

Ways of knowing within the Master of Education in Arts

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Introduction

My PhD project at the UvA focusses on the possibilities of artistic research for art educators working in Dutch (secondary) schools. As coordinator and lecturer of the part-time Master of Education in Arts (M.Ed.), I work with students who, in addition to their studies, work as professionals within the field of arts education. They are doing a master's course to further develop themselves and their work practices through research. Until recently, the research methods used in the Master Education in Arts were mainly derived from the social sciences and humanities. However, these methods are not sufficiently in line with the artistic expertise of art teachers. Therefore, for the past six years or so, artistic research methods have been used instead. These include arts-based (educational) research and A/r/t/ography (Cahnmann-Taylor, M. and Siegesmund, R., 2008 and 2018). Yet, within Dutch art education much is still unknown about these forms of research. A systematic analysis of the possibilities and difficulties of applying artistic research in the arts education domain is not yet available. With my research project I want to fill this gap.

Research question

Artistic research is a relatively young field of research, having existed for only a few decades. The idea of 'art as research' is admittedly older and emerged as early as the 1960s, with the rise of conceptual art. Conceptual artists stressed that art is cognitive and contested that art is something that can be made in isolation, detached from a historical, social or political context. Therefore, since the advent of conceptual art, contextualization and self-reflexivity have become part of art production itself.

Artistic research, however, differs from the making of (conceptual) art because in artistic research the research serves more than just the work of art itself as an end point (Hannula et al., 2014). Even though the research questions arise from the artistic work practice, they reach further. When an artist consciously seeks a certain distance from his or her own actions, reflects on them and makes the results of that reflection transferable, both in works of art and in texts, she or he is not only engaged in making art, but in artistic research. The Dutch art historian Janneke Wesseling (1955) defines artistic research as follows: 'Artistic research is the critical and theoretically positioned reflection by the artist on her practice in the world, in

art works and in written text' (Wesseling, 2016, pp. 9-10). She adds: 'this is to say that the reflection finds expression in the interconnection of artwork and discursive writing'.

In order for students of the Master Education in Arts to learn how to become artistic researchers - and how to teach this to their students at a basic level - it is important to have an understanding of how textual and artistic aspects interact optimally within artistic research.

Although Wesseling argues that written texts within artistic research are always equivalent to discursive writing, I believe that this is something that requires further investigation. The main question of my research therefore is: How do artistic and textual aspects within artistic research interact and how can they reinforce each other?

Method

As a research method, I make use of multiple case studies. The basic assumption here is that useful insights into the coherence of artistic and textual components within artistic research are best gained by looking at successful examples. The use of case studies is not entirely without problem: there are hardly any role models for artistic research within arts education, because artistic research within this domain is still a very recent phenomenon. Also, examples are only useful for education to a certain extent, because artistic research is characterized by a unique, personal-specific approach: there are as many approaches as there are artistic researchers. Too much attention to iconic examples in education may prevent students from finding their own path and signature (Jochum, 2020). On the other hand, studying good examples of artistic research can provide useful insights into possible strategies for bringing together artistic-educational practice and theoretical reflection.

What kind of knowledge does artistic research produce?

The question of what kind of knowledge artistic research produces and how it differs from (e.g.) scientific knowledge is still the subject of research and debate. Artistic research primarily produces knowledge for art itself, but it can also enrich other disciplines.

According to philosopher and music theorist Henk Borgdorff (1954), the specific contribution of artistic research lies in the way it communicates non-conceptual, non-discursive content (Borgdorff, 2012). Non-discursive contents include aesthetic experiences or religious beliefs: contents that say something about our typical human relationship to the world, but which the natural sciences cannot deal with. Non-discursive contents are more than just a pure expression of an emotion or a sensation. They are the result of socialization and education and can be shared intersubjectively (Stokhof, 2017). According to Borgdorff, artistic research is

also always about knowledge embodied in artistic practices, objects, processes. Such embodied knowledge is often implicit, difficult to put into words and thus difficult to communicate to others through language alone.

So relational knowledge is something that can be specifically produced by artistic research. The French curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (1965) coined the term 'relational aesthetics' for the work of socially engaged artists who regard social relationships as their 'work material' and socially engaged art as a new form of artistic expression. Artistic research can reflect on these relationships and thereby establish a second-order relationship.

The significance of artistic research for education

With my research, I hope to gain new insights that can be applied and tested within the ArtEZ Master of Arts Education. The aim is for students in the Arts Education Master's program to see artistic research as a way of continuing to develop their own practice, even after graduation, and thereby contributing to the renewal and improvement of art subjects in Dutch education.

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Bio

Drs. Elsbeth Veldpape was trained as a teacher of drawing and art history at the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten and as an art historian at the Vrije Universiteit. She has been working at ArtEZ since 2007, first as head of the Bachelor's program Art and Design in Education at the Arnhem and Zwolle locations, and since 2018 as coordinator/teacher of the Master Education in Arts and as a researcher in ArtEZ's AeCT lectorate.

In 2021 she started as a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam, at the Faculty of Humanities. Her promotor is Prof. Dr. C.M.K.E Lerm-Hayes and co-supervisors are Dr. F. Chiaravalloti and Dr. J. Lutters (ArtEZ).