



CASE STUDY

Vienna, Austria, March, 2013

The case-study visit to Vienna brought together a wide range of experience and leadership in the development of an artistic research culture across the higher arts education landscape, and involved site visits to the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Applied Arts Vienna and to the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). This followed in the wake of ELIA's major international biennial conference, which had taken place in Vienna some months previously, meaning that there was already a well-established dialogue on research issues in the arts and design and the subject of the third cycle.

Furthermore, two of the institutions in Vienna are leading and highly proactive members of the SHARE network, enabling a well-developed and lively debate on artistic research education within the higher arts education community in Vienna. Finally, the activity of the national funding organisation for basic research – in establishing PEEK, an internationally celebrated and advanced programme of funding for artistic research – created an environment in Austria in which legitimacy anxieties within arts-based research were no longer an issue. This provided a specific context for doctoral education in the field and allowed the substantive content of the research to be the key pre-occupation among researchers, research educators and educational leaders. Participants in the discussion included:

- Prof. Ruth Mateus-Berr (University of Applied Arts Vienna);
- Dr. Andrea B. Braidt, Vice-Rector for Art | Research, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna);
- Mag. Michaela Glanz (Head of Support Art and Research, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna);
- Dr. Alexander Damianisch (Head of Support, Art and Research, University of Applied Arts Vienna);
- Prof. Vitaliy Bodnar (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna);
- Prof. Annegret Huber (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna);
- Prof. Christine Hohenbuechler (Vienna University of Technology [TU]);
- Dr. Paul Rajakovics (TU);
- Barbara Holub (independent artist-researcher, associate researcher and educator, TU);
- Dr. Eugen Banauch (Manager Programme for Arts-based Research, PEEK, FWF).

The discussion in Vienna was extremely wide-ranging, indicating that there was a clear relationship between the growth of a rich artistic research milieu within various institutions, the robust development of doctoral education at the art universities and a proactive stance on the part of the national research funder. It was pointed out that a strong background for research activities in the field was vital for prosperous development, leading to applications and project support and also for third-cycle activities like the ones in place. The overall context was marked by the empowerment of a bottom-up approach, taking serious what is already in place within arts education at the first and second cycle. This was seen by the participants as a key factor for the success of Austrian artistic research space. Some participants noted that inter- and transdisciplinary institutional open settings are a key requirement, and pointed to examples at the University of Applied Arts Vienna (e.g. Art and Knowledge Transfer, Art & Science, TransArt, Social Design, Transmedia Arts) and to the doctoral contexts, like the PhD-in-practice programme at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

One of the most important issues discussed was the legal situation concerning doctoral programmes, which allows for 'scientific' research-based doctoral programmes, meaning that the possibility to create purely practice-based programmes is still absent in Austria. The art universities are thus introducing third-cycle programmes in arts-based research areas as scientific doctoral programmes.

Among the other issues that emerged was the significance of internationalisation in engendering the necessary milieu for successful artistic research education. In response to questions as to why Austria had taken a leading role in developing artistic research education, particularly in contrast with the other major German-speaking nation in Europe (which has manifested broad reserve, if not quite antipathy, on this question), the participants cited a number of factors. One general consideration proposed, but subject to some debate within the group, was the different geopolitical histories of the two countries. In particular, the different ways in which the interaction with former bloc countries had played out in Austria was posited as contributing to a different kind of internationalism within Austrian experimental arts and arts education, and that Austria, and especially Vienna, participated in a different geopolitical sphere of influence. However, all participants agreed that the enlightened approach of the national funders had been especially important, and they cited, in particular, the way in which the funding measures had an internationalising effect in themselves. The review progress of the PEEK programme invites reviewers from around the world (well over 600 reviewers since 2009, exclusively from outside Austria) and this creates both a robust international peer-review culture for the sector and an international awareness of what is happening in Austria. Since 2009, close to 40 PhD students have been funded under the PEEK umbrella. It was noted that the Academy of Fine Arts' doctoral programme for artists had attracted 200 applications for 15 positions; these were drawn from a very wide international base, even though there was no automatic funding system in place (unlike the Nordic countries, for example, where all doctoral positions are funded).

Colleagues from the University of Music and Performing Arts noted that their first foray into doctoral education with a specifically artistic research dimension was within an inter-university doctoral system, begun in 2000, which brought together a very diverse mix of disciplines from across the performing arts, media and film arts. In this way, they pointed to the role of national-level networking in providing a basis for developing doctoral research education. Some challenges were noted in relation to the construction of a wide disciplinary mix within a national doctoral education network, as there was a sense that, at a certain level of generality, doctoral research education becomes less salient to the individual researcher. However, the value of interdisciplinarity across the arts was generally endorsed by the participants.

Speaking with respect to architectural education, the participants from TU noted that there was an important need to reorientate professional architects and architecture education to a research practice because of the over-production of cadres of 'professionals' with narrowly conceived professional identities ill-suited to the radically changed demands of the contemporary built environment, the challenge of sustainability and the demise of the 'perpetual unrestricted growth' paradigm. They emphasised the necessity of enhancing and promoting the role of independent artist-architecture collaborations in research, taking place in the orbit of architectural educations, crossing formal and informal education settings, as a means of stimulating and nourishing the research culture and challenging the common ground of the established institutions. This was seen as important as the established education formats historically understood professional practice to operate at a certain remove from research, construed as a historiographical or theoretical task. The argument proposed was that, precisely because of the engagement with a world of professional practice beyond the academy and the university, there was a need to integrate innovative research initiatives, and doctoral education, into the professional educational setting and transgress this setting. This was seen as especially important in terms of foregrounding practice within a research process and developing new tools based on artistic research and practice for addressing the current challenges of architecture and urbanism as societal issues. In this field, new artistic-urban practices can play an essential role in challenging the neoliberal governance paradigm of urban development in order to reintroduce social values.

One of the issues that emerged during the closing stages of the discussion was the potential for local networking across disciplines as a means of exchanging experience in developing doctoral education. This was not a matter of proposing interdisciplinarity as an end in itself, but rather a means of sharing knowledge of techniques and strategies in organising research and research education.