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On the art of research in the arts: Tracing praxis and reflection

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Introduction – Thinking what we are doing

> Some facts. Not all of them. And, no conclusions. For whomever accepts me, both are useless. The curious will take pleasure in finding out my conclusions, juxtaposing work and facts. For whomever rejects me, it is a lost cause to explain that which, before reading, he has already not accepted. When I feel the lyric impulse upon me, I write without thinking all that my unconscious shouts out to me. I think afterwards: not only to correct but also to justify what I have written. Hence the reason for this *Extremely Interesting Preface* (*Prefácio Interessantíssimo*). (Andrade, 1968 [1922], p. 5).

How we think about research practices is embedded in environing research traditions, scientific communities, shared agendas and spaces of disciplines; and broader in our history, our education and the ideological framework or worldview we have not only inherited but also adopted. We live in a continuously evolving knowledge context and information society. This society requires the articulation of professional practices and experiences. While this claim was tacitly present in the last century's construction of western culture (of which science and art are certainly the most powerful outcomes), it has become explicit in the last decennia in all cultural domains. Society has become more and more focused towards its epistemic value and production: we map whatever into "knowledge". The arts do not escape this evolution. While such an evolution has benefits, it has also its pitfalls. Of course, a culturally and epistemic productive society offers potential for creative practices and original contributions to knowledge. However, when we rename this evolution as a knowledge economy and its outcomes as deliverables, research is

risking falling prey to a process of commodification and rationalization where both aesthetic and epistemic values become economic values.

The main challenge for artistic research is then to build a research culture that marks a difference, both in the realm of research as in society. This means participating in the broader field of research, but from its own perspective, both resisting economic competition, and being of value to the development of culture and education. Artistic research means opening a field, defining a hitherto unexplored, or at least unexpressed field, it implies questioning the terms of the field, the content of the field, the meaning of the field:

> To be effective, artistic research needs to be articulated in its own terms, rather than mediated through the more dominant research paradigms of science — although, as we have seen, it can learn from these — and especially from the more recent lessons that science itself is learning. (Coessens, Crispin and Douglas 2009, p. 72).

It implies as well a commitment to a possibly compromising task, merging art and research on art, creativity and the reflection on it, making and conceptualization.

The aim of this article is to explore the potential of artistic research as an experimental field that can benefit our societies — artists, researchers and all other audiences — in ways that both enhance the understanding of artistic practices and the dialogue with other research cultures:

> It is only through the artist that certain new insights into otherwise tacit and implicit knowledge can be gleaned, and only through the artist/researcher remaining an artist while pursuing these insights that he or she will be able to enrich the existing inquiries carried out by scientific researchers. (Coessens, Crispin and Douglas 2009, p. 91).

By using different optical tools as metaphors for ways of doing research, I will unravel the richness of an artistic research approach. Binoculars, prisms and mirror rooms are three different optic tools that reveal from different angles the object under investigation.

In a first part, I will analyze the differences between a binocular and a prismatic view, and its significance for research. Research always offers a certain focus on the world; it "dramatizes" the world in a particular way, bringing its own foci on the stage of knowledge. While a binocular view is mostly present in research, artistic inquiry can open this to a prismatic view.

The second part explores these differences deeper, by analyzing the notions of experiment and experimental action, theory and theorizing. By offering this polarity, positions are sharpened.

The third part will consider the complexity of the artist's inquiry into his or her own artistic practice. A situation where the researcher is both subject and object clearly breaks the rules of 'objectivity' as an established research code. The metaphor of Leonardo da Vinci's octagonal mirror room will clarify the "centredness" and "decentredness" of such a research activity, decoding the notions of reflection and reflexivity. This will demonstrate the possible distance of a "subjective" point of view and reveal its rich potential.

In the fourth part, both the concerns of the second and third part come together in an analysis of the practice of artistic research — what I call the "web of artistic practice". I claim that artistic research has always existed, acknowledging that, until recently, it was not institutionalized. The article will end with a short showcase of some examples *avant la lettre* of both European and Brazilian artists; this will articulate and show the multiple perspectives artistic research writing and communication can take.

About binoculars and prisms, flaneurs and explorers

> … the construction of the object of study is not primarily methodological – in the sense of methodology as epistemological starting point or as procedure of verification. It is aesthetic, because a research-based account dramatizes the world in a particular way. (Pelletier, 2009, p. 7-8).

Knowledge activities are tributary to the prevailing state of the art, to social and intra-disciplinary conventions and human-made rules. The body of available knowledge and its prevailing research community determine the space of questions and answers, interpretations and representations that can emerge, and which others remain not only undiscovered but also unacceptable (Rescher 1999). Different disciplinary and intellectual niches — different over time and space — will decide differently over what counts as knowledge, even more, what is desirable as knowledge. While the overall research culture has different characteristics to share — like family resemblances in a Wittgensteinian sense — they all use their own

binoculars to focus in a particular direction and orientation, and enlighten a specific portion of what is so difficult to distinguish from the background noise. Think of physics or chemistry: they start from the same world, but use a different binocular to disclose two divergent aspectual sides of it. Moreover, their underlying practices and methods are developed to sustain this particular focus.

Art does not look at the world through binoculars, but rather through a prism. A prism is a transparent optical object with flat, polished surfaces that refract light or break light up into its constituent spectral colors, dependent upon the angles and dispersion of the surfaces. The artist always has turned his/her attention to different, often unexpected, angles on the world, resisting not only the obvious but also the disciplinary focus — forcing to look from a certain angle:

> Artists, like ethnographers, train their eyes to see things other people do not see. They try to present what they see so that we, the audience, can glimpse something where we have looked a thousand times and failed to find anything-noteworthy. (Hoyem, 2009).

The artist is like the flaneur of Baudelaire and Benjamin, present inside stressed urban time and economic needs, but having the capacity of appreciating all sides of the prism. It is a kind of person that emerged in the nineteenth century as the one who resisted the stress and the economic pressures of modernity. The flaneur observes, merges with the crowd, still having his/her own thoughts and rhythm, takes in its noises, colors, its chaos, its heterogeneity, its cosmopolitanism (Hess 2009). The flaneur is amidst the multiplicity of different layers, tempi and rhythms, and at the same time escapes imposed time and space frames, cultivating, like Balzac said, **the gastronomy of the eye** — I would say for the artist, the **gastronomy of the senses**. However, the *flaneur* and in analogy the artist, is not only a wanderer and observer of the outside, but also of his own inside, of his own thinking and imagination, creating dialogue and tensions between subject and actions. Both the artist and the *flaneur* resist the temptation of the prevailing ideology — the city or the knowledge economy —, and develop other perspectives.

For the *flaneur*, it is a way of life and observation, while for the artist it goes further: all the sensorial perspectives offer different aesthetic encounters and possible sources for creation. The experience of the artist follows different paths in

time and space, in perception and creation, and embeds a rhizomatic field of trajectories. These remain often unexplored, as the artist, after the creation, withdraws from an investigation of his/her practice and leaves the artistic object as the only trace.

It is here, in these unexplored interstices of artistic practice, that artistic research can enter the scene. Experiential and experimental pathways can only be saved from oblivion by the artist committing him or herself into an exploration and expression of the different paths and traces of its practice — by the artist as researcher. The view and enterprise is again prismatic, but the diverse colored reflections are now subject of both aesthetic and epistemic concerns. Such enterprise opens research paths that can bring new knowledge as well as change existing knowledge.

This means that the artist researcher has to be more than a *flaneur*, s/he has to be an explorer, challenged to inquire in depth into both unknown terrain and into the own practices. "To explore" means "investigate, search out, examine" but originates in the Latin *explorare* for "shouting out, intervening".[1] At one side, the exploration of different expertise, methods, practices and issues in the natural, human and cognitive sciences, in relation with the broader domain of arts, will launch a forum for dialogue and reflection on knowledge-creation, discovery and investigation. At the other side, the idiosyncrasy and the prismatic open-endedness of artistic practices urge the artistic researcher to develop his/her own ways of experimenting and exploring. The artist-researcher like the artist takes a prismatic view, different from the binocular.

Experience, experiment, exploration

> … no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances. (Said, 1978, p. 11).

The European scientific revolution at the end of the 17th century opened a new pathway for knowledge: science, scientific experiment and method. Priority was given to the intellect and its possible processes of objectification extracted out of empirical information, while other more perceptual and/or

1My colleague Fernando Iazzetta made me attentive of this last etymological connection.

intuitive approaches became more or less ignored, at least in the scientific community that was build.

This approach can be called a cognitive approach, privileging abstraction and distanced objectivity, and starting from a 'hypothesis'. It became the predominant way of building the scientific community. The inquiry is led by an 'aboutness' thinking. Such stress on constructing knowledge 'about' something definitively outside the researcher created the typical subject-object distance in inquiry. Experimentation developed as a goal-driven, well defined and laboratory clean set-up, with the aim to gain the following bit of knowledge in the already vast domain of knowledge.

In Western science and knowledge construction, theory-oriented perspectives clearly overshadowed other experience-oriented perspectives: the binocular overshadowed the prism. As such, an aesthetic approach was dismissed**.** Aesthetic is meant here in the pure sense of the word, "aesthesis" meaning literally "the senses", concerning a direct experiential relation. In such an aesthetic approach, the inquiry originates in a "withness thinking", a thinking from within an experience: "a form of reflective interaction that involves our coming into living contact with the living (or moving) being of an other or otherness." (Shotter, 2005, p. 145-6).

While the theory-oriented approach has become the dominant scientific method, the experience-oriented approach was favored by "non-scientific" or artistic ways of understanding the world.

However, both perspectives aim at a questioning of the world, resulting in a better understanding of humans and their environment, and in knowledge that can be communicated:

> Both domains shape culture in their own ways. They originate in the same world and their respective manipulations, transformations and conquests partake of our same human nature. Their source domains are therefore equivalent. Both have to start from the constraints of the world and the constraints of the human being; both have to cope with cultural context and prevailing conventions. But the reconstruction processes and objectives of scientific and artistic practice are different. Their target domains point to different worlds. In the case of science, the goal of the endeavor is limited by the constraints of real-world situations; in the case of art this goal is limited only by the constraints of human imagination. This implies that the horizon of possible significations in art is much more open-ended than in science. (Coessens, Crispin & Douglas, 2009, p. 25-6).

As we remarked, the notion of experimentation itself has followed this divergent orientation. While in science, the experiment follows a rather instructional, protocoled pattern of actions, linked to previous experiments and their status inside the scientific knowledge, in the arts, the experiment is still embedded in the unexpected and improvisational aspects of an artistic practice. As the composer John Cage writes: "an experimental action is one the outcome of which is not foreseen." (1961, p. 39).

The notion of action is interesting in the arts as it places the experiment within a subject-environment relation. An experimental action is based upon observation and intervention exploring unknown relations between subject and action. It is not only about "what happens", but also about the action itself that causes "what happens" and the possible intervention. Experimentation here is much more related to its etymological origins of risk and danger. The word experience originates in the Latin verb *periri*, meaning "try out", but also "taking risks" and even "dying" — think of perilous. The prefix *ex* implies a movement, a going "out".

Another difference that is remarkable between an artistic research approach and other research disciplines is the notion of theory. Different research fields and their experimental practices are driven by rather established fertile theories; they are grounded in such theories, even if the experiments can lead to a revision of the theory. However, in the domain of the arts, theories cannot be articulated in isolation from the artist's practice and research, because they are established and constructed within that particular practice. And, that particular practice contains unexpectedness and open endedness in its search for what we call a creative, aesthetic outcome. Creativity cannot emerge from within the protecting walls of a theory, it has to be discovered in the fissures, the gaps, the missing, the unexplored, in short, the artist has to search for difference, not for continuity — even if that difference can be inside of continuity. As such, the artist uses diverse kinds of knowledge, an epistemic *bricolage* of experience and expertise, concerning body, materials, personal inspiration, cultural context (Lévi-Strauss 1962). In art and artistic research, we should consider the act of theorizing instead of investigating from an acknowledged theory:

> While theorizing, then, can be playful and full of movement, theory signifies the freezing of a set of thoughts. (…) Theorizing (…) means an attempt to understand and explain (…) and it includes everything that precedes the final formulation that is set down on paper or fixed in some other way ("theory"). This means interaction with people and texts such as books and articles, among other things. (…) Intuition, imagination, and abduction are also all indispensable to successful theorizing. (Swedberg, 2012, p.15).

The connections between the steps an artist takes, the reflection upon one's own practice and its trajectories, its materials, its hidden knowledge, as well as the — often implicit — links with others' art and the broader context, form a kind of method, a way of doing which engenders 'artistic knowledge'. They reveal a theorizing attitude: unraveling these processes by reflection, analysis, explanation, conceptualization, but also by wondering, playfulness, experimentation and by deepening both the insight in and the aesthetic and epistemic contexts around one's own artistic process. However, it is not a straightforward process of theorizing. Difficulty arises in how to gather that discontinuity and juxtaposition of knowledge(s) into a coherent or at least understandable whole, how to "disclose" it. An artist-centered and interventionist use of knowledge offers new perspectives but can be less accessible than the approach of the traditional researcher who strives for continuity of knowledge frames, theory and content as well as for a reader-centered point of view. This means often provocation and open-endedness at one side, integration and focus at the other side.

Praxis and reflection in the web of artistic practice

> The self comes into being at the moment it has the power to reflect itself. (Douglas R. Hofstadter, 1980, p. 709).

Returning to the prism of the artistic approach, we need to add one other visual extending tool, which helps to understand the challenges facing artistic research, and, more precisely, to appreciate the multi-facedness of its subject-centered approach: the mirror room.

In one of his manuscripts, Leonardo da Vinci describes an interesting invention: an octagonal room consisting of eight mirror rectangles. Entering that room, a subject is confronted with seeing him or herself an infinite number of times from different angles. The reflection offers sensorially impossible perspectives on his or her body, perspectives that are never attainable without this kind of environment. It allows for a multi-sensorial experience of self-display.

These mirror reflections create in the first place an externalization and 'exhibition' of the body — the self — of which we are normally unaware, leading to a disturbing situation. This extended bodily situation is disturbing on the visual and kinetic level of perception. Kinetically, it troubles the usual bodily schema of action, as movement and perception add totally new experiences. This relation between movement and perception seems only controllable by moving the frontiers of the body coherently with its reflection, extending also the motor and sensorial skills. Moreover, on the visual level, the actor before the mirror can experience what is normally reserved for other people — seeing his/her sides, back, movements.

Secondly and following from this, the experiment stresses the problem of the limits of the body, its centrality as well as its abounding into the environment. The extension of the body is dependent on its sensorial and kinetic relation with the environment. Normally, this relation starts from a centered position of both body and self. However, here it is re-defined by parameters of extending vision and movement. As such, the inner perception of the body is decentered. The body is experienced from the inside as well as from the outside: where does it start, where does it end? The reflection offered by the environment leads the subject to a reflection on its own body, its appearance and extension, its display.

There is an analogy between the reflection in the octagonal mirror room of da Vinci and the reflection upon the own artistic practice. Firstly, by inquiring into the own artistic processes, trajectories, signification and context, hidden aspects are revealed, sometimes disturbing, sometimes unexpected. What was hidden in the experience of creation itself, beyond the art object, reveals itself by inquiry and reflection. Secondly and following from this, the position of the artist and the artwork is decentered, as the artist as a researcher focusses on both the subject and the object, complementing a subjective idiosyncratic creation with a more distanced, but still involved reflexivity. How did I get there? What were the implications of this act? Wherefrom came this influence? In analogy with the multiplication of the performative possibilities in the mirror room, the artist as researcher unravels a diversity of self-referential, contextual and tacit knowledge that relate to the body and the senses, to a private or public context or to the imagination. The reflection of the mirror becomes the reflexivity of the researcher, a

deep awareness of the dynamical and personal unique relation in which you engage with the outside. Where the reflection is given by the outside, the mirror, reflexivity is the jump from that outside that happens to you — reflection — to your commitment by being and acting in that world. A circle unfolds between inside and outside, creating a loop between doing and thinking, actor and spectator, leaving traces of reflection and reflexivity.

> There is not anymore the original and the derived; there is a thought, which moves itself in a circle, where the condition and the conditioned, the reflection and the reflected, find themselves in a relation of reciprocity, and where the end is the beginning as the beginning is the end. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. VI, 35).

As such, beyond the trace of the artistic object or manifestation, the artist-researcher explores a complex process of acting and reflecting, decision and creation, disclosing parts and parcels of the broad web of artistic practice. This web is woven over time and space and is composed of different tacit dimensions — tacit because they are present in the background of the artist's creative act (Coessens, 2013).

The first of these is the embodied dimension. Artists have a specific relation to the body, molding and training it to attain expertise in kinesthetic, sensory-motor and intellectual coordination. The body is fine-tuned — towards actions, materials, tools, instruments — in a kind of unified activity in which qualities and sensations come together. The body of the artist is his or her first medium of expression. Each act of artistic creation engages the body in specific ways, demands from the body a high involvement.

The second dimension is the personal knowledge of the artist, inevitably determined by and involved in the environmental or contextual background. The artist partakes in a system of convictions, intellectual passions, sharing a "web of belief" (Quine, 1953/1970) with a like-minded community. In this web of belief of a person, the input of previous generations, cultural ideas, technology, education and science, but also the personal identity, remembrances and commitment merge together in a present act: "*Traditions are transmitted to us from the past, but they are our own interpretations of the past, at which we have arrived within the context of our own immediate problems."* (Polanyi, 1958, p. 160). A lot of this personal knowledge remains tacit, unarticulated and in the background of our acts.

A third dimension is the ecological environment. The surrounding space, its

dimensions, colors, the incidence of light, the temperature and degree of humidity or even furniture will have some influence or impact on the artist's practice. A musician, for example, will, again and again, have to adjust to the surrounding space with its own acoustical characteristics, its dimensions, colors, furniture, air, temperature, people present, as well as other musicians' instruments. A painter will be confronted with the prevailing light, seasonal alterations, the shades of the available color paints. Later on, the conditions of light and the positioning of the painting in the museum room will influence its brightness and the perception of it by the public. The environment, with its materials and laws, will always influence the artist and his or her creation in some direction.

The fourth dimension concerns the cultural possibilities for art: the tools, languages, codes which permit the artist to translate his or her creative thinking and acting into something durable. Different media and sign systems (semiotics) make possible the discovery, translation, transmission, interpretation and recording of art. Semiotic systems are deeply rooted in socio-cultural styles, values and meanings, as well as linked to the technological evolution. They offer freedom and constraints. Artistic responses and creations, even resistant or subversive, will have to cope with these, use them, transgress them, transform them, and innovate them.

The last dimension brings us back to self-reflexivity. This dimension is the realm of human discursive interaction, being in dialogue, in monologue: all kind of encounter with the other, be it the other artist or community of artists, the listener or audience, public, society, critics, friends and relatives, or, last but not least, him or herself in the creative process. This dimension moves action and research from reflection to reflexivity, from awareness to committed responsibility: as Sandywell mentions: “reflection treats the Other as an occasion to consolidate the Self, reflexivity approaches the Other as a sign for the irreducible movement of dialogue and spontaneity within selfhood.” (1996, p. 5).

At one side, following Sandywell, reflexivity is considered as the awareness and experience of the self, as an involvement in a concrete practice that implies an anticipation of reflection. Standing in practice means being involved, engaged in a situation of affective and epistemic intentionality, while being engaged in a tradition,

a background. At the other side, it is also the experience of difference and dissonance, the encounter within every project of world-construction of alterity and violence, questioning all human practices and significance and forcing the individual to strategies and tactics. (Sandywell, 1996, p. 5; de Certeau, 1980). There is a clear link here with the attitude of the exploring flâneur of Baudelaire.

As each artist's web of practice is never finished, artistic endeavor remains a dynamic process in which the artist will have to readjust the prior acquired schemata, each time (re-)creating his or her art, reweaving his or her web. The artist will have to cope, time and again, with new or different aspects of those tacit dimensions, each time exploring new situations, adapting and readjusting his or her skills and expertise to slightly different internal and external parameters — embodied skills, personal knowledge, semiotic codes, environment, self-reflexivity and the presence of the others. The artist researcher can then unravel certain aspects of these tacit dimensions: for example explore gesture and embodied knowledge behind the artistic act, investigate the intellectual and artistic background and ramifications of the creation, trace the transformation of traditional signs and symbols into the artist's language, analyze the impact and role of the ecological environment. The artist-researcher can combine different dimensions, but will always approach these from the point of view of the own creation, of the self, the artist. Artistic research then, being prismatic and reflective, will build up a kaleidoscopic knowledge, exploring parts and parcels from the artistic web of knowledge.

Tracing from exploration to expression

> I am fully aware that the fact of my not being a man of letters may cause certain arrogant persons to think that they may with reason censure me, alleging that I am a man ignorant of book learning. (…) They will say that because of my lack of book learning, I cannot properly express what I desire to treat of. Do they not know that my subjects require for their exposition experience rather than the words of others? (…) my conclusions were arrived at as a result of simple and plain experience, which is the true mistress. (da Vinci, 1955, p. 57-58).

Back five hundred years, Leonardo da Vinci kept notebooks of his research in science and art. The books were filled with drawings and diagrams, explained with notes written in mirror handwriting. He undertook for example detailed studies on optics and the investigation of mirrors. He combined both an aesthetic and scientific fascination for all what could be investigated in creative ways. In his notebooks, he

analyzed the abstract geometry present in the patterns of reflection and the potential utility of concave mirrors as sources of heat. These resources and research experiences offered trajectories through his imagination, knowledge and art.

Da Vinci shows that, while artistic research is but recently an emerging field in institutionalized research culture, exemplars *avant la lettre*, meaning before the advent of the institutionalization, are multiple and diverse. This article started purposively with another exemplar: a quote from the *Prefácio Interessantíssimo* of the Brazilian artist Mario de Andrade who, at the beginning of the 20th century, wrote a volume of revolutionary verse on the city of Sao Paulo in the late 1910s, *Paulicéia desvairada* or *Hallucinated City*. He accompanied this poetry by what he called an 'Extremely Interesting Preface', in which he analyzed his own processes of creation as well as his situatedness in the context of vanguard's poetry in Brazil and in broader modernist movements in Europe. Later, he would even rework these "artistic research" ideas into a deeper reflection on the nature of the composition of lyric poetry in the 20th century — in *A escrava que nao é Isaura* [The Slave who is not Isaura], with the subtitle *A Discourse on Some Tendencies in Modernist Poetry* — and inquire into what he considered the main constituents of poetic creation: the role of the act of inspiration and the act of criticism. (Suarez & Tomlins, 2000, p. 19; 46).

Let us travel through some other exemplars.

It is late 20th century; the imaginative and sound realm of the acoustic instrument seems to be exhausted. However, the contemporary experimental composer, Helmut Lachenmann, proposes a new sound world. The piece *temA* of Helmut Lachenmann for flute, voice and cello (1968) explores in a very direct way the physical act and effort of breathing, a life affirming experience and constraint. How do we breathe when we sleep, when in effort, when in pain? Breathing is normally a tacit process, part of human physicality. At the same time, it is an acoustically mediated energetic process at the basis of the human voice and of all wind instruments.

> Along with *temA* [for flute, voice and cello] and *Pression* for solo cello, *Air* [for solo percussion and orchestra] is one of those of my works that consciously break with socio-aesthetically established habits: the attempt and the proposal by Beauty, not only to refuse the usual, but also to unmask the conditions that validate the Beautiful: as the repression of the underlying physiological constraints and physical energies, the repression of the underlying effort; or if you like: the

> work hidden behind the Beauty. (Lachenmann, 1968, p. 102).[2]

Researching artistically the extreme possibilities of acoustic instruments, Lachenmann has also traced his vision on music and sound in the book *Musik as existentielle Erfahrung*. We now can understand certain of the drives, motives and knowledge behind his music.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Paul Klee elaborated his *Bauhaus lectures*, inquiring into drawing and motion. In his pedagogical sketchbook, he started from the drawing of point, moving to a line and further to a geometrical form or to natural forces. The drawing becomes a narrative or a trajectory, an imaginary path through force and attraction, necessity and contingency. Movement becomes part of art and part of life.

> In the first place, what do we mean by movement in the work? As a rule our works do not move. After all, we are not a robot factory. No, in themselves our works, or most of them, stay quietly in place, and yet they are all movement. Movement is inherent in all becoming, and before the work is, it must become, just as the world became before it was, after the words, 'In the beginning God created', and must go on becoming before it will be in the future. (Klee, 1961, p. 355).

In Klee's exploration, the intricate relations between artistic gesture and human movement, art and philosophy offer a path into creation and thought.

The writer Italo Calvino wrote the marvelous book *Invisible Cities*, narrating the dialogue between emperor Kublai Kan and adventurer Marco Polo. The narrative relies on embodied, perceptual imagination emerging out of the interaction between the human being and the environment.

> (…) my writing has always found itself facing two divergent paths that correspond to two different types of knowledge. One path goes into the mental space of bodiless rationality, where one may trace lines that converge, projections, abstract forms, vectors of force. The other path goes through a space crammed with objects and attempts to create a verbal equivalent of that space by filling the page with words, involving a most careful, painstaking effort to adapt what is written to what is not written, to the sum of what is sayable and not sayable. These are two different drives

[2] Zusammen mit *temA* und *Pression* für Cello solo bedeutet *Air* in meinem Schaffen den bewußten Einbruch in gesellschaftlich-ästhetische Selbstverständlichkeiten: den Versuch und das Angebot von Schönheit nicht allein durch Verweigerung des Gewohnten, sondern durch Ent- larvung der Bedingungen von geltender Schönheit: als Unterdrückung von zugrundeliegenden physikalischen Voraussetzungen und physischen Energien, Unterdrückung der zugrunde- liegenden Anstrengung; wenn man so will: der dahinter verborgenen Arbeit. (Lachenmann, 1968, p. 102).

> toward exactitude, which will never attain complete fulfillment. (Calvino, 1988, p. 100).

Beneath artistic output, he reflected upon the interactions between literature and life and upon his own creative process in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. Each "memo", respectively on lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, and multiplicity offers an insight into life and creativity.

From the 1920s on, Sergei Eisenstein, notorious filmmaker in Russia, reflected upon movie-making, but also on the tensions with politics, with the public and with his own artistic drives. His writings were bundled in three books, a compendium of his *Selected works*, largely in draft form. They show a man struggling with his own ideological rhetoric, but also an artist who reflects upon the impact and development of technology on his own film aesthetics. The coming of synchronized sound, the possibilities of montage challenge his original idea of the juxtaposition of signifying elements. Montage for Eisenstein is a powerful human principle present in all activities of art, and implies the spatiality of representation and the temporality of poetry. (Nowell-Smith, 1991, p. xv).

> I have always been more preoccupied with movement — mass movements, social movements, dramatic movement — and my creative interest has always been more keenly directed towards movement itself, toward the actions and deeds as such, rather than towards the person performing them. (…)
>
> At the end, we shall consider the notion that living man, his consciousness and activity is not only the basis of what is expressed in the content of a film, but that man is also reflected in the exigencies of form and the structural laws of a work of art. (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 1; 4).

Beside the art they created, these artists had the need to describe, and explain how they worked or what they meant with their artwork; or just which kind of knowledge they used — like Leonardo da Vinci did in his notebooks, explaining the scientific knowledge that underpinned his artistic creation, or like the composer Helmut Lachenmann, who investigated the limits of sound possibilities of acoustic instruments and the body. Six different approaches, six approaches that extend artistic creation into an artistic inquiry on the processes of that creation and its context. They are exemplars of how some of the implicit, artistic knowledge of creation and context behind an artwork can be disclosed and expressed. The

exemplars are in written language; however, we should acknowledge that many of them have a lot of visual material — like Klee, Eisenstein and Da Vinci —, prefaced the artistic poetic material like de Andrade, or were even embedded in lecture performances or pedagogical transmission — like Klee, Eisenstein and Lachenmann.

The previous exemplars *avant la lettre* offered different ways of how artistic research can be shared. There is no guaranteed way to transform, translate a practice into a discourse, a making into a writing. However, different perspectives, translations, discourses can unravel some of the mysteries of processes and practices. Writing is another characteristic of different research cultures. While in academic research it is reader-centered, about experience and discourse-related, in artistic research it is rather artist-centered, within experience and practice-based. Writing about and in artistic research will as such have its potential and its failures: things, which can find a written expression, others, which cannot. The tensions of what can and what cannot be expressed from one domain to another, engages the artist researcher to go through and forth between both, constantly revisiting both languages and rethinking the own heuristic process:

> Far from being a question of whether to privilege written text to visual construct or to abolish the written text altogether, (…) the experience of the artist/researchers shows that the two forms are integral. The written element has also been perceived to add a greater depth, perception and dimension to the research process. (Macleod and Holdridge, 2004, p. 157).

The writing process can then be one of the faces, one of the mirrors of reflection and reflexivity, throwing some light on epistemic and aesthetic layers in art. Artistic research needs observation, experimentation and communication of its subjects and practices. Experimental relationships take place not only inside artistic practices, but also at the interactional plane where the sensorial, creative and aesthetic world of the artist meets the world of science, research and explicit communication. While the different artistic languages are the preferred domain of artists, artistic research aims at partaking in a broader research discourse and inevitably needs to engage in one or another way with verbal culture, not dismissing other forms of expression. Therefore, the book of the artist-researcher, the artist's research book can exist at the intersections of the visual and the auditory, of photography and poetry, of experimental narrative and visual arts, of performance and transmission.

Conclusion

"What" is known is overwhelmingly determined by "the way" it is known. Exploring and expressing an artistic research culture is enriching knowledge and reshaping certain experiential ways knowledge was taking since long. It offers, as we have claimed, a resistance to the distanced subject-object relation.

What happens when a music performer suddenly remarks: I know there is this music score, with all its melodic and harmonic analyses, with the whole musical tradition explained by musicologists, in institutions and texts; I know there is the sound, the recordings and the aesthetic idea of the composer I have to convey by performing; but, what about my artistic process, what about my narrative and trajectory, my body, what about all my rehearsing and performance related concerns and processes by way of which I not only understand but fully reveal this music? What happens when a visual artist explores explicitly the way a dot evolves into a line, into a shape? What when an artist tries to discover the enabling conditions of making art, reflects upon the constraints and freedom, upon the impact of the field and the society on his or her artistic practice? What happens when, what an artist does, thinks, or how an artist acts is not the subject of some other researcher, but a self-reflecting process, enabling, enhancing the own work, and by expressing and explaining these processes at the same time reveals some hidden knowledge to others? Then an artist is also an artist-researcher, tracing praxis and reflection.

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