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## Artistic research – necessary and challenging

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### Summary

Artistic research is an established term in the statutory framework for higher education, it is part of the everyday vocabulary of art education and it is discussed in the philosophy of science literature. In the Norwegian *Act relating to Universities and University Colleges*, artistic research has been treated on an equal footing with other research since 1995, and this still needs to be followed up structurally and in terms of content in the educational system. Internationally, the term artistic research is understood to mean research in and through the arts. It is the artist's own experience and insight that are the point of departure for artistic research, unlike research on the arts, which is based on looking in from the outside. The Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme, which is funded by the Ministry of Education and Research, was established in 2003 in order to develop an arts-based alternative on a par with already established doctoral programmes. It now encompasses around 40 active research fellows in different institutions. The programme, which underwent a major evaluation in 2009, has been characterised as a great success. For the research fellows, completion of the programme fulfils the learning outcomes for the third level in the new qualification framework, and should in the future be formally recognised as a doctorate. Critical reflection is an implicit part of all artistic processes at a high level and, in the educational context, reflection must also be explicitly formulated with a view to dialogue and debate. Focus on this aspect of artistic research has in many ways changed the culture among the artistic staff at art academies. Enduring documentation of temporary results such as exhibitions, performances and concerts is one of the many challenges in this context. The consolidation of artistic research has contributed to vitality and quality and it has a great potential for further work.

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Artistic research is an established term in the statutory framework for higher education, it is part of the everyday vocabulary in art education and it is discussed in the philosophy of science literature. In this article, I will describe how artistic research has developed as a separate field in Norway over the past ten years, and I will discuss certain important challenges. I write on the basis of my experience from my different roles as artist, professor, rector of an art education institution and member of the Steering Group for the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. The text should be read in the context of how different art forms are expressed – in the performative arts, film, music, design and visual art.

## **Artistic research is the foundation of art education**

Artistic research is a precondition for dynamic teaching at a higher level, just as research is for other subjects at universities and university colleges. In the Norwegian *Act relating to Universities and University Colleges* from 2005, this is formulated as follows in Section 1-1:

'The purpose of this Act is to make provisions for universities and university colleges to

- a) provide higher education at a high international level.
- b) conduct research and academic and artistic development work at a high international level.
- c) disseminate knowledge about the institution's activities and promote understanding of the principle of academic freedom and the application of scientific and artistic methods and results, both in the teaching of students, in the institution's own activities and in public administration, cultural life and business and industry.

The Act's explicit emphasis on and acknowledgement of artistic activity has been crucial in enabling us in Norway to develop a strategy for art education based on core competence in these fields. Here, artistic research is put on an equal footing with other research and it is recognised that, through different methods and forms of presentation, they both produce new insight that is beneficial to society. This equality of status was established in the University and University Colleges Act already in 1995. The upgrading of the former arts and crafts colleges and art academies to national university colleges during the 1980s made it necessary to formulate new relevant goals. As a result of the university college reform in the mid-1990s, less comprehensive educational programmes were merged, as in the case of the establishment of the National Academies of the Arts in Bergen and Oslo in 1996. Others were incorporated into bigger existing entities, for example Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, which became part of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and the Grieg Academy, which became part of the University of Bergen. This reform also contributed to new requirements being defined in relation to institutionalisation, professionalisation and goal attainment.

There is a long-standing tradition in Norwegian art education institutions for a large proportion of the artistic staff to have the qualifications required of an associate professor or professor, and the institutions have for many years given professors and associate professors opportunities for professional development through their own artistic work. The developments in the 1990s helped to promote a more discursive institutional culture rather than an individualised, and at times privatised, approach to members of staff's own artistic work. At that time, a stronger focus on theory and reflection also emerged in Norwegian art education institutions, stimulated by contact with international institutions where these aspects had been given greater focus. Today, the institutions are aware of their responsibility to contribute to innovative artistic work through adopting a critical perspective that is purposeful and articulated, and they realise that, from an

institutional perspective, artistic research must be more than the sum of individual works or exhibitions.

## **Artistic research - the artist as researcher**

The term artistic research was coined in order to describe work at the forefront of higher art education. In Norway, the term '*kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid*' was chosen for artistic research – literally translated, it means artistic development work – in order to avoid the Norwegian term for research (*forskning*), which it was felt was still too closely associated with the traditional understanding of research.

Internationally, many terms have been used to describe corresponding activity, depending on the history and policies of the countries in question. In Sweden, the authorities now advocate using the literal term '*konstnärlig forskning*' for artistic research. In English, the term 'artistic research' has come to be most used, a trend that was strengthened by the establishment of the international web-based *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* in 2010.

Artistic research is conducted on the basis of and through artistic practice, and it is thereby based on approaches and experiences that are specific to this perspective. One of the most important early references for the phenomenon is from 1994, when Christopher Frayling, then rector of the Royal College of Art, introduced a distinction between 'research *into* art, research *through* art or research *for* art' (Frayling, 1993/1994). Here, *research into* is understood as art history/theoretical research, *research through* as something the artist him or herself is in a position to engage in, and *research for* as technical development work in materials and tools. In *research through art*, it is the artist's distinctive experience and reflection that is communicated. Recognising *research through art* challenges the traditional division of labour whereby artists produce art and art historians and other theoreticians talk and write about art and are those who engage in research.

Research through art is not intended to turn artists into theoreticians. What the painter or dancer can contribute is something different from what someone who studies their work can tell us. Nor is 'the reflective artist' who thinks, talks and writes a new phenomenon. Many artists are very well-versed in philosophy, art theory, history, social science and politics and use this knowledge as an integral part of the artistic process.

## **A doctorate in art?**

Based on the educational developments I have described above, the relationship between science and art was much debated in Norway and other countries throughout the 1990s. These debates also encompassed the issue of establishing PhD programmes in art, which was a logical consequence of more education at a higher level. In the UK, Finland and Sweden, for example, it became possible to take a doctorate based to a greater or lesser extent on art, but still grounded in the philosophy of science and within the framework of established research programmes. In Norway, Oslo School of Architecture and Design consciously recruited artists to its doctoral programme from the mid-1990s onwards. Both here and in many of the international programmes, the relationship between scientific and artistic methods was far from clear, which was also the case as regards qualifications for admission and evaluation criteria. 'A grounding in philosophy of science can't do any harm', was an opinion often voiced in defence of these programmes. However, many art education institutions came to the conclusion that using

philosophy of science as the basis for artistic work was fundamentally mistaken, even though it was interesting in itself. There were also grounds for concern that these programmes were not promoting the recruitment and development of strong artistic talent.

Two extensive studies on education, on visual art and music, respectively, were carried out under the auspices of the then Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs (1999). They pointed to the need to establish relevant doctorates in these fields. A working group appointed by Bergen National Academy of the Arts, Oslo National Academy of the Arts and the Norwegian Academy of Music, which I chaired, submitted a proposal to the ministry in 2000 outlining a common national programme. The working group had familiarised itself with the situation internationally, in the UK, among other countries, where it was easy to find examples of artistic values not being given sufficient space within a scholarly framework. But British institutions and key persons also represented pronounced artistic attitudes and experiences that provided great inspiration for the working group, and the following quote was used in the introduction to the group's recommendation:

Art and design practices are intellectual pursuits in their own right not requiring translation to other terms in order to have sense and coherence.  
Art and design works embody 'meaning' through their interior symbolic languages and syntax (formal organisation).  
Art and design works embody 'meaning' through their discursive relationship to other works in their field and their corresponding cultural positions.  
Art and design works can be read by those trained in the subject in the same way that, for example, mathematicians read mathematics or philosophers read philosophy.  
(Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London)  
( 'Proposal for a programme for artistic competence development in art education institutions', 2000).

The working group proposed the establishment of 'an artistic competence development programme on a level with and based on the model of the organised doctoral programmes'. It went on to say: 'The working group envisages considerable problems in connection with the establishment of an artistic competence development programme within the framework of a doctorate, and it therefore proposes that, for the time being at least, an independent programme be established that is not linked to a degree.' ('Proposal for a programme for artistic competence development in art education institutions', 2000).

## **The Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme - a success story**

The framework conditions for artistic research in Norway achieved a breakthrough in 2003, when the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme was established and six research fellows were admitted the same year. It was and is an interdisciplinary programme that included music, film, performative arts, design and visual art.

Funding for the Research Fellowship Programme was included as a separate item in the national budget, and Bergen National Academy of the Arts was appointed operator of the programme. An interdisciplinary Steering Committee was appointed, consisting of members with associate professor or professor qualifications in the arts. The Ministry of Education and Research's clearly formulated motive for supporting the programme was to develop an artistic alternative *on a par with* the already established doctoral programmes. For the time being, *on a par with* means that

research fellows whose projects achieve a pass grade are recognised as having associate professor competence in the field to which the project relates – but they are not awarded a formal doctorate. In this context it is the Steering Committee that has the formal overriding academic responsibility, on behalf of the participating institutions.

One or more artistic works and a critical reflection in an elective format constitute the equivalent of the thesis in a PhD programme. The objective is worded as follows in Section 1 of the Regulations for the programme:

To accomplish the programme, the research fellow shall produce an independent body of work of a high international standard. The research fellow shall also study theory and method in depth in order to acquire greater depth and breadth of knowledge in his/her own field, while at the same time placing the discipline in a broader context. Through the programme, the research fellow shall also gain experience in communicating and teaching at a high level in his/her field. The programme shall build new networks for the development of knowledge and competence as well as promoting qualified and critical debate at art education institutions and in society at large. (Regulations for the Research Fellowship Programme, 2010)

Today, the following art education institutions can apply to have research fellows admitted to the programme: Bergen Academy of Art and Design (formerly Bergen National Academy of the Arts), Oslo National Academy of the Arts, the Norwegian Academy of Music, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology – Trondheim Academy of Fine Art and the Department of Music, the University of Bergen – Department of Music (Grieg Academy), the University of Stavanger – Department of Music and Dance, the University of Agder – Department of Music, Lillehammer University College – the Norwegian Film School, Østfold University College – the Norwegian Theatre Academy, and the University of Tromsø – Faculty of Fine Arts. These are institutions whose main objective is to provide education in professional artistic practice and where artistic research forms the primary basis for the education offered. Appointments and promotions of artistic staff are made on the basis of an assessment of artistic qualifications. Other institutions can apply for admission to the programme if they have an equivalent artistic basis.

So far, literature as an art form has not been included, because education in creative writing has a different historical tradition. It is only in recent years that a separate education in creative writing has been available to authors – the creative writing academies – and they do not yet offer bachelor and master's programmes as the other institutions do.

Aspiring research fellows apply through one of the institutions. The Steering Committee is responsible for admission. Those who are accepted for the programme are employed by the institution, are assigned a supervisor by the institution and are attached to the academic environment there during their fellowship period. The programme organises two joint gatherings every year for all the research fellows, supervisors and representatives of institutions, as well as a number of courses for research fellows. From 6 research fellows on start-up of the programme in 2003, there are now 45 active participants, 13 of whom are in different stages of their final assessment (as of 1 March 2012). In all, 67 research fellows are or have been attached to the programme, 20 of whom have passed. Even though valid statistics cannot be produced on the basis of such small numbers over such a short space of time, we register that most fellows complete their projects within the aquired time. A few projects have not been approved by the assessment committees in the final assessment and have either been withdrawn or reworked and submitted for re-assessment.

The peer review principle is the basis for admissions, supervision and assessment. The research fellows are followed up by a main supervisor and co-supervisors, a large proportion of whom are not Norwegians. The six-monthly gatherings for research fellows and supervisors have become established as important arenas and a resource bank for new contacts and references. The programme's activities have had a strong influence on the participating institutions through the work carried out on guidelines and criteria, and the exchange of international networks. The environments concerned are very small in the national context, and the use of an interdisciplinary organisation form was first proposed at the planning stage as a solution to the problem of ensuring sufficiently large groups of research fellows. As the interdisciplinary activities started up, however, this proved to have a valuable development potential that far exceeded its merely being a practical solution.

The Steering Committee carried out an evaluation of activities for the period 2003 to 2008 ('The National Artistic Research Fellowship Programme 2003-2008. A Presentation and Evaluation', 2009). The evaluation primarily confirmed that the initiative must be continued. The Steering Committee recommended increasing both the number of research fellowships and the funds available for implementation of the project. Some more specific development areas were also highlighted, such as developing a format for critical reflection, focus on the institutions' areas of responsibility, and work towards achieving PhD status.

The Steering Committee is now working on developing a common part of the programme that is in line with the qualification framework's learning outcomes for the third level, the PhD level. There will be a stronger focus on promoting understanding of artistic research and critical reflection through the establishment of a number of mandatory research fellow seminars during the first half of the fellowship period. Artistic research in the international context, critical reflection, quality and criteria relating to the different projects will also be on the agenda. The seminars started in autumn 2011, and they have the potential to become artistic powerhouses that the institutions can engage in dialogue with and benefit from.

After these adjustments, the programme will be able to document that the structure is in accordance with the qualification framework's requirements for the third level. On this basis, the Steering Committee takes the view that completing and passing the research fellowship programme must result in a PhD, and it will work towards this goal in consultation with the institutions involved. We note that the Norwegian model represented by the research fellowship programme has attracted interest and even envy from international colleagues because it is so clearly focused on outstanding artistic results and because its interdisciplinary profile seems to produce results.

## **What do the research fellows do?**

To give some examples of what the research fellows actually do, I will describe the topics for a few of the projects:

**Identity Design for Geographical Defined Areas** (Linda Lien, Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Department of Design)

This project explores new ways of finding and communicating a place's visual identity through cooperation with the municipality of Kvam in Hardanger. The local inhabitants are an important

resource in connection with the work. The project has evolved during the process to become highly critical of 'branding' as superficial visual design work.

**'Being the Director' - Maintaining your Artistic Vision While Swimming with Sharks** (Trygve A. Diesen, the Norwegian Film School, Lillehammer University College)

How can a film director maintain and develop his/her own artistic vision in connection with film production, which is highly commercialised and involves collaboration with many different parties with different agendas? The project includes documenting and discussing the research fellow's own work over three years, as well as interviews with leading international directors who have a strong artistic signature.

**Calligraphies** (Pedro Javier Gomez Egana, Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Department of Fine Art)

This project explores movement relating to forces such as the law of gravity, repetition and catastrophe. Visual art/ performance, including text and sound material and drawn animation.

**The electric violin in the digital room** (Victoria Johnson, the Norwegian Academy of Music)

This project expands the area of application of the electric violin using computers, various computer programmes and sensor technology, enabling the instrument to control sound and video. Software such as Live and Max/MSP/Jitter is used that can handle sound and images in real time. The research fellow is a performer, but she is collaborating with a number of composers who write music for the instrument – a form of collaboration that could lead to a change in the traditional division of roles between performer and composer.

**The Acoustic Act - A new music theatre** (Morten Cranner, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, the Academy of Theatre)

An interdisciplinary exploration based on the research fellow's background as a theatre director, musician, actor and dramatist – strategies for creating musical theatre in which the actors play music and act in a play with the help of sound-producing scenography.

**Second-Hand Stories - the 'found' object in contemporary material based art** (Caroline Slotte, Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Department of Specialised Art)

What role do the objects in our surroundings play in the continuous construction of a life history? The project explores the use of second-hand objects as materials in contemporary art. The result will be a number of reworked ceramic 'found objects' related to memories of everyday life.

All the research fellowship projects are described on the programme's website:

[www.kunststipendiat.no](http://www.kunststipendiat.no).

## **Sensuous Knowledge - creating a tradition**

In 2004, Bergen National Academy of the Arts organised a conference that proved to be the first in a series of six: *Sensuous Knowledge - a conference on artistic research*. We invited participants to an international arena for the discussion of ongoing projects, both to learn more about developments in the field elsewhere in the world and to contribute to qualifying the discussion form itself. But would many enough colleagues with relevant backgrounds be willing to devote time and money to a three-day *working conference* on this topic? The result was overwhelming. Far more than the 60 we had space for wished to participate. After three days of open and systematic sharing and discussion of project goals, methods and results, the response was

unusually positive – and it continued to be so during the six years in which we held these conferences. A highly structured and binding form of group work combined with an open and inclusive approach to the issues clearly met a need at the time. The participants during the period 2004 to 2009 represented 85 different institutions from 14 countries, and around 130 projects were presented. The topics at the conferences reflected the ambitions of highlighting and specifying important issues:

Creating a Tradition  
Aesthetic Practice and Aesthetic Insight  
Developing a Discourse  
Context, Concept, Creativity  
Questioning Qualities  
Reflection, Relevance, Responsibility.

Six conferences and, so far, seven publications have resulted from this project, which was generously supported by the Research Council of Norway's Strategic University College Projects, 2007-2009. I write 'so far', because the Academy is considering whether to revive *Sensuous Knowledge*, and because work is currently ongoing on even more publications. The *Sensuous Knowledge* conferences were process-based. Key notes and other important contributions were disseminated through the publications. We wanted to use both artists and theoreticians as writers in the publications, and we succeeded in that, although we found that artists' contributions often took a long time coming, precisely because this form of expression is so complex.

Because art education is offered in such small environments, it should be obvious that the frame of reference needs to be international, and the Academy succeeded in demonstrating this by getting international colleagues to come to Norway. In addition to the Research Fellowship Programme, *Sensuous Knowledge* was the most high-profile and dynamic forum for artistic research in Norway during this period, and it achieved a unique international reputation in circles that are interested in artistic research, and came to be associated with qualities such as open, dynamic, professional, critical, interdisciplinary and stimulating. The conferences contributed to network building – it was here, for example, that the idea for *JAR* arose among some of the participants.

## **Where does reflection come in and when is it important?**

Whether a clear dividing line should be drawn between artistic work and artistic research is a very complex discussion. An inclusive interpretation was formulated by an expert committee appointed by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (The Jørgensen Committee), which submitted its report 'Emphasis on artistic research' ('Vekt på kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid (KU)' in 2007). It defined the concept as follows:

Artistic research covers artistic processes that lead to a publicly accessible artistic product. This process can also include an explicit reflection on the development and presentation of the artistic product.

In line with the above quote from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, the report contains a detailed description of how artistic activity of a high standard entails an implicit reflective process – how advanced reflection is continuously included in the creative process.

This is a line of argument that addresses experiences and examples of artistic research from the 1990s in which the artist was first supposed to produce and then reflect on his or her own work – like a kind of prosaic afterthought that did not appear to contribute to greater insight into the distinctive nature of artistic processes. The report contains a well-formulated argument for not splitting art and reflection in a way that removes the reflection aspect from artistic work. This touches on big questions about the nature of art, work methods and integrity – questions that are too big to be discussed extensively in an official report.

The work of The Jørgensen Committee was based on the understanding that all artistic activity contains elements of artistic research, but it also raised the issue of how art education institutions, through discursive activity, debate and criticism, have a need for verbalised reflections in advanced and relevant formats. In this context, the requirement for critical reflection must be formulated more specifically because it is a necessary element in teaching and discussion. This is where the Research Fellowship Programme comes in. In the programme, it is the research fellow's artistic results and critical reflection combined that constitute the artistic research. It is not stated anywhere that the critical reflection has to be in writing. Section 5.2 of the Regulations for the Research Fellowship Programme, on the other hand, defines four criteria for the critical reflection:

With regard to the artistic result of the work, the candidate must submit:  
His/her personal artistic position/work in relation to the chosen subject area nationally and internationally;  
How the project contributes to professional development of the subject area;  
Critical reflection on the process (artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and professional environments etc.);  
Critical reflection on results (self-evaluation in relation to the revised project description).  
The results of the critical reflection shall be available to the public and of a permanent nature. The candidate shall choose the appropriate medium and form.  
(Regulations for the Research Fellowship Programme, 2010)

In the Research Fellowship Programme, experimentation with the form of the critical reflection is actively encouraged in order to investigate which forms can best communicate the reflection in each individual project. A video essay has been used as well as a radio programme, but much remains to be tried out in this context. Perhaps the research fellows' fear of failure in relation to the assessment serves to put a damper on their willingness to try new forms? The nature and value of the reflection in relation to artistic expression is a crucial issue in the development of the programme. In a broader perspective, researchers, practitioners and thinkers from fields other than art will also have a lot to contribute to the discussion on reflection.

Internationally, we see signs that the appreciation of specifically artistic forms of dissemination is increasing and being taken seriously in connection with artistic research. The *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* describes its mission as follows:

With the aim of displaying and documenting practice in a manner that respects artists' modes of presentation, JAR abandons the traditional journal article format and offers its contributors a dynamic online canvas where text can be woven together with image, audio and video material. These research documents called 'expositions' provide a unique reading experience while fulfilling the expectations of scholarly dissemination.

Ongoing discussions about artistic research and critical reflection serve to keep this area open. *JAR* expresses this optimistic approach in an editorial statement:

Not knowing what exactly artistic research is, however, is a good thing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reminds us of artistic research's transdisciplinary character, which makes it difficult to predict where and under what circumstances such activity might be located, adding to a sense of institutional openness within the academy and between academic and non-academic sectors. Secondly, it emphasises artistic research's transpersonal character, which applies not only to its discourse amongst a community of practitioners, but also to its relationship to materials, forms and contexts. Thirdly, it enhances artistic research's transformative nature, making the experience of a change of knowledge count, even as the mode through which this change was evoked remains undefined. And finally, it poses an artistic and intellectual challenge, since, due to the lack of approved methods and criteria, no external scaffold can replace the work that is required to inform others that, and how, research has taken place in a given proposition. (Schwab, 2011)

## **The Project Programme – small, but important!**

So far, this article has mainly focused on the role of research fellows in artistic research because the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme has been the institutional representative of the concept since 2003, representing relatively extensive resources in a completely new framework. The research fellows are affiliated both to an institution and to the common programme, but what about the associate professors and professors – what framework conditions apply to them? They work in accordance with the individual institutions' own strategies for artistic research and their own models for the allocation of time and the institutions' project funds. Until 2010, we did not have any external public funding of artistic research over and above the institutions' own funds. The Research Council of Norway has no responsibility for this field. The art education institutions have complained to the ministry and the Storting about this lack of resources for many years.

The task of The Jørgensen Committee was to investigate whether performance-based funding – state funding of institutions on the basis of quantifiable performance indicators – was feasible for artistic research, in a corresponding manner to other research. The committee unanimously recommended not establishing a quantitative counting system for this field. Artistic grounds were given for this recommendation, namely that it is desirable to have many different channels for the publication of artistic research, that the establishment of a credible hierarchy between these channels would be a dubious exercise and that experimentation with forms of presentation is imperative in the context of artistic activity. The committee recommended two measures aimed at putting artistic research on an equal footing financially and competitively with other research, and these measures have been followed up by the Ministry of Education and Research: financial recompense for research fellows in art whose projects have been completed and passed (as for other research fellows) and the establishment of national project funding – an art education counterpart to the Research Council of Norway.

The Project Programme was thus included in the national budget from 2010 with funds dedicated to artistic research. The goal is expressed as follows:

The Project Programme intends to initiate and implement Norwegian artistic research projects of high international standard.

The programme intends to increase the understanding of - and develop and challenge the concept of - artistic research, in dialogue with relevant national and international environments.

On its own initiative, the programme shall initiate measures to promote dialogues on artistic research.

The implementation of the programme's profile shall contribute to develop and promote international debate on artistic research through its projects and meeting points.

('Guidelines for the Project Programme', 2011)

The plan is to introduce national interdisciplinary competition for project funding on the basis of applications, with higher education institutions as project owners, possibly in collaboration with others. The criteria are as follows:

In this context, artistic research should include the following dimensions:

A solid basis imbedded in artistic practise;

Create new artistic perspectives and contribute to new understanding within the arts;

Provide critical reflection on content and context;

Articulate and reflect on methods and work processes;

Promote critical dialogue within one's own profession and with other relevant professions;

Share relevant professional knowledge with the public sphere;

Be limited to a project format, based on a project description followed by public presentation of results.

('Guidelines for the Project Programme', 2011)

Based on calculations made by the Norwegian Academy of Music in which the number of academic full-time equivalents in Norway is compared with the funds available to the Research Council of Norway, the number of art-based full-time equivalents should indicate start-up capital of around NOK 140 million. The annual allocation to the Project Programme from the Ministry of Education and Research started at NOK 2 million in 2010 and was increased to NOK 6 million from 2012. There is much catching up to do in terms of volume, however. But the establishment of the Programme has great symbolic value as an arena paralleling the Research Council of Norway. The funding has real importance to the projects that are awarded funds, and the application processes, awards, implementation and joint forums such as conferences all contribute to new discussion and development.

The Project Programme and the Research Fellowship Programme are now under a joint umbrella: The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, under the direction of the same Steering Committee. Guidelines and criteria have been adopted in close cooperation with the institutions involved, and the allocation of funds started in autumn 2011.

## **Quality, documentation, relevance – no shortage of challenges**

In Norway, artistic research is now a central part of the institutions' responsibilities and something for which we are accountable, both to our owners and to society at large. There are requirements for strategies, plans for quality development and results. How do we know if we are better in 2011 than in 2010? I have described how the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

has contributed to a focus on important challenges relating to methods, quality and reflection – but the institutions themselves must have a firm grasp of the criteria for the quality of their activities. This is no small challenge in relation to art.

New requirements concerning tasks and results have to a certain extent changed the role of artistic staff. In job interviews at Bergen Academy of Art and Design, candidates are asked about their ambitions and results in relation to artistic research far more than used to be the case. The focus on teaching must be balanced by a focus on artistic research. Active and critical contributions to artistic discourse are expected from artistic staff. The competition for funding for artistic research is tough at times, and it is those who manage to put their work in a project framework who are rewarded. In a hectic work context, staff can perhaps see artistic research as yet another duty, but at the same time it represents the foundation for the rest of their activities and has an attractive potential in relation to important arenas and discussions. Good strategies, good planning and good institutional infrastructure are crucial to support constructive activity. Interesting artistic projects cannot be based on structure and finances alone, however, there has to be a spark, inspiration and commitment. Fortunately, the art education institutions have no shortage of staff who are dedicated to their field.

The introduction of the third level, the PhD level, through the Bologna process means that greater emphasis is placed on formal education and competence. While there is still a long way to go before a doctorate is the only way to qualify as an associate professor or professor of art in Norway, the emphasis on educational background and on assessments of formal competence will increase, and those who wish to work in the field of art education will have to conform if they are to succeed. The Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme is based on a rational view of how a high artistic level can be achieved: with a good basis and selected in competition with others, a result can be achieved through unremitting work and organised opposition (supervision, presentations and discussions). In a longer perspective, the framework for artistic research can contribute to highlighting a change in the role of the artist, from genius to dogged researcher. This involves some important challenges. Will these researchers thereby no longer be able to express themselves in unique and ground-breaking ways? Will they no longer be as willing to take risk? Will the reflection requirement result in predictable mainstream texts or in new and interesting material? How will the artistic results be evaluated in relation to the ability to reflect? The art institutions have a big responsibility for defining the framework in a manner that best serves the field.

Peer reviews are unstable – but the principle is sound enough. Quality can be framed through different criteria, but someone will have to exercise discretionary judgement on the basis of the criteria. From the UK, we obtained the three criteria that have been used there in formal research assessments: Significant, Original and Rigorous. Personally, I am very enthusiastic about the latter. Rigorousness is important in relation to both the form and content of a project: purposefulness, precision, assessment, selection and presentation.

What happens to the results of artistic research? An exhibition or a performance is by nature transient, and any written documentation that does not include the visual or auditive elements is for the most part inadequate. The time, place and extent of an event can be reported, and the surface (the scenery, the sound, the wall) can be documented, but this does not always include the multidimensional qualities, nor the audience's overall experience. It is in this context that the ambition for *JAR* is important and exciting. There are many challenges relating to documentation forms, and the development of institutional, national and international archives has only just

started. At the same time, the artist's presence in the moment, time and place has an intrinsic value that is still unique.

As a phenomenon, artistic research belongs to the art education institutions and is conducted in connection with them. But the results must concern the whole art field – they must be distinctive artistic contributions. Do they reach an audience, how are they presented and discussed? Relations between the relatively well-regulated art education institutions and the various arts scenes can be tense and inconstant and they are governed by many complex mechanisms. If two parallel realities develop – within and outside the world of education – artistic research will become isolated and, at worst, irrelevant.

My subjective conclusion is that the institutional consolidation of artistic research has contributed to vitality and quality, and it has a great potential for further work. People with artistic competence have sufficient influence on the establishment of the new framework. The institutions' ability and desire to address the challenges of contextualising, formulating content and intentions and to ask critical questions have been strengthened in a manner that benefits the artistic results. Interdisciplinary activity has challenged the conventions of the different disciplines in a very productive way, and we can already see the results of this in new collaborative constellations. Necessary questions are being asked about quality – continually.

## **Presentation of the author**

Nina Malterud was rector of Bergen National Academy of the Arts (now Bergen Academy of Art and Design) (KHiB) from 2002 to 2010, and she has been a member of the Steering Committee for the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme since 2003. She has a background in art/ceramics and was professor of ceramics at KHiB from 1994. She was responsible for KHiB's Sensuous Knowledge Project, 2004-2009, which, with support from the Research Council of Norway, focused on artistic research through international conferences and publications. She is currently working on an exhibition to be held in 2012.

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