



Daring to Venture into Unknown Territory

Future outlooks for Artistic Research

'In the coming decades we will see astonishing and provocative developments in science and technology. Artists will be there to ponder, celebrate and critique. Consider some of what we may confront: invention of new species; advance in cloning; post-human enhancements to human bodies and brains; access to the inside of brains; worldwide monitoring of the health of oceans and skies; computers that can read speech and thought; autonomous intelligent everyday objects; robot companions, construction of materials atom by atom; visits to other planets. Imagine what kind of art will answer these challenges. Like science, it will be revolutionary and experimental, daring to venture into unknown territory'.¹

Artistic researchers are high quality artists that are engaged in a personal or collective investigative project, reflecting on and extending their artistic practice, interacting with societal, scientific, material and other challenges.

Operating at the intersection of cultural production, education, research and innovation, artistic research is experimental and often trans-disciplinary in nature. It results in new arts and cultural practice, media formats and content development; it generates innovative products and services across the culture, entertainment, and education sectors in Europe.

Artistic research spreads across the spectrum of arts disciplines: art & design, performing arts, architecture, media and film, music and the humanities creating fresh insights, new knowledge and enriching society's understanding of culture and creativity.

It functions as an engine for intellectual cross-fertilisation, for inter-disciplinary cognitive insight and for bridging speculative enquiries with practical implementations and commercial application. The research ecology integrates end-user needs and includes participatory design, rapid prototyping, practice-led research, real-world situated and responsive enquiry and creative content development.

Internationally - including an interesting variety across Europe - slightly different terms such as artistic research, arts-based research, research in and through the Arts, creative research, arts science and practice-based research are being used.

1. Stephen Wilson (2010, UK), 'Art + Science NOW; How scientific research and technological innovation are becoming key to 21st century aesthetics'

United Kingdom

The definition of artistic (or arts) research as defined by the British Research Assessment Exercise understands artistic research & development as ... Original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

France

In France, artistic research, as recently defined by the national association of French Art schools ANDÉA² is first of all considered as 'research', sharing with other fields the general definition of creating and developing new knowledge and objects that – if shared – extends the concerned disciplinary field and adds value to society. Research is defined by its forward looking character, the continuous tension of uncertainty and the ambition to conquer unknown territories as well as its ability to disseminate and share results. The French definition defines specific characteristics of artistic research as:

- Not necessarily having technical and technological prerequisites, but the distinct ability to develop its methods, protocols, experience, and how to verify, question and to rethink these;
- Interacting with sensitivity, intuition, out-of-the-box prospective capacity and - like any creative activity - never separating between sensibility and intelligence;
- Resources coming from the outside world, and from all possible data and activities and not assuming any linear relationships, while capitalizing on forms and ideas from the past (since the Renaissance and Leonardo da Vinci). it supports people to be part of this world in all its dimensions.

2. l'ANDÉA, Association nationale des écoles supérieures d'art <http://www.andea.fr/fr/home/>

Austria

The Austrian Programme for Arts-based Research (PEEK)³, an initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research developed standards coming solely from the arts disciplines therefore the definition is as open as possible: 'Arts-based Research can be understood as fundamental research that leads to the acquisition of knowledge. It implies the development of methods by artistic and aesthetic means as opposed to applying purely scientific processes in order to gain information'.⁴

3. [http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/projects/ar/PEEK document.pdf](http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/projects/ar/PEEK%20document.pdf)

4. Program Document: Programme for Arts-based Research

In most European countries, artistic research is practiced both inside and outside the institutional framework of arts universities. However, the key locus for arts and design research development is in the interaction between the institutions of higher arts education, the creative economy sector and the various national, regional and European cultural agencies.

Within the diverse research ecology of artistic research both science/technology-oriented and humanities-oriented approaches develop. An over-arching specificity to the domain exists provided by viable creative practices and solutions in direct engagement with users, audiences and publics.

Examples of approaches particular to each artistic discipline

- **Design:** participatory design; service design; embedded technologies; design for development; experience-based design interface design; new media art; bio-art; electronic art; advanced product development;
- **Fine Art:** a broad range of contemporary arts practice including painting, photography etc, three dimensional work, interactive installations; electronic art; sound art, public interventions & community art, new media art and network culture, interdisciplinary practices, curatorial experiments with cultural heritage; expanded documentary; language art; archive/archaeology-based work; alternative economies; micro-urbanism; experimental urbanism; and mobile content / locative media experiments; as well as traditional practices;
- **Theatre:** documentary theatre, interactive (multimedia) theatre, scenography;
- **Dance:** movement / cognition studies, dance technology; dance research is often conducted by companies/choreographic centres, such as the Forsythe Company, Wayne McGregor/Random Dance, Emio Greco | PC;

- **Music:** music technology, sonology, notation systems, (historical) musicology
- **Architecture:** research by design with strong interaction with architectural practice; universal design; RTS (Research Training Sessions).

During the last decade there has been a huge advancement in artistic research across Europe and the rest of the world as manifested in:

- Contemporary artists and designers adopting a research orientation, starting from a key problem-base rather than from a specific material or art form;
- New artistic opportunities created by the synergy with advanced technological approaches and the adaptation of various knowledge production models;
- A dramatic expansion of concerns addressed and means employed, as artists and designers increasingly explore social, economic and public challenges across health, education, housing, urbanism, employment and environmental sustainability;
- Proliferation of methodological innovations in practice-based and practice-led research in art & design, performing arts, architecture, media, and communications;
- The emergence of research centres within academic as well as in industrial settings;
- The Bologna process leading to art academies increasingly acquiring university status and the current emphasis on PhD programmes within arts universities;
- The growth of national and European platforms for creative arts research supported by targeted national research funding schemes;
- The globalization of artistic distribution circuits.

Across Europe, there is a large variety in the institutionalization of research and in the numbers of researchers. In trendsetting countries such as the United Kingdom and Finland, more than 1500 (UK) and 400 (Finland) PhD researchers are active at art universities. This variety indicates the relatively under-developed European coordination of national support initiatives taking place in the UK, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and elsewhere. National research funding initiatives have been pro-active in galvanizing creative arts and design research initiatives while the key enabler at a European level has been the stimulus for programme innovation provided by the inclusion of the 3rd cycle in the Bologna Process. A more pro-active European dimension is needed to capitalize upon national support initiatives.

