor and filmmaker respectively) and our experience of teaching is important to contextualize the following montage of positions and perspectives.*

*We took the opportunity to invite colleagues from across different institutions and in different positions to reflect on their experiences of artistic research. Depending on the positions of pedagogues, practitioners or institutional managers or researchers – the perspectives on artistic research differ and these opinions and reflections, in some instances with cautionary reservations; open-up further potentialities for artistic research outside of its institutionalization. It is necessary to observe that while artistic research has certainly evolved across various disciplines in art schools, its formalization through Bologna has meant that some of the core ideas and its open-ended possibilities have come to be systematized since artistic research is now described as a discipline rather than a way of working through processes and to foreground how knowledge is produced from artistic and creative practices.*

*The first section is an assembly of those perspectives that capture the iterative nature of artistic research and how it informs processes of investigating and expanding methods through practices. In other words, through artistic practice, knowledge of the subject and artistic forms is gained by working through the material aspects of the research topic; for example through field work in filmmaking or by experimenting with the expanded forms of cinematic representation. The perspectives shared here, express how modes of looking, constructs of the gaze and the definitional limits of genres come to be expanded through artistic interventions. By foregrounding process and working across different forms and disciplines, these reflections capture the fundamental aspect of research: its repetitive procedures and iterations of (re)searching informed by the curiosity.*

Artistic research for me as a practitioner and as a teacher unfolds in how:

"...thinking is a process of inquiry, of looking into things, of investigating. Acquiring is always secondary, and instrumental to the act of inquiring. It is seeking, a quest, for something that is not at hand. We sometimes talk as if "original research" were a peculiar prerogative of scientists or at least of advanced students. But all thinking is research, and all research is native, original, with him who carries it on, even if everybody else in the world already is sure of what he is still looking for."<sup>1</sup>

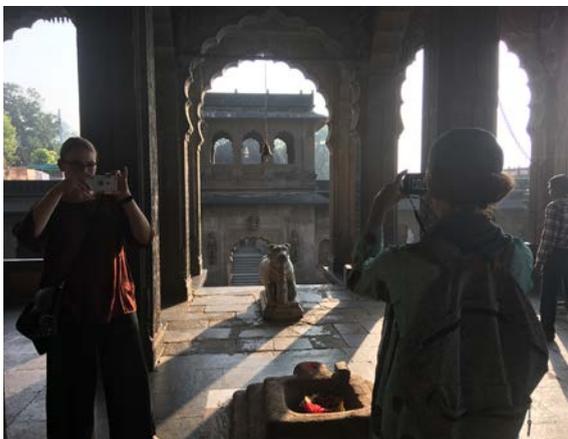


Fig. 1 BRICS research project: field trip in India, Klara Björk, 2018

**Version 1**

Critical thinking entails seeing both sides of an issue<sup>2</sup> and to be mindful of your position that enables the perspective.

**Version 2**

Your position enables the perspective.

**Version 3**

Your perspective is in relation to your position.

To see more than one side of an issue be mindful that you need to move.

**Version 4**

An image can make visible a specific perspective. The image is the visualization of the perspective. If we are looking from a different point of view – depending from which position we stand, the perspective changes.

Klara Björk, HDK-Valand Academy  
at University of Gothenburg, Sweden

1 Dewey, J. (2007). Democracy and education: An introduction to the Philosophy of Education. Sioux Falls: NuVision Publications (p. 123).

2 Willingham, D. T. (2007) Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach? American Educator, 31, 8-19 (p.8).

## MULTIMODALITY

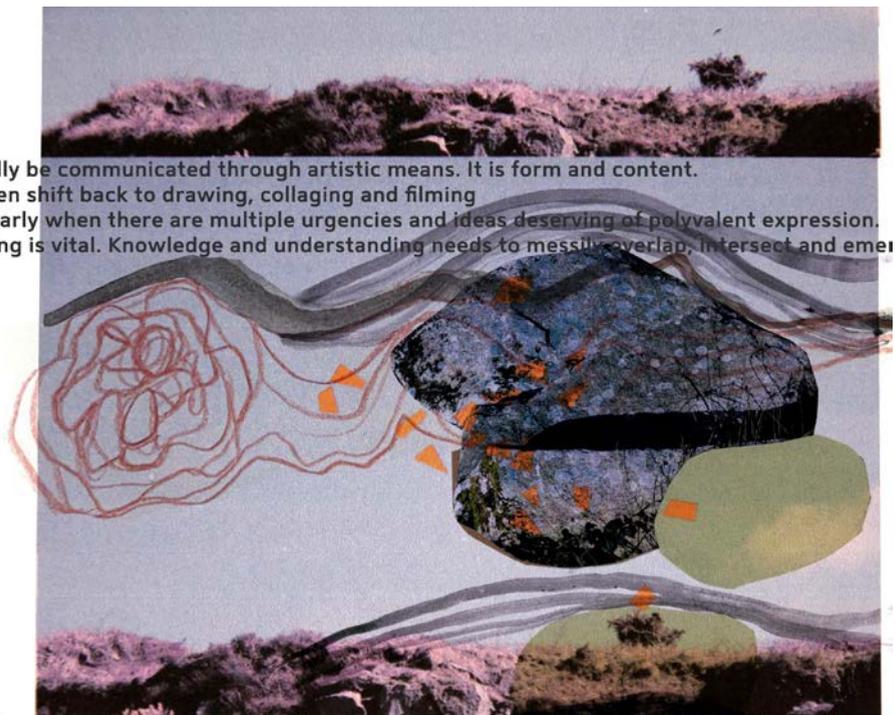
The importance of artistic research; in my reflective realisation is that it can only really be communicated through artistic means. It is form and content. As I research, encounters happen through sensory explorations. I write from practice and then shift back to drawing, collaging and filming from the written words that spurn new creative sparks of understanding. Language is useful but it is not all encompassing. When there are multiple urgencies and ideas that deserve polyvalent expression then images and sound carry a particularly

## POLYVALENCY

important role. However, any channel of communication is not wholly adequate when considered in isolation. Therefore, the space to experiment with multimodal possibilities that push out of conventional constructs and stretch our understanding is vital. Knowledge and understanding needs to messily overlap, intersect and emerge through conversations that move interactively across disciplines: making connections beyond the frame, over the line and between materials.

Rachael Jones, Falmouth University, UK

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I am reflecting on the importance of artistic research to the research community, and realising that it can only really be communicated through artistic means. As I research, encounters happen through sensory explorations. I write from practice and then shift back to drawing, collaging and filming from the written words that spurn new creative sparks of understanding. Images and sound do carry an important role; however, any channel of communication is not wholly adequate when considered in isolation. The space to experiment with multimodal possibilities that can push out of conventional constructs and stretch our understanding is vital. Knowledge and understanding needs to messily overlap, intersect and emerge through conversations that move interactively across disciplines: making connections beyond the frame, over the line and between materials.

Fig. 2 © Rachel Jones

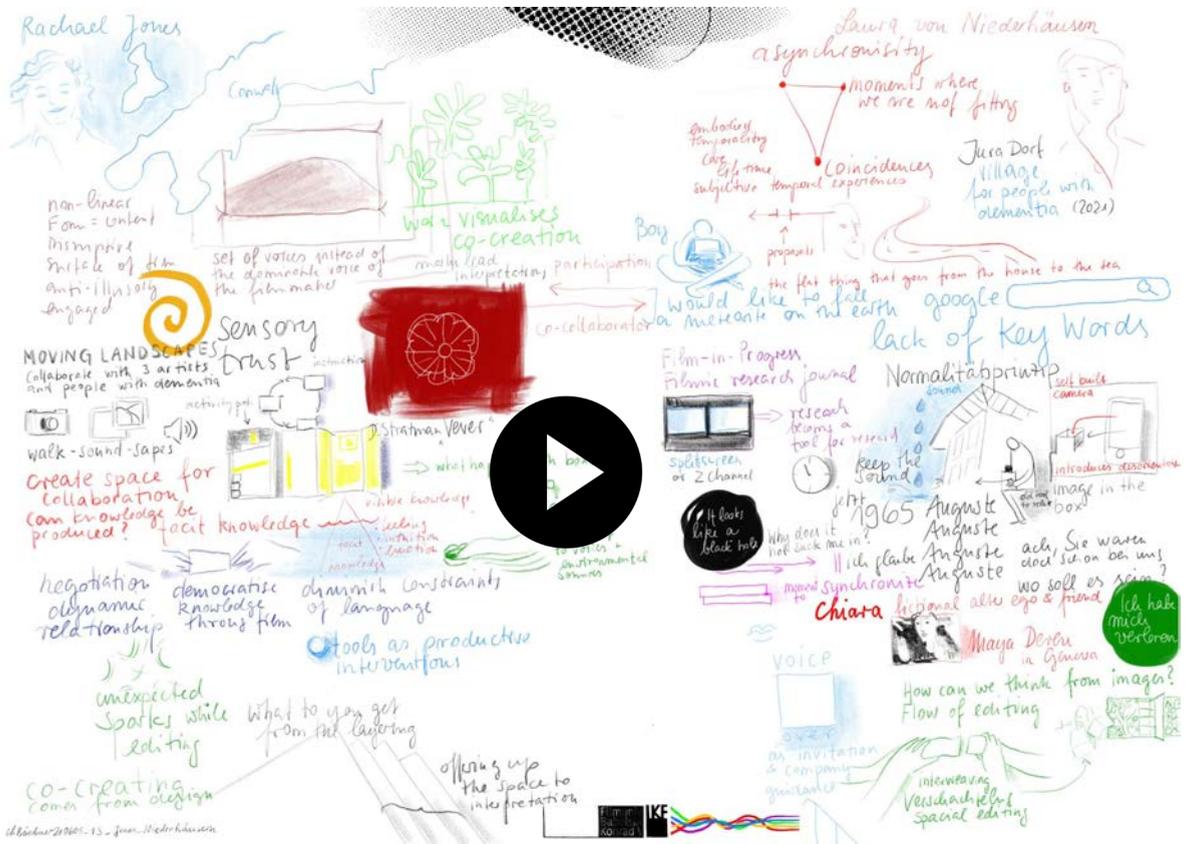


Fig. 3 Drawing by Christiane Büchner. It was made during the talk "Layering Artistic Research: Working with People and Materials" by Rachael Jones at the GEECT Conference Transversal Entanglement 2021.

Process is key for artistic research and not a luxury when making documentary films. It is not simply a means to an end, but rather reflects the essence of the moving images eventually seen on screen. In that sense, artistic research is an integral part of developing a more ethical, transparent, inclusive and sustainable filmmaking practice.

Who gets to tell whose story? Why does representation matter? How can I fully acknowledge my positionality and responsibilities as a documentarian? What does accountability look like?

Those are some of the questions that I continue to pose in my filmmaking practice. The importance of rigorous introspection that challenges my own preconceptions of prevalent conventions of story and form has been important on the journey. The inquisitive researcher and the creative practitioner merge on a path of discovery and self-reflection, generating new understandings of visual storytelling and the creation of subversive narratives.

Rand Beiruty, Film University Babelsberg  
KONRAD WOLF, Germany

## SUBVERSION

## CRITICISM

## RESISTANCE

Das Bild ÓCULOS (Goggles) als methodisches Objekt künstlerischen Forschens zeigt eine Brille mit vier umkehrbaren, teils verspiegelten Linsen. 1968 von Lygia Clark entworfen problematisiert es den single gaze, öffnet ihn multiperspektivisch und setzt auf die Potenziale eines *zwischenmit*, wie Hélène Cixous es nahezu zeitgleich schreibend als eine immanent widerständige Bewegung entwirft, als einen «unablässigen Austausch des Einen zwischenmit dem Anderen. [...] Zulassen, dass Schreiben eben genau bedeutet (im) Dazwischen zu arbeiten, die Entwicklung des Selben und des Anderen zu befragen, ohne die nichts lebt, [...] vielfältig unerschöpflicher Weg aus tausend Begegnungen und Verwandlungen desselben ins Andere und ins Zwischen.» (Hélène Cixous, *Das Lachen der Medusa* (1975) 2017)

[...]

Stichwort *écriture féminine*,

das als Schlagwort zum Suchbegriff wird:

eine systemkritische, vielstimmige Figur künstlerischen Forschens, in der sich ›feministisches Pamphlet, Metaphysikkritik, eine neue Art des Philosophierens, ein Ausloten der sogenannten weiblichen Erfahrung, Poesie & politische Utopie‹ mischen.

*écriture féminine* ist als historische oder besser gesagt *herstorische* Figur ganz klar ein politisches Konzept, das mit (heteronormativ codierten) Binaritäten bricht, ein emanzipatorischer Akt:

schreiben im *zwischenmit*



Fig. 4 *zwischenmit*: *betweenwith*<sup>3</sup>

[...]

Als methodische Praxisfiguren ihrerzeit utopisch konzipiert heute greifbar als ein polylogisches, auf Austausch insistierendes Prinzip: Xenofeminismus<sup>4</sup>, Intersektionalität.

[...]

With these ideas in mind, I jumped into the artistic research conference *Transversal Entanglements* and found a filmic echo of these *herstorical* figures and practices, especially in *BLOOD* (BLOD 2020) by Annika Boholm & Kersti Grunditz Brennan. As a method of risk-taking, artistic research with- in film can be described as performative, process-driven, repetitive, re\*iterative and relational. Reading / seeing with the *herstorical* figures of thought by Clark and Cixous, these kind of practices initiate a multidirectional search – a practice of

3 Perspective piece with a detail of *betweenwith* – a transitional fragment (*zwischenmit* – ein transitorisches fragment 2021), developed and read by Jana Seehusen, c.f. Z0000M ZERO, A Collective Reading and Listening initiated by Katrin Mayer, May 30, 2021; <http://c0da.org>.

4 Laboria Cuboniks, XENOFEMINISM – A Politics for Alienation: <https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation/>; Legacy Rusell, GLITCHFEMINISM A Manifesto: <https://legacyrussell.com/GLITCHFEMINISM>.

discursive openness, visible in the field of film-as-research as a transversal entanglement of practice and theory, a Möbius strip-like endeavour with the aim of opening up expanded transdisciplinary, intersubjective and, above all, emancipatory spaces of action. Or in other words:

[...]

Praktiken des Sehens, Lachens und Schreibens wie diese situieren ein widerständiges und weniger gut regierbares Subjekt, das, wie Hanne Loreck mit Rosi Braidotti betont, «eines des Feminismus ist, ein prozessuales, das andere des Anderen und nicht länger «die Frau»». (Braidotti, *Metamorphoses* 2002)

*The text is originally written in German and English<sup>5</sup>. In the footnotes you will find the full English version.*

Jana Seehusen, University of Fine Arts of Hamburg,  
Germany

Yes, the thesis can be put forward that a (not only) artistic research, if it wants to claim to be a critical research and knowledge practice, has to develop its methodology and epistemology from a feminist perspective. For it is the feminist epistemological approaches that “combine research with interaction and responsibility, as well as think together truth and objectivity claims [...] with positioning and partiality.”<sup>6</sup> They develop critical transdisciplinary and intersectional knowledge practices in accordance with this desire, combine the interest in knowledge with the political concern, to indicate processes of exclusion and marginalization, and take into account the intertwining of theory and practice.<sup>7</sup>

Elke Bippus, Zurich University of the Arts,  
Switzerland

5 The image ÓCULOS (Goggles), as a methodical object of artistic research, shows a pair of glasses with four reversible, partly mirrored lenses. Designed by Lygia Clark in 1968, it problematises the single gaze and opens it up to multiple perspectives. Moreover, it relies on the potentials of “working (in) the in-between” – a *betweenwith*, as Hélène Cixous, writing at almost the same time, designs it as an immanently resistant movement, as an “incessant process of exchange from one subject to another. [...] To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, [...] a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between”. (Hélène Cixous, *The Laughter of Medusa* (fr. 1975, g. 2017) engl. 1976) [...]

Keyword *écriture féminine*, which, as a keyword, becomes a search term:

A system-critical, polyphonic figure of artistic research, mixing ‘feminist pamphlet, metaphysical critique, a new way of philosophising, an exploration of the so-called female experience, poetry & political utopia’.

As a historical or rather *her*-storical figure, *écriture féminine* is clearly a political concept that breaks with (heteronormatively coded) binaries, an emancipatory act: writing in the *betweenwith* [...]

As methodological figures of practice, at their time utopian in conception, today tangible as a polylogical principle insisting on exchange: xenofeminism, intersectionality. [...]

With these ideas in mind, I jumped into the artistic research conference *www* and found a filmic echo of these *her*-storical figures and practices, especially in *BLOOD* (BL0D 2020) by Annika Boholm & Kersti Grunditz Brennan. As a method of risk-taking, artistic research with↔in film can be described as performative, process-driven, repetitive, re\*iterative and relational. Reading / seeing with the *her*-storical figures of thought by Clark and Cixous, these kind of practices initiate a multidirectional search – a practice of discursive openness, visible in the field of film-as-research as a transversal entanglement of practice *and* theory, a Möbius strip-like endeavour with the aim of opening up expanded transdisciplinary, intersubjective and, above all, emancipatory spaces of action. Or in other words: [...]

Practices of seeing, laughing, and writing like this situate a resistant and less governable subject that is, as Hanne Loreck points out with Rosi Braidotti, “one of feminism, a processual one, the other of the Other and no longer Woman”. (Braidotti, *Metamorphoses* 2002)

6 Mona Singer (2008): „Feminist critique of science and epistemology: preconditions, positions, perspectives“, In: Becker Ruth, Kortendiek Beate (eds.) *Handbook of Women’s and Gender Studies*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 285-294, here 293.

7 *The quote is from an original publication in Bildpunkt. Journal of IG Bildende Kunst (Vienna), No. 45, Spring 2018, “Art, Research, Politics.” For full article see: [https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt\\_/953/](https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt_/953/)*

## ENTANGLEMENT

*The following section brings together a set of voices that address the connection between politics, identity (intersectionality and positionality) in relation to artistic research. The focus is on expanding definitions to challenge the role and value of artistic research. It offers commentary on the socio-political dimensions of artistic research and its potential in creating wholly new connections and paradigms. In other words, the perspectives expressed here challenge the notion of artists/practitioners as isolated or insulated from the world but rather as of the world and therefore implicated in its socio-politics through their creative practice and artistic research facilitates new political potentialities.*

With its procedures, forms, materialities and semiosis, film as a medium is, certainly, a specific mode of relationality, that often violently cuts, selects, frames and records something to produce a *certain* image of a reality or world as a (mostly euro-centric, male, heteronormative) homogenous, coherent given. As a film and media scholar entangled with queer feminist and decolonial theories; entanglement, is an ontoepistemological condition of everything, humans and more-than-humans alike. Media, in turn, and especially film aren't the 'things' in the middle that represent something – like a given reality or a given world – to 'us' to gain knowledge or the truth from. Likewise, aesthetic is not, nor aesthetic procedures are not just ways of better understanding a given reality or world (or parts of it).

From the angle of a queer feminist or specifically a decolonial perspective it would be – also in a pedagogical sense – important to make this specific, violent mode of relationality, structured by same and difference (binarisms), not only tangible, but also not to identically reproduce them.

## HETEROGENEOUS WORLDS

For this, 'we' should make ourselves – in the aesthetic realm – sensible to other modes of relationality that are not structured by gendered, sexual, cultural or ethnical differences within a homogenous world, but wherein multiple worlds are simultaneously connecting in that they diverge from one another. In such a respect, I see film as an artistic medium not as a negotiator between different worlds or cosmologies, nor as a structure that connects them, but that which enables ecologies to be connected in their ever-diverging heterogeneity in the sense that in their inner divergences they are un/disposable and cannot taken into possession (they can't be fully known, there is no truth about them). On the contrary, making oneself (aesthetically) sensible to the indeterminacy of those ever diverging/entangled worlds implies that we, as we inhabit those worlds, are also already being changed/always changing. In an artistic and pedagogic sense, to me, we should foster the sensibility for (and maybe produce) images of divergent, heterogeneous worlds instead of homogeneous, but different worlds.

Christiane König,  
University of Cologne, Germany



Fig. 5 © Susanne Foidl, 2021.

Uncertain times inspire the resurrection of narratives thought to be once outdated. These have been reproduced again and again, ever since Griffiths' *Birth of a Nation* - I call this "milestone" in film history *Birth of Discrimination*. Myths from a heterosexual matrix and the binary notion of male vs. female, good vs. evil, white vs. black promise order in a time of increased and escalating uncertainties.

Certainties are the privileges of those forces that seek to secure their power with classist, racist, misogynist,

interpretive supremacy and heteronormative chronopolitics in their narratives.

These certainties mean nothing to me, as a queer person. I have always felt the world around me to be unjust. Doubt as an impulse and *Non-Understanding* as a method taught me to live without certainties. And so, I understand artistic research and feminism as professional practices of doubting. Both question structures of power and search in the fragile layers of injured civilization for cross-connections and for possibilities to recognize and understand something. No claim to knowledge exists. Intersectional approaches cross-fertilize each other.

Truth is replaced by multiple perspectives. Therefore, a queer editing room is suitable to make new concepts for an equal world conceivable with an artistically researching, feminist attitude. I often don't know what is conceivable when I, as a film editor, connect the different materials and bring them into a new context. But I can make these connections appear on a screen and make them visible, thus opening up spaces in which nothing is certain, but everything is conceivable.

Susanne Foidl,  
Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany

## DOUBTING

## SPECULATING

In my practice, I consider artistic research as a condition that allows for conceptual mobility, a way of sense-making, rug-pulling, axiomatics-rebutting, hegemony-busting, spatio-visual way of knowing. I like the radical speculative and experimental possibilities that artistic research enacts. I make spatial-visual work that grapples with the densities of perspectives, velocities of values and frequency of affects. Within the tensile framework of artistic research, I confidently orchestrate circuits of sinuous experiments unburdened by unexamined teleologies; emancipated from the validations

or assumptions of scientific research. I draw from the iterative potentialities and methodological abundance of artistic research to dare to fail, misread, decode, inscribe, and remix knowledge(s) embodied in my art practices. Artistic research offers conceptual coordinates that are constantly re-calibrating to the dynamic contours of both my image-making in the world and pedagogic efforts in the context of a film school.

Nduka Mntambo,  
Netherlands Film Academy, Amsterdam

## MODELLING



Fig. 6 © Erik Gandini

Throughout my years as independent documentary filmmaker I encountered artistic research in my position at a university as Professor of Documentary. My insight has grown of artistic research as a celebration of the fact that The Researcher is not only the man in a white coat in a lab. We artists are full-fledged researchers too - often with no support from outside nor a space to gather a common sense of dignity and value for the knowledge we produce. Artistic Research is a bold claim that the practice of a researching artist deserves to be given a relevant position in the universe of academia. And it grants the means to ensure that research activity can take place in a free, visionary, non-market driven institutional setting.

I am currently working on a project that called *The Future Through The Present*. It focuses on wage work and grasping what work could be in the future, exploring whether documentary film, a genre traditionally constrained to portray how 'things are' could expand into aesthetics that allows it to capture 'how things could be'.

I sense that documentary film is still very much confined, aesthetically and content wise in being a tool for the passive observer, the discrete witness, mere collector of images and sound from the present. Less a tool for dreamers, visionaries of alternative future scenarios.

In this project, I interviewed Noam Chomsky, 93 years old and a long-time critic of wage work slavery. I asked him about his vision concerning what work could be in a better future. He answered:

*Well, we actually have models. People who are really lucky like me, who had jobs in research institutions. I happened to have spent most of my life at M.I.T. main research institution in the United States. That's about as close to a self-governed anarchist society as you can imagine. As researchers, you may work 70 or 80 hours a week, but you do it because you enjoy it. You want to do it. You're working with others in cooperative work. You're working on problems you want to solve. And you can be dedicated. Work can be the highest joy in life when it's undertaken on your own, without domination, in pursuit of your own internal drives for creativity and pursuing your imagination and so on.*

I'd love to be able to say the same in a few years from now, looking back at my artistic research practice.

Erik Gandini,  
Stockholm University of the Arts, Sweden

*Artistic research endeavours to validate the significance of artistic forms as a means of questioning and as a mode of knowledge production. The expression of knowledge is constituted not only in the art form itself but brings into play the entanglement, co-existence and interdependency of knowledge paradigms - of the epistemic which implies the historical and political spheres of knowing, structures of knowledge and its cultural contexts and, its specific artistic forms and meanings. In addition, the ontological - what constitutes the nature of the subject and, how that subject is constituted in modes of representation or through the subjectivity of the artist as expressed through the practice. Inherent in this exploration of knowledge is always the relation of how power constitutes knowledge and how power is inscribed in ontological expressions. Art produces knowledge and reflective texts describe the processes and methodological procedures that framework the research enquiry.*

Art is a way of thinking about reality that blurs the boundaries between rational and sensory knowledge, feelings and beliefs, and is therefore able to offer a more holistic approach to reality. Thus, art is not only a possible access to the perception of reality and a way of communicating these worldviews but can also be a stage for negotiating the interpretation of reality. In the field of artistic expressions of community based cultural forms, such as traditional and popular art, this idea is a widely accepted postulate in ethnomusicology, but also it is a translation into art of fundamental ideas of Latin American currents of intercultural dialogue.

What happens if we transfer this idea to documentary film? And especially if we go one step further and not only strive to

show realities through art produced in this context, but use documentary film and its production process as a second level that perhaps allows us to negotiate (in a more holistic way) non-verbalised, sometimes diffuse thoughts, perceptions and understandings, thus contributing to a dialogue between different points of view on shared realities?

For documentary filmmaking, this could be one of the many ways to give art a little more power in the eternal negotiation between research, communication and artistic transformation that, in one way or another, is behind any documentary film production...

**Vera Gerner,**  
**Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica**

## NEGOTIATION

## INTERVENTION

Artistic research is based on the assumption that artistic practice can make epistemic claims. However, little academic investigation considers artistic practice as a significant mode of knowledge production. Only recently has artistic research gained currency through a gradual academic recognition. But most of the academics cited in artistic research publications and projects are not artists themselves; the process of knowledge production and transmission still commonly remains in the hands of non-practitioners. In my experience as an artist and researcher, artists and practitioners are often marginalized and under-represented in academia's institutional hierarchy, even in the growing field of artistic research.

Given this context of the marginalization of the artist proper in knowledge production, I advocated for a change in this situation when I wrote *The Auditory Setting* (2021)<sup>8</sup>. As a core principle of research through practice, I draw from my own practice with film sound to suggest that more artists should

claim their work as research creation in the arts and to thereby contribute to the production of new, layered and innovative knowledge with a self-reflexive and auto-ethnographic mode of inquiry. The growing need for artists to actively intervene in the arts-based research and pedagogy adds to real-world knowledge and processual understanding of spaces, sites, environs, materials and objects to debate with adequate and sustained attention to artistic research through a number of films and audiovisual artworks. I expand on these ideas in an embodied exploration of human agency to mediate environmental sounds and the nature of sonic experiences in the Anthropocene – a geologic era with unprecedented multiplication of environmental damage, and decay of the biosphere.

**Budhaditya Chattopadhyay,  
Critical Media Lab Basel, Switzerland**

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8 Chattopadhyay, Budhaditya (2021). *The Auditory Setting: Environmental Sounds in Film and Media Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

## A DOUBLE DANCE

Creative practice researchers are doing two dances in the university. We are making our work and articulating our work as research. So, creative practice is not an easier form of research. It is harder. It requires concurrent thinking in artistic media and thinking in institutional knowledge forms.

Making artistic work requires skills that are more difficult to master than direct, explicit forms of academic writing, because artistic work produces knowledge, insight, or understanding with image, sound, movement, rhythm, subtext, perspective, voice, tone, juxtaposition, allusion and more. But, as researchers, we are required to articulate further how our work in research in other academic disciplines can be understood, be recognised, be supported and used. Doing this double dance is an obligation, but an opportunity. All sources of funding and support come with obligations. Our opportunity is to get the most out of the specific obligations of accepting support and funding of research institutions.

In my experience, articulating clear questions and context for inquiry strengthens my work. But there is an even more significant reason to do it. Communicating our research as research can change knowledge systems. Creative practice research can challenge the 'epistemological violence' of empirical knowledge forms. The neo-liberal logics that currently dominate academic and cultural thinking have got us, and this planet, into the mess we are in. Creative practice research is an opportunity to open, expand, and revise exclusionary knowledge forms and get them to accept other ways of sensing, knowing, and comprehending the world.

So, we do the double dance. We generate insight and ideas through creative practice and then we do a translation into academic terms. With these double artistic and academic moves, insights and apprehensions are slipping in and opening up academia to other ways of knowing, comprehending, creating and being in the world.

Karen Pearlman,  
Macquarie University, Sydney Australia



Fig. 7 The-Physical-TV-Company, 2019

## EXTENDED DISCOURSE

Using artistic means and methodology to do academic research and knowledge creation surely creates ripples in the traditional conceptions of knowledge canons and their institutional hierarchical formations. The conventional binaries like percept/concept, experience/discourse, emotion/analysis to a great extent have overshadowed the possible intermediary zones between the extremes. For the same reason the pedagogy of documentary has not been sufficiently developed in most of the institutions of formal learning of film. The usual tropes of learning fiction cinema are found in abundance in the name of finding a 'character', following the character/s to find a 'story' of interest, or in the importance given to pre-written scripts.

In contrast to that, a viable alternative practice-based pedagogical approach can be initiated where documentary would be posited as a kind of cinema fundamentally enabled to create discourse. In this respect, an important repository of study and analysis can be done with the documentaries made by some of the great masters of fiction cinema, to figure out the multimodal impulses in their cinematic expressions – the

narrative impulse, the descriptive impulse, the rhetorical impulse, and the documenting impulse, and the nature of their blending to arrive at the polyphonic nature of discourses. The discourse in documentary is not to be seen as limited to the idea of discourse of words, as found in linguistics, but far more extended – the discourse of visual and sonic images, the discourse of cinematic objects. Even the fragments of stories, pieces of cultural attitudes, which always might be grasped from the images gathered from the pro-filmic 'real', can be seen as meta-objects of discourse, with differently poised tangents of sensations and temporalities and their chequered blending into one another. The standard syntax of spacing out the information-based analytical sections, from the rhetorical sections (for creating blocks of experience), can be fused at times to arrive at startling and often indeterminate blocks of sensations, which can be tried out as an intuitive option in terms of methodology.

Deb Kamal Ganguly,  
Ex-faculty Film and Television Institute of India, Pune



Fig. 8 © Deb Kamal Ganguly

## POLYPHONY

### IDENTITY

To research with the arts can be a quite material practice.

But what is digital matter?

(What is the matter of film anyway?)

The physicality of the celluloid which can be cut and scratched or the sensuous surface, the "haptic visuality"<sup>9</sup> eliciting visceral response?)

What I can feel is the sensuous radiating from digital matter. I can mold digital matter. I can research digital matter by forming it.

To experience what happens when the surface of the digital matter has been touched, scratched, damaged, ruptured, cut open.

Can digital matter scream?

What is the reciprocal connection between digital matter and physical action?

A possible answer from Catherine Malabou:

*"Plasticity refers to an equilibrium between the receiving and giving of form. It is understood as a sort of natural sculpting that forms our identity, an identity modeled by experience and that makes us subjects of a history, a singular, recognizable, identifiable history, with all its events, gaps, and future."<sup>10</sup>*

Szilvia Ruszev,  
Bournemouth University, UK

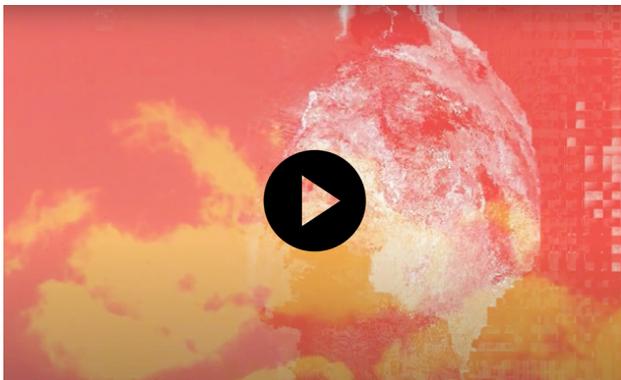


Fig. 9 © Szilvia Ruszev

9 Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000.

10 Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, Cambridge: Polity, 2012, p. 3.

*The open-ended propositions of artistic research, its space for chance and coincidence – primarily the articulation of oscillating between knowing and not-knowing; from processes of recovery to discovering entrenches artistic research with an ethos of uncertainty. In the recently increased insistence on definitional parameters of artistic research within institutions, some cautions and reservations have emerged. In this final section we offer some sobering reflections also on how the institutional “disciplining” of artistic research stands to compromise some of the fundamental propositions of artistic research which is knowledge gained from the centrality of creative or artistic practice as a place from which knowledge is gleaned and gained. There is a growing need to consider what the scope of research within artistic institutions affords creative practices without compromising either artistic expressions or academic rigour. The growing concern is that one is either at the service of the other or that artistic research requires academic validation in across disciplines.*

## AMBIGUITY

The breath of my education has been in artistic research including my PhD and admittedly after all these experiences I'm not sure what it means and how it should work. In fact, it sometimes makes me so angry that I ask myself if I haven't made a mistake by taking this course. Reading and writing open my curiosity, broaden my knowledge, create new associations in my mind. I discovered that when identical or overlapping questions my film and my research, it was deadly for both. However, when I managed to separate them in a way that they still spiraled within the same realm, it was inspiring. It is never easy for me to phrase these questions, and I refine them as I go, but every time I feel that my research positively influences my art, I choose to continue in this direction a bit further.

When I academically write about a topic, I lose interest in it as a subject of my art or as a prism through which to view my film. The determined, argumentative way of thinking suffocates my striving for ambiguity and abstractness. So why am I choosing this path over and over again?

Perhaps the fact that I see myself first and foremost as an artist makes it easier for me to accept that this contribution is never equally reciprocal. I'm sure that academic research is also influenced by art, but I will always put my art first, which

helps me better understand my personal expectations from the weird yet inspiring concept of artistic research.

Maya Klar,

Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany

The growing wave of interest in artistic research is mirrored by the networks of increased curiosity for new formats and further experimentation in filmmaking but makes more apparent the different understandings of what artistic research in film means. Particularly in terms of the differences between making films and artistic research in film 'Film born as research', to 'conducting research on film' – is a valuable and complex progression that addresses the act of filmmaking as a research endeavour itself or is film a viable methodology for research on its own? It seems there could be two perspectives that need to be considered at the same time. Kip Jones explains "I see it more as two sets of performative promises with the potential to work singularly or in concert." (2018)<sup>11</sup>. But is it possible to make those two promises and honour them both equally? My observation is: film can be research and, research is needed for film.

Su Nichols,

ifs International Film School Cologne, Germany

11 Hearing, T & Jones, K. (2018). Chapter 22 - Film as Research/Research as Film in *Handbook of arts-based research*. P. Leavy, (Ed.). The Guilford Press.

## RISK TAKING

Artistic research raises two, potentially contradictory, questions for me. The first: how can artistic research lead not just to the production of art but also to the production of knowledge? The second: how can we prevent artistic research from becoming a discipline?

The first question basically begs the question of relevance in our in-depth investigation of the language of film and the subject matter of our art project fields beyond the art work itself and even beyond the field of art as such. What can 'artistic research in and through cinema' – as we call it at the Master and Research Group of the Netherlands Film Academy – contribute to the knowledge about the world? What kind of knowledge can 'artistic research in and through cinema' generate that cannot be generated any other way?

The second question; may perhaps be better phrased as 'how can we maintain, protect and cherish the open, novel, risk taking and rule breaking character of art even in an academic context of research'? How can we resist the pressure to become like other, often humanities or social science research, with a fixed set of frames, methods, validation systems and forms of dissemination? How to question and challenge the efforts to "discipline" artistic research? How to not give ground, how to remain radically playful...

**Mieke Bernink,  
Netherlands Film Academy, Amsterdam**