

Introduction

You won't, for example, tell us,
nor could you possibly tell us,
what the criteria are by which
we know which uses of
'know' in the future will be
legitimate or rational

Hilary Putnam

The content of a science [is]
the reconfiguration of the
world ... through practical
engagement with things,
people, and prior patterns of
talk.

Joseph Rouse*

* Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 32. Joseph Rouse, 'Vampires: Social Constructivism, Realism, and Other Philosophical Undead', *History and Theory*, 41 (2002), 60-78 (p. 73).

This book is about artistic research – what it is, or what it could be. And it is about the place that artistic research could have in academia, within the whole of academic research. It is also about the ways we speak about such issues, and about how the things we say (in this book and elsewhere) cause the practices involved to manifest themselves in specific ways, while also setting them into motion. In this sense, the book not only explores the phenomenon of artistic research in relation to academia, but it also engages with that relationship. This performative dimension of the book is interwoven with its constative and interpretive dimensions. If the book succeeds in its aims, it will not only advance knowledge and understanding of artistic research, but it will further the development of this emerging field. Such an articulation of artistic research, in which thinking and doing are enmeshed, implies a certain engagement. Though that might seem to stand in the way of an objective assessment, there are good reasons to defend the intertwinement of theoretical and practical agency, as I shall make clear below.

The field of endeavour that I articulate and analyse here is, as mentioned, artistic research in its relationship to academia. It is a field of research under study, and my investigation can therefore be regarded (to use an old expression) as metatheoretical, as metascientific, as foundational research. It thereby situates itself in the domains of philosophy of science and science policy, in a field currently known as science and technology studies (STS). I would not go so far as to claim that the research I present here forms a significant contribution to various STS standpoints, nor that it adopts a stance in the STS debate. It can, however, be regarded as an extensive case study in which I sometimes partake of insights developed in the STS context. A thoroughgoing study from an STS perspective has yet to be undertaken; a whole territory awaits exploration.

The area covered by this book is limited. The focus is on artistic research – that is, on an endeavour in which the artistic and the academic are united. The field of artistic research thereby sets itself apart from other encounters between the arts and academia. It is important to draw a clear distinction between artistic research and other forms of art-science collaboration, where artists are outsiders, visitors, or participants in scientific practice (cf. Zijlmans, Zwijnenberg, and Clevis 2007: 33–34). Such relations between artists and scientists remain outside the scope of this book, though I do refer to them in several chapters. My present study focuses on an undertaking in which artistic practices contribute *as research* to what we know and understand, and in which academia opens its mind to forms of knowledge and understanding that are entwined with artistic practices.

A further delimitation concerns the book's orientation. As the subtitle announces, it is about artistic research and academia. Although artistic research is positioned at the interface of art and academia – at the place where the art world and the world of academic research meet – the book concentrates not primarily on the art world, on issues in the domain of the arts, but on the relationship artistic research might have to academic research. Obviously such topics cannot be viewed in isolation from one another, and developments and critical issues arising in the art world will certainly come under discussion in various chapters. But the relationship between artistic research and the art

world still needs to be explicitly investigated by other studies. A historical study of artistic research, which is likewise yet to be written, will not only have to uncover what factors – or better still, actors – have contributed to the rise of this research field, but it will also need to show what developments immanent in art practice have fuelled its emergence.

The fact that I am confining myself to artistic research and academia may perhaps justify my slightly undifferentiated, or sometimes ostensibly uncritical, use of the term ‘art’ in various chapters. Though I do distinguish here and there between different art practices and disciplines where relevant, and though I do realise that, since the historical avant garde, ‘nothing concerning art goes without saying’ (Adorno 1997 [1970]: 12), I do not pretend to make a sophisticated contribution to the history, theory, or criticism of art. At the same time, I am also aware that the advent of artistic research does potentially influence how we think about ‘art’ (as well as about ‘academia’).

Besides being a field that is strongly proliferating, artistic research is also a controversial matter. It is important to underline its disputed status from the start, even before I discuss this with varying degrees of emphasis in later chapters. Whether in the art world, in the arts education sector, or in the world of academic research, there are always people who react to artistic research with reserve, if not with scepticism or outright rejection. As we shall see, their motives and arguments for so doing differ greatly. I will highlight one such viewpoint straightaway, since it could recently be heard once again in distinguished art circles.¹ It involves the presumed disciplining effect of ‘academic’ artistic research. In contrast to disciplined academic research, it was argued, the unregulated field of research in the arts exempts itself, as a matter of principle, from standards, restrictions, and criteria – which naturally could never arise out of the autonomous work of artists. The artistic

1. Kathrin Busch, ‘Generating Knowledge in the Arts: A Philosophical Daydream’, *Texte zur Kunst* (special issue, Artistic Research), 20.82 (2011), 70–79. Cf. Michael Schwab’s commentary in Schwab 2011b. See also Peter Geimer, ‘Das große Recherche-Getue in der Kunst. Sollen Hochschulen “Master of Arts”-Titel und Doktorhüte für Malerei verleihen?’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 April 2011, Forschung und Lehre section, p. N5. <http://www.hkb.bfh.ch/uploads/media/Das_grosse_Recherche-Getue_in_der_Kunst.pdf>. Cf. Elke Bippus’s commentary in Bippus 2011.

production of knowledge was seen to have potentially more in common with speculative philosophy and the knowledge criticism it practises than with scientific knowledge production. The institutionalised field of artistic research was also accused of leaning strongly on an obsolete concept of science or scientific rigour and of failing to take into account recent insights from the sociology of science. It was warned, moreover, with recourse to Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Levinas, that true artistic research should resist, as an independent form of knowledge production, any kind of academisation. Through its focus on the singular, the aesthetic-affective, the transgressive, the unforeseen, artistic research should exemplify an alternative culture of knowledge.

The problem with this type of criticism is that it fabricates its own object of criticism. It begins by constructing a caricature of artistic research in academia – it is disciplining, homogenising, restrictive, conformist, naive. After that, it is no longer difficult to field a whole line-up of post-Nietzschean witnesses to lambast those pernicious practices, which are inimical to art and which, under pressure from an equally maleficent education policy, are seen to have infected the art world under the label ‘academisation’ in order to subject art practices to their disciplining forces. Such argumentation often follows the same pattern: first you create an antithesis between (inadequate) academic research and the liberating cognitive practices of artists, and then you go on to defend the latter from unwarranted institutionalisation and normalisation.

This pattern is the mirror image of another sort of reasoning that likewise posits an antithesis between artistic research and academic research. It is deployed to protect the realm of the sciences against an invasion by unfounded ideas and strategies that cannot withstand systematic scrutiny, even if they might be of value in the enigmatic practices of artists. These defenders of science insist that the arts and sciences, though perhaps close together at some points in history, still remain two fundamentally different domains and practices, and that it would be highly inappropriate to lump them together in a single higher education and research framework.

It is one of my objectives in this book to counter some of these, in my eyes, needless oppositions between artistic and academic research,

between art and academia. Clearly, these represent, at first sight, two domains and traditions of human activity that are institutionally and theoretically (and to some extent historically) segregated; no extensive research is necessary to confirm that. Nor are there many people who would claim that every expression of artistry is a form of scholarly research; those who do so tend not to be taken seriously in the discourse. All this notwithstanding, it is in this emergent field of artistic research that the domains of art and academia meet and intersect. At that very junction, something significant happens that could influence how we think, or might begin to think, about both domains.

At the same time, the warnings made by these critics ought to be taken seriously. If we near the point where institutionalisation of artistic research leads to curtailment or dilution of artistic practice, or to an erosion of academic values and conventions, it is time to step on the brake. And, now already, the way that institutionalisation has actually occurred in some places gives reason to watchfully monitor and criticise how the field is developing. At present, that development is characterised by a diversity of initiatives, models, and practices, not all of which will prove equally fruitful. Yet such heterogeneity is inherent in a field that is still in development and has not yet fully crystallised. Establishing a new research field simply takes time – as well as sparking a lot of conflict. My motivation in writing *The Conflict of the Faculties* is to contribute to that struggle. It is not helpful when people give up the struggle beforehand by ossifying the antithesis between artistic and academic research. The challenge lies in exploring whether and how artistic research could cohere with academic research.

So what is the current state of affairs in this research field, and how do I position my contribution? In chapters 2 and 5, I attempt to document the state of the art, but I can already disclose for now that there actually is no ‘state of the art’. Any effort to provide a current overview is undermined by the heterogeneity and dynamism of the research field. Owing to the stream of new developments, my own texts, as compiled here, were in danger of being obsolete at publication. To paraphrase Bruno Latour, it is a field in action. Viewed in a particular, mainly institutional light, the research field has already been established in some countries since the early 1990s. From a more theoretical per-

spective, however, the field is still in a continuous state of flux and some turmoil. The foundational debate has not yet led to a status quo. It may indeed be inherent to the field of artistic research that such a status quo cannot ultimately be achieved. I shall defend that possibility below.

A growing number of publications relating to the new field of research – journal articles, books, conference proceedings, policy papers – are now seeing the light. But the number of studies that explicitly examine the relationship between artistic research and academia is still scant. The voluminous ‘companion’ by Biggs and Karlsson (2011) therefore represents a milestone, though it still covers a limited number of viewpoints. If something can presently be said about a state of affairs, it is that there is a particular need for studies to illuminate the new research field from the perspectives of sociology of science and history of science. I would definitely endorse Helga Nowotny’s appeal (made in Biggs and Karlsson, p. xxii) to science and technology researchers to engage with the new field. I hope that my present volume will also contribute towards this.

My own contribution to the field of artistic research and the associated debate may be roughly described using the terms clarification, justification, and positioning. Particularly in the early chapters of the book, I try to create some terminological and conceptual clarity regarding the phenomenon of artistic research. The theoretical and political rationale of this type of research is a theme that pervades all chapters, and I also attempt to situate artistic research within the academic realm. The earlier publication of the articles incorporated here was also part of an effort to promote the concrete establishment of the new research domain (more on this below).

The principal theme addressed by this book is: What are the characteristics of artistic research? This general question breaks down into a series of more specific questions, explored in different chapters.

- a. How can we differentiate artistic research practices from artistic practices?
- b. What are the ontological, epistemological, and methodological attributes of artistic research?
- c. How can the relationship between artistic research and academia be characterised?

- d. What position does the artistic research programme occupy in science and technology policy and classification?
- e. Under what terms does artistic research qualify as academic research?
- f. What are the similarities and differences between artistic research and other academic research fields and how does artistic research relate to other life domains?
- g. What criteria may we employ in assessing artistic research?
- h. How is such an assessment framework rendered into concrete practice in a peer-reviewed journal?

The focus in the later chapters turns increasingly to the epistemology of artistic research and the criteria for research assessment. Throughout the work, I urge the acceptance of artistic research as a fully fledged research form, including institutional recognition.

My exploration of the theoretical and political rationale of artistic research is based in part on the study of texts, complemented by a case study to test the artistic research assessment framework. Concrete artistic research itself is not a focus of my study. The book is *about* artistic research – I do not discuss (analyse, interpret, criticise) specific research projects, though these do receive some attention in the literature I treat. In the emergent field of artistic research, there is a significant need to bring together exemplary research, to create a canon of projects that can serve as examples or mirrors for comparison or can qualify as paradigmatic. A new field of research usually evolves against the backdrop of uncontroversial work to which one can have recourse – which represents the research domain, as it were. The fact that no such corpus of exemplifying research now exists gives pause for thought. Does the establishment of artistic research as a new domain perhaps follow a different logic? Whatever the case, my present study should not be seen as a contribution to that facet of the artistic research domain. Although I am aware that a study on and about artistic research which does not draw on concrete research is at risk of remaining an abstract exercise, I believe my study helps to clarify, justify, and position artistic research within academia.

The sources I have consulted deal roughly with four domains: artistic research, theory of science, philosophy, and research policy.

(Policy documents and online resources are listed in a separate section of the bibliography.) In studying the texts and other sources, I focus not only on the theoretical and political rationale of artistic research, but also (albeit less explicitly) on what academia is, on how we can think about academic research against the background of the discourse on artistic research. One aim of the book is therefore to make a contribution of my own to the current discourse about academia and the future of academic research. In doing so, I do not position myself on the outside, either by branding academic research beforehand as flawed or by presupposing an opposition between artistic and academic research, but I contribute from within – by showing that there are good reasons to champion and bolster *within* academia the alternative culture of knowledge to which the cited critics refer. Here, too, there is considerable work to be done. The challenge is to find and mobilise allies at all levels within the world of academic research and the science system – in theory and in practice, conceptually and strategically, for the debate on values and criteria *and* for the material and procedural infrastructures. Natural allies can be expected in the humanities and social sciences, for instance in cultural studies and anthropology. But beyond that, exchanges of ideas and research strategies with people from areas like physics or engineering could also help strengthen the enhanced and expanded culture of knowledge. As I shall discuss below, the emergence of newer forms of transdisciplinary and Mode 2 research may also be relevant. And clearly the new artistic research domain can and should be further sustained by insights emanating from science and technology studies.

The study presented here consists mostly of chapters that have been published earlier as articles in their own right. Only the final two were written specifically for this book. The first two chapters explore the territory covered by the study and provide a tentative characterisation of the emerging field of research. Chapters 3, 4, and 6 focus on various aspects of artistic research: the often uneasy relationship with academia, the place of artistic research in the wider realm of science and technology, and its status on the borderlines between art and other life domains, including science. Chapter 5 may be seen as a sort of intermediate tally on the state of the art in the emergent domain. In chap-

ter 7, I attempt to position artistic research within academic research and *as* academic research. Under the notions of non-conceptualism, realism, and contingency, I also discuss in relation to artistic research a number of more speculative viewpoints that have been mentioned in passing in previous chapters. Such views invite additional brainwork. In the interview in chapter 8, amongst other subjects I anticipate the central theme of chapter 9: the status of artworks and art practices as 'epistemic things'. In chapter 10, I draw together the insights gained so far and mould them into a framework for assessing artistic research. This framework is tested and put into operation in chapter 11, the case study on the creation and functioning of the peer-reviewed *Journal for Artistic Research*.

As noted, most chapters have been published before. Those publications have meanwhile had some effect on the international discourse about the artistic research programme. One reason why I wrote them was to promote the establishment of that programme in concrete initiatives. That might explain the slightly combative and occasionally categorical tone of some passages. Matters of fact and matters of concern are intermingled. That obliges me now to engage in some reflection about how theoretical analysis relates to practical agency. Such reflection is not a secondary consideration; it goes to the very heart of the matter.

In addition to being an essay on artistic research (in relation to academia), this book is also a project and a proposition. It is a project in the literal sense of 'that which is thrown forth', and this is done with a specific purpose: to achieve something in practice, to make a difference there. This performative dimension of the book, as I have pointed out in the beginning, is interwoven with the discursive dimension. Theories are not disinterested attempts to approach an ever-receding practice, nor are they imperfect representations of a constant reality. Theories, including ones about artistic research, co-constitute the practices they address – just as there are no practices that are not permeated by theories and beliefs. This intertwinement between theory and practice – acknowledged both in hermeneutics and in constructivism – is the departure point of my analysis in the first chapter. But this relationship between theory and practice also figures in the entire project of which this book forms a written account. No one, of course, is the sole owner of the viewpoints advanced here, as any certificate of

ownership bears traces of things that others have left behind in inter-textual space. These shared viewpoints exert their performative force on the practices they become involved with. This can be illustrated by the interplay between the framework for assessing artistic research, as developed in this book, and the peer review criteria employed in practice by the *Journal for Artistic Research*. The unmistakable reality of those criteria (sedimented in the peer review form that guides reviewers through the assessment process) cannot be seen in isolation from the discursive practice articulated in the criteria. That discursive practice has both unfolded within the assessment framework proposed here and transformed itself into the peer review form. That double transformation may serve to exemplify the paradox that this book, this project, indeed this whole endeavour demonstrates. Theories exercise their performative power on the very practices that are described by those theories. Bruno Latour has shown how we can escape from this paradox – or rather, from what perspective the paradox no longer manifests itself as a paradox. For indeed, the opposition between theory and practice dissipates as soon as we learn to understand the dynamic of the emergent field as a chain of transformations – in which something that belongs at one moment to the ‘logical space of reasons’ (to use Wilfrid Sellars’s term) is set into operation at the next moment and becomes reality. Latour referred to this double ‘articulation’² of the field as ‘constructivist realism’ (Latour 1999: 135). Reality becomes more real through our interpretations of reality. And if only because of that, the present project is not a relativist undertaking. At first glance we seem to be dealing with a double circle: that which is to be proved is already assumed, and we test our assumptions in implementing them. In actual fact, however, this is not self-referential at all; it is a dynamic chain of interactions, transformations, and articulations that may ultimately produce more reality.

This book is also a proposition, in the literal sense of ‘a proposal to do something’. It might go too far to designate what I have under-

2. Latour 1999: 303. ‘This term [*articulation*] occupies the position left empty by the dichotomy between the object and the subject or the external world and the mind. Articulation is not a property of human speech but an ontological property of the universe. The question is no longer whether or not statements refer to a state of affairs, but only whether or not propositions are well articulated.’

taken in this book as action research, although the chain of reflection and intervention might certainly tempt one to do so. It is better to describe my work as a proposition³ to view reality differently, to offer an alternative for what now exists, by connecting and mobilising ideas, people, institutions, and material things. This makes my project resemble art practice itself (if indeed I may say so), since art practice likewise offers another perspective, or a perspective on the other. Such a perspective is fundamentally contingent. Things *could* be different, but whether we succeed in fulfilling the proposition depends on how powerfully it is articulated. The artistic research programme is not a given; it is itself a project and a proposition. It provides the opportunity, 'through practical engagement with things, people, and prior patterns of talk' (Rouse 2002: 73), to look at artistic practices differently and to articulate their epistemic potential. And precisely because we cannot say 'what the criteria are by which we know which uses of "know" in the future will be legitimate or rational' (Putnam 1995: 32), there is room here to propose an enriched and expanded epistemic culture. Articulating artistic research in academia therefore also amounts to a proposition to speak differently about academia, to reconfigure academia.

The earlier published texts that comprise most of this book came about in a variety of circumstances. That explains differences in style, tone, length, and structure. I have decided to include them here in their original form, save some minor adaptations, in order to allow the context to resonate in the narrative, as it were. Occasionally, but not too often, that context is specifically Dutch; if so I point that out.

The various texts do not follow on one another precisely, but they overlap as tiles on a roof. Repetitions or paraphrasings may occur here and there, for which I hope the reader will forgive me. Each chapter is preceded by a small preface that briefly explains the context of its in-

3. Latour 1999: 309. 'I do not use this term [*proposition*] in the epistemological sense of a sentence that is judged to be true or false [...], but in the ontological sense of what an actor offers to other actors. The claim is that the price of gaining analytical clarity – words severed from world and then reconnected by reference and judgment – is greater and produces, in the end, more obscurity than granting entities the capacity to connect to one another through events.'

ception and may link it to preceding or subsequent texts. This might seem to divorce the context from the content; but, as I have pointed out, the context also resonates through the text. And, just as theory and practice, the discursive and the performative, are interwoven, so should the distinction between content and context be de-emphasised here.

The texts were written between 2004 and 2011. Not only did the field of artistic research expand decisively during that time, but the terminology used to describe it also shifted. Although this is explained in subsequent chapters, I should point out here, to avoid misunderstandings, that the expression ‘artistic research’ is used here synonymously with ‘research in the arts’ (as contrasted with ‘research *on* the arts’). Some shifts have occurred, too, in my own thinking about artistic research as well as in my perspective on artistic research and academia. For that reason, I provide annotations alongside the texts of all chapters but the last two; these contain either my own comments and elaborations on the adjacent passages or a kind of stage directions to aid in following the book’s line of reasoning. Together with the short prefaces explaining the context, the annotations may be regarded as a sort of metatext that further articulates my perspective on artistic research and academia.