

# Doing Artistic Research: A Collaboratory

*symposium on artistic research practices*



March 20, 2018

Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy,  
and the Public Sphere

Faculty of Arts, Zuyd Hogeschool Maastricht



The symposium was a collaboration between Zuyd Hogeschool (Faculty of the Arts Maastricht, Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy, and the Public Sphere), Maastricht University (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering), Van Eyck, the Maastricht Centre for Arts and Culture, Conservation and Heritage (MACCH), and the recently established Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM). The symposium is made possible by het platform KUNST ≈ ONDERZOEK.



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*Ruth Benschop opens the symposium.*

# Introduction

Ruth Benschop, lector Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy and the Public Sphere

How can artistic research be done? What sensitivities, methodologies, and collaborations emerge in practices of artistic research? On March 20th, a symposium on artistic research took place at the Faculty of the Arts, Maastricht. Showcasing a variety of concrete projects, the symposium aimed to articulate some characteristics of a typical Maastricht style of doing artistic research. The symposium was organised by the Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy and the Public Sphere (Zuyd Hogeschool) in collaboration with Maastricht University (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities and Sciences) and Van Eyck Academy.

The symposium was part of a process of thinking through a Maastricht graduate school for Artistic Research. Zuyd Hogeschool, Maastricht University and the Van Eyck are currently investigating the possibilities of establishing MERIAN: Maastricht Experimental Research In and through the Arts Network. MERIAN is a Maastricht-based environment for PhD candidates in Maastricht-style artistic research. Mobilizing the powers and fragilities of artistic and scientific practices, MERIAN encourages innovative methods and styles of empirical research, renegotiating relationships between existing cultural and knowledge institutions and addresses urgent matters of societal concern.

This symposium and the connected work being done to try and establish MERIAN as a collaborative environment for Maastricht style artistic research at the PhD level fits with the aims and habits of the Research Centre for Arts, Autonomy and the Public Sphere (Lectoraat AOK). This centre emphasizes the problem based and contextual nature of artistic research and aims first, to combine ethnographic strategies drawn from the pragmatic tradition of Science and Technology Studies (STS) with the exploratory and embodied modes of research belonging to artistic practice (see for instance Benschop 2009, 2014, Benschop, Peters & Lemmens 2014, Peters 2009, Peters, Benschop & Mineur 2013, Spronck 2016). The centre develops artistic research as an experimental, intimate ethnography in which systematic sensitivity for the world is fundamental (see Benschop 2015, Coumans et.al. 2018). It thus stimulates work that explores the riches hidden between opposing clichés about art, society, politics, academia and research. It does so to form a practice based and problem oriented approach to artistic research, developed in close conversation with a variety of societal, artistic and academic partners. The centre works in close collaboration with the different artistic disciplines (BA and MA) within the faculty: theatre and performance, fine arts and design, classic and jazz music, computer media design and visual communication, (interior) architecture, i-arts, scientific illustration and arts education. It collaborates in many ways, and specifically through the format of the research studio,

that have been developed since 2012 (see for recent examples: Benschop 2017, Hoofwijk 2017, Kroese et.al. 2017). Such projects are aimed at developing the craft of artistic research and complement ordinary arts education in their aim to enhance students' analytic and reflexive skills, as well as their relevance within the public sphere.

The symposium showcased a wide range of projects. PhD candidate Marlies Vermeulen (Dear Huntern & Zuyd) for example presented her fieldwork which she conducts from a tiny container at different public places. She argued for a new to-be established discipline (cartopology) that combines architecture, map making, and anthropology. The philosopher Ruud Hendriks (UM) showed how he had to re-think and re-train his body, in order to conduct research as a clown in dementia care practices. Peter Peters and Veerle Spronck (MCICM) addressed the challenges when experimenting with innovative classical music practices and highlighted the need for both researchers and musicians to address audiences in alternative ways. The audience was invited to participate in an experiment, as PhD candidate Ulrike Scholtes (UvA / Zuyd) allowed them to experience different techniques of feeling one's body through multiple exercises – thereby showing how she mobilizes and attunes her body in her own research. In an interview-intermezzo, the audience learned how theatre-makers Mayke Roels (Het Laagland) and Christophe Aussems (Het Nieuwstedelijk) grew into artistic researchers in the ITEM project Productive Borders (a collaboration with the Lectoraat AOK). In the following lively panel discussion, invited artistic researchers and scholars from different Dutch institutes reflected upon the shared characteristics of the presented projects.



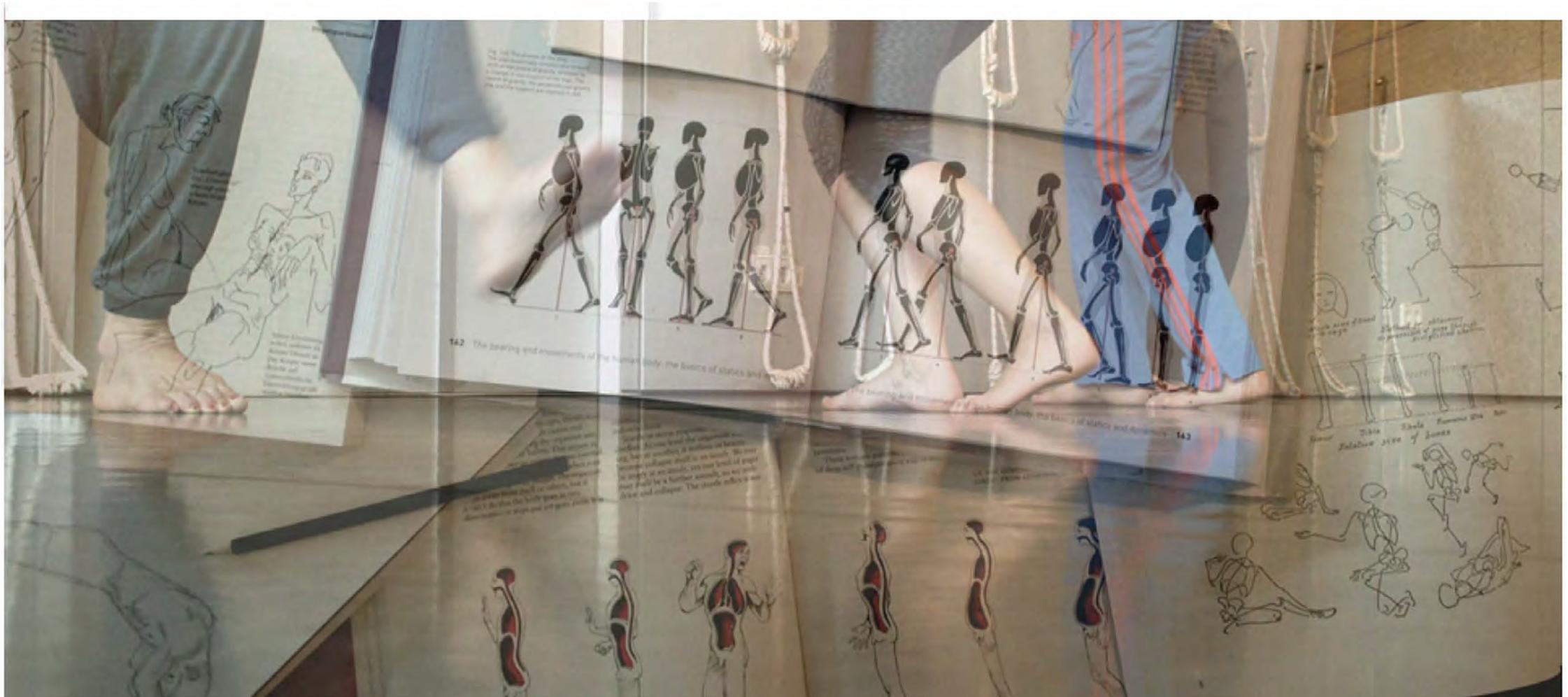
*Clowning in practice.*

After the symposium, we asked the members of the panel to write about what they heard, saw, and did during the symposium. This resulted in this small booklet, where you can read about the Maastricht-style of artistic research from four different perspectives. Through this publication, we hope to contribute to the discourse on and development of artistic research nationally, as stimulated by Platform KUNST ≈ ONDERZOEK.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is the second public contribution to this development initiated by this platform. In the summer issue of FORUM+, three contributions were published reflecting on the symposium and exhibition *Artistic Research in the North* (see Coumans et.al. 2018)



One of the slides of the presentation by Ulrike Scholtes.



*Flora Lysen is a PhD candidate at the Mediastudies department of Amsterdam and also program coordinator for ARIAS, the Amsterdam Research Institute for the Arts and Sciences. In her thesis, she examines the rise of public demonstrations of brain science in the twentieth century, particularly the use of new media (film, television, exhibitions) to exhibit the "brain at work". Before starting her PhD, Flora worked as a curator, researcher and teacher for several cultural institutions, including the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin and the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague.*

# A north-south divide in artistic research land? Notes on articulating methodologies-in-the-making

Flora Lysen, PhD candidate at University of Amsterdam

Is there a north-south divide in the Dutch landscape of artistic research? In November 2017, Groningen University and the Research Centre Art & Society launched a vision of 'Artistic research in the North', while in March 2018, MERIAN presented a southern, 'Maastricht-style' of 'doing artistic research'.<sup>1</sup> In Groningen, invited lecturer Tim Ingold argued we should be wary of the current trendiness of ethnography, the collapse of anthropology into ethnography and the combination of art and ethnography, which, according to Ingold, "generally lead(s) to bad art and bad ethnography."<sup>2</sup> In Maastricht, in contrast, Ruth Benschop foregrounded a vision of artistic research with an important emphasis on "methodologies-in-the-making," developing a "rigorous sensitivity in practice" much inspired by ethnography and STS.

Of course, to picture artistic research in Maastricht and Groningen as pro- and contra ethnography is a false opposition, which would only lead to incessant discussions about expanding notions of the ethnographic and the anthropological.<sup>3</sup> Ingold and Benschop are in fact much in agreement about what good art and artistic research have in common with good anthropology/ethnography: as Ingold puts it, to absorb "into your way of working a perceptual acuity attuned to the materials that have captioned your attention (...) science when it becomes art is both personal and charged with feeling" or, as Benschop summarized during the introduction of the MERIAN symposium, artistic research with ethnographic sensibility emphasizes experimentation, embodiment in researching, a thinking with all the senses and a self-reflexive creation of methods in doing fieldwork.<sup>4</sup> In this vein of thinking, as Benschop emphasizes, there is no need to discuss what artistic research is in an ideal-typical way, but one can only understand artistic research through the examination of particular practices, i.e. the 'doing' of artistic research. Both Ingold's and Benschop's recent talks are evidence of two converging movements in the current research landscape: the expansion of the ethnography turn in contemporary art and a sensory turn in anthropology.<sup>5</sup>

Here, I want to make a brief observation in relation this exciting sensuous approach to artistic research, spurred by various presentations and discussions at MERIAN. If we consider artistic research in proximity to methods in (sensory) anthropology/ethnography, and we adhere to a process-oriented conception of ‘research through art,’ this means that artistic research, rather than describing, explaining or abstractly conceptualizing a phenomenon, can be viewed as skillfully enacting the values and qualities of a situation, thus transforming experience, heightening our sensibility and opening up possibilities for action.<sup>6</sup> Yet, if we understand art and artistic research as enactment of a process of knowing rather than accumulation of knowledge, this raises the question whether it is possible to articulate how artistic research transforms experience, to articulate what new qualities have become sensible, and in turn, what type of articulation suits artistic research.<sup>7</sup> In other words, what forms of mediation, verbalization and articulation are necessary and fitting to understand the doing of artistic research, to learn from its force?

Some have argued that the ways of knowing of artistic research can and should not be made explicit, first because artistic research must resist the academic system of accountability based on ‘writing up’ your research to produce knowledge, and secondly because the mode of inquiry of artistic research escapes language, it is ultimately ineffable. In this line of reasoning, art’s knowing can only be articulated in and through the work, and such articulations can and should be distinguished from writing about the work. Accordingly, the knowing of artistic research is presented like a delicate pattern in the air, an ephemeral phenomenon that evaporates as soon as we open our mouth and start to describe it. I think this is a poor and falsely dichotomous image of the relation between the doing of artistic research and writing with, against and about the way it knows. As Ruth Benschop puts it: “sensitivity to and exploration of forms of knowing and ways of making research public are an intrinsic part of substantial argumentation,” as has been emphasized by scholars in cultural studies, science and technology studies and anthropology.<sup>8</sup> Writing too, is an important form of knowing; writing too, is a practice, one that shouldn’t muffle but enact the sensibility of a particular artistic research.<sup>9</sup> We need as much an experimental approach to (artistic) research as we do to articulating its ‘doing’, in fact, we need to see writing as an integral part of a sensuous practice of artistic research (which does not mean that writing needs to be part of every artist’s practice).

During the MERIAN symposium, artist Marlies Vermeulen described the strange situation of having to apply for an artistic PhD through the traditional academic formats and procedures for application. While her way of working is a process of participant-observation in tandem with exquisitely designed maps and drawn instruments, university regulations forced her to just ‘fill in the form,’ one text box at a time. Such a potential mismatch between ‘forms,’ I would say, is an integral part of a process of research – the academic world has many ‘forms,’ both traditional and experimental, and so does the world of art. If we encourage a view of “methodologies-in-the-making,” than our use of - and reflection on ‘forms’ should also be an integral part of it. The challenge of course, is that such negotiations of form take place within a hierarchical structure of power, in which the danger, as Lucy Cotter puts it in a recent publication on artistic research, is that “academic protocol often drown out art’s sensibilities, while claiming interest in art’s epistemological possibilities.”<sup>10</sup>

This challenging question of how to publish, mediate and articulate artistic research has of course been taken up by the many experimental publication platforms for artistic research (such as the artistic Research Catalogue) that have been established over the past decade.<sup>11</sup> I am excited about these experiments in the articulation of research and I think scholars associated with artistic research also have much to learn from adjacent debates on experimental publishing and writing in anthropology and ethnography.<sup>12</sup> In her introduction to the MERIAN symposium, Benschop referenced a 2011 article by Mol and colleagues, an ethnographic experiment on finger-tasting, which for Benschop serves as an excellent example of ‘methodologies-in-the-making’.<sup>13</sup> The article is also exemplary in the sense that writing practices, in this sensuous experiment, also become an integral part of the research and are themselves too, ‘in-the-making.’ The authors examine how “complexities, ambiguities, tensions and pleasures” can be kept alive by experimenting with new procedures of writing, such as the construction of an “author-composite,” a kind of writing assemblage through which authorship itself is subverted.<sup>14</sup>

While Mol has expressed concern over the scarcity (and even the decrease) of experimental styles of articulation in science studies, feminist scholarship and anthropology, other authors have instead described a proliferation of such experiments in the expanded field of ethnography (see for example, the experiments at Mattering Press or the Sensory Ethnography Lab).<sup>15</sup> Auto-ethnographic approaches to writing – such as those described by Ruud Hendriks during the MERIAN symposium - can fruitfully interface, for example, with sensory approaches to artistic research.<sup>16</sup> Not all artists have to become writers, but all artistic research should be concerned with the articulation of experimental processes of knowing. In that sense, it is interesting to see that the MERIAN symposium expanded its scope from thinking not only about the trajectory of PhD candidates in artistic research, but also about artistic research undertaken by other, heterogeneous configurations of groups of researchers and institutions, such as the “Artful Participation” project introduced by Veerle Spronck and Peter Peters. Within such research assemblages, positions of articulation may intersect, there is no need for a singular artist-writer-philosopher-ethnographer-poet, but artistic research takes place through hybrid amalgamations. Spronck referred to Tim Ingold’s useful concept of ‘correspondence’ to explain research as a situation of mutual responsiveness, as Ingold puts it, researchers “correspond with things in the process of formation rather than being informed by what has already been precipitated out,” as such, all researchers (including artistic researchers) have a more “humble profession,” not to represent a given reality but to “converge with artistic sensibility as a way of knowing in being.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 10 November 2017, Symposium 'Thought Things,' as part of Artistic Research in the North.. 20 March 2018, Symposium March 20th: 'Doing Artistic Research: A Collaboratory,' I would like to thank the organizers of the symposium for inviting me to this wonderful meeting ground.

<sup>2</sup> Ingold, Tim. "Art, Science and the Meaning of Research," 1–7. *Academie Minerva Groningen*, 2017. [https://www.hanze.nl/assets/kc-kunst--samenleving/image-in-context/Documents/Public/keynote%20Tim%20Ingold\\_symposium%20Thought%20Things\\_nov%202017.pdf](https://www.hanze.nl/assets/kc-kunst--samenleving/image-in-context/Documents/Public/keynote%20Tim%20Ingold_symposium%20Thought%20Things_nov%202017.pdf). 8.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the expanded notion of the ethnographic vis-à-vis art, see Grimshaw, Anna, and Amanda Ravetz. "The ethnographic turn – and after: a critical approach towards the realignment of art and anthropology." *Social Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (November 1, 2015): 418–34.

<sup>4</sup> Ingold, "Art, Science and the Meaning of Research," 7.

<sup>5</sup> As observed by Kris Rutten, see: Rutten, Kris, An van. Dienderen, and Ronald Soetaert. "Revisiting the Ethnographic Turn in Contemporary Art." *Critical Arts* 27, no. 5 (2013): 459–73, 461. "This is exemplified by anthropologists who are collaborating with artists, by artists who are creating projects generating anthropological insights, and by art projects that are produced as outcomes of ethnographic research."

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Henk. "Embodied Knowing through Art." In *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, 141–51. London & New York: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Henk Borgdorff's way of phrasing this question is by asking "is it possible to achieve a linguistic-conceptual articulation of the embedded, enacted and embodied content of artistic research?" Borgdorff, Henk. "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research." In *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, 44–63. London & New York: Routledge, 2010, 60. In this phrasing, I would object to the idea of 'content' that can somehow be extracted from a work.

<sup>8</sup> Benschop, Ruth. "Practicing the Research Catalogue." In *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*, edited by Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff, 105–16. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, 113. See also Benschop, Ruth. "STS on Art and the Art of STS: An Introduction." *Krisis: Tijdschrift Voor Actuele Filosofie*, no. 1 (2009): 1–4.

<sup>9</sup> The International Conference on Artistic Research (The Hague 28-29 April 2016) took this perceived dichotomy between artistic research and writing as a leading topic. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/portal/announcement?announcement=43>.

<sup>10</sup> Cotter, Lucy. "Reclaiming Artistic Research – First Thoughts..." *MaHKUscript. Journal of Fine Art Research* 2, no. 1 (December 14, 2017), 1.

<sup>11</sup> For a current overview see. Stone, S, L Redhead, and T Long. "An Annotated Bibliography and Webography of Sources Related to Practice Research. Canterbury: Centre for Practice Based Research in the Arts." 2017. Accessed May 5, 2018. <http://create.canterbury.ac.uk/16292/>. Such publication experiments are of course themselves part of demarcating what counts as artistic research, as Ruth Benschop has noted, the use of such formats is part of "(anti-, trans-, non-) discipline-in-the-making of artistic research." Benschop, "Practicing the Research Catalogue," 107.

<sup>12</sup> As Sarah Pinker argues, in sensory ethnography too, the question of articulation of knowing is a key concern and difficulty. Pink, Sarah. "Engaging the Senses in Ethnographic Practice." *The Senses and Society* 8, no. 3 (November 1, 2013): 261–67, 264.

<sup>13</sup> Mann, Anna, Annemarie Mol, Priya Satalkar, Amalinda Savirani, Nasima Selim, Malini Sur, and Emily Yates-Doerr. "Mixing Methods, Tasting Fingers: Notes on an Ethnographic Experiment." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 2011): 221–43.

<sup>14</sup> Mann, et al. "Mixing Methods, Tasting Fingers," 224.

<sup>15</sup> Mann, et al. "Mixing Methods, Tasting Fingers," 229. For an overview of experimental forms of publication and writing in anthropology, see Marcus, George E. "The Legacies of Writing Culture and the near Future of the Ethnographic Form: A Sketch." *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (August 1, 2012): 427–45. Wulff, Helena. "Introducing the Anthropologist as Writer, Across and Within Genres." In *The Anthropologist as Writer: Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Helena Wulff, 14–52. New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016. Mattering Press at: <https://www.matteringpress.org/>. Nakamura Karen. "Making Sense of Sensory Ethnography: The Sensual and the Multisensory." *American Anthropologist* 115, no. 1 (February 22, 2013): 132–35.

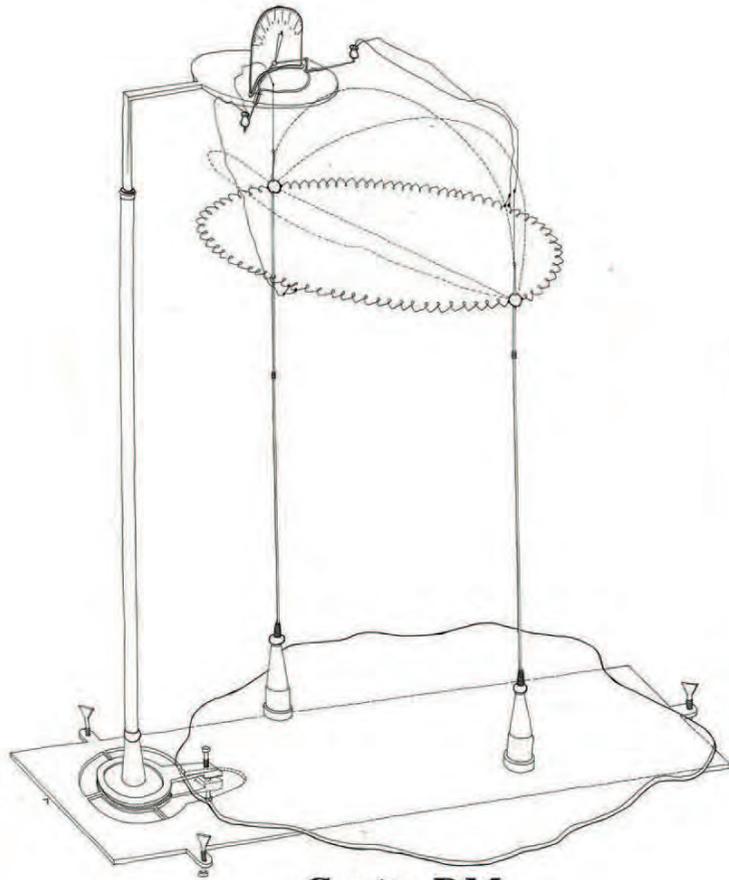
<sup>16</sup> Hendriks, Ruud. "Tackling Indifference—Clowning, Dementia, and the Articulation of a Sensitive Body." *Medical Anthropology* 31, no. 6 (November 1, 2012): 459–76, 462. "Analyzing how I became moved when becoming a miMakkus clown is thus a way to put into words what is usually largely passed over in silence between clown and resident, and between them and their surroundings." STS researchers have also long been involved in finding different ways of articulating, mediating, publicizing and writing about modes of inquiry, such as poetry, dance and science fiction. Law, John. "STS as Method." In *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, edited by Ulrike Felt, Rayvon Fouché, Clark A. Miller, and Laurel Smith-Doerr, 31–58. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016, 48. Ingold, "Art, Science and the Meaning of Research," 7.



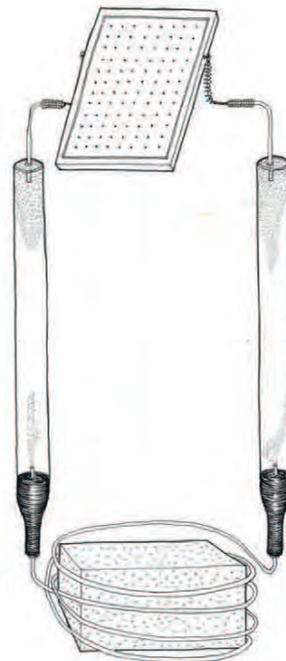
*The panel members. From left to right: Anke Coumans, Sissel Marie Tonn, Flora Lysen, and Christian Ersten.*

# CARTOPOLOGY

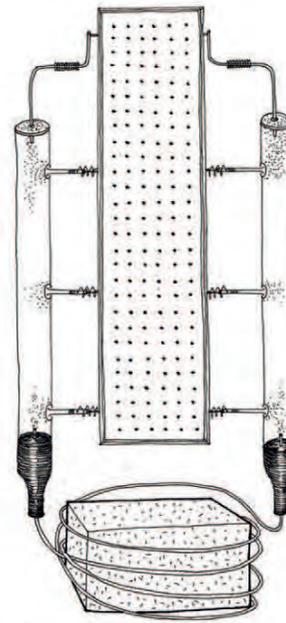
*PhD*, the field.



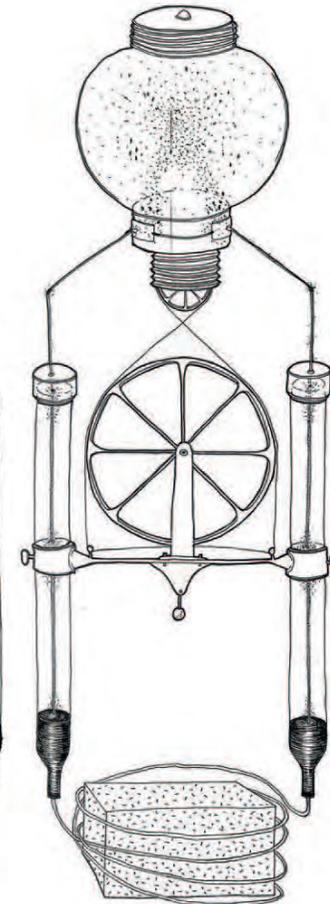
*Cogito DM*



*Cogito Rotem*



*Cogito Rotem 2.0*



*Cogito Cartopology*



*Sissel Marie Tonn is a Danish artist based in The Hague. She is the co-founder of the initiative Platform for Thought in Motion together with artist and frequent collaborator Jonathan Reus. Together with Flora Reznik they arrange reading groups and other events in The Hague, engaging artists with scholars in a mutual exchange of knowledge. She completed a master in Artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague in 2015. In 2016 she was the recipient of the Theodora Niemeijer prize for emerging female artists and in 2017 she was admitted to the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. Sissel's practices focuses on the role of the senses and modes of attention in perceiving environments undergoing change.*

# Careful scratching

Sissel Marie Tonn, artist at Van Eyck Academy Maastricht

During the symposium on Artistic Research I very much enjoyed the diversity of fields represented at the presentations. I felt that the aim of zooming in on practice, and not just artistic practice but rather the interdisciplinary approach to what 'artistic research' might mean across a variety of fields, was successful. This approach reminded me of the way my former tutor at the Artistic Research Master in the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, Sher Doruff, described Artistic Research for me when I first entered the master – as a scratching motion, where you go back, re-examine, try out different approaches to a concept, a situation, an idea, in order to understand its complex fabric of relations with the world.

For me the concept of artistic research makes the most sense in the interaction with other fields and other forms of knowledge. This interaction informs how the work I put into the world brings a different perspective on the themes I'm investigating. I believe that the artistic method and outcome is fundamentally different to that of other fields, and I believe that this difference is important in the discussion of the role of artistic research in the academy as well as in the university. As practices move towards more hybrid forms (and as funding bodies increasingly look to promote interdisciplinarity) I think it's important to equip young art students in the academy with ways of understanding how they navigate and contribute within such practices and the contemporary artistic climate. In my opinion an Artistic Research master in the art academy should focus on developing a vocabulary for young artists to think about how their practice brings a very specific kind of knowledge to the table in the context of interdisciplinary artworks, such as in relation with the hard sciences, academia or industry.

Important to the knowledge within artistic practice is a sensitivity towards the unknown and the unknowable. The 'careful scratching' of artistic research is not always a conscious methodology that can be written down and shared, and the resulting artwork may contain aspects of (non)knowledge that flees language, or that is so highly subjective that any quantitative analysis of the 'outcome' is useless. While knowledge in the classical academic sense as something that can be shared in written form to the academic community, I sometimes wonder about the role of artists in PhD's (given that the PhD exists in a traditional framework of academia, where you add knowledge to an existing body of knowledge within a specific field) – what about all the things that slip through the cracks of established knowledge-systems, the not-yet-defined, that which is at the cusp of knowing? Unfortunately I still haven't

encountered a discussion around AR that isn't political. In the Netherlands, traditional schemes of funding for the arts have been cut, and it's necessary for artists to find new ways of supporting themselves. As one of the panelists said, a PhD is a way for an artist to fund 4 years of research, lifting her out of precarity for a time. But in the end this is tied into politics and institutionally enforces a certain valuation of art in society. Although the separation of artistic research and the politics surrounding it is likely impossible, we must be vigilant towards the institution(s) being created.

There was a comment during the discussion on the 'secrecy' of artists' methods, which could perhaps also be interpreted as a kind of 'preciousness' of the artistic object/mind/genius – as something that we're not interested in sharing. I agree with this comment that artists shouldn't shelter themselves from sharing their process or their work with the rest of the world, and that a concept such as artistic research could somewhat shatter this 20th century idea of the artist in the ivory tower. But I also wonder if fitting this process within certain pre-formatted structures of academia is the right place or artistic practice. Having spent several years in the humanities during my bachelor I've spent considerable amount of time 'unlearning' the ways of thinking and analyzing that I picked up then, and discover curious ways of 'research' within my artistic practice. I find relations within my work through the properties of the material at hand, thoughts and concepts I've read, as well as a sort of 'empty mind' directing my decisions towards the kind of beauty, poetry and imagination that emerges in the moment of making.



*Marlies Vermeulen presenting her PhD project.*



*Sissel Marie Tonn discussing artistic research.*



*Ties van de Werff welcoming the audience.*



*At the research group Image in Context (part of Research Centre Art & Society at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen), dr. Anke Coumans fosters projects in which artists and designers take up new roles and develop new research practices. Anke's interests are currently in: Parrhesia and the role of the artist in the public sphere; design attitudes in health care practices; portraits as a form of encounter with people with dementia; and humour as counter-strategy for a polarised society. Her work starts from the notion of research ecology: researchers shape each other through different perspectives and methods, within a shared research environment*

# North meets South

Anke Coumans, Reader Image in Context, Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Beste Ruth,

In september nodigde ik als lector van kunstacademie Minerva, mijn collega, Ruth Benschop, lector van de kunstacademie van Hogeschool Zuyd, uit. Ik vroeg haar om haar licht te laten schijnen over de tentoonstelling Dwell, Act, Transform vanuit de vraag: Is een tentoonstelling een geëigend format om artistiek onderzoek te presenteren? Dit resulteerde in een in juni in Forum + te verschijnen tekst die de vorm heeft van een brief die ze tot mij richt. In die brief beschrijft ze hoe ze vanuit de houding van de agnost probeert te begrijpen hoe in Groningen artistiek onderzoek wordt begrepen en gepresenteerd. Omdat deze kwestie vaak vanuit de oppositie met wetenschappelijk onderzoek wordt begrepen – een oppositie die eerder bevriezend dan explorerend werkt- stelt Ruth een productievare omweg voor, die ik als volgt begrijp. Laten we ons niet bezighouden met wat artistiek onderzoek is, maar laten we kijken naar de verschijningsvormen die het aanneemt. Laten we, anders gezegd, kijken hoe het onderzoek zich actualiseert in het onderzoeken van de zaak zelf.

Een half jaar later nodigde Ruth mij uit om aanwezig te zijn bij en te reageren op een eendaagse conferentie op Hogeschool Zuyd met de titel Doing Artistic Research, a Collaboratory. Ze vraagt me dit te doen met als uitgangspunt de door hen geformuleerde uitgangspunten. Ik zal in het vervolg van deze korte tekst, mijn herarticulering van de aandachtspunten geven waarin respectievelijk methode, kennis en context aan de orde komen en deze onderbouwen met de onderzoekprojecten die op de conferentie werden besproken.

*Aandachtspunt 1 Methodologies-in-the-Making: developing rigorous sensitivity in practice*  
Centraal hierin staat het woord rigorous wat verwijst naar gestrengheid. De verbinding van dit woord aan sensitivity onderstreept dat er in het zuiden net zoveel belang wordt gehecht aan de gevoeligheid van de onderzoeker voor zijn omgeving, als aan de gevoeligheid voor de wetenschappelijke gemeenschap waar hij onderdeel van is. Mijn afgeleide vraag is: laten de gepresenteerde onderzoeken op de conferentie zien dat zij de relatie met de mensen in het onderzoek boven de methode stellen? Worden de methodes op hen afgestemd? Slagen de mensen in de samenwerkingsprojecten er bijvoorbeeld in bestaande methodes ter discussie te stellen?

Het bevestigende antwoord was het meest duidelijk in het onderzoek van Ruud Hendriks (Articulating Bodily Senses ) naar clowning in dementia care. Clowning verschijnt hier niet alleen als een artistieke theatrale methode omdat het de relatie met de dementerende mensen mogelijk maakt, maar vooral omdat het een genereuze methode is die is afgestemd op de dementerende mens. Ruud Hendriks is in zijn onderzoek zowel mens als onderzoeker. Hij durft zijn rol als onderzoeker los te laten wanneer hij zich als clown verhoudt tot de mensen met demencie. Dat doet hij in het vertrouwen dat die onderzoeker zich als vanzelf weer aandient wanneer er gereflecteerd en geanalyseerd moet worden.

*Aandachtspunt 2 A Collaboratory: artistic research as 'agnostic laboratory' for cooperation between researchers from various backgrounds, disciplines, and institutions, and the construction of a shared (societal) problem or issue.* In een agnostic laboratory wordt, zo kan ik me voorstellen, gestart vanuit het 'niet weten' en niet vanuit bestaande kennis. De onderzoeker positioneert zichzelf eerder als een vragend en dus open persoon dan als een wetend en dus bewegend persoon. Waar in het eerste aandachtspunt de gevoeligheid voor de mens boven de methode staat, zo staat in dit aandachtspunt de open houding naar de mens boven de relatie tot bestaande kennis. Uit ieder gepresenteerd onderzoek die dag bleek dat de relatie met de ander, de kennis die voortkomt uit praktijken en ervaringen, boven de wetenschappelijke situering van het onderzoek gaan. Een voorbeeld: in Writing and drawing feeling techniques staat centraal de zogenoemde tacit knowledge de kennis die impliciet aanwezig is in het werk van de practicioner, en niet de bestaande wetenschappelijke kennis ten aanzien van vergelijkbare praktijken.

*Aandachtspunt 3 The Topology of Artistic Research: the relationship between artistic research and the environment in which it takes place (its societal context).* Na methode en kennis wordt in dit aandachtspunt de context benadrukt die impliciet aanwezig is in de twee eerdere aandachtspunten. Artistic research in the south is onderzoek binnen een context. De onderzoeker is een embedded researcher. Hij neemt letterlijk, zoals in het geval van Dear Hunter, voor een langere tijd plaats in te onderzoeken omgevingen op zoek naar datgene dat zich alleen aandient wanneer men tijd neemt.

Beste Ruth,

Aan de basis van onze noord-zuid as ligt de ambitie om artistiek onderzoek van een eigen signatuur te voorzien. Ik spreek over artistic research in the north en jij over de Maastricht stijl van artistic research. We zoeken een signatuur die niet voorschrijvend is en niet essentialistisch. Het gaat ons om het zichtbaar maken van een eigenheid die voortkomt uit de bestaande praktijken en kwaliteiten. We zijn nieuwsgierig naar de accenten die er gelegd worden aan beide einden van de as. Zullen we dan nadat we elkaar bezocht hebben aan de verre uiteinden van Nederland, elkaar nu ergens in het midden treffen, zodat we samen aan de hand van de elkaar ondervragende projecten wat dieper kunnen ingaan op hoe de relatie tussen artistiek onderzoek en de omgeving plaats kan vinden. Graag laat ik je dan zien wat voor mij een onderzoeksecologie is aan de hand van bijvoorbeeld het project Ik zie ik zie wat jij niet ziet. Dit is een project waarin vele perspectieven bij elkaar komen. Het is een project dat een open en genereuze omgang zoekt met de mens met dementie, zoals dat in het clowning project gebeurt. Wellicht kunnen we dan samen met onderzoekers uit het zuiden en uit het noorden onderzoeken wat tacit knowledge te maken heeft met de attitude van de kunstenaar. En waar en waarom het performatieve zich openbaart in de praktijk van het artistiek onderzoek. Laten we ons samen met de onderzoekers ontworstelen aan ieder disciplinerend juk en zoeken hoe we in navolging van Tim Ingold in het onderzoek genereus, open-ended, vergelijkend en kritisch kunnen zijn.



Anke Coumans talking about the environment of artistic research.



*iClassics in Klokgebouw, Eindhoven. Picture taken from the presentation by Peter Peters and Veerle Spronck. Photo credits: South Netherlands Philharmonic.*



*dr. Christian Ernsten is a researcher in heritage studies in the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Maastricht University, and affiliated with the Maastricht Centre for Arts and Culture, Conservation, and Heritage (MACCH). He is interested in embodied knowledge and methodologies – or more particular in notions of body as archive, landscape as archive, performance as archive. What does it mean to think through the body, affect and senses? He worked as an editor at Volume magazine, a quarterly on cities founded by architect Rem Koolhaas. He also wrote as a journalist for Italian design magazines such as Domus and Abitare, and he translated the oeuvre of the urban designer Gert Ujhahn into a monograph titled The Spontaneous City (2010).*

# Towards an anatomy of Maastricht-style artistic research

Christian Ernsten, postdoctoral researcher at Maastricht University

As a way of structuring this report on the Doing Artistic Research symposium, organized by dr. Ruth Benschop and the organizing committee at Zuyd University, I propose going through my notes of the event and, specifically, the glossary of terms that emerged for me while being there. The patchy list of words and ideas I introduce below could perhaps be seen as an exercise of sorts in capturing something of the conceptual language associated with Maastricht-style artistic research.

**Cartopology.** Architect Marlies Vermeulen introduced this strange and fascinating term. What does it refer to? A topology of map-making? A cartography of topologies? A study of the constant shifting, cutting, and layering of our subjective understanding of the environment? Marlies also asked: What makes a ‘good’ map? I also wrote down: What would an ethics of mapping look like?

**Clowning.** During the presentation on dementia care by philosopher Ruud Henriks, I wrote down, among other fragments, “clowning as a way of knowing”, but also “learning to forget”, “cognitive decline”, and “at the mercy of the situation”. In response to these prompts, I wrote down: Can we think of dementia as a form of unruliness? As an involuntarily form of irrationality?

**Inner fire.** The words I recorded from the conversation between theater-makers Mayke Roels and Christoph Aussems are, I believe, particularly indicative of a fresh methodological approach. I jotted down “softening as a way of engaging”, “concentric circles around intuition”, “open-heartedness”, and “inner fire”. I particularly enjoyed the phrase “ik zit in mijn hoofd te kijken”. This would perhaps translate as “I’m looking inside my head” – something I’m afraid I do quite often.

**Movement.** Artist and researcher Ulrike Scholtes’s presentation about embodied methodologies stood out for me, not only because she made us do a movement exercise – a welcome break – but also because of her observation that “bodies articulate sensitivities, learn to be affected and attuned to other bodies and environments”, which struck me as profound. According to Scholtes, feeling, touching, writing, and drawing are all interrelated activities that “mediate sensitivity and represent movement”.

**Innovation.** Sociologist Peter Peters introduced his project “Artful Participation” and proposed that “innovation requires reflexive research and experimental practice”. I’m interested in this conceptualization of artistic research as an ethnography of innovation. Below, I will briefly linger on some of Peters’ and Benschop’s ideas, while exploring some of the specificities of the Maastricht style.

**Rigor.** Firstly, as points of reference, I will present a few excerpts from the diverse range of perspectives on artistic research. The Dutch figurehead of artistic research Henk Borgdorff has written that artistic research is conducted not with aim of producing knowledge, but in order to enhance what could be called the artistic universe; producing new images, narratives, sounds or experiences. Yet knowledge and understandings might emerge as by-products. The practice of unsystematic drifting and searching – of which serendipity, chance inspirations and clues are an integral part. Mika Hannula, Tere Vaden and Juha Suoranta wrote that artistic experientiality is the very core of the research, as is how it is transmitted and how it transmits a meaning. They argue that it must be self-reflective, self-critical and an outwardly-directed communication. Closest perhaps to the Maastricht style are the thoughts by media scholar Peter Dallow, who writes that practice-based research offers an intermediary intellectual space which facilitates the exchange of ideas between theory, analysis and practice. In turn, a focus on methodological rigor is central to the Maastricht-style project. Peters' and Benschop's interpretation of artistic research is "problem-based": it is about "practice and learning in and through practice", and it entails "collective practice".

**Revolt.** My own interest lies in how artistic research allows for an embodied experience and in how it allows for the full spectrum of human perceptions, sensations, and affections to enter into heritage occasions. Scholtes's presentation, and especially her remark that bodies articulate sensitivities, hit home and made me think of a quote by theorist Tony Eagleton:

[T]he world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal biological insertion into the world.

In his seminal work *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990), Eagleton discusses the coming into being of the modern concept of aesthetics. The latter is a tale about how the world of feelings and sensations was "penetrated" by modern reason but also about how "there is something in the body which can revolt against the power which inscribes it". As a scholar in heritage studies, I am interested in those moments when the body starts revolting – the moments during which the body speaks up against the "mystified image" of the world produced by modernity/rationality, or the moments when the body goes in search of alternate images, symbols, and modes of signification.

Perhaps as a way of further solidifying Maastricht-style artistic research, we could consider it to be a strategy of methodological reconstitution or of "de-linking" from the "normativity that colonized the senses", to quote Walter Mignolo and Rafael Vasquez.

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*Christian Ernsten discussing embodied experience.*

