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2020
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CONFERENCE 2020

ARTS RESEARCH AFRICA



HOW DOES ARTISTIC RESEARCH DECOLONISE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE IN AFRICA?

WITS UNIVERSITY

THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS

ARTS RESEARCH AFRICA

CONFERENCE 2020



ARTS
RESEARCH
AFRICA

DOI: http://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/P4WKT

Published on the occasion of the Arts Research Africa Conference 2020 held at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 22–24 January 2020

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ISBN: 978-1-990964-45-9



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Conference Organisers
Arts Research Africa
The Wits School of Arts
Johannesburg, South Africa

Sponsors
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Published by
Arts Research Africa
The Wits School of Arts
Private Bag 3
WITS 2050
Johannesburg, South Africa

Editor
Christo Doherty

Publication design
Ryan Honeyball

Copy-editor
Stacey Vorster

Contributors
Anthony Keith
Balindile ka Ngcobo
Berhanu Ashagrie Deribrew
Bongile Lecogo-Zulu
Brett Pyper
Calvin Ratladi
Christo Doherty
Crystal Endsley
David Andrew
Dimakatso Motholo
Edda Sickinger
Ernst van der Wal
Fouad Asfour
Geir Strøm
Gerrit Olivier
Hans Ramduth
Hedwig Barry
Jane Taylor
Jason Jacobs
Jessica Foli
Joani Groenewald
Joseph Toltz
Kathyayini Dash
Katleho Kano Shoro
Kgomotso Moshugi
Kolodi Senong
Kristina Johnstone
Les Nkosi
Leyya Hoosen
Louise Hall
MADEYOULOOK (Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho)
Manola Gayatri
Marc Duby
Mareli Stolp
Mark Fleishman
Michael Schwab
Michelle Stewart
Moses Nii-Doherty
Myer Taub
Nduka Mntambo
Nhlanhla Mahlangu
Nico Athene
Nicola Genovese
Oluwadamilola Apotieri-Abdulai
Paul Cooper
Petro Janse van Vuuren
Phumelele Mzimela
Rebekka Sandmeier
Samuel Ravengai
Sandra Felix
Sela Kodjo Adjei
Sharlene Khan
Stefan Winter
Thulile Gamedze
Tshego Khutsoane
Visser Liebenberg
Yonela Mnana
Zanele Siko

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INTRODUCTION

CHRISTO DOHERTY

In his closing address to the Arts Research Africa 2020 Conference, the Ethiopian artist-scholar, Berhanu Ashagrie Deribew, catalogued the rich variety of events that took place over the three days of the conference:

> Decolonising strategies and the role of artists, artist-researchers, artist-fieldworkers, artist-scholars … The power of music, drama, theatre, poetry, storytelling, dance, performance, installation, therapy, architecture … Also dealing with the urban and the township, the centre and the periphery … The intention of journeying to the unknown, to the not known, to the unknowable, to the undiscovered, to the unrecognised, to the unintended, to the unimagined, to the unexpected … Also involving through a process of healing and dealing with the ghosts of violence from the past … Loss, mourning, grief, and indignation … Care and becoming … Relations, translations, representations … The physical, the digital, the spiritual, the dream, the hope, the desire, the memory … Interdisciplinarity, participation, collaboration … The queer, the oppressed, the marginalised, the unprivileged … The personal, the ethical, the political … the logical, the geographical, the historical … Beauty and order … Gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality … The South African, the African, the Global South, the European, the Euro-American, the International …

These proceedings are an attempt to capture the wide range of responses, listed by Deribew, to the question of artistic research in Africa that were presented at the ARA2020 Conference held in South Africa at the University of Witwatersrand in January 2020, which was organised and planned by Zanele Madiba, Mareli Stolp and myself. Since the question of artistic research in Africa is new and evolving, we structured the ARA2020 Conference to operate as an open-ended, interrogative machine, giving space to the more than 60 presenters who were selected from the many responses to our conference call. We encouraged contributions that tested not only the ideas of artistic research but that investigated new formats for the presentation of artistic research. We also sought to engage with the more than two decades of debates and experiments that have gone a long way towards establishing the field in the Global North. For these reasons, the ARA2020 Conference was opened with both a keynote lecture and a keynote "performance-dialogue". The lecture was delivered by Michael Schwab, the founding editor of the European Journal for Artistic Research—while the keynote "performance-dialogue" was performed by Nhlanhla Mahlangu, the South African multi-skilled performer, director, composer, and researcher. The performance was followed by a dialogue on the work and its implications for research, between Mahlangu and Jane Taylor, a South African academic who works at the point of intersection between scholarly enquiry and artistic practice.

The conjunction of the two forms was intended to emphasise the equivalence of both forms of presentation. The rest of the conference incorporated a wide variety of inputs, from traditional conference paper presentations and panels, to experiments with the staging of other examples of "performance-lectures," which ranged from interactive engagements to experientially orientated workshops. We were also as inclusive as we could be, treating postgraduate student work as having the same potential as presentations by established figures in the field. Our goal was to give exposure to as wide a variety of work as possible, while encouraging experimentation with new formats of presentation, believing that all of this work has the potential to open up new ways of thinking about the relationship between artistic practices and research in Africa in the 21st century.

These proceedings are now accessible to all, free of charge, as a downloadable document from the Wits University Digital Repository (WIRED Space), because we have

released the proceedings as an Open Access publication, under a Creative Commons License.[1] This ensures that the contributors' work is protected and that the authors retain full ownership of their intellectual property. We encourage our contributors to circulate, revise, and republish their work on other platforms. There is an urgency to this project that requires that we utilise all available channels to stimulate discussion and debate about the meaning of artistic research in the African context. The urgency of advancing the debate also led us to drop the time-consuming process of peer-review,[2] and to work to put these proceedings into publication as rapidly as possible.

While not the first gathering on the African continent to explore the relationship between artistic practice and research,[3] the ARA2020 Conference was notable for our strategic decision to use the term "artistic research" as the focus, rather than any of the other terms that have been used to designate the work in the field, such as "practice-led," or "practice-driven," or even the generic term "arts-based." The other strategic decision that we made with the design of ARA2020 was to fasten the theme of the conference to the imperative of decolonisation. Decolonisation is a pressing issue in South African universities, brought to the fore by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protests that erupted in 2015 and 2016, and which were subsequently taken up as a challenge to established modes of pedagogy and institutional culture in many educational institutions in this country.[4] We pushed this theme strongly, asking contributors to consider: not just "how can?", but "how does?" artistic research actively contribute to decolonisation? The material gathered in these proceedings might be read as an answer, in a rich variety of ways, to that question.

Over the last two decades or more, artistic research has become more or less established in the universities of the Global North, under a variety of different nomenclatures, and in response to various institutional pressures and opportunities. Beginning in the United Kingdom, where the artistic or creative work PhD has been available since the 1990s, the recognition of artistic research was driven by the imposition of research ratings on institutions. In Europe, the adoption of advanced degrees in artistic research followed the institutional re-arrangement of tertiary education within the European Union. This realignment brought tertiary creative arts education, previously taught in arts academies, into the university system, leading to requirements of advanced postgraduate accreditations and the recognition of PhDs based on artistic research. The several presentations at ARA2020 by speakers from the Global North testified to the fact that, although there are still disagreements over the conceptualisation of the field, artistic research has become widely accepted in the institutionalised tertiary art systems, following along the European and Anglophone traditions.

While considerable preparatory thinking and strategising has been done in this sphere in the North, and it is evident that this experience must inform the institutional strategies that are developed for our continent, it is vital, as several African speakers at the ARA2020 Conference emphasised, to recognise that the institutional context in Africa differs significantly from that of Europe or the Anglophone North. This suggests that a different route must be followed in establishing artistic research in African tertiary education. In contrast to the European context, creative arts departments on this continent have generally been part of post-colonial African universities since their founding. However, as Deribew observes in his closing address to the ARA2020 Conference, the academic leadership and administrators in African universities have never taken creative arts departments very seriously. Creative arts departments were good for decorative purposes, such as providing music at graduation ceremonies or providing a mural for the walls of the student cafeteria, but were never considered as sites for significant research or knowledge production. All too often, arts

practice in Africa has been regarded as a "craft" without intellectual content. The incremental changes in regulations that have allowed some space for artistic research in African universities have been a belated response to international trends rather than a result of deep engagement with the field. Samuel Ravengai, a Zimbabwean professor of Theatre and Performance currently teaching in South Africa, notes in his paper, that university regulations in Zimbabwe have already made allowances for the recognition of creative work, but that nobody has been promoted on this basis. He expresses the hope that the pressure of artistic research will change the situation for the better. Rebekka Sandmeier, a professor of Music at the University of Cape Town, in her close reading of the university regulations governing doctoral study in music at South African universities, notes that they don't "entirely support the requirement that research is embodied in the creative output of the degrees." It is clear that the regulatory framework is changing in several parts of Africa, often in response to institutional trends in the Global North, but the intellectual work to think through the implications of such changes and to make the interventions that will facilitate engaged artistic research on this continent must still be done.

Should the creative arts, when situated within the institutional framework of the research university, produce new knowledge in a manner that is in any way commensurate with the production of knowledge in the sciences or even the social sciences? This is a question that has occupied much of the discussion in the early phase of the debate over artistic research in the Global North. As Stefan Winter, one of the European contributors to the ARA2020 Conference, reporting from the debates in the Global North, stated: artistic research can contribute to broader social thinking "only if it can work autonomously in its own element and is not over-shaped by criteria from other fields." Many of the papers at the ARA2020 Conference questioned, in particular, the commensurability of artistic work with research output. Mark Fleishman, a pioneering figure in performance-based research in both South Africa and internationally, sounded this warning in his paper entitled 'Artistic Research and the Institution: A Cautionary Tale.' Speaking as the artistic director of an independent theatre company and a university head of department, Fleishman's experience led him to advocate that the arts should function as a "minor literature" within the various ethical traps set by the structures of the research university.

At the heart of the radical demand to decolonise the African university is a recognition that the existing structures of knowledge fostered in the colonial university must be critiqued from a political perspective. As several speakers at the ARA2020 Conference aver, the structures of knowledge that have been at issue in the debates over the status of artistic research in the Global North, can be viewed very differently from the perspective of the formerly colonised. Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of *epistemicide*,[5] or the murder of indigenous knowledge, is referred to on more than one occasion in the papers. This debate has become more acute as African universities reposition themselves as producers of knowledge rather than as consumers of knowledge from the universities of the Global North. The developments in artistic research in the Global North have, as several contributions to the ARA2020 Conference recognised, also created a common space for co-operation between the development of artistic research in Africa and allied movements in the rest of the world, particularly the decolonial struggles in the rest of the Global South. Mareli Stolp, proposed that the development of artistic research in the Global North has already created a common, anti-Cartesian space where a collaborative dialogue with African philosophies could be possible.

Speaking from his experience as the founder and editor of the first major peer-reviewed publication devoted to the presentation and exposition of artistic research, Schwab chose an arresting metaphor as the opening figure of his keynote lecture. In the first part of his lecture, which he entitled 'Dynamics,' Schwab outlined the ways that artistic research has disturbed what currently passes for knowledge in the contemporary art, as much as settled scientific epistemology. To understand the current state of artistic research, he invited his African audience to imagine themselves trying to jump aboard a moving train from a platform that was itself in motion. The train, he suggested, could be understood as the train of knowledge or even the train of art, because artistic research, just by its existence has changed the fabric of what currently passes for both knowledge production and for contemporary art in the Global North.

The sense that what "currently passes for knowledge" in the African university is a colonial imposition resonates particularly strongly with practitioners on this continent who seek to use artistic practice to reconfigure our understanding of the past, the present, and the future. Yet, as Brett Pyper, the principal investigator of the ARA project, emphasises, echoing Schwab's dynamic metaphor, the notion of art is under question from a thorough-going decolonial critique: "we [must] simultaneously address the coloniality of (much) art even as we recognise its affordances with regards to decolonial knowledge production." To speak of decolonisation is to emphasise the urgency of this approach and the potential for artistic research to actively disrupt the hierarchies of knowledge and artistic practice that were imposed as part of the colonial dispensation.

As we sought to engage with the intensity of the decolonial critique as it has recently emerged in South Africa, we were also determined, when organising the ARA2020 Conference, to reach beyond South Africa to the wider continent beyond the borders of the Limpopo and Orange Rivers. It seemed imperative that the implications of artistic research should be examined not just from a post-colonial, but from a pan African perspective. Two papers by African contributors from outside South Africa explored themes that resonated with the topic of the conference but in ways that reinforce the importance of a pan African engagement for developing artistic research in dialogue with the continent's histories of post-colonial culture and the distinctive entanglement of African epistemologies with ritual and sacred practices.

Moses Nii-Dortey, a composer and music researcher from Ghana, gave an absorbing account of the artistic research tactics he employed to document and perform—and by performing preserve for future iterations—the "dying folk opera," *The Lost Fishermen*. As Nii-Dortey points out, the genre of "folk opera," with its combination of dance, song, and myth, offered the promise, in post-colonial Ghana, that the aesthetic values of the indigenous African arts could be integrated into a new genre of performance. For two decades, the genre was seen as a vital aspect of Kwame Nkrumah's decolonising mission for the arts in newly independent Ghana. Nkrumah's political fall, and the resulting loss of state patronage, combined with the scale and cost of performing such ambitious works, has led to their near extinction. Working with the composer of the opera, Saka Acquaye, at the time of his research an elderly, blind man, and the only extant record of the work (some damaged VHS tapes from the performance at FESTAC in 1970), and drawing on the embodied memories of two surviving actors of that performance, Nii-Dortey was able to reconstruct *The Lost Fishermen* and restage the opera in Accra with a live performance. Nii-Dortey's work was not only a vivid demonstration of performance as a way of producing knowledge, but also brought the complex history of decolonisation and culture into the ARA2020 Conference.

The visual artist-researcher, Sela Kodjo Adjei, also from Ghana, described how he drew on techniques of auto-ethnography and the deployment of his own artistic practice to engage with the belief systems of the Ewe-Vodu practitioners in the Upper Volta region. The research began by questioning Anlo-Ewe elders from an artistic perspective. Simple questions emerged such as: what do you consider as art in Vodu shrines? What does this or that artistic expression imply in sacred Vodu spaces? What are the spiritual dimensions of Anlo-Ewe Vodu sculptures? Artistic practice and spiritual practice were closely intertwined in these discussions with Anlo-Ewe elders; Adjei arrived at an engagement with the deeper sources of meaning in Anlo-Ewe culture through his practice as an artist. His paper traced his personal development through debates in scholarship around auto-ethnography to a realisation that he had to unlearn what he has read in books, in order to approach the sources of knowledge. But, as he discovered, the most potent sources of knowledge in Africa are not necessarily accessible to anyone, nor do the holders of such knowledge believe that it should be available for general propagation. Adjei's work as an artistic researcher suggests a way that such channels of communication can be opened up through sympathetic engagement and an insistence, shared by many of the papers and performance-lectures at the ARA2020 Conference that the aesthetic and the spiritual in Africa are closely entangled.

To bring in other forms of embodied thinking and knowledge production, we experimented with the design of the ARA2020 Conference in order to make "space" for other modes of presentation. In some ways this echoed the decolonial critique of university institutions, and the call for new spaces in which to develop alternative forms of pedagogy and engagement. The South African artist and writer, Thulile Gamadze, referenced this imperative in her contribution to the panel discussion curated by the Johannesburg art collective, MADEYOULOOK. "How do we find ways to bring our entire selves into the space and spaces like the university?", she asked. In our call, we opened the possibility of "performance-lecture" but left the format of these presentations open to the creative inclinations of our participants. The range of events tested the special limits of what was possible in a conference presentation and has also challenged the collection of such events in the proceedings. Some chose to stage an excerpt from a performance or, like Kolodi Senong, to present a selection of paintings from an exhibition, using the context of the conference and the presence of an audience to frame the work as research. Others, such as Balindile ka Ngcobo, deliberately broke with the one-to-many ergonomics of the conference presentation, and used performers strategically placed amongst the audience to disorientate and dismantle the structural dynamics of the conference as a knowledge transfer mechanism. Jason Jacobs, a performer whose practice is rooted in the relationship between dreaming and the brown body, used the space of the performance-lecture to deliver a letter to his grandmother, where he explained to her absent presence how he made use of his dreams about her as a site for developing his dramaturgy. Edda Sickinger, a choreographer who works between Europe and Cape Town, used a combination of video, touch, and the interactions with her conference audience to articulate the experiential outcomes of her practice. Perhaps most provocative of all, the artist and experimental South African filmmaker, Nduka Mntambo, delivered his lecture/paper presentation to an empty auditorium, while his "audience" experienced his deconstruction of the single camera view by walking through an multi-screen cinematic installation on the stage behind his lectern.

What was also striking were the number of presenters who chose to use the format of the workshop to explore issues in a non-hierarchal way with participants. Drawing from a complex mélange of decolonial and black feminist theory/practice, Sharlene

Khan and Fouad Asfour used a series of textual prompts, fixed to the floor or walls of the workshop space, to engage participants in a variety of embodied activities, which they called "parcours," as catalysts for the mental processes of decolonisation at both the group and individual level. Kristina Johnstone, a Belgian-South African choreographer and dancer, used movement improvisation as a way to develop an ethical research method by working with the artist-researcher's body in relation to other bodies.

Unfortunately the re-presentation of the performance-lectures and workshops is the least successful aspect of these proceedings. The limitations of our time and budget has meant that we have, in most cases, only been able to give a brief acknowledgement of the events in this publication. The problem of how to use digital media technology to represent and distribute artistic research is another challenge for the development of artistic research in Africa. We hope that the preliminary steps taken with the organisation of the ARA2020 Conference and the design of these proceedings are a contribution to this challenge.

As professor of art and media theory, Hans-Peter Swartz has observed, digital media technology is not simply a toolbox for the instrumental representation of artistic research; but has been the driving force of the post-modern globalisation of cultures.[6] Many of the debates in Europe and the UK have recognised that artistic research has emerged in relation to the potential of digital technologies to open up new modes of recording and communicating such research. One of the biggest challenges to the hegemony of the written text is not simply from the theoretical critique of "logocentrism"; but because of the alternative platforms offered through digital technologies. A panel discussion at the ARA2020 Conference recognised this crucial development by bringing together the editors of several online journals to discuss the challenge of dissemination of artistic research using the potential of digital instruments and networks.[7] The hour scheduled for the discussion was clearly not enough, and merely gestured towards the questions that must still be addressed around digital repositories; copyright and open access, and ways to understand the effect of digital transformation and representation, particularly in relation—in the African context—to transient artifacts and performance.

These papers should be read, and the representation of the performance-lectures explored further, in order to advance the possibilities of artistic research in Africa. Emerging as a common theme in the majority of this work is a sense that artistic research can and must play a vital role in the development of a truly decolonised university in Africa. However this is not a simple process, and may, as Deribew reminded us in his closing address, require not just the demolition of colonial monuments and the interrogation of the inherited epistemological structures of the research university, but also the deconstruction of many of the most cherished deep mythologies of western art.

Acknowledgements

There are several individuals without whom this conference and these proceedings would be impossible. Thank you to Zanele Madiba, the ARA Project Coordinator, for her steady management of the conference that had the demands of both academic conference and arts festival; Mareli Stolp, our first ARA Postdoctoral Fellow, for her contribution to the planning of the programme and her valuable link to the European artistic research communities; Vincent Truter of Orlando for his branding expertise and online strategy; Debbie Straver, from Kunst Onderzoek, Holland, for her encouragement and advice with alternative formats such as "performance lectures"; Zivanai Matangi for stills photography; our conference venue managers: Bongani Malinga, Bongani Nicholas Ngomane, Lunga Khuhlane, Mahlubandile Hlubi Nontlanga, Nobantu Shabangu, Relebohile Mabunda, Simangaliso Thango, Thembakazi Mdeni, Tshepang Moticoe, and Kamogelo Walaza; Anna Raselomane and O'bidie Maunze from Wits Marketing; Rene Green and Monwabisi Linganisa from the Wits Sports Conference Centre; Emma Ketzie for Financial Administration at Wits; Charl Roberts and Nina Lewin from the Wits Library/Digital Repository; Stacey Vorster for her patience and meticulous copy editing; Ryan Honeyball from Stranger Studio for his dynamic design of the proceedings; Robin Drennan for the additional funding support provided by the Wits Research Office; The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the primary funding of the conference and the ARA project in the Wits School of Arts.

Christo is Associate Professor and Head of Arts Research in the Wits School of Arts and served as the director of the ARA2020 Conference; christo.doherty@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Our licence was based on the Open Access Publishing agreement which was drawn up for the Wits online OA publication, *The African Journal of Information and Communication*, by Dr Tobias Schonwetter, the Director of the IP Unit at UCT Faculty of Law, who was, from 2009 to 2018, the Legal Lead for Creative Commons SA. It is based on a template he had done for the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). Thanks to Chris Armstrong, the Publishing Editor of *The African Journal of Information and Communication*, for his help with the licence arrangements.

2 Reconfiguring the operations of peer review has been central to the development of artistic research, as was discussed in several of the ARA2020 Conference sessions.

3 The first important meeting in South Africa to address this area of practice was the international colloquium hosted by the Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD) Research Centre at the University of Johannesburg in October 2009. The papers from the colloquium are available as *On Making: Integrating Approaches to Practice-Led Research in Art and Design*.

4 See the papers collected in Jansen, *Decolonisation in Universities*.

5 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

6 Schwarz, 'Foreword'.

7 The record of this panel discussion has not been included in these proceedings, because the positions and understandings articulated by the contributors are all available online. The members of the panel were Tegan Bristow, the managing editor of *Ellipses*; Michael Schwab, the founding editor of the *Journal for Artistic Research*; Geir Strøm, speaking about *VIS: the Nordic Journal for Artistic Research*; and Nirav Christophe, Professor of Performative Processes at HKU University of the Arts, Utrecht, Holland.

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OPENING ADDRESS:

DYNAMICS

MICHAEL SCHWAB

Section 1 in which we jump onto a moving train[1]

This first point has to do with the historical realities of what we call "science" or better still, in German, *Wissenschaft*—a general term for the making of knowledge that does not discriminate between natural science and the humanities. Imagine such science or *Wissenschaft* to be a moving train with a window of opportunity open somewhere at its side, and you, somewhat apart, also on a moving platform with a different speed and direction. How would you take aim? Would you try to hit what you already know of science, that is, its past that has travelled to you like light from distant galaxies pretending to be a trace of its presence, or, would you aim for a future, different point at which your window of opportunity might be, after you are already mid-air just before impact?

Of course, this is all too simplistic. We are living in what has been termed a "knowledge society" to various degrees, that is, an at least partially-shared environment in which we move. Train and platform are already interconnected, that is, how the train moves informs the movement of the platform and vice versa—artistic research, through its sheer existence, has already changed the fabric of knowledge and the epistemic trajectories within it, with or without explicit acknowledgement.

Furthermore, how do we know that it is us who are jumping? May it not be the window of opportunity that jumps onto and grabs hold of us so as to turn from virtual into actual reality?—We have to let go of this idea that we, humans, are the only subjects in this—or any—play, and allow things—windows, but also animals, body parts, instruments—to jump, too. So, you could imagine this movie where the camera is in, or better, "the window" as it looks onto you standing on a platform zooming by, waiting, jumping, capturing you in a new emergent reality.

Or, yet again, and perhaps even more complex: what if not only trains and platforms are seen as moving parts, but also people jumping off platforms and windows jumping off trains? That is, what if your jump—as well as the window's jump—likewise inform the play and the epistemic trajectories that it unfolds? Might it be that without anybody jumping, nothing would ever turn or change? Thus, let's imagine for a moment that in a jump, whose subject we cannot even identify, that what the world is and can be is determined anew, and that things become in an act of jumping, of doing, of daring, of trusting, and of caring.

Actually, the train is not only to be imagined as science or *Wissenschaft*. It is also the train of art and maybe, better still, trains of arts that we thus engage, for the arts, too, are moving along and we, even with the ticket we once bought, might find ourselves not as their passenger, in particular if we are not prepared to also make them, that is, jump and change them.

We are not alone. Look around, and you will see base jumpers and high jumpers and long jumpers of all types and in all contexts that interact, too, that are being pushed and pulled, and push and pull others in mid-air-jump in what may be called local moments of encounter, from which, suddenly we look up and see both trains and platforms disappear in irrelevance while people and concerns enter as if invited. Can those trains and platforms perhaps get lost in such moments of mid-air-trajectory-altering suspense, before—CRASH—we hit the ground again?

So, here we are. I lifted off, and we'll see how this will figure.

Section 2 in which we travel from being to becoming

Modern science is a distant development from antiquity, the birthplace of the logocentric western or northern way of doing things, as many believe. Of course, art, in

the way we think about it today, didn't exist back then, but from Plato, we know that activities of such artistic kind were highly suspicious, in particular with regard to their epistemic value.

Plato is unable to imagine a place for art within the category of truth that his philosophy imposes, despite the fact that a will towards locating an appropriate register for art is more than apparent in his writings. In *The Republic*, before declaring that "poetry has no serious value or claim to truth," Socrates in discussion with Glaucon offers art a possible line of defence if it is able to articulate its value.[2] However, being exclusively engaged in a world of appearances, art is seen as so far removed from the truth (i.e., the ideal forms) that a secondary process must be set in place through which art's claim can be supported.[3] This process would be carried out by "defenders, men who aren't poets themselves" who could speak on art's behalf.[4]

Knowledge, or more appropriate here, truth, is related to something stable, "eternal" even—anything that changes is at least once removed, like the growing and waning flower from the idea of the flower, or twice removed, like the painting of that growing and waning flower. We find residues of this need to ground knowledge in something stable in demands for replication in the sciences, for instance, or the reservation towards experiences as merely "subjective."

Still, art's "return" is dependent on art's ability to reflect on its own genuine and positive relationship to "truth," without which "her defenders" would remain in the same spot Socrates is in. To my mind it is only shortly after Immanuel Kant's three critiques at around 1800 that the most radical departure took place, when an interest in the formations of life started, suggesting a new, central role for art announcing "the end of the longest error" as Friedrich Nietzsche put it.[5] Here, a section from *The Novices at Sais* by Novalis, published posthumously in 1802:

> Mankind travels along manifold pathways. He who pursues and compares them will perceive the emergence of certain strange figures; figures that appear to be inscribed in that massive tome composed in cipher that one everywhere and in everything beholds: on wings, eggshells, in clouds, in the snow, in crystalline and stone formations, in freezing waters, on the skins and in the bowels of mountain-ranges, of plants, beasts, people, in the stars of the heavens, in contiguous and expansive panes of pitch and glass, in the clustering of iron filings around the magnet, in the extraordinary ebb and flow of contingency. In these, one may glimpse an intimation of the key to this wondrous text, its very grammar-book; and yet the intimation refuses to accommodate itself to fixed forms and appears to begrudge any translation into a higher key.[6]

And, in a different context:

> The world must be romanticized. In this way one finds again its original meaning … Insofar as I give the common an elevated meaning, the usual a secret perspective, the known the value of the unknown, the finite an infinite appearance—I romanticize.[7]

Section 3 in which we become quite specific

In terms of phenomena, eternal forms aren't very specific as they refer, for instance, to any and not this particular flower. More technically speaking, one would perhaps look at the absolute specificity of a really random number. Pseudo-random numbers of the kind that computers often generate are pretty random but show a pattern, which allows them to be expressed in an abbreviated way, lossless compressed, if you

will. Absolutely random numbers, on the other hand, that is very specific things, can only be arrived at through themselves and in no other way, compression—an attempt at a shortcut—will always introduce loss.[8]

Or, take this idea from Lewis Carroll, which is said to have inspired Jorge Luis Borges' famous story, *On Exactitude in Science*,[9]

> "What a useful thing a pocket-map is!" I remarked.
>
> "That's another thing we've learned from your Nation," said Mein Herr, "map-making. But we've carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?"
>
> "About six inches to the mile."
>
> "Only six inches!" exclaimed Mein Herr. "We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"
>
> "Have you used it much?" I enquired.
>
> "It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr: "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well."[10]

I would suggest that rather than having moved to some form of integration of knowledge—a pocket-map, if you will—as science has progressed, we see more and more phenomena that, stubbornly, resist being explained. While knowledge surely has grown over the centuries, ignorance seems to have outgrown the growing knowledge.

Time for a step-change, perhaps, and another mode of "research" that lets phenomena be, that engages with them one at a time, accepting the endless labour of turning every stone—or of rolling it up the hill, as Sisyphus asks us to do—and not falling prey to the temptation that what I understand *here* may explain what happens *there*, despite the connections that things undoubtedly are said to have.

Section 4 where things are getting really fast

My friend and colleague, the pianist Paulo de Assis, has recently suggested that practitioners cannot, at the moment of making, afford time for contemplation of the kind that so strongly has influenced philosophical aesthetics. "In this particular moment, in the very last seconds before going onstage, the whole concerto—its overall form and all its pitches, rhythms, instrumental colours, dynamic ranges, tempi, pedalling, fingerings, gestures—is vividly present in the pianist's body and mind, being concretely felt as a huge field of *virtuality*… As soon as the pianist starts performing—physically touching the keyboard, attentively listening to the orchestra, punctually looking at the conductor—all those potentialities go through a process of synthesis, leading to the radical here-and-now of every single fraction of a second, which one-by-one, one-after-the-other, in closest vicinity and rapid pace, are producing concrete *actualisations* of forces and materials."[11] Although other disciplines seem to be moving at different speeds, the complexity that art seems to afford requires fast "thinking on one's feet," decision-making without having as yet understood (all) the

implications, risking, as it were, to miss the most obvious, but hoping also, to touch on the unprecedented.

In particular, the rate and speed of technical developments have meant that things are implemented—and often sold—before we really understand their implications. The best example for the current state of affairs may be the discussions around Artificial Intelligence. 'AI can predict if you'll die soon—but we've no idea how it works'[12] read a recent headline. Likewise, AI seems to be able to create art—or something that resembles art—but we are equally at a loss when it comes to this work's meaning.

More and more, understanding seems to lag behind the dynamic material reality of the world. Insisting on secured knowledge may still be very important, but it risks detaching knowledge from decision-making. In the face of this, unsecured knowledges that operate right at the point of life become perhaps the better options, not as no-knowledge and anything goes as orthodox fundamentalists want to make us believe, but as more varied but still specific epistemic engagements in concrete situations. Material and social bodies gain particular importance, but they are not the only means by which phenomena are being processed, in particular with respect to the futurity that is engrained in such fast presence.

Section 5 in which we demand better

Epistemologically speaking, those historical developments have led to various crises, regarding, for instance, the unity of knowledge. One lesson learnt is that historical factors matter and that at least a certain degree of dynamism is required since what counts as knowledge at any given time as well as the routes chosen to obtain it can be different. Historical epistemology tries to take account of this and also of the historicity of knowledge and the way it creates futures.[13] This is already a valid and valuable departure from more fixed notions of epistemology.

However, history itself has been problematised in art. For instance, in modernity, the challenge of artistic research could have been responded to in simpler ways. Institutions such as the Bauhaus or art movements such as Conceptual Art were very engaged in their historical relevance, sometimes explicitly politically but not necessarily so. From today's perspective, it seems comparatively easy to take historical problems and to research and deliver "solutions" to them, that is, to modernise practice by creating new templates (or artistic forms).

The teleology that comes with the need of making future—avant-gardism—over time has made this mode rather dated, and we have become fast in spotting and disapproving of this often-essential ingredient. From the perspective of contemporary art, historising knowledge is, thus, not enough, that is, moving from an eternal to a durational baseline still offers a ground that is not sufficiently part of developments *before* historical lines have been drawn and historical paradigms have taken hold. For this reason, artistic research must be valid even without historical demands.[14] However, which kind of epistemology would support this is very much open to debate. Without such epistemological engagement, research carried out within a more contemporary paradigm risks not being taken seriously in a wider context of research. Or, conversely, work carried out according to a historicising paradigm might find it hard to be recognised in the context of contemporary art.

At its most extreme, a radical epistemology must be proposed,[15] allowing for absolutely unprecedented knowledges not yet—or never—adapted into a shared fabric of knowledge. Untransferable items of knowledge must be possible for which finding

the right space or the right time remains a challenge. We may—with Nietzsche—call such knowledges "untimely."[16] In fact, clear epistemic phenomena that resist being absorbed into standardised and timely knowledge are of great importance, as they signal the shortcomings of our present knowledge systems vis-a-vis the world as it exists, be it as part of artistic sensibilities or cultural practices. Thus, epistemology should not be used to discriminate against knowledges outside its own territory; however, we also need a space to probe and contest lazy knowledge claims with no basis.

Section 6 where we have learnt a lesson

There is no point in setting up a Journal for Artistic Research if this journal aims at replacing concrete experiences with general statements: the kind of shortcuts mentioned before. While such statements may well be important and should feature in the journal, we need to take extra care with the way in which practice appears.

What researchers submit and how they arrange it is absolutely down to them.[17] We have neither a desired word count nor some other way of assessing the quantity of media that are used. All we ask for is that "a reader should be able to access all essential aspects of the exposition in the period of an hour of investigation."[18] This includes, for instance, the distinct possibility of non-textual submissions, such as, say, a single video.

Avoiding templates of any kind is important to us since the form of an article may be as relevant to its meaning as its content—and you wouldn't want to tell people what exactly to write in a text either, would you? Thus, we conceive of the pages of the journal also as sites of practice rather than just spaces to reflect upon it.

At the same time, the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) is an online journal, so there are limits in what is technically possible. While the Research Catalogue—the software platform that we use—allows for rich-media, multimodal, and non-linear forms of "writing," for most people it is clearly not their usual artistic context.[19] For many, this may be problematic, but stepping into this also social environment can be very productive.

To take a more general example: an installation or a performance made again in a different context or space will, in most cases, affect my understanding of the work. I will also, in most cases, need to make compromises and adapt what I have brought to the table, that is, take on external challenges and find artistic responses to them. All of this changes and transforms the work, which is now not a singular object carried over from space to space but a multiplicity tangible only across those spaces. In each appearance, something will have been taken away, and something else will have been added.

While I accept that doing this also in the context of JAR can be a difficult task, when it artistically works, it has proven successful for everybody, including authors, reviewers, and readers. Importantly, though, when we are looking for art, we are not pointed to another space or another occasion, which I might have missed as the site for experience and meaning. I—as the reader—can expect it to happen here and now as I engage with it in JAR.

However, JAR is not an online art magazine but a peer-reviewed journal, which means that in its very specific context other than perhaps in different contexts, practice needs to be articulated—or *exposed* as we usually say—as research,[20] that is, as practice happens again, its epistemic implications have to become tangible. In effect, beyond simple technical structures, the institutions that we built and the credibility that they have solicited in the past creates precisely that: a space where research is

"natural" and needn't be argued for (again) from the ground up, as well as, a community that understands the difficulties involved, and appreciates and learns from achievements.[21] Technology is important, but successful articulation and communication are not about the technology that is used.

Such expositions of practice as research happen in JAR, but the operations of expositionality are so basic that other contexts can easily be imagined, in which due to their different affordances, different other aspects may be worked on. To give an example, for our 'Transposition [T^P]: Artistic Data Exploration' project (which was funded by the Austrian Science Fund),[22] Gerhard Eckel, David Pirrò and I specifically worked towards those contexts with their own respective histories and problematics: 1) the (music) performance setting, 2) the white cube art setting, 3) the conference setting, 4) the art catalogue setting, 5) the academic book setting, and 6) the project website setting.

Each of these settings allows for different types of engagements with different balances between discursive and non-discursive understandings, creating a richer experience of the project than any single setting could.

Section 7 where there is no time to rest

JAR and the Research Catalogue are also research projects in their own right. Over the past years, we discovered aspects that still require work. Here, I want to list just a few of those in order to indicate current concerns:

1. The notion of "artistic" in the journal's name is problematic in a number of ways. First, different creative disciplines relate to the concept of "art" differently. Some practitioners have reported that this can go as far as to reject the idea that their work may be "artistic" in any way. Second, in particular, when the making of "art" is not the aim, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish research practices that are "artistic" from those that are not. And, third, notwithstanding my first point, for some positioned in fine art contexts, the notion of "artistic" does not sufficiently engage with high-art concerns,[23] mirroring to some degree issues with the institutionalisation of art that some see at play when notions of "research" enter the academy. Amongst others, these points make it hard to define a disciplinary position of the journal, which is not general enough to simply be "transdisciplinary" and yet wider than what usually counts as art.[23]
2. Strategically, JAR was set up to demonstrate the very possibility of traditional peer review processes in the field of artistic research. However, this has made many very specific discussions and dialogues necessary, adding value to a submission in the eyes of those involved in the review and editing process. This value, however, is largely hidden from our readership, since a JAR exposition may be seen as too much akin to a "work" to carry the various layers of negotiation, collaboration, interpretation, and reflection that allow for divergent readings. It is difficult to imagine how this could be represented; currently, those valuable layers remain largely hidden.
3. The way the Research Catalogue had been conceived prefers spatial over temporal modes of distribution, expressing a dominance of visual over auditory registers, for instance.[24] While it is possible to create temporal structures through the use of audio or video, the structure itself can very little be engaged with.[25] The implications of this bias, for instance, in regard to the peer review process, but also the kind of practices that JAR attracts, are not very well understood, but clear when we ask practitioners to "design" their submission.

4. To my mind, JAR has successfully tackled issues of multimodality, that is, the articulation of research across a variety of media, including written text. However, the language in which this is written is also not neutral, and it is only very recently that we have started to accept also submissions in Spanish, Portuguese, and German next to English. With this move, we have opened up the possibility of working across languages as well, but what impact this has with regard to our processes, as well as the understanding of art and research, is not yet clear. The distinct possibility exists that we may eventually encounter submissions that don't sit easily within global paradigms. How would assessment and editorial policies need to respond to more localised knowledges expressed in languages not accessible to most?

We aim to apply as few as possible external determinations creating a technical, conceptual, and structural framework that allows seeing specific choices rather than defaulting behaviours. This implies that an ongoing critical process is needed to learn from our observation and to see when expectations are merely satisfied or at what point new approaches enter the field. Processes of authorship, peer review, and reading can become very complex if one aims at responding on eye-level to all submissions that we receive, but this is part of our responsibility. In effect, we invite artists and researchers to work it out and to challenge us, reviewers, and readers with epistemic claims born out of specific practices.

Section 8 where we learn to walk (or ride a bicycle)

JAR has been working to free artistic research publishing—and, hence, artistic research as a whole—from as many presuppositions as possible. We do not operate with an understanding of what art is or what it is supposed to be, and neither do we apply definitions of research. However, we do require submissions to make those aspects tangible as part of their articulation so that we can learn how to read, listen, see a project, and understand what implications this has for art, science, or artistic research—platforms and trains—which through expositionality become moveable and not just moving objects.

With reference to Jean-Luc Nancy (and Martin Heidegger), the "sense" that an exposition makes is three-fold—it is perceptual, insofar as aesthetic objects are being experienced; it is signifying, insofar as knowledge is articulated; and it is directional, insofar as it operates an open-ended movement towards the reality and the unfolding of its world. More specifically, expositionality as the articulation of practice as research has a differential operator at its heart where the doubling and re-doubling of practice replace representational reference and provide a grounding in something other than what the articulation tables. This includes the notion of practice itself, which is equally not a given but—as research practice perhaps?—emergent from its exposition. The movement of the exposition, its momentum, if you will, creates just about enough stability to afford letting go of what is otherwise deemed necessary. This stability is, first of all, temporal and not historical; the engagement with material temporality need not be codified historically to gain its status as research.

In the best cases, I see artistic research articulations as self-grounding exercises that take away definitory power from existing institutions creating as it were with an exposition temporary or limited new institutions, as Esa Kirkkopelto so aptly put it.[26] Re-instituting, in this sense, is a founding exercise that has to go down deep enough to detangle a practice's operational order from existing orders that can do nothing but box art in, a risk that many rightly see associated with the field of artistic research

as a whole, where research captures, identifies, and makes available for use and abuse what otherwise may have had other, also epistemic, potentials.

Addressing you as artists—and, in particular, African artists—today, the question that is most concerning me, and which I hope to be able to talk to you about these coming days, is this: is the option of leaving "northern" definitions of art and research behind enough, in terms of decoloniality, or, is the need for, and perhaps the pressure to, self-ground another turn of the screw that promises a voice to those who are willing to, at least provisionally, suspend their place in their own history, while those who require history not as presupposition but as lived, interconnected reality might feel the opposite?

This question very much touches on notions of originality, which both art and research in my proposition—despite being moved from history to time—rely on perhaps too much. What about that researcher whose research focuses on the subtraction of originality so as to become the maker of what has already been made?

Section 9 is about strategy

Expositions of practice as research in JAR are dependent on a suitable peer-review process, where reviewers need to be found from within a context—or better, still, a world—that a submission engages. The selection process is a little hit-and-miss as we need to cast a net wide enough in order to not suggest very specific disciplinary contexts. We do this by also not focusing on disciplines, for instance, by involving artists primarily with experience of JAR and the Research Catalogue, but also by employing a comparatively high number of reviewers: on average 4.3 reviewers per submission (for the record, JAR's success rate is 20%), in addition to the currently ten-people-strong editorial board, which also looks at each submission.

Inside the process, the key strategic element is expressed in question three of the peer review form, which reads: "How does the submission expose practice as research?" with a checklist below asking to check, for instance, "Whether or not the submission is contextualised and the context is referenced, which may include social, artistic, and/or theoretical issues, and if not, if such an omission matters." In effect, a submission could not be according to any orthodox criterion for research and still be accepted, which could happen only if it was in full expositional operation. However, for the one or the other point, peer reviewers may see deficits and a need for standardised external scaffolds, which we are not principally objected to. Those hand- and footrests can, in fact, be quite powerful.

However, from experience, I would suggest this: the better an exposition works, the less dependent it is on criteria. Or, conversely, asking to respond explicitly to criteria for research during revisions is often a stopgap when, in fact, a more principled re-thinking could have made those demands disappear. However, it is comparatively easy to require, for instance, contextualisation; it is hard, if not impossible, to suggest new, suitable artistic solutions, which is the reason why the reviewing process unintentionally has an academic bias.

To my mind, while such openness is still strategically relevant, our own history might have created a sense of expectations—or a habit—that doesn't make it any more likely today to receive an expositionally challenging submission than it was nine years ago. This is also down to the often institutionally driven field of artistic research as a whole, which I don't see as being very experimental, perhaps missing a trick or two.

Section 10 that describes emergent concerns

There is no systematic analysis of the effects of all of this on intellectual or artistic investments, and I would say that broadly speaking concerns are largely shared with the wider context of contemporary art. However, below the surface, when discussing the effects of artistic research, I would look at those areas in particular as fields in which artistic research may offer different departures from both contemporary art and science:

1. Distributivity and fragmentarity

Distributivity is, of course, a concern in contemporary art as, for example, Peter Osborne remarks.[27] It also plays a role in the context of artistic research, most prominently perhaps described by Sean Lowry and Nancy de Freitas in relation to *Project Anywhere*.[28] What is striking to me, however, is that those notions of distribution are not (yet) radical enough, both on the side of the makers and on the side of the audiences, that is, I see artistic research as being in the process of integrating more diverse practices and audiences, breaching in the process notions of art but also conceptions of knowledge. In this respect, I see expositions as microcosms in which distributions are enacted that may be and often are developed from there to a global scale, connecting, for instance, audiences that would otherwise not have seen a shared ground. Artistic research projects are, in this sense, also integration exercises with the caveat that there is no simple and single representation of the distributed whole of the project. Work concepts may need to refer to notions of "fragment," "assemblage," or "multitude" in order to describe the kinds of objects and identities that are still afforded.

2. Inter- and transdisciplinarity

Related to this is the importance of interdisciplinarity, an area in which artistic researchers are already seen as leaders.[29] Beyond this, and potentially more interesting, are the developing notions of transdisciplinarity in which, despite the critical voices,[30] I see real departures. The most important of these are not so much particular relations of disciplines and not even the relationship between academic and professional research, but the increased epistemic role of amateurs, tourists, or lay people—their knowledge on their own terms is fast becoming as relevant as that of experts rooted in historically developed disciplines. And, yes, many artistic researchers venture out precisely on those terms to engage in makeshift ways with difficult issues for which it would take a long time to develop the appropriate apparatus.

3. Collaboration, authorship and subjectivity

The inter- and transdisciplinary setting is not one that ever works for a single person. In artistic research, groups of people integrate and develop protocols for authorship and distributions of knowledge, often reaching out to voices that don't (yet) matter, which is the reason why artistic research projects are often activist in nature. Those collaborative networks of distributed authorship are part of the creative processes themselves. They may also include non-human acteurs, indicating how subjectivity itself can be seen as distributed and fluctuating across a complex set of relations.

4. Minor forms

A further development from this, on the artistic production side, is the role that minor practices and forms play in artistic research, which contemporary art criticism and the art market would have weeded out. Without my experiences in artistic

research—as a simple gallery- or museum-goer—I don't think that I would have seen quite how manifold artists' trajectories can be, and what kind of inspiration can be gained from things judged badly by the standard discourse. (As an aside, I continue to get comments about the "artistic quality" represented in JAR, which to me is an indication of the hierarchies still very much at play in art and the ethical implications that result from those kinds of judgements, including access to people and capital).

5. Intermediality

Media—and also the medium of art—are, in this sense, major forms that control what is possible to say. Rather than feeding those channels, according to the idea of distributivity, many artistic research projects work across media in order to create or assemble new temporary media, that is, modes of communication beyond the control of a single medium (often text, but also the more artistic media of photography, painting, etc.) with very different affordances. Hence, what I seek when I look at those is not a cluster of fixed media but a sense of emergent, invented media and the kinds of articulations that become possible in those. Here, then, it doesn't really matter what media are used; what matters is that the effects of intermediality are embraced—

6. Locality

—which is to say that the enacted distributivity is always local and not transferable in the way orthodox knowledge is assumed to be. In effect, it is precisely the possibility of creating such local (inter-)media that allows for research to engage much closer with the material, social, and cultural specificities of its objects. In other words, the only way that local knowledges can feature as local in a global setting is by affecting the very fabric of the global. As I have suggested elsewhere, "the globe"[31] as this unified object seen from space may not exist, at least not as a material, social, and cultural reality.

7. Materiality of articulation

This may, in turn, lead us to an appreciation of any articulation as materially thick rather than informationally transparent, which implies that aesthetics—and, in fact, also politics—can never be taken out of the epistemological equation. Whole new skill sets are required, and (expensive) infrastructures (archives and libraries) needed that embrace the provisionality and partiality of whatever they may hold.

8. Complexity and complication

Due to these and other aspects, artistic research projects deal not only with complex sets of materials, requiring complex architectures, they themselves cannot be clearly distinguished and separated from what one might call the material, social, and cultural background noise. The whole idea of "project" needs to be complicated—we idealise projects, but the projective structure of research, which makes it so manageable, is also in the way of different knowledge relations.

Michael is an artist and artistic researcher based in London. He is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR); michael.schwab@jar-online.net

Notes

1 In the notes that I supplied for this revised version of the lecture I aim to make explicit links to my underlying work carried out over the last decade or so. Most texts are available on my profile on the Research Catalogue.

2 Plato, *The Republic*, 608a.

3 Plato, *The Republic*, 597e.

4 In Schwab, 'First, the Second, Walter Benjamin's Theory of Reflection and the Question of Artistic Research,' I explain this in more detail; note that the notion of "exposition" has in large parts replaced the concept of reflection that I was working on at the time. Still, Walter Benjamin's work on early German Romanticism remains influential to my thinking.

5 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*.

6 *"Mannichfache Wege gehen die Menschen. Wer sie verfolgt und vergleicht, wird wunderliche Figuren entstehen sehn; Figuren, die zu jener großen Chiffernschrift zu gehören scheinen, die man überall, auf Flügeln, Eierschalen, in Wolken, im Schnee, in Krystallen und in Steinbildungen, auf gefrierenden Wassern, im Innern und Äußern der Gebirge, der Pflanzen, der Thiere, der Menschen, in den Lichtern des Himmels, auf berührten und gestrichenen Scheiben von Pech und Glas, in den Feilspänen um den Magnet her, und sonderbaren Conjuncturen des Zufalls, erblickt. In ihnen ahndet man den Schlüssel dieser Wunderschrift, die Sprachlehre derselben; allein die Ahndung will sich selbst in keine feste Formen fügen, und scheint kein höherer Schlüssel werden zu wollen";* Novalis*, Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs. Band 1: Das Dichterische Werk, Tagebücher Und Briefe*, 201. The English translation is taken from Robertson, 'A Translation of "Die Lehrlinge Zu Sais" by Novalis'.

7 *"Die Welt muß romantisirt werden. So findet man den ursprünglichen Sinn wieder. … Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe so romantisire ich es"*; Novalis, Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs. Band 2: Das Philosophisch-Theoretische Werk, 334, aphorism, 105.

8 I have, of late, been thinking again about a self-published text written in the first year of my doctorate, which, although not used again in my successive work, is in hindsight not irrelevant to the idea of exposition as information and its relationship to data; Schwab, 'Early Computer Art and the Meaning of Information.'

9 "… In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography—Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro* IV, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658" Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 325.

10 Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, 169.

11 de Assis, 'Transduction and Ensembles of Transducers. Relaying Flows of Intensity', 246.

12 Lu, 'AI Can Predict If You'll Die Soon—but We've No Idea How It Works'.

13 I have been working with and against Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's understanding of historical epistemology (Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things*) in a number of texts around his notion of "experimental system" (cf. Schwab, 'Introduction'; Schwab, 'Artistic Research and Experimental Systems'; Schwab, 'The Exposition of Practice as Research as Experimental System'). A more specific critique on questions of history in this respect can be found in my work from 2013–2018.

14 This approach is developed in Schwab, 'Transpositionality and Artistic Research' around the notion of "transposition."

15 The idea of a radical epistemology was first developed in the context of the research project *MusicExperiment21* (PI: Paulo de Assis) during a case study on Nietzsche's compositions. See Schwab and de Assis, 'Nietzsche 6+1: The Weight of Music' for video documentation of the performance of Nietzsche 6, The Weight of Music, at the Tanzquartier in Vienna on 28 November 2015, which includes my lectures within it.

16 See Schwab, 'Experimental Systems' for my use of the untimely against notions of the contemporary counter to what, for instance, Giorgio Agamben suggests in 'What Is the Contemporary?'.

17 See the JAR submission guide.

18 See the JAR submission guide.

19 The Research Catalogue is constantly evolving. See Schwab, 'Expositions in the Research Catalogue' for a description of what is now called the "graphical editor." See Döbereiner, 'The Research Catalogue Exposition as a Digital Object: Challenges and Future' for more on the current developments. Regarding questions of academia, written in the context of the Research Catalogue, see Schwab, 'The Research Catalogue: A Model for Dissertations and Theses in Art and Design'.

20 The notion of exposition—or better—to expose practice as research is central to JAR's conceptual makeup. See Schwab, 'Expositionality' for a detailed description of the term and its implications and also Schwab, 'Exposition Writing' for its relation to art.

21 I highlight the importance of institution here in reference to Kirkkopelto, 'Artistic Research as Institutional Practice'.

22 Eckel, Schwab, and Pirrò, 'Transpositions [TP]: Artistic Data Exploration'.

23 According to Ann Bermingham, "the accomplished woman was understood to be 'artistic' but not an artist. She was not an artist because she was neither original nor a paid professional. Unlike the artist who was a creator and producer of culture, she was a consumer and reproducer of culture. The word 'artistic' inscribes art onto the body and into the personality of the subject who makes art. 'Artistic types' are works of art themselves, embodying art without necessarily mastering it," in Badger and Upitis, 'On the Research Paradigm in Contemporary Art Discourse: A Dialogue', 258.

24 Schwab, 'Expositions in the Research Catalogue'.

25 Döbereiner, 'The Research Catalogue Exposition as a Digital Object: Challenges and Future'.

26 Kirkkopelto, 'Artistic Research as Institutional Practice'.

27 Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*.

28 Lowry and de Freitas, 'The Frontiers of Artistic Research'.

29 Quinn, 'Auditing Research in the Arts'.

30 See, for example, Barry, Born, and Weszkalnys, 'Logics of Interdisciplinarity'.

31 Schwab, 'Experimental Systems. Contemporaneity, Untimeliness, and Artistic Research', 171.

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OPENING PERFORMANCE
AND DIALOGUE

CHANT

NHLANHLA MAHLANGU
WITH JANE TAYLOR

Chant is an astonishing piece, combining a potent engagement with Ritual as Theatre/Theatre as Ritual, and is a work through which Mahlangu explores his multi-dimensional and cross-generational relations as a source of performance energy. It thus has some elements that draw on a psychological and resolutely archaic mode of staging. Yet, the work also explores a form of hyper-modernity, with a vacuum-cleaner as a signifier for his grandmother, who raised him. Mahlangu stages himself in a loincloth, using such disjunctive prop elements as the vacuum cleaner suction pipe (as coils that he winds around himself, invoking ethnographic images of bodies ornamented with coils of brass or copper) and a traditional clay pot filled with ashes. The monologue is a wildly funny and profoundly affecting account of his vexed relationship with a dog gifted to his grandmother by her employers when they cancel her employment. It is a work full of wild sardonic joy, physical exertion, and what for all the world seems a kind of "channelling" of the grandmother through the vacuum cleaner, which is intermittently turned on, bringing a thrumming electrical sound to the work. The performance is staggering to watch in its complexity of selfhoods, with a kind of shamanic potency that is both credulous and incredible, which, however, the performer holds as close as possible, while also holding it remotely, with a wry joy that comes from a really experiential depth of theatre knowledge.

I had planned to engage Mahlangu in a depth of discussion about the making of the work, and its relation to the core themes around practice as research, and decolonial practices, but it was evident that he was drained by the performance. In the end, it seemed appropriate to engage in a brief conversation about his own theatrical thinking, questions that stayed, in a way, inside the ethos of the piece rather than engaging in a meta-discursive discussion that might articulate the thought that is so palpable in the performance itself.























Nhlanhla is a multi-skilled performer, teacher, director, and composer. He is researching towards an MA in the Department of Theatre and Performance at the Wits School of Arts; maumongfarmers@gmail.com

Jane is a writer, playwright, and academic. She holds the Andrew W. Mellon Chair of Aesthetic Theory and Material Performance at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape; taylor.taylorjane.jane@gmail.com

ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND AFRICAN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE: LISTENING BEYOND EURO-AMERICAN CANONS

BRETT PYPER

Are certain forms of African music-making inherently advantaged or disadvantaged through engagement with artistic research? How does the quest to advance decoloniality factor into such efforts? What does such belated recognition mean for African musics and more general African arts practice outside academia?

Introduction

Recognition of artistic practice as research arrived later in scholarship concerned with music and has been taken up relatively slowly in relation to other arts disciplines.[1] One notable manifestation of this belated arrival has been a narrowing of the distance between scholarship and performance. While musical performance as research has, to date, been studied primarily regarding western art music (see, for example, the significant series of publications of the Orpheus Institute), several new collections in preparation indicate that the conversation is also impinging on fields of music scholarship beyond Euro-American canons. Scholars of music are, then, increasingly placing performance, as opposed to either the musical texts traditionally studied by musicologists *or* the sociocultural contexts conventionally prioritised by ethnomusicologists, more centrally in relation to their work. In the process, performance has emerged as an epistemological question in both disciplinary branches of musicology,[2] becoming a potentially unifying current concern.

Furthermore, *an expanded field of practices* associated with documenting, recording, or curating performance in contexts of music and sound has also come to be recognised as domains of practice in their own right—in older "analogue" as well as digital formats.[3] Examples of expanded understandings of performance extend beyond traditional concert practice and repertoires to include studies of the performative dimensions of social identities and public culture, including the performance of tradition and heritage, as well as inquiries into musicality in everyday life. This, in turn, includes music's mediation through proliferating technologies of reception, outside of contexts traditionally deemed to be overtly "artistic" nor necessarily those that would be deemed to be "professional."

The relevance of the professional, described by some as the "vocational," aspects of music adds another boundary to two I've already invoked, which exemplifies the way that performance- or practice-research questions conventional and academic boundaries. Alongside the ways in which performance potentially bridges the relationship between musicology and ethnomusicology, with their respective emphases on (mostly western art music) texts and (non-western traditional/popular) contexts, now simultaneously encompassing expanded fields of practice—which may exceed the traditional purviews of both subdisciplines—performance challenges us to think anew about the binary between musical professional practice and research. The questioning of such boundaries is particularly salient in such historically layered and contested cultural settings as contemporary South Africa, from where I am writing. I'm going to focus this questioning further by trying to listen beyond Euro-American canons, by considering how practice or artistic research could serve as a productive site of engagement for the many avowedly traditional and contemporary popular musics practised and/or listened to in Africa, many of which have yet to be addressed within music curricula and formal study programmes.

In the process, I want to consider what is implied when distinguishing between performance as research and performance on its own terms (thus performance as a site of knowledge, outside of asserting its value or equivalence as academic research).[4]

I proceed by briefly reviewing what I take to be the key arguments for considering the intersection of performance, practice, and research (in the Anglophone literature, at least). While there are both institutional and philosophical rationales for these developments, I'm going to focus on the latter (specifically the ontological and epistemological arguments) without intending to suggest that the institutional factors aren't equally relevant. Building on the formulation of a colleague at Wits—who was

central to the start of our university's recognition of artistic work as a valid component of research up to the doctoral level over a decade ago (something that I'm mindful is not yet universal across arts departments in this country, let alone elsewhere in Africa)—the institutional "entry into full citizenship of the academy for creative artists [entails clarifying, at the ontological level] whether artistic products *are* research or whether they *are the equivalent of research* or whether they *accompany, incorporate or inspire research* while at some level remaining something *different from* research."[5]

In the second part of the paper, I focus on how artistic research is coming to impinge on branches of music scholarship that are oriented beyond the western art music canon and fall mostly within the purview of ethnomusicology and popular music studies. I should point out though that, in South Africa, both disciplinary formations are quite fluidly defined, and often contested. By drawing on very recent writing from elsewhere, regarding how practice research involves "adjusting and *expanding* the notion of what ethnomusicology can offer,"[6] I'm advocating for an inter- or even post-disciplinary openness to any approach to intercultural music research that could be applied to the widest possible spectrum of musical and sound practices, in any context. I will also argue that adopting artistic research in the charged political contexts in which most of us currently work in South Africa, and many other places, requires attending to how the colonial legacies, with which the notion of "art" is freighted, further complicate its recognition as—and its equation with—research.

If the belated recognition of art as research at many universities potentially entails a welcome move beyond what I think of as the "decorative" or "civilising" effects it has historically been deemed to contribute to academic life, decolonial critiques of the very knowledge project of the traditional university require, I will argue, that we simultaneously address the coloniality of (much) art even as we recognise its affordances with regard to decolonial knowledge production. This necessitates a reflection on how the notion of artistic research in music might itself potentially be transformed through engaging with musics beyond the Euro-American canon. Simon McKerrell's attention to how "questions about intercultural aesthetics which are currently unaddressed in the largely western-centric debate about artistic research, which is dominated by art music and musicians" informs most of my concerns here.[7] In short, in my own ongoing engagement with artistic research as well as that in supervising the postgraduate work of my students, I am often prompted to consider several questions that I'm going to touch on in the space available: 1) whether certain forms of music-making are inherently advantaged or disadvantaged in the domain of artistic research and, if so, how; 2) how the quest to advance decoloniality factors into such efforts; and 3) what such belated recognition as a valued or even newly privileged form of knowledge potentially means for the relationship between art and music-making in academic contexts, and arts practices beyond academia.[7]

Conceptual underpinnings of the "performative turn" in academic research

Nicholas Cook has pointed out that, within musicology, contrary to the broader "performative turn" in the humanities and social sciences since the 1970s, the idea that music is, in essence, a form of writing—a text reproduced in performance—remained dominant into the 1990s.[8] This has much to do, to my mind, with musicology's traditional orientation towards western or, later non-western art music canons, including their avant-gardes, reinforcing Arnold Schoenberg's provocative adage that

> Music need not be performed any more than books need to be read aloud, for its logic is perfectly represented on the printed page; and the performer, for all his intolerable arrogance, is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print.[9]

Quite a different position has been arrived at more recently in which not the text but the act of creation has come to be recognised as a primary site of research. In his Preface to *The Artistic Turn* (2009), an important book for the present discussion that ends with a short self-avowed "manifesto" for artistic research, Jeremy Cox (who is a singer, conductor, former Dean of the Royal College of Music, London and later Chief Executive of the European Association of Music Conservatories),[10] offers an account of art-making that is evidently framed in terms that are intelligible as academic research, whether or not it is written down:

> [T]he act of creation itself is intrinsically an act of 'proving'—of testing out the intimations and speculations (in research, we would call them hypotheses) and determining how they stand up under rigorous scrutiny in the world of "real", made things; finally, the object or event created carries the results (the research data) of this proving encoded within it.[11]

Framing "the act of creation" within prevailing research discourse is one manifestation of the current performative turn but, conversely, much of the literature on artistic research entails what one might call epistemological critique, revealed in part as an impulse to resist the pervasive academic tendency to entextualise the world. Several South African colleagues are moreover invested in modes of artistic inquiry that are deeply sceptical of the institutional logics and politics of quantifiable research "outputs." Rather, they favour ways of knowing that are fundamentally doubtful, provisional, process- rather than product-based, often accentuating, through withholding, what Jay Pather referred to at a symposium hosted by our school in 2017 as "the elusive truth of our desire for certainties."[12] At its best, artistic research broadens the palette of what counts as knowledge, bringing into academic reflection distinctive, multimodal ways of knowing in their own right, rather than offering easy equivalences for funding unit-bearing research outputs or providing a vehicle for ready-made knowledge from other disciplines. Indeed, artistic research is widely viewed as a critique of instrumentalised, commodified knowledge, and it is celebrated for its capacity to foreground precisely what we *don't*—or even *can't*—know.

Cox would, I think, concur with these perspectives in that he recognises that the value of the kinds of tacit knowledge that the arts are often held to exemplify may reside on the other side of an epistemological boundary that has not traditionally been valued in many academic contexts:

> It is the invisibility—we would probably prefer to call it the "tacitness" or "embeddedness"—of the knowledge encoded in creation that causes problems and divides opinion … By stretching language to its limits, and moving outside the traditional vocabulary of research discourse, we may perhaps succeed in winning a few border skirmishes along the frontier between the explicit and the tacit, but what we put into words will always be less than what we are trying to describe.[13]

This is, then a kind of problem that could be viewed as an epistemological "Midas touch." As Cox points out, "To give verbal articulation to tacit knowledge is to make

it no longer tacit"[14] and artistic researchers are often cognizant of the contraction of understanding that this can entail.

Cox takes up a, perhaps unfortunate, spatial metaphor from the authors of the book he is prefacing to compare the entry of artistic research into the terrain of academic knowledge production with the settling of a territory to be colonised. While I prefer Kathleen Coessens's characterisation of advancing artistic research in terms of coping with what she calls an "already epistemized world,"[15] I do think that Cox makes a valuable point about the current moment as questions of artistic research are coming under renewed scrutiny in academia under conditions that he characterises as "enforced assimilation" (to quote him one last time),

> The territory of research is densely colonised; vested interests, whether individual or institutional, conscious or unconscious, carry a natural resistance to new settlers. If the first phase of this manifests itself in exclusion, the second, that of enforced assimilation, is no less dangerous for all that it may appear superficially more tolerant. Artistic research is currently at this second stage [he wrote over a decade ago]. Its presence is accepted, although often grudgingly, but it is under pressure to show its gratitude for this recognition by conforming to the dominant ideologies, criteria and methodologies of research culture. As long as it behaves itself, it is now allowed a modest place—decidedly "below the salt" in terms of funding—at the research table.[16]

Artistic research from a standpoint in the Global South

Contrary to normalising the colonial metaphor in the extract I've just quoted; I want to consider the promise of practice-oriented or artistic research as a key site for articulating the *de*-colonial and transformative affordances and capacities that multimodal conceptions of knowledge potentially entail. In the contexts in which most of us work, this requires a sober reckoning with both the limitations of artistic knowledge as well as its promise. I am arguing, then, for the salience of the turn towards performance as research in advancing, within the context of the ongoing decolonisation of the university, the ongoing decolonisation of art. Realising the transformative efficacy that the arts can bring to the academic project writ large rests on reckoning with the ways in which colonial reason posited (among other things) an ethnocentric, hierarchical, *a priori* distinction between what counts as art and what doesn't, and the ways in which this was mapped onto prevailing ideological structures. This hierarchy also mapped, of course, all too easily onto the binary between musical literacy and orality, privileging the notion that the music worth knowing through systematic study must be a form of writing. For all its own colonial baggage, ethnomusicology has, since its consolidation as a discipline in the mid-twentieth century, critiqued this narrow conception of music. Even while the discipline has struggled to cast off its own shadows (notably in weighing the import of the "ethno-" prefix), ethnomusicology has posited a potentially radical aesthetic relativism, according to which every practice merits equal consideration as an expression of human musicality. The (sub) discipline is now taking up of the notion of artistic research within its own disciplinary ambit, in an era in which reflexivity about its own colonial underpinnings should, moreover, be assumed.

At its best, the promise of artistic research appears to lie in embracing "not only *new knowledge* but also *new forms of knowledge.*"[17] Modes of research that recognise their own affordances as situated practices—as modes of action that resonate with the practices with which they are engaged—seem to be more closely aligned at an

ontological level than those which centre primarily on textualisation only, thus genuinely expanding epistemic horizons and advancing the proliferative potential of artistic knowledge. Significantly, in my academic context, such epistemic proliferation moreover has considerable potential to align with reimagining and realising what Achille Mbembe, Sarah Nuttall, and others have characterised as the decolonial "pluriversity."[18]

I'm of the view that despite postcolonial and decolonial critiques of ethnomusicology—indeed, because of them—intercultural music studies have much to offer the pursuit of such a pluriversity. If artistic research arrived late in musicology relative to other arts disciplines, it has arrived even later in ethnomusicology, and research in this subdiscipline is still largely in the process of being published.[19] In a yet-to-be-published article that I've found very instructive, McKerrell emphasises that in the discipline of ethnomusicology,

> musical performance has been constitutive in the research process, but not the central outcome ... historically, performance has not been an end in and of itself in ethnomusicology, but has always been a method used in the service of understanding more about human culture and society around the world ... That is to say, the real object of study is people, culture and society, and the subject is music.[20]

McKerrell argues that, despite this history, there is potential for practice research to emerge as both a more central method, and as the object of research in ethnomusicology,[21] in the process (as I have already mentioned) "adjusting and *expanding* the notion of what the subdiscipline can offer."[22] McKerrell highlights several pertinent respects in which practice research in ethnomusicology challenges the artistic research paradigm that has emerged in other domains of performing arts research.[23] These centre on the lack of a central canon of repertoire in ethnomusicology, as compared to other musicological disciplines who share a more or less accepted (or even continually negotiated) canon of works against which the novelty and originality of new music—a key criterion for artistic research—can be compared. Secondly, this is closely related to what McKerrell characterises as "the extreme relativism inherent in the training and professional outlook of ethnomusicologists that emphasises the local and particular over the universal and elite."[24] Taken together, both factors considerably complicate "the ontological understanding of 'new knowledge' in orally developed or transmitted repertoires from around the world,"[25] and how one demonstrates the kinds of "originality of practice" on which much artistic research is predicated.[26] What counts as original or as good, appropriate and meaningful research is not, I want to emphasise, neutral, but has to reflect the aesthetic and related priorities of each particular domain even as it attempts to relate that to the ways in which the world has already been epistemised.

Conclusion: towards research in/as performance

Navigating the challenges remains work in progress but, in conclusion, I want to underscore McKerrell's argument that apart from instances "where practice is used as a method to translate previously tacit or embodied knowledge into other modes of communication such as text for the benefit of comparative research on world musical traditions,"[27] a second, hitherto largely undeveloped opportunity lies in "primary performance research where the research consists of practice that demonstrates and communicates new knowledge in a particular field of performance."[28] In other words,

from whichever disciplinary address one might choose to undertake such intercultural research, there should be an opportunity to produce "research outcomes that are sited in original performative knowledge."[29] McKerrell's discussion is useful for highlighting how practice research in genres that fall outside existing canons always entails a crossing of registers and audiences. This calls for what he describes as an act of translation, through which a practice researcher explains "for outsiders what the advance in insiders' aesthetics means or demonstrates."[30] Whether researchers resort to what I have called "entextualisation" (what McKerrell calls translation), or to what he terms "research *in* musical performance" rather than "research *about* musical performance,"[31] reflexivity regarding the crossings involved becomes a key feature of both approaches, and stands, at its best, to be mutually reinforcing.

Practice research in music is likely, perhaps paradoxically, to entail some degree of recourse to the written word, given that "[m]usical sound is generally too semantically ambiguous to communicate with the level of … specificity needed for research when there is no central artistic tradition or canon."[32] And so, in closing, I want to re-materialise the word and place it back in the register of embodied practice. I'm going to close then, by invoking the way in which the renowned West African griot, Kele Monson Diabate, in conversation with linguist Charles Bird, responded to the suggestion that his words could be of help if written down, "You and your dry words. What are they to me? The meaning of my words is in the moisture of the breath that carries them."[33]

Brett is Associate Professor and Head of the Wits School of Arts. He is also the Principal Investigator of the ARA project; brett.pyper@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Doğantan-Dack, *Artistic Practice as Research in Music*, 1.

2 I leave aside, for the moment, the question of which of the two branches of musicology should be regarded as a sub-branch, a debate which has assumed renewed salience in the light of decolonial activism.

3 Witzleben, 'Performing in the Shadows,' 137, makes a similar point concerning ethnomusicology in an important article discussed later, even though he also argues that "the physical acts of making and perceiving music must be distinguished from all other performance-like phenomena," 151.

4 This resonates with the notion of listening or knowing otherwise, a mode of avowed border thinking (see Mignolo, 'Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing') associated with contemporary decolonial theory.

5 Olivier, 'Formal Recognition for Creative Work: Some Critical Reflections,' 86. This is a published elaboration of the original internal document, which dates to 2007.

6 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology (DRAFT) for Comment', 18.

7 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology (DRAFT) for Comment', 8. McKerrell happens to be an accomplished musician and scholar of Scottish bagpipe music based in Newcastle in the UK, who identifies not as an ethnomusicologist but as a scholar of music policy and the social impact of music, who uses ethnographic fieldwork and survey data to explore musical micro-enterprises and their social capital in the rural creative economy.

8 Cook, 'Performing Research: Some Institutional Perspectives', 14. There are important precedents to the performative turn discussed here, which range widely across disciplines and geographies. A few examples include the broad, interdisciplinary formulation across several places in the Global South of participatory action research (PAR), which drew from the late 1970s on the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, other new thinking on adult education research (e.g., Hall, 'Participatory Research: An Approach for Change'), the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (e.g., Horton and Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking*), and South Asian social movements such as those associated with the Participatory Research Network created in 1978 and based in New Delhi. The first explicitly named PAR conference was organised by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda in Cartagena the previous year. In the context of music studies, see Samuel Araújo's extended work (e.g., 'From Neutrality to Praxis; limited, for now, to texts available in English). Another important precedent is the emergence of interdisciplinary Performance Studies (see e.g., Schechner, 'Foreword'), as well as aspects relating to Live or Performance Art within Fine Art movements. Yet another broad field relevant to this discussion entails the intersection of art and anthropology; for a recent articulation of the latter see Laine, *Practicing Art and Anthropology*; in the context of music, see especially Steven Feld's work since the early 1980s (notably *Sound and Sentiment* and 'Acoustemology').

9 Quoted in Newlin, *Schoenberg Remembered*, 164.

10 Association Européenne des Consevatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen.

11 Cox, *The Artistic Turn*, 7.

12 Pather, Unpublished paper presented at ArtSearch symposium.

13 Cox, *The Artistic Turn*, 7.

14 Cox, *The Artistic Turn*, 7.

15 Coessens, 'The Human Being as a Cartographer'.

16 Cox, *The Artistic Turn*, 7–8.

17 Farber, *On Making*, back cover.

18 Mbembe invokes this notion in the face of "the exhaustion of the present academic model with its origins in the universalism of the Enlightenment" (Mbembe, 'Decolonizing the University', 36). He recognises the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Enrique Dussel in invoking the notion of the pluriversity.

19 These would include panels and papers presented at the 45th world conference of the International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM), Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, July 2019; the 1st International Symposium on Artistic Research, *Hands-On Research*, at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, November 2019; and the upcoming 7th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, Lucerne, August 2020, as well as a special issue of the journal *Ethnomusicology Forum* in preparation (publication expected in 2021). Important precursors include Baily, 'Learning to Perform as a Research Technique in Ethnomusicology,' Witzleben, 'Performing in the Shadows,' Lemmens, 'The Learning Process in Fado through Artistic Research,' and McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology'.

20 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology', 1–2.

21 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology', 1.

22 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology', 18.

23 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology', 1–2.

24 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 2.

25 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 1–2.

26 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 11.

27 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 16.

28 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 16.

29 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 1.

30 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 13.

31 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 7.

32 McKerrell, 'Towards Practice Research in Ethnomusicology,' 15.

33 Quoted in Charry, *Mande Music*, 339.

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ARTISTIC PRACTICE AND RESEARCH: AN ARTIST-SCHOLAR PERSPECTIVE

MICHELLE STEWART

How do measurable methods of research move between theoretical critique, technical reporting, and creative practice? This question is explored with reference to Michelle's own practice-based PhD, the experimental animation, *Big Man*.

This paper aims to show the dynamic and complex nature of artistic knowledge. It hopes to illustrate how, within the context of practice-based-research PhD study, measurable methods of research can move between theoretical critique, technical reporting, and creative output.

In his essay, 'What is Artistic Research?', Julien Klein posits that serious creative practice constitutes legitimate research and that the research process does not only evolve from practice but that it is there and can be measured from the outset, from the "level of artistic experience."[1] In terms of a PhD-level or scholarly study, while artistic research is made visible in the final artwork, it can be further communicated, documented, explained, and contextualised in a written component. However, he asserts, if artistic practice as research is to have any relevance at all, the practice and creative output need to be recognised as the primary source of knowledge—in that such knowledge can only be acquired through creative or artistic experience. He posits that "artistic experience is a form of reflection" and, as with scientific research methods, it is a process that requires contemplation, interpretation, analysis, and elucidation.[2]

G. James Daichendt, in his book *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research*, makes a good point in his discussion of the relatively short historical allegiance between the creative arts and universities. He reminds us that, while universities are now the standard institutions for training in the creative arts, the original homes for art education up to the late 19th century were the academies. In the academies, the need for artists to validate their work as research or to equate their work with or evaluate it against textual research methodologies was never a priority.[3] While Daichendt thus insists that the responsibly to overcome issues on the definition and evaluation of art-practice-as-research lies within the universities, where creative practice is seen as an academic discipline, he also posits that the artist/scholar should simultaneously be able to locate their practice within the context of the university setting. By this, he infers that, in this context, an artist should be able to explain their work critically, and stresses the usefulness of being able to explain one's work textually. He also points out that the requisite written component that is predominantly required to accompany practice-based research at the PhD level is not likely to change—but stresses that, how this component is approached is something that is open to debate.[4] To Daichendt, it is not a point of finding ways to make art practice conform to the scientific approach to research. In his view, the central aim of scientific research—to provoke enquiry to gain new knowledge is indistinguishable from that of creative inquiry. Citing the examples of ancient Greek poetry, Michaelangelo's turbulent genius, and Damien Hirst's animals in formaldehyde, the potential of artistic enquiry to challenge boundaries and to gain new insights, he argues, has been present in art-making since antiquity, and is just as potent today.[5] In 'The Three Configurations of the Studio-Art' PhD, James Elkins agrees that a practice-based research PhD should be supported by a discursive document and that this should critically reflect on the practice.[6] Elkins is quick to point out, though, that critical reflection in practice-based research in art should not be interpreted as simply a mixture of art theory and art history—but rather a sound elucidation of one's own artwork—situating it "within the critical matrix to which it belongs."[7] Daichendt and Elkins' observations were influential to how I approached the dissertation component for my PhD.

Before I discuss my approach to my dissertation, let me briefly explain the context of my film, the primary research focus for my PhD.

In his book, *Talk of the Devil: Encounters with Seven Dictators*, Riccardo Orizio observes that "big men" seldom atone. The experimental animated film *Big Man* posits a fictional situation (or wish fulfilment) where a *Big Man* is made to atone. The film is based on the second and fourth chapters of 'The Book of Daniel' of *The Old*

Testament. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, has troubled dreams that can only be interpreted by the Hebrew prophet Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar refuses to heed the warning explicit in Daniel's reading of his dreams, so God sends him to live as a beast in the wilderness to atone for his sins. In the film, former South African Prime Minister, B. J. Vorster is cast as Nebuchadnezzar. Dr Beyers Naudé, theologian and anti-apartheid activist, appears in the role of Daniel. While the film questions "big man" politics in South Africa both during and post-apartheid, it has broader relevance in the underlying biblical narrative. In addition, the "big man" phenomenon, often associated with a characteristic of political leadership in Africa, is becoming a characteristic of world politics—and has come to describe more recent political phenomena such as "Trumpism" and "Putinism."

The film uses a variety of animation techniques, including stop-motion paper cut-out animation, digital, traditional hand-drawn frame-by-frame, cel animation, digital puppet animation, and paint-on-glass animation. The various creative approaches I explored were significant sites of experimentation and learning, and thus were an important aspect of my dissertation.

As seen in this brief break-down, the dissertation documents and critically reflects on the narrative, thematic, theoretical, visual, aural, procedural, and aesthetic aspects of the film from pre- to post-production. While these areas are listed separately, the dissertation comprised a somewhat more fluid intertwining of technical and procedural reporting as well as critical, theoretical, and historical reflection.

1. A detailed synopsis—detailing the biblical and South African historical narrative.
2. A detailed critical analysis of the notion of the "big man"—its anthropological, historical, and recent emanations.
3. A break-down and documentation of the visual and aural creative processes, including the approach to archival sound, archival footage, and archival imagery, storyboarding, pre-production documentation, and processes, as well as traditional animation processes and digital animation processes.
4. An analyses and illustration of the various visual, conceptual, and narrative influences and themes from individual experimental filmmakers, visual artists, and genres within art, animation history, and literature.
5. A contextualisation of the study within the history of experimental film and animation.
6. A contextualisation of the study in terms of South African art.



Figure 1. Still from 'The funeral of Dr Verwoerd, the South African prime minister assassinated last week, was held in Pretoria yesterday (Saturday),' 10.09.1966.



Figure 2. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Paper puppets from 'Prologue' (entourage and military guard), *Big Man*, black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing.



Figure 3. Still from 'The funeral of Dr Verwoerd, the South African prime minister assassinated last week, was held in Pretoria yesterday (Saturday),' 10.09.1966.



Figure 4. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Paper puppets from 'Prologue' (pallbearers with coffin), *Big Man*, black card, pen and ink, and split-pins; digital drawing.

I have singled out two instances from my dissertation for discussion, through which I hope to illustrate the nature of my creative research as a process that required contemplation, interpretation, analysis, and elucidation. The first is my exploration of stop motion paper cut out animation in the first scene of the film and the second my explanation of the use of metamorphosis in the last scene of the film.

Paper puppets: conceptualisation, visualisation, and manipulation

▶ These were used in the first scene of the film, which is a re-imagining of Hendrik Verwoerd's funeral and the subsequent inauguration of B. J. Vorster. This segment draws strongly on archival footage, imagery, and sound from the original event (Figure 1). While some of the process was pure experimentation on my part, it was informed by early experimental filmmakers. This scene was a hand-manipulated, traditional stop motion process (Figure 2).

Paper puppets, post-production

▶ Archival, newsreel feel
▶ Deliberate archaic style to separate change from the imagined past and present within the film (Figure 4)
▶ Authenticity: to the event and characters
▶ BBC News footage (Figure 3)
▶ Creative licence and rights

Frame-by-frame log: walk cycle for people

▶ Log—used in pose-to-pose animation—industry animation and production methods developing out of Disney Studios in the 1930s (Figures 5 and 6)

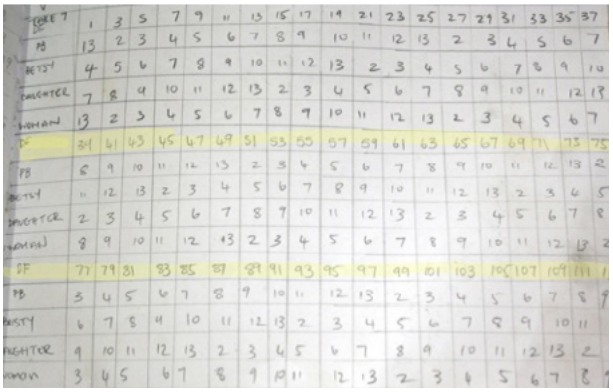


Figure 5. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Log showing walk cycle plotting for Betsie Verwoerd, two family members, and pallbearers in preparation for 'Prologue,' *Big Man*, pencil on paper.

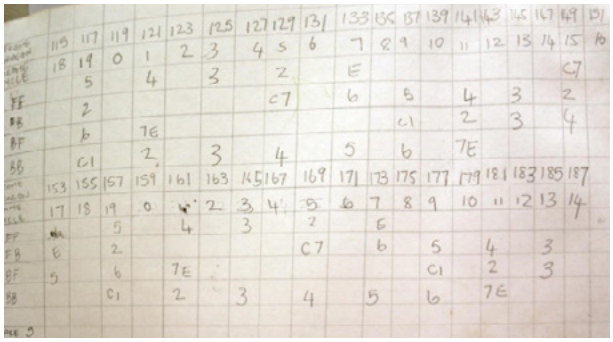


Figure 6. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Log showing walk cycle of dog puppet in preparation for 'Prologue,' *Big Man*, pencil on paper.

Walk cycles, research references (Figures 7 and 8)

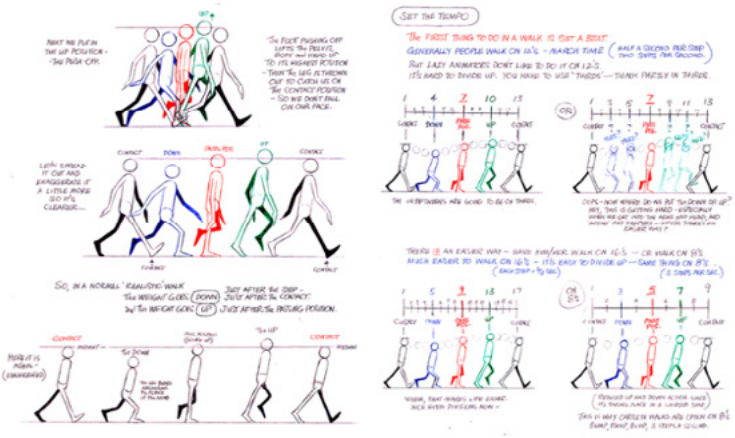


Figure 7. Richard Williams, pages 109–110, 'Set the Tempo.' In *The Animator's Survival Kit*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009



Figure 8. Eadweard Muybridge, Plate 2 in *Animal locomotion: An Electro-photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements, 1872-1885*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, v. 1, 1887.

Influence of Lotte Reiniger

- German filmmaker and pioneer of silhouette animation. Her best-known film is *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, from 1926—thought to be one of the oldest surviving feature-length animated films.
- Watched videos on her nearly a century-old process.



Figure 9. Lotte Reiniger at work on *Prince Achmed* using her innovative 'trick table' set up, 1926.

Influence of Berthold Bartosch

- *The Idea* (French: *L'Idée*) is a 1932 French animated film by Austro-Hungarian filmmaker Berthold Bartosch (1893–1968), based on the 1920 wordless novel of the same name by Flemish artist Frans Masereel (1889–1972).
- Worked with Reiniger—using early multiplane camera techniques—developed by Disney studios.
- Austerity of style and subject matter—reminiscent of the wordless novels of the time—often dealt with political, social content—suppression or freedom—was banned in Germany.
- Film historian William Moritz called *The Idea* "the first animation film created as an artwork with serious, even tragic, social and philosophical themes."[8]
- A thinker sits by a window, and an idea comes to him in the form of a doll-sized naked woman. The thinker puts the woman in an envelope and sends her out into the world. She finds herself at odds with authorities who attempt to clothe her, suppress her in variously violent and abusive ways as she persists in journeying through the world as an emblem of freedom and hope. She becomes involved with a young, working-class man, and he appeals to the people on her behalf; he is captured and executed, and his coffin is carried through the streets by the people. This scene influenced the conception of my funeral scene—its austerity and aesthetic. Presentation of be-suited, morally corrupt authoritarian figures—influenced the visual conception of the Vorster paper cut out.



Figure 10. Berthold Bartosch. 1932. Still from *Le Idée*.



Figure 11. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Paper puppets from 'Prologue' (pallbearers), *Big Man*, black card, pen and ink, and split-pins.



Figure 12. Berthold Bartosch. 1932. Still from *Le Idée*.

Paper puppet animation

▶A visual break down of two limited animation processes—influenced by both Reiniger, Bartosch, and the Russian animator Yuri Norstein but also adapted to my specific approach.



Figure 13. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Still from 'Prologue' (entourage at Heroes' Acre), *Big Man*, pen and ink; digital drawing.



Figure 14. Michelle Stewart, 2012, Paper cut-out puppet of B. J. Vorster, with additional segments showing direction of movement, black card, pen and ink, and split-pins.

The influence of Yuri Norstein



Figure 15. Yuri Norstein demonstrating his technique of animating with small pieces of celluloid (used in *The Overcoat*), 1985.

This idea of animating portions of the face within the face itself was influenced by a similar (but somewhat more complex) animation technique exemplified by Norstein, who is best known for his animated shorts *The Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) and *Tale of Tale*s (1979). Norstein has worked with the traditional paper cut-out technique since the 1960s and continues to work with the process today, unaided by digital technology. Norstein's paper cut-out animation is meticulously crafted and detailed. Each puppet can comprise numerous movable celluloid parts, which allows for extremely realistic movement. In spite of his active refusal to use the digital platform to speed up his process, Norstein is still revered as an animator and is regarded as an innovator of the paper cut-out process: "His characters, mostly cut-out puppets, are delicate figures of texture and form, inscrutably built, existing in some fascinating limbo between two and three dimensions. He is first among equals in a long line of Russian geniuses of animation."[9] I was particularly taken with the way in which he animated the face of the central character in his 1981 film *The Overcoat* (Figure 15). In a short documentary on the film, he demonstrates this process.

Situating the study between practice and theory: an illustrative example

Metamorphosis, the changing of one form into another, is intrinsic to the medium of animation. Drawing on the influences and approaches of experimental animators and artists, I aimed to extend the traditional function of metamorphosis (as a device to simulate movement). Metamorphosis is an overriding theme of the main biblical narrative of the film (the mutation of man to beast) but is also visible as a conceptual, stylistic and expressive strategy. While this approach emanates variously in each scene of the film, this paper focuses on how the work and ideas of artists William Blake and Francis Bacon, and filmmaker Joan Gratz influenced my approach to metamorphosis in the closing scene of the film. This discussion illustrates one instance wherein the study is explained in terms of where practice and theory merge.



Figure 16. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Images of the various layers that made up the puppet used for B. J. Vorster's inaugural speech, card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink.



Figure 17. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Head segments created for B. J. Vorster's inaugural speech, card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink.



Figure 18. Michelle Stewart, 2013, Examples of mouth segments created for B. J. Vorster's inaugural speech, pen and ink on tracing paper.

Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar (after Blake's rendition)

▶ The visual mutation of Vorster in the wilderness as Nebuchadnezzar—beast-like, terror-stricken, naked, and debased on all fours—is a deliberate reference to the English Romantic painter and poet William Blake's engravings of Nebuchadnezzar (engraved 1795, printed 1805).
▶ Video

Beginning in 1795, Blake made four impressions of this image. It was these engravings that provided the initial visual spur for how to show the "fallen" Big Man/Nebuchadnezzar/Vorster character at his most abject. While Blake's image is a still, it implies metamorphosis in that it represents King Nebuchadnezzar in his final mutated form, as in the biblical narrative. Blake's prints are illustrations of the biblical description of Nebuchadnezzar in 'The Book of Daniel' at that part of the narrative where he is clearly beast-like and in the wilderness: "and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."[10] Blake portrays Nebuchadnezzar as a naked, vulnerable half-beast whose fearful facial expression and wide staring eyes powerfully reveal his terror. It has also been suggested that Blake's portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar alludes to King George III. George III was a contemporary of Blake and was regarded by some during the first two decades of his reign as a tyrannical leader, although this view was in opposition to attitudes that dominated later on during his rule in the early 1800s when he became "a revered symbol of national resistance to French ideas and French power."[11] In his essay 'The Doom of Tyrants,' John Mee suggests that the idea of Blake's Nebuchadnezzar being an evocation of King George III is pertinent, particularly since the King had suffered a bout of madness between 1788 and 1789.[12] Mee further posits: "Nebuchadnezzar was a traditional image of the regal oppressor, but after King George III's attack of madness in 1788–89 recourse to biblical

archetype became a particularly appropriate motif for radicals seeking to attack the king."[13]

It was this image of Nebuchadnezzar that inspired me to imagine a naked Vorster in the same vein—hence the initial exploratory watercolour that preceded the film and that spurred the idea (Figure 19). In the film, this depiction further and deliberately echoes Blake's beastly image. I attempted to emulate the terrified, silent scream of Blake's image. This is a further reference to Francis Bacon's 'Screaming Pope' series and his exploration of the moral corruption within these images, but this is complex and detailed in another chapter.



Figure 19. Michelle Stewart, 2013, *Untitled*, watercolour on paper.



Figure 20 William Blake, c. 1795, *Nebuchadnezzar*, monotype finished in black chalk, pen and watercolour, coated with gum or size. Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

The film ends with the silent screaming head of the "beast-like" Vorster, mutating back into a portrait of his former self (Figure 21). From there, Vorster's head metamorphoses into each head, in turn, of all the subsequent South African heads of state from Vorster up to the ex-president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. Traditionally, metamorphosis in film or animation has been used to suggest a shift into fantasy or into a psychological realm.[14] Similarly, the use of metamorphosis at this point of the film was intended to signify Vorster's altered state of mind and to show, at the end of the film, the change from one political dispensation to another, in the metamorphosis of one head of state into another.

The animation process in the 'Epilogue' scene moves from frame-by-frame animation to a combination of frame-by-frame animation and time-lapse painting. This approach was influenced by Gratz's 1992 animated film, *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase* (Figure 22). In this film, she uses the clay painting technique that she pioneered, where she merges the works (mostly portraits and the human figure) of thirty-five famous artists using a combination of time-lapse, metamorphosis and frame-by-frame movement. Much like the paint-on-glass process I used, each frame in Gratz's film is altered and ultimately destroyed in the creation of the next frame.[15] Of particular interest to me was

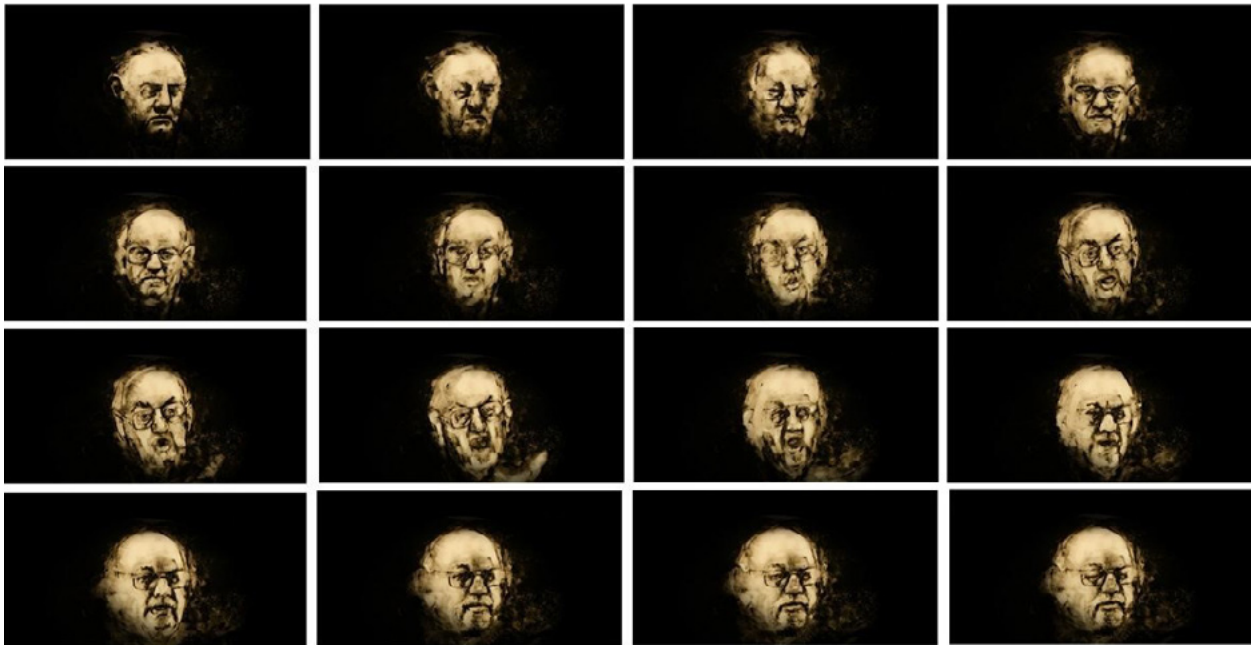


Figure 21. Michelle Stewart, 2013, paint-on-glass stills from 'Banishment', *Big Man*, gauche and glycerine on glass.

the way in which Gratz combined the merging or metamorphosis of one image into another with animated movement, adding another emotive, psychological dimension. Similarly, in the 'Epilogue' scene, the portraits of the heads of state not only transform from one to another, through a time-lapse approach but also include movement. This can be seen in P. W. Botha's wagging finger, the closing eyes of various heads, the changing smiles of F. W. De Klerk and Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki's hand movement, and finally Zuma raising his finger to his lips. The source images for the creation of the portraits were found media images. I referred to these to create the likeness to each head of state and to give me an idea of the nature of the movement I could incorporate. For the movement in-between poses, I used a mirror and observed and adapted my own movements.



Figure 22. Joan Gratz, 1992, stills from *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase*, clay painting animation.

As well as being influenced by Gratz's approach to movement, I was also inspired by the implied movement of Bacon's painted portraits (e.g., Figure 23). His portraits, though static images, suggest faces in movement. The distortions of his portraits are not unlike the effects that can occur when blurred movement is captured photographically in one image. Bacon achieves a similar effect with the drag of his brush that cuts through, mutates, and blurs form. Movement in Bacon's work is further suggested by the sequential nature of many of his paintings, particularly those he presents in the triptych format. In these triptychs, movement is not only suggested in the dissolution and abstractions of the still image, but also in the sequential juxtaposition of the heads, which show changes in rotation and angle. Similar distortions and blurring of movement occur naturally in the time-lapse painting process. Bacon talks of the psychology of the face or head in movement—how he watched people in bars and was fascinated by faces and gestures in movement—tried to capture this in is his paintings—where faces appear distorted in a frozen moment—caught in movement.



Figure 23. Francis Bacon, *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne*, 1966, oil on canvas. Tate.

Picasso perceived the idea of a search as a vital, transitory, ongoing process, which does not stop with the completion of an artwork. He said, "I never do a painting like a work of art. It is always a search. I am always seeking and there is a logical connection throughout that search. That is why I number them [the works]."[16] Picasso disdained the academic notion of research and the emphasis given to the process of documenting the search or gathering of reference materials.[17] For Picasso, it was ultimately the knowledge one has found—as made visual in the artwork—that matters. Writing in 1993, Christopher Frayling saw potential in the "Picasso approach" but strongly advocated, in terms of the PhD study, the need for further debate.[18] Frayling's misgivings around the art object completely replacing the dissertation as new knowledge is still echoed by Elkins some years later in 2009.[19] Elkins does not at all discount the idea of the artwork as comprising and embodying the new knowledge but, like Frayling, suggests that much research needs to be done to define how such knowledge is assessed in the university environment.[20]

Michelle is a lecturer and coordinator of the Digital Arts programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; stewartm2@ukzn.ac.za

Notes

1 Klein, 'What Is Artistic Research?', 5.
2 Klein, 'What Is Artistic Research?', 5.
3 Daichendt, *Artist Scholar*, 29.
4 Daichendt, *Artist Scholar*, 63.
5 Daichendt, *Artist Scholar*, 16.
6 Elkins, 'The Three Configurations of Studio-Art PhDs'.
7 Elkins, 'The Three Configurations of Studio-Art PhDs', 151.
8 Moritz, 'Bartosch's The Idea', 93.
9 Carter, 'Yuri Norstein and the Hedgehog at USC'.
10 'The Book of Daniel', 4:33.
11 Reitan, *George III, Tyrant or Constitutional Monarch?*, viii.
12 Mee, 'The Doom of Tyrants', 108.
13 Mee, 'The Doom of Tyrants', 108.
14 Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 78.
15 Purves, *Stop Motion*, 138.
16 Liberman, 'Picasso', 132–133.
17 Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design', 5.
18 Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design'.
19 Elkins, 'The Three Configurations of Studio-Art PhDs'.
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ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN AFRICA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE: FORMULATING THE THEORY OF AFROSCENOLOGY

SAMUEL RAVENGAI

How can artistic research offer the opportunity to create knowledge based on African practice and produced from the African context? This presentation will delineate seven approaches to artistic research and argue for decolonial imperatives.

Artistic research can be understood in seven different but related ways. The object of study can be the work of art resulting in an intellectual output such as a journal article. In the field of applied theatre, a problem may exist in society, for example, HIV/AIDS, trauma, etc. A work of art may be created to engage with this problem. The process of art-making becomes a method, resulting in a performance/published play text. Here, the theatre-maker is both a creator and a researcher. On another level, an artistic researcher may create work to develop new techniques and processes. They may also develop new technologies for use by artists or even new methods of research. Since all practice either follows an existing theory or proposes a new one, artistic research has the potential to propose and advance new theories. In this article, I argue that arts researchers in African theatre have been developing new techniques and processes since 1939, based on African performance modes and their creative recombination with multinational influences to create work that is unique to the African continent. I have called this creative theory "Afroscenology." I see artistic research as offering the opportunity to create knowledge based on African practice and produced from our local context. This paper will delineate these seven approaches to artistic research. Since the other six approaches are relatively well known, I will spend a little more time explicating how artistic research can lead to the invention of a new theory, in this case, Afroscenology.

The context of artistic research

Artistic practice is as old as humankind. When climbing the rocks, kopjes, hills, and mountains of Southern Africa, one is intrigued by the Khoi and San paintings, the oldest painted 73 000 years ago. One would say the same thing about other, less enduring, artistic forms such as dance, song/music, ritual theatre, ceremonies, social drama, and cultural performance. When the first drama departments, at least in Southern Africa, were established from 1942 through to the early 2000s, artistic practice (not research) was the norm. Most of the 11 drama departments in South Africa offered full diploma and degree courses, following the North American or British models of combining theoretical study with practical training based on established Russian or western versions of performer/actor training. Creative practice could be built into a course or would have a life of its own through extra-curricular productions run by lecturer-directors using students and university infrastructure for the realisation of a creative output. Although there was substantial research toward realising the output, the theatrical production would not be recognised as research unless the lecturer-director wrote an article published in a recognised journal, book or conference proceedings on some aspects of the performance.

The fight for recognition of artistic practice as research began in the 1980s when the South African Department of Education (as it was then called) introduced a new funding regime where public universities would receive state subsidy based on the quantum of traditional research, as well as doctoral and master's graduates. The state did not recognise creative output as research. At least in South Africa, where the number of theatre departments and staff is higher than that of Zimbabwe, these departments used their numerical advantage to influence policy on artistic research. By the late 1990s, some South African universities established internal recognition systems for creative outputs and allowed artistic researchers to advance their careers based on recognition of their creative outputs as research. Around the same time,

artistic research had become a well-established approach as a method of enquiry in the UK, Australia, Canada, and Scandinavia.[1]

In Zimbabwe, without any pressure from artistic researchers, the few universities (Midlands State University, University of Zimbabwe, and Great Zimbabwe University) offering drama/theatre/performance, created staffing and promotion ordinances that recognised creative output as research. They would reward artistic researchers if their creative output displayed "originality and innovation in contribution to issues of culture, of creative arts, writing, architectural design, etc."[2] Regrettably, no one has ever been promoted based on artistic research as the staffing and promotions committees are dominated by academics who are not artistic researchers and are biased towards *scripto-centrism*. The advocacy prevalent in South Africa may, one day, shift attitudes towards artistic research in Zimbabwe.

Despite the strong artistic research advocacy present in South Africa, the government did not change the policy on research until 2017. Not all policies on what constituted research included artistic research as a form of knowing. The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) was, however, warming up to the idea of artistic research by 2001 when it acknowledged the fragility of all proceeding policies on research, which were biased against certain disciplines in the arts and humanities. The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DOHET) finally incorporated recommendations of the NPHE and various documents developed by academics at various forums on the subject of artistic research. DOHET developed a new document called "Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations" produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions (2017). This document created six subfields from which artistic research would be assessed and rewarded; Fine Arts and Visual Arts, Music, Theatre/Performance/Dance, Design, Film and Television, and Literary Arts. It also provided criteria for assessing artistic research output and the processes that artist-researchers would follow in submitting that research for government subsidy.

After establishing this context, it is necessary to describe the various approaches to how academics carry out artistic research in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and motivations for such ways of doing research. My experience in artistic research has taught me that it may take any of the following dimensions.

Artistic research may involve the accumulation of data that confirms an existing theory. This is the place of workshop theatre, variously called devised theatre, collaborative theatre, or radical theatre. The artist-researcher may work from an existing archive, such as the Magnet Theatre's history plays, which rely on memory sites in Cape Town, such as District Six Museum, graveyards, or the Bleek-Lloyd archive, containing Khoisan stories. Magnet Theatre selects the material and subjects it to various playmaking processes with the result of a theatrical output. Workshop theatre may depend on the living archive: people who were actually present during the unfolding of a unique historical moment, for example, the liberation war of Zimbabwe. Based on individual experiences, the artist-researcher selects the material. Zambuko Theatre created frontline theatre based on the experiences of war collaborators who had become students shortly after the war. Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) war plays such as *Takaitora neRopa* (Won by Blood) were created by demobilised soldiers under the directorship of artist-researchers, Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ and Kimani Gecau. It is possible that the artist-researcher will follow a pre-existing performance theory in realising the performance. It may also be possible that the artist-researcher will propose a new performance/

emplotment/acting theory. It is not an "either/or" situation. Both old and new theories may inhabit the same performance.

Related to the aforementioned approach is the application of an existing theory to facts, plays, performances, etc. In this approach, the work already exists in written form as a musical score, a play, dance notation, a literary work, etc. The artist-researcher chooses, again, an already existing theory to apply to the work. This type of artistic research has always been the norm in the western-influenced academy. An artist-researcher would choose a realist play and deploy realism in transforming the play into a performance. The designers would be guided by the same theory in the construction of sets, costumes, musical, and lighting scores. An acting method designed for realism—the psycho-technique, or its western variations—would be used to guide the performers in researching and constructing characters. Of late, a new generation of artist-researchers has emerged, who seek the death of the playwright, replacing them with the auteur director. This artist-researcher deploys postmodernism as a method of emplotment, where they build a performance text from several sources. The resultant creative output privileges the body over text, exuding a visual dramaturgy. Mncedisi Shabangu, Mandla Mbothwe, Mark Fleishman, and Prince Lamla are South African examples that come to mind.

Artistic research may involve the generation of new theory and its empirical testing. The nexus between performance practice and performance theory, especially in Africa, necessitates that every innovative, practical approach in performance preparation, presentation, and training leads to a theory of performance. South African performance practices are thoroughly under-theorised. Some South African theatre-makers have been creating work that is peculiar to their location: making it different from global trends. The 1980s up to the present moment produced work that was uniquely South African with a particular identity of its own as opposed to doing theatre originating from elsewhere in South Africa. A number of these performance forms were appropriated by postliberation theatre-makers to create work and a form of performance practice uniquely South African. Yet the theory of this theatre-making is barely visible. I have in mind the performance practices of Gibson Kente, Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa, Barney Simon, Fleishman (Magnet Theatre), and Shabangu, in South Africa, to mention but a few. The performance practices developed by these practitioners have revolutionised and expanded our understanding of acting and actor training. The global theory of the actor can, thus, no longer fully explain the developments in Southern African performance. In actor training, there is an overreliance on global notions of acting based on prominent western/eastern theatre innovators and theorists like Konstantin Stanislavski, Anton Chekhov, and Stanford Meisner. Today, we find out that decolonial discourses are frustrated with the lack of (Southern) African knowledges of performer training. I shall return to this point shortly.

The generation of new methods for dealing with problems in the discipline or in practice—artistic research—has helped us to create a method of research called Practice as Research. This method is defined as "research that is carried out through or by means of performance, using methodologies and specific methods familiar to performance practitioners, and where the output is at least in part, if not entirely, presented through performance."[3]

Temple Hauptfleisch has added three more approaches to artistic research, which I wish to summarise here. He calls the first artistic research approach "a study undertaken through/by means of the arts."[4] This is the orthodox tradition where the play/production and its associated assemblage like design, performance, lighting, sound,

dance, etc. are taken as the object of study to produce journal articles, collections, monographs, and conference papers. The second approach is one that Hauptfleisch calls arts research as "a study undertaken *through/by means of* the arts."[5] Here, the process of creative writing, painting, choreography, directing, designing, filmmaking, digital coding, curating, for example, is seen as research. The artist is making discoveries (philosophical thought) as they create and make them known to the audience/analyst. The creative output is the research. The third approach, according to Hauptfleisch, is "arts research as the development of *new technologies and instruments* for use by artists."[6] This is related to the approach of developing new theories, techniques, and processes that I mentioned, except that, here, a tangible scientific product is the outcome. This may be a new light, new paint, new instrument, for example, of a musical nature. A colleague in the Music Department at Wits University manufactured a new guitar, for instance, and that became part of their doctoral thesis.[7] The invention is usually then patented.

Framing the research

Not all creative activity and practice, even of the highest quality, constitute research. However, creative activity can be distinguished from creative research even if the output resembles each other. Creative activity becomes research when it has been framed as research. Therefore, a framing document should be constructed. The reviewer uses the framing document to evaluate the creative work. In other words, the artist-researcher is helping the reviewer to read their work according to their own criteria. Examples of the questions that reviewers may pose while reading/watching your work may include:

- How does the theatre piece/process relate to the framing?
- Does the theatre piece contribute to current practice or propose something novel? If so, how and to what extent?
- What is the theatre-maker's personal signature/contribution relative to the context? Quality is not the only criterion, but one of the indices of evaluation.

Jon Whitmore has introduced an interesting concept of framing systems.[8] He argues that audience members or theatre analysts bring the totality of their experiences to watch theatre and may experience it according to their horizon of expectation. In order to guide the analyst, the artist-researcher should put framing systems in place, and he suggests some of the following:

- Aesthetic Framing: This involves a production concept and how it inspired other creative processes.
- Production Framing: This involves an element of intellectual involvement, which may take the form of literary/performance analysis, something normally covered in a press release.
- Physical Framing: This includes digital drawings of the set, models, sketches, costume, pictures, etc.
- Intellectual, Historical, and Social Framing: This can be fulfilled by providing a statement of intent outlining the problem or question to be addressed; the researcher contextualises the enquiry. What place does the creative practice occupy in the stylistics, politics, the body of theory, and the researcher's own previous work? Awareness of other theatre-makers' work in the same domain is critical. Positioning

the researcher's previous work (where it exists), reputation, and performance style is recommended. State the niche that the new work occupies in the scheme of things.

Towards the theory of Afroscenology

I now return to artistic research that leads to the generation of a new theory. This nexus between performance practice and performance theory in Africa and the Diaspora needs to be theorised. Every innovative practical approach in performance preparation, presentation, and training leads to a theory of performance. While, in the past, alternative modes of theatre analysis, theatre-making/writing, performer training, and performance were not recognised by the dominant western knowledge system, Richard Schechner began theorising Performance Studies in his important book, *Performance Theory*. In 1995, French scholar, Jean-Marie Pradier, coined the term "ethnoscenology" to describe modes of performance originating from outside North America and Europe or the West.[9] This theory or field of study opens up the generation of new terminology to describe and analyse performances that originate from other continents, where western models would not suffice as tools of analysis or creativity. While I recognise the good intentions of Pradier and his theory of ethnoscenology, scholars who have deployed this theory, such as Patrice Pavis,[10] and including those who have deployed Schechner's performance theory, have taken these theories to mean the study of Latin American and Asian performances. As with many other books written from a western perspective, Africa is missing from the map, despite its various performances that have taken place since time immemorial. The underlying assumption is that there is nothing worthy of studying from Africa. A source of irritation is reading any book on performance studies/theatre studies; case studies from Africa are missing. Take, for instance, Meyer-Dinkgräfe's *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present* (2001). It delves into the origins of acting and its evolution in the West from Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages and renaissance periods. Acting developed from declamatory to *commedia dell'arte*, melodramatic acting, and realistic/psychological acting styles. Meyer-Dinkgräfe delineates the challenges to realism by means of expressionist modes of acting, leading to immediacy and presence associated with postdramatic theatre.[11] From the middle of the book, Meyer-Dinkgräfe diverts to what he calls non-western (itself a problematic term) approaches to acting. The case studies cover India, Japan, China, Islamic countries, and then forges a technique he calls intercultural theatre based on the works of western directors like Peter Brook, who went to the East to harvest stories and techniques to create work such as *The Mahabharata* (1989). Africa is missing.

It has become necessary that researchers from the African continent, or whoever is interested in the study of African performances, do something to fill this lacuna. African arts researchers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Credo Mutwa, Herbert Dhlomo, Kente, Ngema, Fatima Dike, Mtwa and, of late, younger theatre-makers like Mbothwe and Shabangu have been creating work and writing or talking about it. When we look back in relation to the present, we find out particular characteristics of this work that point to a common artistic practice. Since most, if not all, theory comes from practice, I am advancing the theory of Afroscenology to explain, describe, make, and analyse work that has emerged in Africa. Since this is a neologism, I need to spend a little bit more time explaining the theory before I refer to specific case studies.

The term Afroscenology is formed from three lexical items; "Afro-", "scene" and "-logy." The first lexical item is the root word for Africa from which several words can be formed, such as Africanity, Afrocentricity, Africanism, Afro-hair, or Afro-currency.

"Afro-" denotes a deep interest in Africa and a rootedness in the continent and its epistemes. "Scene" has Greco-Roman origins. The Greek word is "*skene*," which means tent or stage, and the Latin version is "*scena*" meaning the same thing. The English version, "scene," has several meanings that, in play, denotes an action that happens at the same place and time. Outside art, it means a place, activity, or in crime, a place where an unpleasant event happened. From this word, various English words are formed, such as scenery, scenario, and scenic. All these words project objects that can be seen: whether as art or in their natural environments, or a sequence of events that build a narrative of a specific nature. Thus, in western culture, the art of building sets and costumes for performances is called scenography. The lexical item "-logy" does not exist on its own. It is a suffix normally used in English to form new terminologies that refer to a field of study, a branch of knowledge, bodies of knowledge, or names of sciences. It comes from the Greek word "*logos*," which means the word or explanation, account, or narrative. Examples of English words formed from *logos* are logic, dialogue, monologue, all of which have something to do with the word. When a new theory or branch of knowledge emerges to warrant further research, English forms new words by adding "-logy" to the field, meaning "study of," for example psychology, sociology, cosmology, and so on.

The complete word, "*scenology*," does not currently exist in the English dictionary, and I am using it here to describe an emerging body of knowledge that is rooted in Africa and the Diaspora around the notion of African performance practice. "Afroscenology" refers to performance practices developed by African practitioners and Africanists, which respond to the African playing cultures by incorporating their performance traditions, forming work that is unique to Africa and its Diaspora. The description of this work through its theoretical tenets provides grounds for the formulation of a theory, which I have called "Afroscenology." Afroscenology is not only a theory, but a mode of thought and action, a body of knowledge that is still growing, which seeks to document, conceptualise, analyse the ways African practitioners and Africanists write, perform, creatively make, direct, design, and vocalise their work. The training of performers and writers already exists in the various theatre companies in Africa, which specialise in community and workshop theatre. This knowledge has not yet fully percolated into African university curricula. Afroscenology, as a branch of knowledge, seeks to expand the domain of performer training by tapping into this tacit knowledge, which currently resides in various theatre companies, and formalise it through documentation and teaching in the formal education sector.

This is not just a pipe dream; at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the programme of decolonisation, I have overseen a rapid process of changing the training of performers in the Department of Theatre and Performance by incorporating African modes of performance, which fellow colleagues currently call black aesthetics. We have made several changes to the naming of courses and the content subsumed in those courses. We changed from "dramatic art" to "theatre and performance," and dropped acting from our vocabulary. We replaced this with performance practice for Years 1 and 2, and performance studies for Years 3 and 4. The various changes that have taken place under my stewardship will be a lengthy discussion for another paper. Suffice it to say, a number of colleagues who worked in the workshop theatre tradition have now joined the university and are developing a performing and writing training curriculum, which they are using in the studios. This material and the discoveries they are making in the studios have become the subject of research for their higher degrees.

Some examples of arts research in pursuit of an african aesthetic

Before the phase of arts research began in Africa, theatre-makers responded to colonial models in a variety of ways, which Frantz Fanon called a literature of assimilation to the metropolis models, followed by a literature of just before the battle, which told African stories in borrowed western aesthetics, and, finally, a literature of combat that fought western models, both aesthetically and in terms of content.[12] After these three phases, African scholars began a new phase of researching and experimentation through creative practice to establish a national theatre aesthetic or an African one. The first recorded arts research was by Herbert Dhlomo, who wrote a number of plays and theorised his practice. After studying the various performance modes of the Zulu, he called this African theatre "*izibongelo*," which he defined as "all forms of tribal dramatic art."[13]

In 1960, a new political and cultural movement called the Black Consciousness Movement emerged and began a theatre programme in 1972, which Steve Biko, the think tank of the movement, called "Black theatre."[14] The aesthetics of theatre can be picked from a number of plays that were written and performed under its banner, such as Mthuli ka Shezi's *Shanti* (1981). Its focus was not so much the form but the message. Mafika Gwala, another active theorist of the Black theatre movement, described the aesthetic as African national theatre.[15] What is significant here is the desire to create a continental aesthetic that would carry the weight and depth of African experiences. The Ghanaian arts researcher, Mohammed Ben Abdallah calls this African aesthetic in the Akan language "*Abibigoro*," meaning "black theatre or theatre of African people."[16] Black theatre scholars who described the same theatre used either terms: black theatre or African theatre. What is clear from the above descriptive epithets is an attempt since 1939 to describe and name the African aesthetic.

In 1976, wa Thiong'o together with Gecau and wa Mĩrĩĩ, at the prompting by the Kamiriithu community, started an arts research project by the same name, Kamiriithu theatre. They worked with untrained villagers and workers to create a workshop play called *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) (1977). After the project, wa Thiong'o reflected thereon based on what he had learnt from the villagers, who he saw as the custodians of his mother tongue, Gikuyu, and African culture. *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was an example of African theatre and wa Thiong'o began to theorise his practice using the term "African theatre" to describe his aesthetic. The tenets of this theatre resonate with Efua Sutherland's *Anansegoro* (loosely translated as "Spider" play), epitomised by her production, *Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). In this play, she demonstrates how the African storytelling tradition can be used as a technique to write and perform an African play. All the aforementioned descriptors speak to a common aesthetic developed at different times across the African continent. Based on their artistic practice, they have argued that this form may be deployed in theatre-making in Africa, and have demonstrated its applicability and efficacy in their respective plays. I want to posit this form as the first tenets of Afroscenology. However, in as much as it is an alternative to western theatre, it does not necessarily negate any useful elements from the western tradition, albeit they may never take the dominant position in the hierarchy of signs.

In African art, the storytelling tradition has not only influenced African theatre, but African novels and films. For much of African theatre that subscribes to the basic tenets of Afroscenology, the "opening" is characterised by a common quality: *nhanganyaya/ukuvula* (Shona and Nguni, respectively). Sam Ukala has called the beginning, the "law of opening."[17] The storyteller/*sarungano* (Shona), who may be played by one person or shared by several people, enters the space and introduces the

story by telling it to the audience and introducing the other characters. In Abdallah's *The Slaves* (2005), for example, the storytellers/*sarungano* are played by a group of people: a search party pursuing captured slaves. They perform a poetry of abuse at the audience. When the *sarungano* is played by several people, the style of performance becomes what is called, in Swahili, a "*ngonjera*." The various plays mentioned here deploy the *ngonjera* performance technique, which the western gaze may read as a chorus. However, in the African sense, the *sarungano* take turns to deliver the narrative, and sometimes take the lines together in choral chants.

In my artistic research, I tested this theory through staging the classic play, *Oedipus Rex* (c. 429 BC), which I adapted to *Vumani Oedipus* (2015). I used a group of praise singers, termed in Nguni, "*izimbongi*," to introduce the story by singing a song of suffering. The king's chief of staff, *ndunankulu*, also played the part of the *sarungano* by addressing the king and the audience, explaining why they were gathered and what the state needed to do. The combination of *izimbongi* and *ndunankulu* provided a pivotal vehicle to deliver the story and add commentary from time to time. Dike deploys the same technique in her play, *Sacrifice for Kreli* (1978) when a group of male *izimbongi* deliver praises to King Kreli, according to Xhosa custom, and provide commentary on the behaviour of men who occupied two different ideological positions: surrendering to the British or fighting them.

This theoretical tenet is not only applicable to African generated play texts but, like any other theory, can be deployed to any play text. The artist-researcher who put it to test several times, Abdallah, concluded that the *ngonjera* technique "is a tool of the director. I see myself taking any play, written … and doing it in the *abibigoro* style [Afroscenology style] without changing the play, talk about the author and then the play begins. Then, at certain points, he cuts into the action and comments on it."[18]

The second theoretical tenet of Afroscenology is *visiosonic* dramaturgy. The neologism suggests a combination that is visual and auditory. All over the African continent, song and dance form an integral part of social life and playing culture. Arts researchers like Dike, wa Thiong'o, Abdallah, and Stephen Chifunyise have reached one conclusion: that work deploying the theory of Afroscenology will have song and dance (*nziyo/ingoma* and *kudzana/shibilika*; in Shona and Zulu, respectively). In a typical western play deploying the six elements of Aristotle's dramatic theory,[19] language with pleasurable accessories (*lexis*) will be a key component. Language will subsume elements like poetic language, emotion, diction, silence, beats, thoughts, units, and subtext. While Africanists and African theatre-makers may choose to use language in their performances, which may or may not have some of the Aristotelian elements, the Afroscenological near equivalent of language is broader than that provided by Aristotle. wa Thiong'o has called this category "the language of African theatre," which subsumes song, dance, and mime.[20] These three languages of African theatre, in the case of wa Thiong'o et al.'s *Maitu Njugira* (Mother Sing for Me; 1982), were more dominant than the spoken word (*lexis*) as he asserts, "dance, mime, song were more dominant than words in telling the story of repression and resistance. The visual and sound images carried the burden of the narrative and the analysis."[21]

Chifunyise, theorising on what called "national theatre," a form of new theatre that he wanted the newly independent Zimbabwe to adopt in 1980, makes a number of interesting observations about the place of song and dance. In this regard, Chifunyise proposes two ways of creating theatre. The first proposal is centred on appropriating the western dramaturgical frame and then grafting it with African texts. Here, the theatre-maker takes recourse to making theatre following a linear plot but

incorporates song and dance at strategic points as summarised in Chifunyise's training manual.[22]

- In every break in the play
- At change of scenes/acts
- To create an atmosphere/location/cultural environment or indicate progression of time
- To bring life into the play
- To explain or expand the theme of the play/to remind the audience of the message/hidden theme
- To involve or awaken the audience
- To begin or end the play/rejuvenate it/help to create impact

In this approach, the matrix of performance is western, and indigenous texts are inscribed within that matrix, and they alter the western dramaturgical frame while indigenous texts are themselves equally altered.

Chifunyise's second proposal may aptly be described as "de-dramatisation" of theatre, in the sense that he attempts to move away from the primacy of the written text, implying the death of the playwright and the ascendancy of the director in the creative process, to a type of theatre that utilises the body as the nucleus of performance or, as he puts it, as "the most critical tool in creating theatre."[23] Chifunyise describes this theatre as "dance-drama," although the term itself is a misnomer in the sense that, in actual performance of this theatre, drama is almost dead. Dialogue is minimal, and where it is used, it is not intended to be constructed around the Aristotelian notion of plot. Instead, the theatre-maker creates a performance through dance, song, music, mime, chants, ululation, recitals, and movement.[24] According to Chifunyise, the theatre-maker could bring traditional songs, dances and ceremonies, rallies, recitals, and festivals to the stage as they are, and then rearrange them for coherence and order. This seems to resonate with the Caribbean theatre of exuberance or theatre of assimilation proposed by Errol Hill.[25] Since Chifunyise believes in the functionality of theatre and its ideological impact, he proposes that the songs and dances chosen by the theatre-maker should depict the interests of peasants and workers. Alternatively, Chifunyise proposes that the songs and dances could be used out of their original contexts by changing the words and inscribing new ones to an existing melody.[26] The traditional dances could be re-choreographed to suit the new needs of the director.

Related to the elements of song and dance is mime. What I seek to establish is to foreground mime as a tenet of Afroscenology. This kind of mime is not to be confused with the western tradition associated with Jacques Lecoq. This mime is different and is called *kuyedzesera/ukunyenyeza* in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively. These words mean to try to be someone or something in the absence of the object or person. This "attempt to be" is not limited to physical means, but incorporates sound action produced by the human body. Thus, the body is capable of performing or expressing anything. Based on the duality of the process, which is both physical and aural, I would call the technique *Afrosonic* mime to distinguish it from the classical mime.

Take, for instance, the performance of Dike's *Sacrifice for Kreli* (1976). King Kreli is planning a sacrifice to his ancestors to ascertain whether he should go back to Bomvanaland (a land now conquered and taken over by the British) to fight the British or to bring the Galeka women and children to the valley to stay with their families, as

opposed to being the subjects of the British. Fourteen men performed the ritual. It involved standing around a kraal (mimed) and identifying an acceptable bull amongst a big herd of cattle (mimed). The performers drive the herd by way of producing bellowing sounds, whistling, shouting, and talking to animals. The herd is mimed through sounds. In its 1976 run, Rob Amato, the producer and co-director with Makwedini Mtsaka, remembers the mime as follows,

> … and at the end of the first act there are fourteen people bringing the imaginary beast in, which always got ovations. There are fourteen people in a coordinated mime, which was rehearsed with me being the bull, and they would bring me down, while I put all the resistance I could muster, just to get the right muscular tensions of the act. Five men at each of my arms, and of course, I would go down … Anywhere, they put it to the ground, and it falls with a great thump as it lands, and this is done by an actor, you know. You've got so many actors that you don't know who's doing the sound effects. Then the king passes the spear between the bull's legs and up and down the body, and then stabs it and one of the actor's cues—you can't tell which, they're all bending down holding this thing, kneeling and holding it, and there is a lot of noise.[27]

Read together with the stage directions in the play, the fourteen performers together try to create an atmosphere and ambience to convince the audience that they are driving a herd of cattle through human and animal sounds, and, of course, using their hands to suggest whips and spears. They do not try to be animals, but they produce sounds that create an atmosphere for suspending disbelief. Since mime is not scripted, there is a greater tendency for the eleatory technique to be used, which Ukala calls "free enactment."[28] Ukala uses this epithet to describe the ability of the performer to imitate actions and speech of a character or non-human object without being fully psychological. It also involves the element of bifurcation: the ability to play multiple characters by shifting from one to the other in quick succession, including playing inanimate objects. While this is rehearsed, the performance changes each night depending on the activities of the assemblage. The subject of *Afrosonic* mime is an essay-length discussion on its own; here, I just want to demonstrate how it works in the context of Afroscenology theory.

Why artistic research in Africa?

Michel Foucault argues that power does not weaken and vanish.[29] It can retreat, but it has the propensity to re-organise its forces and reinvent itself in another form, pursuing the same objectives. Within the Postcolony, the lost power can be channelled more rigorously in the academy and the field of artistic production. Coloniality is an invisible power structure that sustains colonialism and its unequal relations of exploitation and domination even after the end of colonialism. Within the academy, there is cognitive domination, which ensures that inequality reproduces itself. The modes of knowledge production and dissemination in South African, historically white, universities are largely Eurocentric.

- The curriculum will prescribe more western plays for staging, studying, and criticism than African ones.
- The training of performers will use western methods (e.g., the psycho-technique and its various versions like Chekhov, Mesmer, Alexander, Strasberg, Grotowski, Spolin, Mamet, etc.) and, as an afterthought, one Asian technique and side-lined African performer training methods.

▶ The curriculum may privilege western theatre history and theatre innovators and neglect African theatre history.
▶ The curriculum may chronologically study western theories; naturalism, realism, modernism (symbolism, Dadaism, futurism, epic, expressionism, etc.) postmodernism, etc., and neglect African ones; Negritudism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, Afro-futurism, Afroscenology, Womanism (an African version of feminism), etc.
▶ Ali Mazrui has called this "Euro-heroism" by which he means "the tendency toward giving disproportionate attention to European and western achievements in arts."[30]
▶"Euro-exclusivity." In terms of knowledge production, disproportionate space is given to the western side of theatre history and, in the case of South Africa, white theatre history and the role whites have played in advancing South African theatre.

The armed struggle was the first phase of decolonisation. In almost all postcolonies, students were the first to reject a colonial curriculum: Zimbabwe in the 1980s, Kenya in the late 1960s, and South Africa from 2015. I put it to you that artistic research has the potential to decolonise the curriculum in Africa. Emanating from the seven approaches to artistic research, the following can be achieved:

▶ Production of new plays/performances from the African context that may be used by students and researchers for their courses and research.
▶ Production of new performer training methods and techniques that speak to the African context; e.g. Afroscenology, Afro-futurism. The world may benefit from Africa.
▶ Challenging the *logos*. The western academy has always worshipped positivist ways of producing episteme while at the same time demeaning knowledge gained through making, performing, and creating. Arts research challenges the dictatorship of *logos* and privileges embodied ways of knowing a major—paradigm shift.

Samuel is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Theatre and Performance in the Wits School of Arts; samuel.ravengai@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Fleischman, 'The Difference of Performance as Research'.
2 MSU Ordinance, 5.
3 Fleishmann, 'The Difference of Performance as Research', 28.
4 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 19; emphasis in original.
5 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 19; emphasis in original.
6 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 20; emphasis in original.
7 Crossley, 'The Cyber-Guitar System'.
8 Whitmore, *Directing Postmodern Theater*.
9 Pradier, 'Ethnoscenology: The Flesh Is Spirit'.
10 Pavis, *Analyzing Performance*.
11 Meyer-Dinkgräfe, *Approaches to Acting*.
12 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*.
13 Dhlomo, 'Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama', 48.
14 Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 96.
15 Gwala, 'Towards a National Theatre'.
16 Asiedu, 'Mohammed Ben Abdallah's Search for an African Aesthetic in the Theatre', 371.
17 Ukala, 'Folkism'.
18 Quoted in Asiedu, 'Mohammed Ben Abdallah's Search for an African Aesthetic in the Theatre', 372.
19 Plot, character, thought, language, melody (rhythm), and spectacle.
20 wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*.
21 wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 58.
22 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 35.
23 Chifunyise, 'Foreword', viii.
24 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 36.
25 Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 44.
26 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 36–7.
27 Interview published in Solberg, *Alternative Theatre in South Africa*, 60.
28 Ukala, 'Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle in Dramaturgy'.
29 Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
30 Mazrui, 'Foreword', xi.

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A PHD IN PRACTICE-BASED DESIGN RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE AT WITS UNIVERSITY

SANDRA FELIX

How does the new PhD in practice-based design research in the School of Architecture at Wits position itself? This paper is an account of the author-practitioner's exposure to the long history of engagement with design research in the school through the example of architects such as Pancho Guedes and others.

The call for papers for this conference asked: what is artistic research in Africa? This paper sheds light on the potential for artistic research broadly and in my own architectural design research more specifically when approached within contexts of African philosophy and thinking.

The circles of influence of architectural design research carried out at the Wits School of Architecture begin within the context of Wits University, Johannesburg, South Africa, Africa, and extend to the context of architectural design research globally. Architectural design research is defined by Murray Fraser as "processes and outcomes of inquiries and investigations in which *architects use the creation of projects or broader contributions towards design thinking* as the central constituent in a process which also involves the more generalised research activities of *thinking, writing, testing, verifying, debating, disseminating, performing, validating* and so on."[1]

Architectural design research, internationally, has followed a number of different paths, from the practice-based model of RMIT in Melbourne, Australia, which has spread to Europe and Asia, to activist and feminist practice models. However, as it has spread further to the historically based model, "In contemporary discourse and practice it is familiar to discuss design research as if it is new to architecture. But this is to ignore the history of the architect," noted by Jonathan Hill.[2] By this, Hill means that the history of the architect reveals numerous people, from Andrea Palladio to Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas, who had a productive and multi-directional relationship between thinking, writing, drawing, building, which (as per Fraser) is defined as design research. This is arguably the historically based model of design research.

In terms of the African context, Achille Mbembe, in his *Critique of Black Reason*, speaks of "*situated thinking*, born of lived experience that was always in progress, unstable and changing."[3] This situated thinking is akin to the arts or design researcher, thinking of their practice, their lived and embodied experience. Selby Mvusi, a South African artist who taught at the Faculty of Arts and Architecture, University College, Nairobi, put it succinctly when he proposed that, as an architect, you can only build once you are "total and present and constituted of a multitude of relationships. Comprehend this, bring it inside you and allow yourself to be comprised of it, *then* you can build."[4] He spoke of being comprehensive, which was "a relationship built of the productive tension between made of something and knowing something."[5] Mvusi once told his students that "the problem to be resolved—the commitment to be recognised—the question to be answered … is what is *Our Time*?"[6]

So, what does it mean it to do architectural practice-based design research in Africa, South Africa, and at Wits University, *here* and *now*, at this place and time?

The next circle of influence centres around the Wits School of Architecture where a pedagogy firmly rooted in design, theory, and history, as well as in practice was established—with a number of top practicing architects teaching at the school, from Rex Martienssen to John Fassler, Pancho Guedes, Peter Rich, Mpethi Morojele, Jo Noero, and Lindsay Bremner. The link between design practice and pedagogy was strong and, by extension, as per Hill, architectural design research was always present, even if only implicitly.

I arrived at Wits as a student in 1990—to the John Moffat building, designed by Fassler in the modernist style—when Guedes had just left, after 15 years as Head of the School of Architecture. As per Revel Fox, Guedes' time would be remembered as an "exciting and notable epoch, and a high point in the teaching of architecture anywhere."[7] His influence was felt throughout the school, through the lecturers that taught us, to the older students who had been part of the Pancho era. He was the proverbial ancestor in the room, speaking to us through others. Guedes, first a student at

Wits, was later to become head of school. As a student at Wits under the modernists Martienssen and Fassler he was persuaded that architecture was, above all, an art, integrating other plastic and design arts such as painting, sculpture, and interior, landscaping, and urban design.

Like the architects Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, and Steven Holl, Guedes painted, sculpted, designed, and constructed buildings,[8] and like them, Guedes used all these activities in a number of ways:

- as heuristic devices—to discover and learn something for himself, as Aalto did
- as an exploration of architectural qualities of space, as Holl does
- as a mode through which to bring the qualities of composition and form from painting and sculpture to architecture, as Le Corbusier did
- but also, as a type of intuitive exercise, where intuition and representation are interchangeable; he sculpts his architecture and architects his sculpture

As one of his students noted, "Pancho taught us to invent buildings from dreams; to go beyond working consciousness into the realm of magicians and sorcerers. He inspired us with buildings he'd dreamt into reality."[9]

He set up an open studio in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) with craftsmen, artists, painters all working together on architectural projects. The artist Malangatana, who gained prominence as a Mozambican muralist, was part of the group. This communal practice of architecture can be seen to be embedded, or in some way arising, from the African Ubuntu philosophy of "I am because you are," visualising a community built on interdependent relationships, stressing unity, harmony, mutual respect, and individual responsibility to the collective.

Devi Dee Mucina specifies the African philosophy of Ubuntu as a position that communicates that self-reflection and the making of meaning occur in a social-relational world, and investigates the interweaving arenas of embodiment, time, space and action.[10] Moyra Keane put it best when she said that the western world view emphasises thinking over being while, in the African phenomenology of Ubuntu, identity centres on the ideas that I am because you are, or I am because I participate.[11] This is fundamentally different from the Cartesian "I think therefore I am," which points to the separation of mind and matter, and the abstraction of thought: hence, to objective epistemologies. "Ubuntu points instead to participation, interdependence and collectivity, and hence to subjective epistemologies, where intuition, revelation and inspiration are all valid ways of knowing."[12] This shift from objective to subjective epistemologies, is particularly relevant to arts or design research, which is largely self-ethnographic and draws particularly from practice, including all those subjective ways of knowing that Keane lists—intuition, revelation and inspiration.

In his last lecture in New York, before his death, Mvusi resurrected Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity, which seems very much like the scientific proof of Ubuntu—that what governed human societies was the relationship of attraction, repulsion, inequality, or equivalence.[13] However, he went further and, in a post-colonial statement, rejected the binaries of the developed versus the underdeveloped world, of African versus western; he said that the chronology of progress was a fiction and that we in Africa were never going to be "developed"; that we, like anyone, will only continue to grow or else die.[14] Like Mbembe, Mvusi focused on the journey, the process, rather than the origin or destination. In a way, this is what arts and design research is: a focus on the journey, the process, a way of making this subjective epistemology visible.

Ubuntu, however, goes beyond the relation of people to each other; as Chrisna du Plessis puts it, "Ubuntu describes the African view of humanity and its place in the greater order of things … Ubuntu visualises a community built on interdependent relationships and regards humanity as an indivisible part of the ecosystem with a communal responsibility to sustain life. The emphasis is not so much on human rights but on human responsibilities."[15] The values of Ubuntu are:

- oneness/unity—that all life is interconnected and interdependent
- harmony
- respect
- responsibility

Essentially, du Plessis sees the connection between Ubuntu and the values of sustainability.

In his interracial creative studio atmosphere, where architecture, arts, and crafts came together, even if practised from a colonial context, Guedes claimed for architects the rights and liberties that painters and poets held for so long. Together with Julian Beinart, a lecturer at the Wits School of Architecture, Guedes led a series of basic design workshops across Africa, which were non-hierarchical, interracial, intergenerational, and multi-disciplinary. The first workshop in Mozambique in January 1961 was initially formulated as an informal course for Wits School of Architecture students. However, the students ended up being joined by workers who were completing construction of the workshop venue—the Piramidal Nursery School—including Malangatana who, only months later, held his first solo exhibition.[16] "The aim of these workshops was to create, for a short time, an environment of complete liberation and intense work, in which young people with different backgrounds and varying amounts of previous training could find personal solutions to set problems."[17] The workshop/summer school was to be replicated across Africa, with five workshops all in different countries. They were unified insofar as they sought to train visual cognition, with Beinart privileging visual culture as a pre-scriptural form of communication, closer to Africa's oral tradition.[18]

At the next workshop at the University College in Ibadan, Nigeria, in conjunction with Ulli Beier, who held a post at the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University College, the original formal programme was adjusted to suit students who came from several different backgrounds. For some students, and some non-students, the workshops became much more of a group improvisation, as Beinart noted, "and then someone would start [an exercise], often, I would myself and then everyone reacted."[19] The work produced was therefore collaborative—and countered the notion of a single author to a work, or individual artistic expression. "How exactly the work was done, remains a mystery. What is clear however, is that the idea of creative freedom so communicated itself from one student to another that in the end the best work had not been done by one or two but by everyone."[20] The workshops were run by Beier and became more formal with limited participants, with the intention to discover and groom a selection of exceptionally talented artists. The Ubuntu spirit of the first workshops was lost in favour of a more formalised pedagogy. The refrain by Beinart that "the best work had not been done by one or two but by everyone" is true of architecture; it is a field where the architect, client, and builder, as well as various consultants, in essence, have to work together with a shared vision towards a completed work. The principle of Ubuntu—"I am because we are"—was physically reflected in the workshops, and is a true reflection of architectural practice.

After spending two years in the Guedes' inspired Wits School of Architecture, I moved to the Faculty of Architecture at Porto University (FAUP), Portugal: a school very much in the grip of Álvaro Siza Vieira's influence. He had just received the Pritzker Prize—arguably the highest honour for an architect—and the school had just occupied a new series of buildings, designed by Siza, on the banks of the River Douro, in Porto. A particular combination of poetic modernism and critical regionalism, as practised by Siza, held sway, and all students were expected to be diligent followers. Coming from the Guedes' dream world at Wits, where "poetry, fantasy and art were seamlessly brought together,"[21] it was a shock. FAUP took the madness of Guedes' Wits and disciplined it, made it more rational, and capable of being defended to the staunchest modernist.

The experience also gave me an appreciation for the city as an organism, and the collective responsibility of all architects, architectural students, and inhabitants for the quality of places. Every project began with intense drawing sessions of the city. Every line of the drawing needed to be defended in terms of what it contributed to the embodied experience of the city. Drawings were expected to be reflections of the design concept, following Marshall McLuhan's "the medium as message."[22] This particular focus on drawing as one outcome of architectural work, and not just a building, was an extension of Guedes' assertion that "Architecture is art and that making buildings is less important than making drawings."[23]

Upon returning to Wits in 1995, the site of the School of Architecture in its urban and political context had come to the fore, under the influence of, among others, Lone Poulsen and the soon-to-be head of school, Bremner, who wrote extensively, eventually compiling her essays into a book entitled *Writing the City into Being*. The phenomenological themes inherent in Guedes' architecture (Guedes was of his time and place) as Christian Norberg-Schulz put it "… all places have character [and that] to some extent the character of a place is a function of time …"[24] continued to be taught at the school, with Iain Low, introducing students to contemporary architectural phenomenology, such as Juhani Pallasmaa's *Eyes of the Skin*, which extended Norberg-Schulz and Gaston Bachelard's work. Also, to architects whose work has "applied their own experiences and studies of a particular culture and context to the design of buildings, in the hope of replicating those experiences in others,"[25] these architects included Siza, from whose university I had just returned.

This was my journey to professional practice, one embedded in phenomenology, both African and global, and in the city, and influenced by many who came before me. My architectural practice-based design research commenced with an understanding of the global precedents of design research and has continued to an autoethnographic study of my ancestors, my community of practice.

Sandra is a lecturer in the Wits School of Architecture and Planning, and a practicing architect with 20 years of experience; sandra.felix@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Fraser, 'Introduction', 1–2; emphasis added.

2 Hill, 'Design Research', 15.

3 Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 161; emphasis in original.

4 Miles, Mvusi, and Johannesburg Art Gallery, *Current of Africa*, appendix, 31, 34, 35; emphasis added.

5 Miles, Mvusi, and Johannesburg Art Gallery, *Current of Africa*, appendix, 31, 34, 35.

6 Quoted in Magaziner, 'The Foundation', 602; emphasis added.

7 Guedes and Guedes, *Viva Pancho*, 4.

8 Guedes and Guedes, *Viva Pancho*, 1.

9 Guedes and Guedes, *Viva Pancho*, 2.

10 Mucina, 'Ubuntu Orality as a Living Philosophy'.

11 Keane, 'Understanding Science Curriculum and Research in Rural Kwa-Zulu Natal'.

12 Keane, 'Understanding Science Curriculum and Research in Rural Kwa-Zulu Natal', 47.

13 Miles, Mvusi, and Johannesburg Art Gallery, *Current of Africa*, appendix, 31, 34, 35.

14 Magaziner, 'The Foundation', 626-627.

15 du Plessis, 'The Real Sustainability Challenge'.

16 Levin, 'Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship'.

17 Beinart, 'Visual Education for Emerging Cultures', 196.

18 Levin, 'Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship', 87.

19 Beinart, 'Basic Design in Nigeria', 21.

20 Beinart, 'Basic Design in Nigeria', 21.

21 Guedes and Guedes, *Viva Pancho*, 8.

22 McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel, *The Medium Is the Massage*.

23 Quoted in Guedes and Guedes, *Viva Pancho*, 10.

24 Norberg-Schulz. 'The Phenomenon of Place', 420.

25 Munoz, 'Quick Tour through Phenomenological Thinking in Architecture'.

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FINDING THE LOST FISHERMEN: A STUDY IN RECOVERY AND PERFORMANCE AS PRESERVATION

MOSES NII-DORTEY

This paper engages what strategic/ethical research options can be deployed for preserving, performing, and documenting artworks such as *The Lost Fishermen*, a dying folk opera, which is arguably one of Ghana's most successful musical artworks, created by Saka Acquaye in the immediate aftermath of Ghana's political independence.

Introduction

This presentation explores ethical and strategic performance-based techniques for researching musical arts threatened with extinction. The reference to performance-based techniques in this context implies learning to perform both as the intended research objective as well as a method of gathering data. The idea is to increase the possibility of extending the lives of such art forms and to preserve them through documentation. The approach resolves two paradoxes of humanities research: it bridges the gap between ethnomusicological research and the human performers it studies, and underscores the primacy of the sound, action, embodiment, and performance of musical arts as living objects, not as a work written as a score.[1]

I wish to discuss this issue regarding an ongoing project to recover/revive stage performances of *The Lost Fishermen*, a musical drama composed by Saka Acquaye (1923–2007) in 1965. *The Lost Fishermen* has been classified under the genre "folk opera," created and so titled by Acquaye: one of the best-known all-round artists ever to emerge from Ghana. Records of folk operas already exist in Nigeria,[2] and also among the African-American communities in the USA,[3] and probably earlier in South Africa, hence Acquaye may not be the originator of that designation. He is also on record as the genre's best-known composer with ten known works within the space of two decades. He defined what he meant by folk opera as "a musical form of drama composed of airs, recitatives, and pieces performed by a chorus with orchestra, and which makes use of scenery, acting and a blend of poetry and dance."[4]

According to Acquaye, his intent for resorting to the operatic genre was to exploit the integrated aesthetic values of the indigenous African arts in ways that no singular art form could express. His emphasis on African-centred themes, folk songs, and dances, characterisation, instrumentation, costumes, performance materials (props), as well as performance practices, give some credence to this claim. He said, "I have always thought of the best way to reach the majority of our people. It occurred to me that music, dance and drama were popular with our people and I can point to problems of society and contribute to its development using opera."[5]

Folk operas in Ghana's history

Acquaye's folk operas occupy a special place in Ghana's cultural history, politics, and nation-building efforts. The art form was created in the nationalistic zeal that characterised the immediate aftermath of Ghana's independence from colonial rule in 1957, particularly between the 1960s and 70s. It was a time when uniting the pre-independence disparate ethnicities of the new nation-state and weaning the populace off the colonial cultural baggage of racial/cultural inferiority were topmost priorities on the Kwame Nkrumah-led administration's political agenda. Under his philosophy, "… art as another tool of ideology,"[6] Nkrumah personally inspired a cultural renaissance trajectory that valorised African personality, values and nature-inspired worldviews as a necessary alternative to the colonial legacy. Even though he may have pioneered the way, Nkrumah was not alone. Similar initiatives such as Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa*[7] and Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Negritude,"[8] confirm the pan-African dimensions of that development. Part of the modus operandi was the conservation of African natural resources and cultural elements such as taboos, totems, ethnic names, folklore, and proverbs as imperatives for the development of Africa.[9] In Ghana, the philosophy translated into unparalleled governmental patronage of the arts by the Nkrumah-led administration, in particular. Acquaye's integration of various art forms, deliberately drawn from different ethnic groups in Ghana, was meant to serve as a metaphor to celebrate the much-cherished

African personality as well as foster a sense of national unity and harmony among the national audience.

Out of his many operas, *The Lost Fishermen*, in particular, exemplifies this creative convention. Acquaye based the story on a *Ga* mythology about the sea and the necessity to honour the taboos and rituals associated with it for peaceful coexistence between people and their natural environment. Based on a true-life story, the musical drama narrates the story of how ten fishermen, headed by a chief and his two princes (the principal custodians of their community's culture), desecrated the taboo of the sea by going to fishing on a Tuesday: the day fishing in the sea was forbidden by the Gods. For their punishment, the crew were battered by ravaging storms, which sent them missing on the high seas for weeks. In the end, they had to sacrifice the chief's youngest, beloved son to placate the sea deity before they were able to retrace their way back to their home village. The play's emphasis on African-centred themes, songs and instrumental accompaniment, costume art, and stage effects were all intended as a metaphor for criticising the growing cultural malaise and as a strong case for a return to African beliefs and cultural values.

Acquaye, already well-known for his exploits in music, sculpture, painting, and national athletics, explained his motivation for resorting to operas, "… to integrate our multi-tribal society in terms of its common interests, attitudes and values of various classes. It is to create a basis for the formulation of a common destiny."[10] This African-centred philosophy perhaps explains the reason why Acquaye's folk operas enjoyed a high level of state support both by the Nkrumah-led administration (1957–1966) as well as its protégé, the Frank Acheampong-led military government (1970–1978). It was not only *The Lost Fishermen* that gained prominence in Ghana's fledgeling cultural politics at the time. His first opera, *Obadzen*, toured the Soviet Union in 1961 over a six-month run as an advance cultural party for Nkrumah's first visit to that country. Performed by the *Wulɔmɛi* neo-traditional band, *The Magic Drum* and *Sasabonsam* both toured the USA in 1975. *The Lost Fishermen*, performed by the Damas Choir—arguably the most popular opera of them all—was staged several times in Ghana and also in Lagos, Nigeria, at the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), 1977. In London, *The Lost Fishermen* was staged in 1986 at The George Bernard Shaw Theatre, produced by Luis Mahoney (a British actor). There, the opera was performed by a cast of 12 leading African (international) artists, mostly South Africans, including Nathan Mdledle of the world-famous Manhattan Brothers.[11] The Manhattan Brothers were one of the most popular South African music groups during the 1940s and 50s. Acquaye was invited to London to supervise its direction.[12] Thus, Acquaye's folk operas had transitioned from a personal artistic initiative to a public/national/cultural heritage right from the 1960s when it first appeared on Ghana's arts scene and which continued into the mid-1980s.

The research challenge

The play is now, however, on the verge of disappearing from the music/theatre scene, both locally and internationally. There is virtually no information about folk opera activities beyond the mid-1980s until 2007. When I first visited the home of Acquaye, in August 2002, the composer was already blind, well advanced in age at 79, and inactive. The last time the music drama had been staged was in 1986 in London. In Ghana, it had not been staged in almost 30 years. In their framework for measuring music vitality and endangerment (MVEF), Catherine Grant and Chhuon Sarin argue, among other things, that "change in the number of people engaged with the art form over the past five to ten years, as well as changes in the performance contexts and

functions over the past five to ten years" constitute enough basis for declaring a genre to be in danger of extinction and therefore needing safeguarding intervention.[13] Effectively, therefore, *The Lost Fishermen* opera can be considered extinct by the time I was first introduced to the composer. What factors precipitated the extinction of a very popular art form, which enjoyed enormous state and public support, and how may artistic research intervene to safeguard it from extinction?

The paradox of folk opera's own history

To explain the potential endangerment factors to Ghanaian folk opera tradition, particularly *The Lost Fishermen*, it is proper to begin with the paradox of the genre's own history. As explained earlier, in the exercise of their social function, artists may align their creative works either in support of or in opposition to particular social agendas and, by implication, the political regime responsible. The idea behind the historical paradox argument is that the very circumstantial factors that may advance the public prominence of an art form are also the very factors that can precipitate their endangerment. Thus, *The Lost Fishermen's* fall into a state of disuse can be blamed partly on radical changes in the socio-political environment and related ideology that once sustained its popularity. The general disillusionment that characterised the post-independence African political environment, and which eroded confidence and public support for African political leadership, also had serious implications for the art forms that were created in support of those regimes and their pan-African ideologies.[14]

Jeff Titon's ecological analogy, which relates the behaviour of musical cultures to the behaviour of ecological systems, can provide a useful analytical framework for this endangerment phenomenon.[15] The musical habitat, he explains, includes,

> both physical and cultural factors of the musical environment such as ideas about music, sound and sound-producing instruments, recording studios, media, venues, musical education and transmission, and the economics of music—indeed, music as cultural production and a cultural domain—which relate to the health of musical individuals, populations, and communities.[16]

He argues further,

> Like all of expressive culture, music is a peculiarly human adaptation to life on planet earth. Each music-culture is a particular adaptation to particular circumstances ... Each world [of music] can be regarded as an ecological system, with the forces that combine to make up the music culture ... in a dynamic equilibrium. A change in any part of the ecosystem affects the whole of it.[17]

The ecology analogy is vital in explaining the circumstances that may have caused the death of Ghanaian folk opera, in particular, *The Lost Fishermen*. Based on the ecological principle of connectivity,[18] the fate of artworks, like operas, in this case, may be decided by significant changes that occur in the art forms' own ecological systems, including the purpose/ideology for their creation, changes in generational tastes, and practitioners, technologies, etc.

In Ghana, Acquaye's folk operas were not the only arts that bore the brunt of their own successes. Nkrumah's sculptures were literally pulled down after the coup that toppled his government in 1966.[19] Intangible art forms, like Efua Sutherland's *Anansegoro* classics ("spider" story series), and songs composed to celebrate Nkrumah and his

political projects fizzled out of public prominence soon after his overthrow in 1966.[20] Elsewhere, in South Africa, Andra le Roux-Kemp also writes about public disaffection for the once inspiring South African liberation or "struggle" songs in the new democratic dispensation.[21] Thus, besides their own internal aesthetic features, artworks may survive several generations if their relevance and aesthetic are transgenerational, and transcend ideological interests and values.

The high cost of producing the opera

Beyond this general theoretical reasoning for the extinction of art forms in general, there are other factors that worked, more specifically, against folk opera sustainability in Ghana, and this includes their relatively high cost of production. Operas the world over are costly to produce,[22] and *The Lost Fishermen* is no exception. This is often caused firstly by the size of the cast, then elaborate costumes, sets, lighting, etc. In the case of *The Lost Fishermen*, the cast includes roughly 20 (ten men and ten women); and about ten percussionists and dancers, three directors (including music, dance, and drama), as well as stage, lighting, and logistics managers. Additional cost comes by way of costumes and performance materials, as well as lighting, sound, cost relating to rehearsals, and renting of a suitable space for the show. The first time we succeeded in staging the play, in 2007, the expenditure was so huge that we could not remunerate the actors, which temporarily stalled further performances.

Acquaye succeeded in his day not just because of his multiple expertise as an all-round artist,[23] but also because of the extensive sponsorship deals he was able to garner from both state and private entities.[24] In addition, there was sufficient state support for the arts, in general, by the Nkrumah-led administration and the Acheampong-led military governments. Acquaye also benefited financially and administratively from a well-organised group of patrons that he organised in his capacity as the Promoter of the Arts at the Ghana Institute of Arts and Culture in Accra, between 1963 and 1971.[25] Added to all these was an apparently prevailing spirit of voluntarism by amateur actors. Most of the non-profit Damas Choir members, in particular, who took part in Acquaye's *The Lost Fishermen* productions did so for the love of it, and not for monetary gains. Thus, the gradual erosion of these three—public support, arts sponsorships, and a dwindled spirit of voluntarism—partly explain the death of the genre in Ghana in later years, even though they all lessened the cost of operatic productions in the 1960s and 1970s.

The play's dependence on the author alone for direction

A more decisive factor that pushed Ghanaian operas, and in particular *The Lost Fishermen*, to the brink of extinction, was their dependence on the composer for future performances. This was because the composer/author scripted and published the texts of his ten operas but rarely did the same for the musical accompaniments. For the music, he adopted a hands-on approach to perfecting his initial musical ideas on-stage, which was how he was able to produce ten operas in the relatively short period of twenty years. Responding to my question as to why there were no accompanying music scores to *The Lost Fishermen* script, Acquaye explained,

> when I conceive the musical ideas, I write the initial melodies down in solfa notation, then, after teaching them, I don't need them again so I haven't kept them well enough. You will, therefore, have to rely on the tape I have handed to you.[26]

The composer's approach may be attributed to a technical limitation on his part. Records show that Acquaye undertook only basic music lessons under the legendary Ephraim Amu, during his training days at the Achimota Training College, between 1947 and 1949, where he trained as an art and craft teacher.[27] That basic training may have proven too little to equip him to undertake the kind of notation/orchestration required for operas. The advantage in the oral approach, however, is the emphasis it places on the primacy of sound, action, embodiment, and performance of musical arts as living objects, and not as a written document.[28] Although the hands-on strategy may have allowed the composer to exploit the pliability, processual, and fluid qualities of the integrated oral musical arts that he sought to replicate in his operas, it ultimately jeopardised their future survivability. What ethical and strategic research options can be deployed for preserving, performing and documenting artworks, such as *The Lost Fishermen*, which may suffer similar sustainability fates?

Field contingencies and artistic research methods

The approaches used for recovering *The Lost Fishermen* may be summarised into two performance-based research strategies. First is the strategy to deploy musical performance as the methodological vehicle for the study, where learning to perform serves as the research tool for gathering the undocumented data (songs) needed for recreating that endangered music. Henk Borgdorff and Tanja Orning both describe this kind of approach to artistic research as one "done in the arts," where the research unfolds *in* and *through* artistic practice; in this case, learning to sing/perform.[29]

I was obviously too young to have witnessed any of the staged performances of *The Lost Fishermen* between the 1960s and 80s. The first time I heard about the musical drama was in an oral literature class as a graduate student, in 2002, and I decided to study it for my master's thesis. So, on August 22nd of that year, Addoquaye Moffat, Acquaye's cousin, escorted me to meet the composer for the first time, at his home in the Laterbiokorshie suburb of Accra. Acquaye was blind and sitting alone for most of the time. After the initial introduction and declaration of my mission, he asked me to visit him a few more times, so he could, in his own words, "convince himself if I was serious enough." As part of the familiarisation, I ran a number of errands for him, after which he opened up for discussions about his personal life, works, and, specifically, *The Lost Fishermen*. It was at this point that it became clear to me that, besides the only 1977 video recording of the play (VHS recorded at FESTAC), there was no other source of data on the opera's songs readily available to aid its re-performance. Thus, I decided to add to my initial research objectives the task of assembling and notating the songs as a permanent solution to safeguarding the opera's future.

The effect of the absence of music scores was further exacerbated by the poor state of the only VHS recording available, arguably due to poor handling.[30] Furthermore, efforts to have the composer sing through some of the songs that were hardly audible on the damaged tape proved futile. He could not recall most of them due to memory loss. As a last resort, I requested to know if there were former actors of the play still in existence in the country. This proved a helpful strategy as, once again, Moffat escorted me to meet Abigail Armah and Solomon Sampah in their homes.[31] Thereafter, the two became my personal teachers and, subsequently, consultants to the project to re-stage the play. To immerse myself in the art, I submitted to learning how to sing the songs as my teachers sang them over and over again, and acted portions of the accompanying dramas. I recorded the audio too. To corroborate what I learned from the two, I went

back to Acquaye to sing the songs to him and, to my surprise, he was able to remember and approve them. This was how the entire 46 songs of *The Lost Fishermen* were compiled on tape to pave the way for the opera to be re-staged. The entire process of field research, which began in 2002, had dragged on for three years because I needed to complete my thesis.

Based on this initial fieldwork/data gathering success, the second leg of the project became attainable: to restore stage-performance of the musical drama again, this time, without Acquaye's involvement. This was one of the ultimate objectives of the project. Both Borgdorff and Orning describe this kind of project as "research for the arts," where artistic/performance functions as the result of research.[32] The outcome of this research—the recording and notation of the songs—meant that it was reasonably easy to find interested artists/experts/producers familiar with the opera to join the team for staging *The Lost Fishermen*.[33] In 2006, we initiated the process to audition and constitute a production team (based on Acquaye's model) of 20 people made up of ten men and ten women. The artists were drawn primarily from church choirs nearby in La and Osu since we thought it was relatively easier for good singers to learn to act than for actors to adapt to singing. Based on *The Lost Fishermen's* Nkrumahist ideological orientation, it was easy to get the director of the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum in Accra not only to host the initial rehearsals but also to produce the first performance. We arranged to bring Acquaye to one of the rehearsals in early 2007 as a way to keep him abreast with the revitalisation initiative and to test how well we were doing in comparison to the ones he had directed in the past. However, our strategy failed terribly— Acquaye was overwhelmed by emotions when he heard the choir sing. He broke down and wept at the very beginning, frustrated, as he explained later, over his inability to see and participate. When we could not calm him, we cut short the rehearsal for the day and took him home to continue at a later stage.[34]

In March 2007, the project to find *The Lost Fishermen* finally materialised. We staged the musical drama for the first time in 20 years, in Accra. The show was attended by a modest audience, about half the capacity of the 1500-seater National Theatre, mainly adults. Unfortunately, Acquaye did not live to hear the play; he fell ill soon after the visit to our rehearsal and died on 14 February 2007. We staged the opera a second time at the Alliance Française, in Accra, sponsored by the Danish Cultural Fund in Ghana. The initial idea was to tour the ten administrative regions of Ghana thereafter but, since we could not pay the actors, nor break even financially, this was to be the final run. As a backup strategy, a copy of the 2007 video recording of *The Lost Fishermen* has been donated to the J. H. Kwabena Nketia Audiovisual Archive at the Institute of African Studies, at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Now, as the project to find *The Lost Fishermen* nears its closing stages, I have begun the third strategy: to document the musical data through transcription and orchestration of the full complement of the opera's songs. The idea is to publish a composite volume comprising both text and music as a more durable solution to the problem that occasioned this research in the first place. Having found *The Lost Fishermen*, the ultimate objective is to safeguard it more permanently as part of Ghana's artistic heritage, and also as a lasting tribute to Acquaye, the composer.

Conclusion

Thus, for a genre like Acquaye's folk opera, *The Lost Fishermen*, and indeed all musical arts that suffer similar fates of endangerment, the chances of recovery through research ought to be guided by flexible ethical field strategies, which make room for realities and

eventualities rather than strict adherence to pre-determined approaches. As demonstrated in the narratives above, the often-unpredictable artistic research environment calls for the flexible field approach that should accommodate the deployment of multiple methodological approaches, which may be drawn from other cognate disciplines. Borgdorff calls this "methodological pluralism,"[35] and Orning alludes to it when she says "In research on musical practice, there are no ready-made methods. It is a young discipline in rapid development that borrows and steals from anything that help shed light on the questions we ask."[36] We may well call this the "common sense approach" to artistic research.

In addition, the idea to adopt a performance-based approach was, first, dictated by the understanding that certain fundamental epistemological issues can best be addressed through artistic practice. This is evident in the nature of the art form in question and the research problem it presented—the fact that part of the work was never documented and could only be accessed through interviews, apprenticeship, and immersive lessons—gives credence to that understanding. More importantly, however, the operatic art in a performance art underscores the fundamental principle of music as sound, action, and embodiment.

There are nine other folk operas by the same composer that are also threatened with extinction if no intervention is made. Like *The Lost Fishermen*, all that remains of most of them is a script without a musical score, and the hope of locating former actors to assist with resurrecting their accompanying songs is fast fading as the years pass by. Giving the unpredictable nature of the field of artistic research, the lessons from *The Lost Fishermen* can only be a useful starting point.

Moses is a Research Fellow in The Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana Legon; mndortey@gmail.com

Notes

1 Orning, 'Music as Performance'.

2 Euba, 'Concepts of Neo-African Music as Manifested in Yoruba Folk Opera'.

3 Allen, 'An American Folk Opera?'.

4 Acquaye, *Folk Opera in Ghana and Nigeria*, 1.

5 Quoted in Vieta, *The Flagbearers of Ghana*, 436.

6 Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 64.

7 Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*.

8 Senghor, *The Foundations of 'Africanité' or 'Négritude' and 'Arabité'*.

9 Masaeli, Sanni Yaya, and Sneller, *African Perspectives on Global Development*.

10 Acquaye, 'Modern Folk Opera in Ghana', 60.

11 Offei-Ansah, 'The Lost Fishermen'.

12 Kambona, 'The Lost Fisherman', 5.

13 Grant and Sarin, 'Gauging Music Vitality and Viability', 27.

14 Udumukwu, 'Achebe and the Negation of Independence'; Mortimer, 'Independence Acquired—Hope or Disillusionment?'; Obi, 'A Critical Reading of the Disillusionment Novel'.

15 Titon, 'Music and Sustainability'; Titon, *Worlds of Music*.

16 Titon, 'Music and Sustainability', 123.

17 Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 9.

18 Titon, 'Music and Sustainability'.

19 Gavua, 'Monuments and Negotiation of Power'.

20 Deandrea, *Fertile Crossings*.

21 Le Roux-Kemp, 'Struggle Music'.

22 Jenkins, 'The Cost of Opera'.

23 Acquaye was a multi-talented artist; he was a musician, art teacher, administrator, designer, sculptor, carver, dramatist, impresario/producer and a great sportsman. Those qualities equipped him to undertake such tasks with minimal assistance.

24 Advertisements in a brochure for *The Lost Fishermen* in 1965, by the Damas Choir, shows about seven private sponsors including Panam Air, GNTC Bottling, and the Akosombo Textile Ltd.

25 This information has been garnered from Acquaye's Civil Service file, reference number 1 C/6, 7 January 1963.

26 Acquaye, Interview by Moses Nii-Dortey.

27 Nii-Dortey, 'The Life, Works and Worries of a Genius'.

28 Orning, 'Music as Performance'.

29 Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge'; Orning, 'Music as Performance'.

30 I cleaned the VHS and transferred the data onto DVD at the International Centre for African Music and Dance (ICAMD) sound lab, the Music Department, University of Ghana. However, both the recording and the handling had already undermined the quality. Thus, a good number of the pieces were barely audible for purposes of learning and transcription, and some of those already transcribed needed corroboration.

31 Abigail Armah, now deceased, was then a resident at North Kaneshie, Accra. She, a member of the famous Damas Choir, often played the lead female character in *The Lost Fishermen*, Koshie. Solomon Sampa (affectionately called Paa Solo), also now deceased, acted as the lead male character, Ataa Amasa, in both the recent two stage presentations in 2007 and 2011.

32 Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge'; Orning, 'Music as Performance'.

33 Addoquaye Moffat, Acquaye's cousin, who directed the drama, brought on George Dzikunu, the dance choreographer of Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble fame, together with his cultural band of six percussionists and four dancers; Hisri Quaye (now deceased) then Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum provided rehearsal space at the mausoleum and also some initial funding for the actors; Aboagye Afari, the PR of the National Theatre, served as the producer; and Nii Amu as our set designer. While Sampa joined the cast, Armah could not, due to old age, but provided free consultancy at the rehearsals.

34 He fell ill not long after and died weeks before we staged the musical play—its first in Ghana in 20 years.

35 Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge', 46.

36 Orning, 'Music as Performance', 82.

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PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH IN VISUAL ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

LOUISE HALL

Drawing from Hall's own experience with the first Practice-led Research (PLR) PhD in Visual Art at UKZN, this paper argues for the potential of PLR to generate a very particular kind of knowledge based on the dyadic relationship between the artist and the intelligence of materials.

Introduction

Drawing on specific contextual experience, this paper will explore the potential of Practice-led Research (PLR) within tertiary academic contexts to offer particular ways of knowing that might have value in the process of decolonising knowledge and practice in Africa. The perspectives, including the challenges and limitations of PLR, I reflect on in this paper arise from having been the first student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to graduate with a PLR PhD in Visual Art in 2013. Subsequent understandings of this research model result from my having supervised Visual Arts Post Graduate Students since 2016 who have used PLR as their research methodology at the Centre for Visual Art (CVA), UKZN.

PLR has the potential to generate a very particular kind of knowledge. This research methodology calls for nuanced agility to explore and combine a variety of ways of knowing: on the one hand, as Barbara Bolt asserts, a methodology shaped by and through the "very process or tissue of making" or "material thinking,"[1] a term she coined with Paul Carter.[2] This methodology presupposes a dyadic relationship between artist and the intelligence of materials to generate new insights, ways of thinking, and, in my case, ways of making art combined with, on the other hand, theoretical, written research. Ideally, the outcome of the imbrication of two languages and two modes of thinking is holistic—and which reflects an integrated rather than parallel relationship.

At the time I registered as a student for a PLR PhD in mid-2007 at UKZN, there were no academic members of staff at the institution who held a PLR PhD in Visual Art, and neither were there precedents of other candidates who had completed such research at other universities in South Africa. I was, therefore, in an unenviable position of pioneering this degree at UKZN.

Perhaps useful to mention here, is that my motivation for embarking on these studies was not driven by an interest in pioneering PLR at UKZN for its own sake, neither was I aspiring for employment promotion since I was not formally working in academia at the time. My primary motivation was to develop and expand my artistic practice in a rigorous way. With the benefit of hindsight, I realise there might be easier ways of achieving this—or not, as the case may be.

An interpretation of PLR

Given the various understandings of art-making as research—"practice-based," "practice-led," "practice as," and "artistic research"—it is important to clarify the interpretation of PLR that I adopt in this paper. Drawing from various authors including Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge,[3] Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt,[4] Julian Klein,[5] and G. James Daichent,[6] my interpretation is thus: as is foundational to all artistic research as scholarship, PLR endorses that artistic practice is seminal in generating knowledge and research,[7] in a variety of media and across disciplines. This factor is central to PLR embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which is an important factor given the focus of this conference.[7]

As indicated, PLR comprises a dual submission of interrelated artwork and writing.[8] Perhaps obvious, but worth emphasising, is that this dual submission must be submitted for examination as a whole and viewed as such. An essential aspect of PLR is that the research must originate in artistic practice and not in theoretical research.[9] Like any research model, PLR must be driven by research questions that reflect the centrality of practice to provoke enquiry to gain new knowledge.[10]

Research, in this double articulation between practice and theory, is developed in such a way that theory emerges from a reflexive practice while, at the same time, that practice is informed by theory.[11] Again, as mentioned, PLR should reflect simultaneously developed imbrications of visual and verbal research. Some of these imbrications might be regarded as provisional rather than complete or autonomous entities in a modernist sense. Practice and theory, two languages and two ways of creating meaning are thus structured in a deliberate relationship. The defining feature in PLR is the integrated—rather than parallel—nature of visual and verbal research, which fundamentally informs both the art-making and the writing.

Finally, it is important to note that any contribution or knowledge produced through PLR will be subjectively-based. Practice-led research is similar to enactive knowledge in this sense. Francisco Varela, Eleanor Rosch, and Evan Thompson's interpretation of enactive knowledge confirms the interrelated nature of knowledge-making and subjectivity.[12] Drawing on Varela et al., Patricia Cain argues that,

> the individual plays a role in what comes to be known. What the individual comes to know is created from the inter-subjective relationship between oneself and the world; the self is not sealed off but part of the knowledge-making process. Knowledge is subjective because it is not independent of the knower. Rather, it bears the mark of an individual's structure. In other words, what we come to know is generated by and relative to ourselves.[13]

Further to the subjective role in this knowledge-making process, Sally Adnams Jones in examining transformation in visual art,[14] holds that in the act of doing and making, artistic practice might be considered a performative gerund—half verb, half noun; a process and a product that is both semantic and somatic.[15]

Debates

This interpretation of PLR might seem fairly clear-cut, as many things do, on paper. As you know, there is no absolute consensus in academic contexts regarding the nature of artistic practice as scholarship. Additionally, many scholars and artists question the rationale for introducing a doctoral degree in studio practice in the first place.

At the time of conducting my PhD research, I took into account some of these debates and misgivings, which included:

- the rationale for a studio practice doctoral degree
- the wisdom of rigorously integrating art-making and writing into a research model
- whether art-making creates knowledge, "expression, Yes. Emotion, passion, aesthetic pleasure, meaning. But not usually knowledge…"[16]
- and the extent to which it is possible to define the nature of the knowledge this model may generate.

On the whole, these points seem to suggest that art-making as research holds a conflictual position in academic contexts between bureaucratic imperatives and historical academic mores versus less formulaic processes and thinking associated with artistic practice. I will elaborate on these points in the following discussion.

James Elkins holds that, in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland, an economic rationale drove the development of practice-led research and, in turn, the terms "research" and "new knowledge" with respect to studio practice; tertiary

institutions in these countries allocate "money and allowances to hire more teachers based on the graduation levels of their students."[17] In light of this, the emergence of a doctoral degree in studio practice is hardly surprising.

Like Elkins, Steve Garner interprets these requirements as driven by a defensive motivation for academic respectability and funding:

> Historically it is ... precisely because fine art education has abandoned many of its core traditions and traditional independence in order to come under the university umbrella that it finds itself having to "defend itself" and its tradition in such terms, terms which are not always of its own choosing and finds itself having to squeeze into the often ill-fitting garment of "Research." Such it seems is the price of academic respectability and of course funding (who pays the piper calls the tune). This can turn out to be a high price indeed when those outside the discipline impose their own sometimes inappropriate paradigms.[18]

Regarding the wisdom of integrating writing and art-making into a research model, Edward Taylor argues for its value, holding the phrase often attributed to Immanuel Kant: "theory without practice is empty; practice without theory is blind."[19] Hence, the need to bring theory and practice together in such a way that we can theorise our practice and practise our theories.[20]

In advocating such a relationship between theory and practice, Taylor stresses that the current dominant network culture is radically transforming the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of our context.[21] As artists and academics, we cannot ignore that information technologies responsible for a shift from an industrial to a post-industrial economy are likely to bring unpredictable and unavoidable changes to higher education. And, thus, we cannot afford to disregard the changing ways in which we communicate and make sense of the world.

For Elkins, the key conceptual difficulty regarding PLR lies in the foundational requirement of simultaneously and/or alternately making, understanding, and writing about one's own practice: "it is hard enough to find the right words for visual art, but harder still to take the making along with the talk about the making."[22] At the time of my research, I concurred with Elkins and added that, in my experience, it is usually hard enough making art in the first place. In contrast to Elkins' misgivings, Macleod and Holdridge argue that it is precisely the tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art-making that helps generate "the depth of thought encountered in the final submissions."[23]

The following discussion will reflect on the ways and the extent to which I and the students I have supervised were able to integrate art-making and writing productively: to eloquently articulate the insights that arose and consider whether these constitute knowledge.

In my own work, I aimed for the research process and written text to assist rather than confuse, hinder, or stand irrelevant to my art-making process. I hoped that the text would not merely explain, describe or contextualise my artistic processes and artwork, but would "play a critical and complementary role" to the practice in revealing, but equally in shifting, my thinking and practice.[24]

Additionally, the following heuristics and theoretical frameworks were useful in tackling the dual nature of PLR. Regarding heuristics, I endeavoured to recognise and manage the inherent multiple and contrasting roles of artist, researcher, and critic, with the attendant subjective, objective, etic, and emic positions required of this dual research. By simply being aware and deliberate, where possible and appropriate, of these various—and at times, mutually exclusive positions—was useful.

The frameworks of "material thinking"[25] and contemporary media theory, following Marshall McLuhan,[26] helped clarify the ways in which the integrated structure of PLR might generate new insights. The terms "material thinking" or "material productivity," coined by Carter and Bolt, respectively,[27] take into account the collaboration of the artist's creative intelligence with artistic processes and materials. Carter asserts that the making of works of art, which includes visual art, architecture, writing, performance, and dance, involves material thinking.[28] The concept of material thinking makes the "handling of materials" essential to the artistic encounter.[29] Barrett and Bolt assert that artistic materials and processes of production are not inconsequential and passive, but play a significant "intelligent" role in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence.[30] Accordingly, material thinking may be considered as the relations and insights that arise during artistic production where the artist's creative intelligence collaborates with artistic processes and materials in a dyadic structure. Thus, all the elements in this dyadic collaboration—in PLR, this includes visual and verbal processes and media—play an indispensable role in the research process. Importantly, the research outcomes are specific to all these elements.

The notion of material thinking correlates with aspects of contemporary media theory. McLuhan contended in 1964 that the "medium is the message,"[31] implying a continuity of "informational meaning and technical expression."[32] The concept is broader than this and includes the idea that our experience and knowledge is brokered by media, as articulated by Friedrich Kittler's claim that "media determine our situation."[33] W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen make the McLuhanesque suggestion that media are the prosthesis of human agency.[34] In this framework, thinking is therefore not neutral: all thinking requires a medium. Moreover, the evolution of thinking and the development of media, as in material thinking, are synchronised. Applying this to PLR, the "prosthetic" medium for thinking and research comprises the deliberate integration of writing and artistic practice. PLR's textual and practice outputs, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation. This research model brokers interrelated thinking, practice, and writing. The relevance of these frameworks is simply to underscore that media in this research model is a hybrid of visual and verbal research, and research outcomes or knowledge generated is specific to this hybridity.

I have to acknowledge that I struggled with achieving fluid hybridity between writing and practice. I found the task of writing clearly and insightfully about my artwork difficult and very time-consuming. In line with the latter part of Elkins' statement,[35] I found that each aspect of the research model—writing and art-making—was very demanding and that it was hard to carry out both simultaneously and adequately.

In examining transformation and the ways in which personal and collective transformation can take place through visual art, Adnams Jones points to the sequential nature of understanding experience, first visually and, then, verbally.[36] She holds that "visual art enables artists to express experience metaphorically, before the artist necessarily has the verbage to do so."[37] Bolt, quoting Martin Heidegger, corroborates.[38] She suggests that theory only occurs once we have somatically understood experience,

> Heidegger's notion of handlability builds on the assumption that our understanding of the world is predicated upon our dealings in the world. According to this perspective, we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling. Through such dealings, our apprehension is neither merely perceptual nor rational. Rather such dealings or handling reveals its own kind of tacit knowledge.[39]

A UKZN student, whom I supervised for a PLR MA, emphasised the sequential and the lengthy periods of time necessary for understanding emergent insights generated by PLR: a process, moreover, that could not be hurried.[40] Caroline Birch reflects,

> I found the element of time to be intrinsic to PLR in a particular way. A core aspect of PLR is that one's research questions issue directly from one's art-making … This takes time. I had to make art until my questions appeared in an initially rudimentary form. Then I had to keep making art, finding relevant research—in the form of literature, theory and artworks—and applying it to my art-making … This was done by spending time developing art-making methods from these sources.
>
> These … methods seemed to bring about insight or understanding either in their particular context or generally in this research. This understanding seemed to emerge sometimes immediately but usually after a period of time. Additionally, this kind of insight could not be rushed in any way … This process refined my research questions as well as my art-making practice. This took further time.[41]

Regarding the extent to which it is possible to define the nature of the knowledge this research model may generate, this student felt that there were moments where the depth of certain experiences drove transformation, yet could not be amply described in academic language. Such moments thus remain unsaid in her dissertation.

The matter of verbal language adequately conveying "tacit" knowledge gained from practice is likely to continue to perplex. In my own research, while I attempted to rigorously and objectively examine and interpret my artwork, I was under no illusion that I might wholly account for and understand the artworks I made, including all aspects of my artistic practice and process.

Especially towards the end of my research, when I understood PLR more fully, the verbal and visual imbrications of this dual research served to complement each other, each highlighting and amplifying different aspects of my central concern, which was the generative nature of drawing. Theory and practice in my research strengthened each other. This could be seen as a case for PLR. However, I would not go as far as to say that I "theorised my practice and practised my theories."[42] The art-making process, in my experience, is more complex and defies a strict application and imposition of theory. My sense is that this endorses Bolt's assertion, that the understanding that arises through the handling of materials is neither merely perceptual nor rational; that these insights are a kind of "tacit" or emergent knowledge.[43]

Distanciation

While artistic practice and writing are necessarily integrated in this research model, my view is that written texts can offer distanciation to artistic practice—and, especially, to the tacit knowledge that might arise through material thinking. Kevin Kelly and Hilde van Vlaenderen are both of the view that reflection and evaluation necessarily involve an etic perspective (view from without) as well an emic perspective (view from within).[44] Paul Ricoeur, as explained by Kelly, succinctly describes the value of distanciation:

> Distanciation adds to meaning not by imposition, but by pointing to the subjective and contextual limits of understanding. No matter how thoroughly we understand a context from

> within, there are certain things about the context that are only going to become evident when we look at it from the outside.[45]

I interpret the art-making process as emic perspective and the written process as etic perspective, and the two perspectives as complementary. I endeavoured to use the writing process to reflect on my work and to write in such a way as to convey the nuanced, complex, and idiosyncratic character of my art-making process. Thus, I sought to harness the reflective and evaluative potential of this dual research and to guard against the text imposing a straitjacket of order, coherence, and meaning onto the artworks,[46] and onto the tacit knowledge generated by the art-making process.

Having completed this research, I do still consider the art-making process as emic perspective and the written process as etic perspective. However, additional factors during this research provided etic perspective, a perspective from the outside. In particular, in November 2011, I was given an interim assessment of my artwork by a panel of experts in the fine art field. The value of this assessment on the development of my work was significant. It is not relevant for this presentation to provide details about the development of my work as a consequence of this assessment. Suffice to say that, in my view, a written text in this research model on its own cannot proffer all the necessary etic perspective an artist may need in this research model, and that discussions with experts in the field should be formalised and regular.

Conclusion

Let me return to Macleod and Holdridge's assertion that, in PLR, it is the tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art-making that helps generate "the depth of thought encountered in the final submissions."[47] And, to return to a question I asked myself during my research: was any depth of thought in my final submissions a result of the tension and hybridity of the two languages and thinking modes, or was the depth of thought a consequence of sustained enquiry in each? I experienced aspects of this research as frustrating—in particular, the fact that thorough writing and theoretical research prevented me from sustained art-making for certain periods. Did this frustration in any way contribute to the tension between the languages and modes of thinking that, in addition, generated "depth of thought"? When I submitted my research, I felt unable to answer this question one way or another with any conviction, despite having devoted a great amount of thought and research to answering it.

Some of my work, particularly that towards the end of my research, seemed to fully address in practice and in concept my central research question. Does an artwork create new knowledge? Or will success—even in the most favourable case—lie not in the creation of new knowledge, but in the fact that I produced some powerful artworks as a consequence of sustained, open-ended exploratory art-making, drawing skill, excellent thinking (material thinking), and exploitation of my particular artistic methodology?

I consider that PLR assisted with deepening my artistic practice and facilitated a clearer understanding of my central research concerns. However, if I take the view that these artworks constitute or contain new knowledge, what indicators with respect to my artworks would I use to measure these shifts in understanding? Are these inappropriate paradigms forcing artistic practice into "the ill-fitting garment of 'Research"?[48] And, how might these experiences of artistic practice as scholarship assist with decolonising research and knowledge in Africa? How will we know if PLR

has played a role in dismantling the complex modes of thinking and reference that bind us to historical paradigms? What indicators will we use to measure change?

I have argued that PLR, with its double articulation of theory and art-making, has the potential to generate new ways of knowing. Importantly, this knowledge may be "tacit" or "emergent" knowledge, and that which references individual experience. The core value of PLR in relation to decolonising research and knowledge may, therefore, lie in its potential to generate ways of knowing that are individual, somatic, subtle, complex, and non-formulaic. The central difficulty with PLR, however, seems to lie in verbally articulating such shifts in thinking and art-making that arise from this performative gerund of a methodology.[49]

A further consideration to developing artistic practice as research in our context might involve a revision of the historic academic hierarchy of languages. Adnams Jones proposes that, with transformation, a balanced ecology of capacities takes place where cognitive faculties are partnered, thus, moving away from one dominating the other. She says,

> When individuals express themselves through art, "feeling," "telling," and "making" are partnered—a systems partnership rather than one cognitive faculty dominating another. Transformation can therefore be viewed as a shift in power, a movement away from dominance of mind over body or words over images. Partnership happens internally, with the partnering of the unconscious and the conscious, as we work with the layers of our psyche … transformation is not a form of sublimation of feelings into thought, suggesting mind is "higher" than body, or thoughts are "higher" than feelings, but rather a balanced ecology of our capacities.[50]

In the light of this, PLR is certainly a step in the right direction in relation to the profoundly complex transformation necessary in our context but, perhaps, what is called for is a greater proficiency in all our capacities where reliance on words to ultimately convey meaning will be reviewed.

Louise is the Academic Leader of the Centre for Visual Art (CVA), UKZN, where she completed a Practice-led Research (PLR) PhD in 2013; halll1@ukzn.ac.za

Notes

1 Bolt, 'Materializing Pedagogies?', 1.
2 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 31.
3 Macleod and Holdridge, 'The Enactment of Thinking', 197.
4 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 29–30.
5 Klein, 'What Is Artistic Research?', 4–5
6 Daichendt, *Artist Scholar*, 3.
7 Klein, 'What Is Artistic Research?', 4–5.
8 Macleod and Holdridge, 'The Enactment of Thinking', 197.
9 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 30.
10 Daichendt, *Artist Scholar*, 3.
11 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 29.
12 Varela, Rosch, and Thompson, *The Embodied Mind*, 16; 150.
13 Cain, *Drawing*, 54.
14 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 47–48.
15 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 51.
16 Elkins, *Artists with PhDs*, 116.
17 Elkins, 'Afterword: On Beyond Research and New Knowledge', 241.
18 Garner, *Writing on Drawing Essays on Drawing Practice and Research*, 20.
19 Kant's famous remark was "Thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind," *Critique of Pure Reason*, 45.
20 Taylor, 'An Update of Transformative Learning Theory', 234.
21 Taylor, 'An Update of Transformative Learning Theory', 233-4.
22 Elkins, 'Afterword: On Beyond Research and New Knowledge', 246.
23 Macleod and Holdridge, *Thinking through Art*, 87.
24 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 31.
25 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 30.
26 McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 15.
27 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 30.
28 Carter, *Material Thinking*, xi.
29 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 31.
30 Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, 31.
31 McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 15.
32 Hansen, 'Media Theory', 2.
33 Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, xxxix.
34 Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, 4.
35 Elkins, 'Afterword: On Beyond Research and New Knowledge', 246.
36 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 47.
37 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 49.
38 Bolt, 'Materializing Pedagogies?', 1.
39 Bolt, 'Materializing Pedagogies?', 1.
40 Birch, 'Poised in Space', 94.
41 In the interests of maintaining the nuanced nature of her insights, I quote Birch at length and have only removed the citations; Birch, 'Poised in Space', 94.
42 Taylor, 'An Update of Transformative Learning Theory', 233–4.
43 Bolt, 'Materializing Pedagogies?', 1.
44 Kelly, 'Hermeneutics in Action: Empathy and Interpretation in Qualitative Research', 399-400; Van Vlaenderen, 'Participatory Research for Rural Development', 379.
45 Kelly, 'Hermeneutics in Action: Empathy and Interpretation in Qualitative Research', 400.
46 Aulich and Lynch, *Critical Kitaj*, 46.
47 Macleod and Holdridge, *Thinking through Art*, 87.
48 Garner, *Writing on Drawing Essays on Drawing Practice and Research*, 20.
49 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 51.
50 Adnams Jones, 'Transformation through Visual Art', 53.

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CREATING NEW, PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN OUTCOMES: JOY BY AND BY REMADE

KGOMOTSO MOSHUGI

How can new knowledge be produced through processes of musical arrangement that have not traditionally been canonised? Through analysis of the versions of the hymn *Joy By and By*, which local arrangers have created since the 1980s, the process of re-imagination and defamiliarisation will be explained.

Defamiliarisation, decolonialism, and rejecting Hegel

Presenting new, previously unknown musical outcomes, is based on altering musical elements with new ideas in a manner that defamiliarises a known piece of music. Hence, I work with the notion that understanding and observing artistic works as embodiments and products of thinking, and a form of "knowing" through creative means, is essential for research in the arts, through the arts, for the arts, or related to the arts, more generally.[1]

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, using a systems model of creativity, offers a framework that recognises the making of creative works as a process depended on, and able to alter, current practice, while producing new knowledge in any given cultural domain.[2] In my doctoral study, of which this paper is an extract, I examine how hymnal and hymn practice developed through missionisation efforts when the Seventh-day Adventist church established itself in South Africa. The hymn *Joy By and By*, composed by Franklin Edson Belden in 1886, became part of a local hymnbook compilation that was translated into vernacular languages. Since the mid-1980s, beyond its use in congregational singing, this hymn has been the object of re-imagination and defamiliarisation by arrangers who have applied to it their creativity, yielding new versions. In my research, I analyse this hymn from the hymnbook and audio recordings, supplemented by an interview with Boyce Seoketsa, who arranged a popular version. I also consider my own arrangement of the same hymn through a reflexive process. Observing this work in its original form, I trace the intellectual value and processes it undergoes as it assumes new forms and variations, in comparative perspective, demonstrating how new knowledge can be produced through processes of musical arranging that have not traditionally been canonised. Through this paper, I also reflect on and challenge the scholarship of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, which is refuted by most other African scholars, regarding how it undermines the intellectual and creative capacity of Africans.

In Omotade Adegbindin's work, it is apparent that Hegel subjectively crafted (and presented as objective) a "cultural framework" that recognises four historical worlds: Oriental, Greek, Roman, and German.[3] Here, Hegel offers no consideration for Africans and is challenged for his endeavours to erase Africa from "universal history," and for justifying slavery and colonisation of blacks. The majority of black scholars do not accept Hegel on the basis that his assertions are totally misinformed and perpetuate a stereotypical view of blacks and Africa, which has historically resulted in layers of human rights violations and a devaluing of African life and thought. Such premises held by Hegel have framed historic and contented misconceptions. This paper is aligned to scholarship that denounces Hegelian views of Africa. Part of the major challenge of African scholars has been to redress the misrepresentation of Africans in history and scholarship by providing empirical evidence and theorisation that speaks to the value and realities of Africans. The impact of Hegelian thought has been problematic on multiple levels of African life, purloining the correct understanding and observational canons suitable for the rest of the world to understand the value of African intellectuality, related aesthetics, and their production merits.

Colonialism, as an act of establishing systems to exert control and dominance of one over another,[4] has assumed various shapes and forms in the process of permeating our African communities and practices over time. As a result of recent outcries in academia, and other areas of society, to "decolonise" is underscored by growing resistance to various systems that have continued to undermine the privileges of one, while unfairly privileging another, group or set of ideals.[5] Although I am not entirely opposed to the decoloniality rhetoric, in positioning my attempts through this study,

part of my proposition also entails thinking of colonisation not only in terms of its hegemony. I consider the possibility of coloniality and its intersection with the indigenous in producing new possible outcomes, that are decolonial in nature: a form of response to coloniality. Critical socio-cultural historic contributions through the relocation of Euro-American hymns in South Africa have not previously been recognised for their nuanced transformational value. For instance, Kofi Agawu argues that tonality, through Christian hymns, has manifested as a colonial force imposing itself on local music(s).[6] While this argument is sustainable in some respect, I take a divergent view to value, instead, the resultant longstanding decolonial efforts that have been ongoing in the re-imagination or de-familiarisation of hymns since missionary times, and the originality and creativity in the transcultural local posture they have assumed. I look at this response to coloniality.

Other scholars have refuted Hegelian assertions, advancing with such concepts, for example, by Kwasi Wiredu,[7] which relate to cultural universals and cultural particulars, offering an opportunity to observe the creativity of Africans within their cultural settings in ways that recognise their humanness within the spectrum of other humans and cultures. This concept implies that there are practices or knowledge forms that are general to all cultures, while there are those that are specific to given groups. Therefore, the assertions that Africans are unable to create are based on ill-informed views that classify Africans as less than human. Wiredu suggests that the creation of culture is a function of creativity, one that resides in all humans.[8] Lewis Gordon attends intentionally to the idea of black aesthetics for the appreciation or understanding of black value.[9] This is an effort towards redressing past neglect of adequate treatment in scholarship that Gordon argues as limited theorisation appropriate for aesthetics that relate to settings of black people. This is an exercise in the domain of decoloniality—the redressing of colonial injustices. In this study, "blacks" refers to those groups of people who had the least privileges in society and no connection with Euro-American Christianity prior to the arrival of missionaries.

Joy By and By—Ekupheleni Sothokoza

Belden was born in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1858. He began writing music in his late teenage years after moving to California with his family. For health reasons, he later moved to Colorado. He returned to Battle Creek with his wife in the early 1880s and there became involved in publishing activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Belden wrote many hymn texts and tunes, gospel songs, and related texts in the early years of the Adventist Church. He was able to write both music and poetry rapidly together, which enabled him to write a song to fit a sermon while it was still being delivered. He compiled and edited a hymnal *Christ in Song*, which was published in 1908 by Review and Herald (the publishing wing of the Adventist Church). Although sold to members of the church and used extensively in the services, it was Belden's personal enterprise and never an official hymnbook of the church. However, it became a more popular collection than its official counterpart, *Hymns and Tunes*.[10] Belden died on 2 December 1945 in Battle Creek, Michigan.[11]

Through the establishment of Adventism in South Africa, the national governing body of the church, the Southern African Union Conference (SAUC), set up a committee for translating a Zulu hymnal. Although the committee comprised two Europeans and one African, the latter, J. Kuboni, a native minister of the church, translated the hymns under the supervision of white pastors, as was the norm in those days. Kuboni was a former teacher proficient in English and Zulu. At the time of translation, the

worldwide General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) church had already adopted a new hymnal, the *Church Hymnal*,[12] in 1941 after retiring *Hymns and Tunes*. The title of the Zulu hymnbook was translated from *Christ in Song* to *uKrestu eNgomeni*. By 1960, the Zulu hymnal was formally in circulation and used in congregational singing. It contained three hundred songs taken from both Belden's *Christ in Song* and the *Church Hymnal*.[13]

Joy By and By, translated as *Ekupheleni Sothokoza*, hymn number 48 in *uKrestu eShlabelelweni* became one of the favourites in the church. Seoketsa, one of the influential musical arrangers among local black Adventists, had a tendency to use secular melodies with sacred lyrics. On one occasion, while listening to the radio, he heard a catchy, appealing melody, which he later learnt was by Reuben Tholakele Caluza, a musical icon and teacher who was educated in America in the 1930s and 50s. Seoketsa took the first section of this song, *iNgoduso*, and adapted it to the verse of the hymn. He composed a new melody for the chorus and wrote a totally new lyric for one of the verses in his new arrangement. Seoketsa was part of a quartet at Vintage at Bethel College, a mission school in the Eastern Cape, which first sang this arrangement. However, it was the SDASA chorale (a male group) that popularised it, nationally, through their performances and an album recording. In 1998, No Limits, an Adventist mixed group (male and female voices) released an album that contained a new version of this hymn, and they have since created additional new versions.

Belden did not speak the Zulu language, nor did Kuboni ever meet him. However, Kuboni engaged with the former's work and applied his mind to it, re-contextualising it in South Africa, in a manner previously unknown. Further, Seoketsa never engaged directly with the ideas of Belden; instead, his engagement was with the ideas of Belden as presented in the work of Kuboni. Finally, Caluza did not meet Seoketsa in person but his ideas, as expressed in the melody of *iNgoduso*, filtered through to the composer. Caluza had no conception of the possibility that Seoketsa realised this arrangement through his initial melody. Seoketsa applied himself to the hymn and framed it into an expression previously unknown, building on and integrating his new ideas with previously existing ideas, which were also once unknown. The development of this hymn is not only due to those who have creatively modified and adapted it. Review and Herald published the hymnbook and made it accessible; missionaries travelled and carried it into Africa; and the SAUC voted on, and facilitated, its translation by co-opting Kuboni into the process. When Seoketsa had arranged it, the SDASA chorale group of singers were willing to perform it, and they became the carriers of the musical ideas. The local leadership of the church permitted the performance of an altered version of the hymn, and the congregation, as an audience, were accepting and willing to listen to it. When it was recorded, the SDASA chorale was able to circulate their influence through the arrangement, the technology enabling the recording became the medium through which their arrangement became known and, therefore, part of the South African Adventist devotional and cultural experience.

In the version I have created, I build on my regular engagement with the hymn in congregational settings and the arrangement of Seoketsa. His version used the words of the second verse as a section precedes the chorus from the verses. I drew on this; I created an introduction for the song and used the second verse as a section that leads to the chorus. Seoketsa extended the verses by repeating the melody he extracted from Caluza's *iNgoduso*. However, I wrote a new melody for the entire hymn and variated it for the introduction, verse, section leading to the chorus, and the chorus. My concept of the entire arrangement was based on the lyrics of the hymn. Given that "joy" is a feeling of pleasure and happiness, I intended to create music

that compliments these sentiments, such that if one removed the lyrics and listened only to the music, the feeling suggested by the words would continue to permeate.

English	Zulu translation	Zulu interpretation	English translation
O there'll be joy when the work is done, Joy when the reapers gather home, Bringing the sheaves at set of sun To the New Jerusalem. Joy, joy, joy, there'll be joy by and by, Joy, joy, joy, where the joys never die; Joy, joy, joy, for the day draweth nigh, When the workers gather home.	Kuyakuba nentokozo uma umsebenzi usuphelile, Injabulo uma abathungi be hlangana ekhaya, Baletha izithungu ekushoneni kwelanga, Kulo elisha iJerusalema. Intokozo, intokozo, Intokozo, ku yoba nentokozo ekuhambeni kweskhathi, Intokozo, intokozo, Intokozo, lapho inyntokozo zingafi, Intokozo, intokozo, Intokozo, ngoba usku lusondela eduzane, uMaizisebenzi sihlangana ekhaya.	Ekupheleni sothokoza Sesibuthana ekhaya Sileth' izithungu zethu Ejerusalementsha Thokoza, thokoza. Thokoza, thokoza Kungel'ukuthokoza Ngobu'suku luyeza	At the end we will rejoice When we gather home When we bring our sheaves In Jerusalem that is new Rejoice, rejoice Rejoice, rejoice It will never end, to rejoice Because the day is coming

Kgomotso is a musical arranger and Creative Work PhD candidate in the Wits School of Arts; kmoshugi@gmail.com

Notes

1 Crispin, 'Artistic Research and Music Scholarship'.

2 Csikszentmihalyi, 'Implications of a Systems Perspective for the Study of Creativity'.

3 Adegbindin, 'Critical Notes on Hegel's Treatment of Africa'.

4 Kohn and Reddy, 'Colonialism'.

5 Gordon, 'Black Aesthetics, Black Value'.

6 Agawu, 'Tonality as a Colonizing Force in African Music'.

7 Wiredu, 'Can Philosophy Be Intercultural?'

8 Wiredu, 'Can Philosophy Be Intercultural?'

9 Gordon, 'Thinking through Some Themes of Race and More'.

10 General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Hymn and Tune Book for Use in Divine Worship*.

11 Belden, *Christ in Song*, preface.

12 General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, *The Church Hymnal*.

13 Southern African Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists archives and minutes between the 1930s and 1970s.

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ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND THE INSTITUTION: A CAUTIONARY TALE

MARK FLEISHMAN

What impact do the specific institutional contexts in which we produce research have on the artwork? What would an ethical approach to the work of art-making entail with reference to these institutional pressures/distortions?

Points of departure

The central question I will examine today might be stated as follows: what impact do the specific institutional contexts, academic or otherwise, in which we produce research, have on the artwork itself and the potential ways of knowing associated with it? If we were to shift from a concern with epistemology (how we go about doing artistic research), or ontology (what in fact artistic research is), to a Levinasian concern with ethics, what would an ethical approach to the work of art entail with reference to these institutional pressures/distortions?

I have been engaged with artistic research since the mid-1990s. Over that time, I would suggest that artistic research has undergone a process of institutionalisation. I understand institutionalisation to be a process by which individuals come to accept shared definitions of a particular reality—the process by which actions are repeated and given similar meaning by oneself and others. Such an understanding requires us to accept that institutions are not "naturally" occurring entities but are made by people over a period of time. Any process of institutionalisation involves regulative elements: the development of policies and work rules; normative elements: the emergence of habits and work norms; and cognitive elements: the institution of a relatively stable set of beliefs and values—all three help to provide a basis for legitimacy and durability.

One vector of institutionalisation has been driven from within the arts disciplines themselves. Artistic research has developed a history, a number of structured organisations in different geographical locations (PARIP; The Society for Artistic Research; The Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR; The SenseLab, etc.), and a set of writings, literature consisting of a body of key texts. And, while these texts are by no means equally available or meaningful to all and the literature assembles and re-assembles differently according to regional specificities, understandings, and proclivities, the literature ensures an element of legitimacy and a perception of stability to the practice. Even if we cannot/do not necessarily always agree on everything to do with artistic research, the existence of the literature suggests that something actual is out there when we speak of artistic research in our various contexts.

One of the papers from that body of literature, published in 2009, continues to haunt me in the sense that it unsettles any certainty I might entertain about what we now, quite confidently, assert about artistic research. It is a chapter by Simon Jones, at the time Professor of Performance at the University of Bristol, with the title: 'Practice-As-Research as a Paradigm Shift in Performance Studies' (2009). I will take some time here to rehearse some of what I take to be its key points.

Jones begins by pointing out that the chapter is itself a development of an earlier conference paper entitled *The Con and the Text* (1993) in which Jones is interested in the idea that when we engage in doing art practice as a form of research in the academy, we "con" or fool others in the academy into believing that practice is a text by a different name and that what we do when we practice is the same as what they do when they produce texts.[1] Or, alternatively, we "con" ourselves that we are doing something different, with an entirely different logic, when in fact we are really aligning performance texts in the academy with "always already self-authorizing critical texts" and "in doing so, we have committed the theatre event to the logic of the critical text. We have validated it on terms not its own."[2]

Jones then goes on to argue that "the closer [artistic] researchers get to power—that is to say, the white-hot interstices through which capital circulates—the more volatile the environment becomes, and the more attention researchers' activities are subjected to by their paymasters."[3] So, as long as practice-based work in the academy

remained essentially undergraduate and was focused on skills development for application in the various forms of the so-called "creative industries" out of the orbit of research and knowledge production (the "real" work of the university), we were pretty much left to our own devices (we could determine our own modes of practice and of assessment for example). However, as soon as we began to venture into the realm of research (including doctoral education) and to make claims on the funding schemes associated with that realm, our modes of practice were subjected to a level of scrutiny previously not encountered.

The latter, in my opinion, introduces institutionalisation from without: the ways in which the academy, as institution, maintains itself by resisting the unfettered development of difference. In other words, once the reality of artistic research became clear, and because of the need to maintain a semblance of academic autonomy, rather than an outright outlawing, specific policies, forms, and methods were instituted by those in authority, which disciplined artistic research, delimiting its possibilities. And, these policies, forms, and methods were acceptable as long as they were essentially recognisable or believable as "text-like": in other words, as long as we could con the institution or ourselves. In this way, "the hegemonic authority of the textual asserted itself"[4] once more and the institution maintained its own reality in which there are many different disciplines but very little fundamental difference between them epistemologically.

Jones argues that one of the consequences of what I am calling the institutionalisation from without is the economisation of the objects and outputs of artistic research. According to Brian Massumi, economisation refers to "the process by which the qualitative field … is economically appropriated and subsumed under the principle of perpetual quantitative growth."[5] As part of this process, artistic research becomes commodified—its essential eventual/occurrent nature gives way to the production of things that are apparently stable and occupy a specific fixed position in time and space. These things are then valued quantitatively (the more we can produce, the more value is generated), and this becomes the basis for processes such as tenure evaluations, promotion applications, and research assessment exercises. The drive of the neo-liberal institution, then, is to keep the system operating efficiently (read: producing as much as possible so that the institution can profit) and, to paraphrase John McKenzie, the artistic researcher, like all other workers, must perform or ultimately disappear.[6]

This leads to the part of Jones' argument that I find haunting. It is the appeal, right back at the point of artistic research's emergence, not to allow this process to take root. Not to con ourselves or others into believing that there is a commensurability between the artistic practice part of our research and the hegemony of the text in the academy; rather, for artistic research to become a play of weakness at the heart of the academy. That is, by emphasising the anomalies in our practices "that threaten … to disrupt the strong lines of force that mark the flow of capital conducted by certain kinds of textual practice, the attempt to monopolize the business of naming, of judging, of mastering, in the pure sense of coming to know a practice apparently once and for all time."[7] In this sense, Jones is arguing for artistic research to operate in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terms, as a "minor literature": "an expression machine capable of disorganizing its own forms, and disorganizing its forms of contents."[8] I say that I find this haunting because I fear that we have capitulated too easily, that we have given into the authority and the logic of the text so as to meet our performance targets and imperatives at the expense of holding onto what makes artistic research particular/different—the possibility of getting beyond capitalist imperatives, in part at least, by revaluing value as qualitative rather than quantitative. This is an action that Massumi argues is "ethical by definition."[9] By not taking heed of this call, it is my contention that we have

behaved unethically or, perhaps, we have ignored/forgotten the ethical dimension of the work of artistic research. At this point, I will leave Jones's paper temporarily, but I will return to it later.

My practice and its context: Magnet Theatre and the University of Cape Town

For the past 32 years, I have been engaged in a practice that involves the making of performance works or productions. This is a practice I have described elsewhere as a particular form of dramaturgy.[10] The particular context within which I have conducted this practice is the organisation known as Magnet Theatre, based in Cape Town. In parallel with this practice, I have also been an academic in a university theatre department. It is important to note here that the duration of my art practice extends beyond the duration of my academic employment. In other words, I was engaged in the practice of art before I began to conceive of it as a part of my research.

Elsewhere, I have outlined the features of Magnet's dramaturgical practice in detail,[11] but here I simply wish to suggest that besides being a practice of making works, Magnet's practice of dramaturgy is also a knowledge practice. In other words, while making space for new works, Magnet also makes space for thinking, for raising questions, generating ideas, and developing concepts. In this respect, in Karin Knorr-Cetina's terms, Magnet Theatre is a particular "knowledge setting."[12] As such, it has its own "epistemic culture" that is defined by Knorr-Cetina as "those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms … which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know*,"[13] and its own knowledge-producing strategies, which are not so much regulated as normative patterns of activities.

While completely unpacking this "epistemic culture" is beyond the scope of this presentation, I would like to highlight four features. First, the body, as opposed to textuality, is the central methodological instrument or point of departure in Magnet's knowledge practice. This does not mean that we eschew texts completely, but rather that we proceed from the body in space and, if texts become involved, they follow after. Second, the nature of the knowledge objects in Magnet's knowledge practice can best be described as what the historian of biology, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, calls "epistemic things": "objects of knowledge that escape fixation."[14] As Knorr-Cetina suggests, these are knowledge objects that are "open, question-generating and complex."[15] For Knorr-Cetina there is an "incompleteness" about such knowledge objects; they unfold indefinitely over time and in unanticipated directions, never quite attaining a finality or fixedness. Third, each Magnet production has a project team which constitutes a "repertoire of expertise"[16] required to bring the production to fruition. The emphasis is on collaboration rather than on individual genius. Fourth, if Magnet's practice *is* a way of thinking—another way of doing philosophy—then it is a philosophy understood in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, not as a set of concepts that are "waiting for us ready-made like heavenly bodies"[17] to be applied to the world and our engagement with it, but rather the "art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts."[18]

Despite research being a part of what Magnet Theatre says it does (its vision statement claims that it "seeks to celebrate a spirit of theatrical research") and that it has the infrastructure and collaborative networks to facilitate the work of artistic research, it is not funded as a research organisation but as an arts organisation. And, as an arts organisation, particularly one in the global South, it exists under conditions of precarity—always needing to chase the money—whether from audiences buying tickets or from funders. In an environment of austerity with a decreasing funding

pool, the chase is increasingly competitive. Furthermore, under the conditions of the neo-liberal economic system operative in the country, access to funding, whether from public or private sources, is dependent on being able to demonstrate social impact. Such impact is demonstrated through quantitative value measures—bums on seats, numbers of people benefitting; numbers of outputs produced; instances of skills transfer. Therefore, Magnet has built up a whole suite of projects around social impact, with only an indirect relationship to the theatre production and research foci, and has used these to fund the research and production activities described above, indirectly or, perhaps, covertly. As a result, while Magnet has, over time, become a relatively well-resourced organisation with a growing community of participants, most of these participants do not have an interest or expertise in research and, even if they do have an interest, they certainly have minimal time in the midst of everything else they are doing to pursue/develop it. Furthermore, as an arts organisation, Magnet has no overt requirement to reflect on its work and its relation to other existing practices, or to articulate publicly the thinking it generates through its research activities and the discourses that support it. The only requirement is that it demonstrates social impact in quantitative terms relative to other similar organisations and, to do this, it must produce—continually and in increasing quantities.

On the other hand, the university is a space in which the ideas emerging through practice at Magnet can be refined through discussion with a community of like-minded researchers, through research writing, and through postgraduate teaching—particularly pedagogical initiatives around artistic research methods and procedures. In other words, the work at Magnet is folded into the university context and, in the process, it becomes the driver for ongoing theorising, and influences other practitioners. At the same time, my position at the university pays my salary, ring-fences time for a different kind of thinking (at least notionally), and provides access to other research costs, such as travel (on a competitive basis).

It seems from the preceding discussion that the two contexts of Magnet Theatre and the university exist in a symbiotic relationship with respect to artistic research, where symbiotic refers to an interaction between two different entities/organisms existing in close physical association. This relationship has evolved over a number of years and is facultative rather than obligate; the different symbionts or entities involved can exist independently of the relationship—they do not require the relationship for their ongoing and complete existence. The question that follows is whether this symbiotic relationship should be characterised as mutualism: both sides benefit; as commensalism: only one side benefits but the other side is not harmed; or parasitic: one side benefits to the detriment of the other side.

An ethical approach: operating beyond capture

In 1951, Suzanne Briet published a manifesto on the definition of the document. In it, she states that "a document is evidence in support of a fact."[19] It is "any physical or symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon."[20] She goes on to consider the case of an antelope. If the antelope is running free in the African veld, it is, according to her, not a document. However, if it is captured and displayed in a zoo, it becomes an object of study and therefore a document, which acts as evidence for those who study it. It becomes an intentional object.

Are Magnet's works like antelopes? When they are brought into the institutions of the academy—do they become documents? Are they reduced to pale versions of

their true selves forced to exist within the confines of the institution and its logics? Has, in Tim Ingold's terms,[21] a "textility" produced by makers from fleshy materials become a textuality produced by "scriptorians" (to coin a phrase from Bruno Latour), captured, stabilised, and fixed in place and time?

While I believe there is a truth in this that presents a challenge to those of us who would conduct our research through art practice, I am not proposing that we abandon all our attempts at exposition: at speaking or writing. I might suggest, however, that we think less of writing *about* and more of writing *with* or *alongside* the practice. But I would also suggest that we resist the will to meaning/comprehension that is so prevalent in the Humanities and, in the process, avoid or perhaps simply delay the inevitable domestication of the antelope in the zoo. To do this, I contend, we have to proceed primarily from an ethical perspective and, in line with Emmanuel Levinas, such an ethics would insist on conceiving of and maintaining the artistic research object as alien: alien in and of itself—beyond grasping or comprehension—and alien to the institutional logics and neo-liberal imperatives of the contemporary university. With regard to the former—the alien in and of itself—we must, I would argue, aspire to engage in a manner that is beyond capture, that does not trap, appropriate, or render mundane our artworks in pursuit of our research. But how?

Rey Chow reminds us that while a trap is a device designed to bring someone or something into submission through some deceit or trickery,[22] the story does not end once the trap is activated, the captured does not simply disappear or die; it is a captive in the trap oscillating between shock and pain and the fear of possible annihilation. Chow's point is that "a supplementary plane of articulation, the plane of articulation of an other, ensnared in but not coinciding with the hunter's, philosopher's, or conceptual artist's [articulation] … now slides into place to rupture from within the trap's aforementioned, presumed discursive unity."[23] In other words, the trapped speaks back to the setter of the trap—a speaking that both evades and ensnares the hunter.

It evades the hunter because the trapped thing exceeds our capacity to know it and, therefore, our capacity to contain it. It is a buzzing, boiling thing that continues to assert its existence in the world regardless of us. We don't, in fact, turn it into a corpse-like a pinned butterfly, as Christopher Bannerman would have it,[24] because that is beyond our capacity. As Jane Bennett makes clear, "a vital materiality can never really be thrown 'away,' for it continues its activities even [when] discarded."[25] And it ensnares us because we who have set the trap are drawn in, lured towards this other articulation—we become captivated. And in doing so, we open a space, a hole, from which the trapped can escape.

Working in a completely different field—economics and marketing—Franck Cochoy defines the French word "*captation*" as "the ensemble of the operations which try to exert a hold over, or attract to oneself … something that one does not, or rather not yet, completely control."[26] In his field, captation reflects "the will to encircle, to surround … to catch … or to seduce users, clients, consumers" in order to increase sales and as a result, profits.[27] For us, it is about forcing the artwork to do our work—to stand as proof of our performance in a research environment. But the point Cochoy makes is that we have a greater chance of benefitting from those or that which we wish to hold onto if we allow for the possibility of "departure or indifference … if the latter has the feeling that [it] is able to leave [or], to be unconcerned."[28] The language here is the same; the modus operandi is different. For Cochoy, "captation supposes an opening, mastery implies dispossession."[29] He suggests that we must "vigorously supply the means to allow flight, to ensure free movement."[30] Our focus should be less on how effectively we can trap/capture that which emerges from our research

makings and more on observing the path of the target, anticipating its trajectory and trying to join up with it.[31]

The first peoples of Southern Africa, the San hunter gatherers, engaged in a particular hunting practice that involved no laying of traps. Instead, hunters would track animals—usually large antelope—for days and, if successful in tracking down the animal, would shoot it with a poison-tipped arrow. However, the animal did not die immediately or even quickly. In fact, the animal was then allowed to escape, to flee the hunter and the hunter would run behind the animal, following in its tracks, in order to retrieve it once the poison had finally brought it down, which could take as long as four or five days. Because the animal could run much faster than the human hunter, there was a good chance that, if the hunter was not a skilled tracker or a strong runner, when the animal fell, it might not be found or it might become the prey of some other predator. And then, all the running would have been in vain and, worse than that, the hunter might actually find himself in some danger: physically extended/exhausted; with little to sustain him; exposed and in danger of being devoured himself by other predators. As the anthropologist, Alfred Gell argues, this form of "hunting equalizes hunters and victims" and unites them "in spontaneous action and reaction, whereas trapping decisively hierarchizes hunter and victim."[32]

To operate beyond capture requires, I think, not the trapping of the works that emerge from our artistic research makings, but freeing them, allowing them to develop as they will. And then, to nurture our capacity to follow alongside, paying close attention. It also involves a recognition that, if we try to trap them, we might very well become ensnared ourselves. We need to concentrate less on holding onto than on accepting the ultimate indifference of our works and their possible departure from us—their free flight of fancy in which they exist for themselves and interact with other objects independently of us who made them. All we can hope for is to follow the trajectory. Hopefully, what this might lead to is less space needed to store documents and more space made for open, question-generating thinking unfolding over time in unanticipated directions.

The work of art is (and here I am influenced by Levinas) not a phenomenon but an enigma. It is "something ultimately refractory to intentionality and opaque to the understanding."[33] To the extent that we can approach it analytically at all, it is "a movement toward an alterity … that is not comprehended, or appropriated."[34] For Levinas, the relationship with alterity is the topic of ethics. In his later work, Levinas suggests that it is through "sensibility" that we can begin to approach across the distance between ourselves and the alien, that we can begin to make contact: a contact that reverberates as sensation. For Levinas, sensible things have a specifically sensuous character made up of quality and intensity and sensation "is not just reception of data for cognitive synthesis"—a reduction of sensible things to signs that reach beyond the sensations themselves to some meaning that lies beyond them.[35] As Alphonso Lingis argues, "Levinas contrasts presence, achieved in representation, and proximity, effected in sensibility. Cognition represents, it renders present across a distance. Sensibility … effects proximity and contact, approaches across that distance."[36]

Adopting such an approach can be described as "non-hermeneutical" and "a challenge against the universality claim of interpretation."[37] This goes against the grain of the dominant modes of practice within university humanities disciplines based on particularly western epistemologies, but it is not meant to be "anti-hermeneutical"—against all interpretation, specifically of so-called aesthetic objects. Hans Gumbrecht, for example, argues that we should "conceive of aesthetic experience as an oscillation (and sometimes as an interference) between 'presence effects' and 'meaning effects'."[38]

To engage in this way proposes a slowing down of approach that is, in itself, oppositional to the overall habits of the neo-liberal institution in which the will to produce is limitless, profoundly inhuman, and totally remorseless. For the Korean-born, German-based philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, "what we face today is an absence of any experience of duration" or the ability to "linger."[39] This is coupled with the fact that we have all become enslaved to work: "everything has to be a kind of work, and there is no time that is not dedicated to work."[40] He draws on Martin Heidegger who, in his later work, makes much of the idea of slowness, the "courage to go slowly." Heidegger emphasised the idea of lingering or dwelling in the world in a manner he termed "releasement" (*gelassenheit*), a "counter-movement, even a counter-rest to the determination to act."[41] *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger refers to a particular mode of thinking that is described as "meditative" as opposed to "calculative." While calculative thinking builds on the given circumstances to achieve specific ends racing "from one prospect to the next" and generally reproducing the same because of increasing time pressures, meditative thinking "bides its time," attempting to reach for something truly different beyond the known and the same.[42] As Heidegger put it, we are "in flight from thinking,"[43] and we need to cultivate the patience required to trace the "measured signs of the incalculable."[44] This requires a practice of lingering, through which we can rediscover an experience of qualitative duration.

With regard to the latter point on alienness—alien to the institutional logics and neo-liberal imperatives of the contemporary university—I will return, once again, to Simon Jones. In his article, Jones proposes a model for the "emergence of value" in artistic research based on the idea of "dialogue" proposed by the physicist David Bohm. He conceives of such a dialogue as a gathering of multiple participants, logics, and modalities in which any sense of judgement is suspended; an act of thinking together collectively without predetermined agenda or fixed objective. A dialogue is not a discussion or a debate that works towards a goal or decision. It is an open-ended process of exploration between positions that can technically never agree even when embodied by the same person but which, nonetheless, recognise the value in working alongside each other without any attempt to resolve the paradox. Such gatherings have the potential to produce a "complexity and intensity … infinitely greater than any single artist or scholar,"[45] or any individual modality could produce.

The above suggests that artistic research practice must struggle to retain its collaborative and open-ended dimensions when it enters the academic context—what Massumi calls its "transindividual" and "n-dimensional heterogeneity"—in the face of attempts to reduce it to "a punctual event of accumulation, individually owned."[46] When an artistic research process becomes an intentional object in the institutional context of the academy, we must fight to retain its alien multiplicities: multiple dimensions; multiple modes of investigation; multiple questions to answer; multiple problems to address.

Now, with this idea of multiplicities in mind, I want to return to Magnet Theatre. There is another, intermediate level of organisation at play that is central to the "epistemic culture" of Magnet Theatre and its symbiotic relationship with the university. Early Magnet works tended to be random, opportunistic events that responded to various impulses and circumstances. Over time, a more considered relationship between the work in the university, and its conceptions of research, and the practice in the studios, and on the stages at Magnet, began to emerge. This led to conceptualising a number of multi-year thematic foci around which a number of different kinds of activities and outputs coalesced. In this way, the research is arranged into what I term, following Deleuze and Guattari, "assemblages". Some of the elements that make up

any particular assemblage take the form of an "intermingling of bodies reacting to each other"[47] at a variety of scales—the human and non-human bodies engaging each other in the molecular moments of each production; one production reacting to another at the molar level of forms and formations. Other elements take the form of "acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed *to* bodies,"[48] which might be formal (as in journal articles, or book chapters) or informal (as in interviews, rehearsal notes, post-performance discussions, reviews, etc.).

Some of the elements are produced by Magnet, and some are produced by others, most often from within the university context, in reaction to what is produced by Magnet. To this extent, the assemblage is not entirely predictable or planned. It is not determined in advance but emerges over time, revealing its properties and capacities in the process. It is a structural composition defined by its dynamic nature, shifting and adapting as it incorporates new elements. There is a sense of coherence between the elements. But this doesn't mean a sense of total agreement. The assemblage is characterised by difference, by the emergence of alternative possibilities. What is required is what Deleuze and Guattari call a "disjunctive synthesis," which is an affirming and "positive relation among a multiplicity of … incompatible alternatives."[49]

I would argue that conceiving of artistic research as an assemblage is to understand it—to paraphrase Massumi—as an ecology of multiplicities belonging to everyone and no-one, which resists private appropriation: the enclosure of its potentialities into a possession.[50] This, together with an ethical approach built around proximity rather than presence (understood as representation or comprehension), around lingering rather than the hectic onward rush to production, has the potential, at the very least, to resist, weakly and playfully, the institutional stresses and the distortions they cause to our ways of knowing.

Mark is Professor and Head of the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, UCT; mark.fleishman@uct.ac.za

Notes

1 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity'.
2 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity', 20.
3 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity', 20.
4 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity', 21.
5 Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value*, 39.
6 McKenzie, *Perform or Else*.
7 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity', 22.
8 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 28.
9 Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value*, 4.
10 Fleishman, 'Making Space for Ideas: The Knowledge Work of Magnet Theatre'.
11 See Fleishman, '"For a Little Road It Is Not. For It Is a Great Road; It Is Long": Performing Heritage for Development in the Cape'; Fleishman, 'The Difference of Performance as Research'.
12 Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*.
13 Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*, 1; emphasis in original.
14 Rheinberger, 'Experiment, Difference, and Writing'.
15 Knorr-Cetina, 'Objectual Practice', 181
16 Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*, 225.
17 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 5.
18 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 2.
19 Briet, *Qu'est-ce que la Documentation?*, 7.
20 Briet, *Qu'est-ce que la Documentation?*, 7.
21 Ingold, *Being Alive*, 211.
22 Chow, 'On Captivation', 53.
23 Chow, 'On Captivation', 57.
24 Bannerman, 'The Butterfly Unpinned'.
25 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 6.
26 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 204–5.
27 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 204.
28 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 205.
29 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 205.
30 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 205.
31 Cochoy, 'A Brief Theory of The 'Captation' of Publics', 212.
32 Gell, 'Vogel's Net', 29.
33 Critchley, 'Introduction', 8.
34 Lingis, 'Translator's Introduction', xiii.
35 Lingis, 'Translator's Introduction', xx.
36 Lingis, 'Translator's Introduction', xiii.
37 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 2.
38 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 2.
39 Han, *The Scent of Time*, 33–4.
40 Han, *The Scent of Time*, 98.
41 Han, *The Scent of Time*, 83.
42 Han, *The Scent of Time*, 46–7.
43 Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 45.
44 Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 237.
45 Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity', 27.
46 Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value*, 38–9.
47 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 88.
48 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 88; emphasis in original.
49 Shaviro, *Without Criteria Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics*, 114.
50 Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value*, 38–9.

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EXPOSURE TO THE UNKNOWN: ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN THE EUROPEAN SPHERE

STEFAN WINTER

What are the core competencies that can be unfolded by artistic research? What are its interfaces with science and technological development? What can artistic research contribute to the transformation of societies? This paper outlines the history of artistic research in Europe as a counterpart to developments in Africa, inviting both sides to articulate axes of difference, similarity, contrast, and accordance.

As Achille Mbembe summed up the characteristics of colonial regimes, he referenced a number of phenomena and structures. Among them, all kinds of war to impose regimes on countries and their population, combined with the expropriation of land, the extraction of resources, and the coerced migration and forced labour in the slave trade.[1]

Other features were racism, segregated city spaces, forced resettlements, and racial distribution of agriculture spaces. On a cultural level, the colonised societies had foreign identities imprinted on them, oftentimes bound to a teleology that said: African societies are not yet the European societies that they are destined to become. The homogenisation move in this is evident.

Frantz Fanon started to describe the existential wounds and deformations generated by the colonial regimes, and, in a philosophic retrospect, these times appear as a long series of missed opportunities for respectful dialogue and exchange with other ways of thinking and of living.[2]

The colonial regimes are gone by now, *but* some of their structures linger on, in modified and in less open ways. In the postcolonial space, progress towards liberty could be achieved, but dictatorships also emerged or state and social structures disintegrated, giving way to yet another death culture that weighs on the living impulse.

Mbembe states all of this and connects his analysis with the demand for a new "Afropolitism" where the other human being is acknowledged in their fragility and vulnerability.[3] And many other voices also call for tremendous reconstruction works in the symbolic order, to create new spaces and identities, new distributions in the economic, cultural, and social field.

The instability encountered in so many places across sub-Saharan Africa is said to carry immense potential for devising "Afrotopias," for building new structures in society.[4] In all these processes, artistic research is supposed to play a major role, as the arts are, by definition, able to analyse and criticise, to open new horizons, and to create future scenarios. And this artistic research work could also be an axis of dialogue and exchange between African and European spaces.

In our European sphere, there is a growing realisation that the complex problems and questions in society call for contributions from the arts and for new dialogues between arts, sciences, humanities, and tech development.

Our networked societies are currently going through transformations in all their areas and layers: in their knowledge cultures, in their economic systems, in their media landscape, and in their social fabric. And artistic research is indispensable to co-design these processes.

However, artistic research can achieve this only if it can work autonomously in its own element and is not over-shaped by criteria from other fields. In the early 90s, artistic research was for some time subjected to criteria from the sciences and met with broad rejection in the European landscape, but in the course of a vivid discussion then came to be acknowledged as a genuine and autonomous way of research.

Artistic research works in its own languages. One example is the pictorial language of photography or the audio-visual language of film. Whereas the sciences and humanities think in the verbal language of concepts or in symbol systems, none of these languages can be reduced to the other; their arc of tension builds up, time and again, in different ways and their dialogue remains in constant motion.

Artistic research uses its own tools and methods; it follows its own laws and criteria. This is evident in artistic practice as well as in artistic reflection. Artistic practice means "tracing a trace": it articulates itself with the unknown, it orients itself while walking, it opens up new spaces and horizons. It is not searching for a way to

reach a known destination point. Artistic reflection is a way to let yourself in on your own craft, to compare yourself, to look at contexts, and to enter into a dialogue with other views.

In its autonomous profile, artistic research can contribute three competencies to the transformation process of society.[5]

The first competence is analysing and criticising

Artistic research illuminates the structures and processes of society. It questions ways of thinking, attitudes, and forms of behaviour. It analyses forms of perception and desire. It asks how the identity of individuals is built. It reflects on the media and the means of artistic work.

An example is the film *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch. It analyses power structures in the Hollywood film industry; it shows how they work in the individual psyche and, at the same time, it reflects on the medium of film.

In its analyses, artistic research puts us at a distance from the self-evident—it makes familiar things unknown and thus allows us to see them anew, to rediscover them.

The second competence is projecting and designing

Artistic research opens up new horizons. It sets up new spaces. It creates new meanings. It builds cultural and aesthetic identities. It projects new ways of being in the world. It creates a knowledge of the possible. It thinks in scenarios.

These scenarios can be whole utopias or dystopias. An example is the film *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott—an intense meditation on time, mortality, and what is specifically human.

The third competence is drifting and navigating

The transformation of society often takes the form of a turbulent current. That is, we encounter an unknown future that is not already determined in advance by the laws of the past. In breaks and leaps, unforeseen spaces of possibility, chance and risk, adventure opens up.

Art has experience with movements of this kind. It constantly deals with the unknown. It is constantly in dialogue with something that calls for form. In its daily experience, art builds up a knowledge of how we can move in open systems, in turbulent currents.

In its autonomous profile, artistic research can interact with other knowledge cultures. As two different ways of determining and shaping the world, art and science meet in common productivity. In this convergence, however, it is precisely the differences that are exciting, and that are precious in cooperation. From Arts@CERN: "Far from commenting on scientific facts, illustrating science or communicating advanced technologies, art provides a framework for discussing the complexities that underly our contemporary scientific culture."[6]

Artistic research opens traces and achieves results that can be picked up and developed by science. One example is the "Strandbeesters," filigree and animal-like machines, which react to the weather and move with the wind. They were created by Dutch artist Theo Jansen "without order" and then served NASA as a template for the development of landing vehicles.

Artistic research and tech development can join hands in their approach and in their mind-set. Jaron Lanier, the father of virtual reality, recollects: "When my friends and I built the first virtual machines, their purpose was to make the world creative, expressive, empathic and interesting."[7] An artistic inspiration.

Artistic Research can be the concrete impulse for tech development. Out of their artistic research work with sounds, the industrial band Throbbing Gristle has developed a new sound system that was required so that they could play their music. And so forth. Artistic research has *never ever* seen technology as a given instrument but as an open space of possibilities that it can co-design.

So, arts, sciences, humanities, and tech development enter into new productive dialogues. If they cooperate at eye level, they achieve novel results and can assume their responsibilities in society and for society in an efficient way. One of the areas where this is to be seen is urban development.

In its motion drift, the city space reflects and co-designs the transformation of societies in all their areas and layers. And it is the space in which we design how we want to live and live together.

Artistic research opens up new ways to read the city space, to look at the built environment, and to analyse the very production of urban space, on a macro level as well as on the level of individual existence.

And artistic research designs new ways to build and to be in a built space. On both sides, artistic research can cooperate with social sciences, with architecture, urban planning, and a whole lot of other disciplines.

And, as African and European city spaces are very different, this would be a privileged area to start cooperation of this kind and to learn from each other.

Stefan is Honorary Professor for Artistic Research and Head of the Institute for Artistic Research at Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany;
s.winter@filmuniversitaet.de

Notes

1 Mbembe, *Necropolitics*.

2 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*; Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*.

3 Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*.

4 Sarr, *Afrotopia*.

5 On the competences of artistic research cf. Winter, 'Artistic Research in Its Impact on the Urban Space'.

6 cf. Heuer and Bello, 'CERN: Great art for great science'.

7 Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget*, 33.

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UNPACKING THE FIGURE OF THE ARTIST-FIELDWORKER

KATHYAYINI DASH

This paper argues that the meeting of practice and academic scholarship constructs the figure of the artist-fieldworker in critical ways, while also giving rise to particular kinds of ethical, formal, and procedural questions of art-making and research.

1

My art practice has been largely informed by fieldwork, and this has led me to think about the relationship between art practice and fieldwork. In fact, one of my central concerns in this paper and as a practitioner is to understand the manner in which the artist-fieldworker can be imagined not only as a person engaged in the practice of amalgamating art and fieldwork processes but also as an embodied methodological framework within the practice as research/artistic research discourse. Questions around constituting the body will interlace the process of unpacking of the artist-fieldworker.

This paper comprises two sections. In the first section, I briefly lay out the trajectory of the processes of fieldwork and art-making that has come to constitute my practice. This forms the basis for the second section, which includes brief theoretical derivations, wherein I think through some of the questions emerging from my practice, and attempt the unpacking of this embodied figure of the artist-fieldworker.



Figure 1. Fieldwork image, Kotada, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.

I discuss three of my projects wherein, apart from focusing on the aspects of fieldwork and its place within the project, I will also be noting the position, contribution, and links of site and spectatorship involved in all three. This will help form the basis of my theoretical configurations in the following section.

To give a brief background, my art practice has centred around articulating the body. My concerns during my undergraduate degree, from which I draw heavily, were located around the permeable body, the body in the constant process of change, and as a site where the inside and outside meet. I became involved with questions of the body through an engagement with painting, on the one hand, and Hindustani Classical music, on the other. My enquires were made primarily through analysing the processes of singing and painting as well as an engagement with the 15th-century poet Kabir. Singing Kabir, engaging with his text, and attempting to render his metaphors in visual media, opened out the idea of the body as temporal and relative to the world. My undergraduate final display project was drawn from Kabir's work as a weaver poet, unfolding a metaphor for the body—a finely woven cloth—and attempting to house this metaphor within the material world. My fieldwork was centred around ways of locating the metaphor of cloth/body. How do I look at the materiality of the metaphor? Where in this world can I house it? The cloth, as it plays out in one of Kabir's famous songs *Jhini Chadariya*, takes us through the entire process of the making of the cloth, the dying of the cloth, exchanging the cloth through various hands. My fieldwork—conducted in Kutch, a region in Gujarat state, western India, and known for its weaving, yarn, cotton fields, dying, and embroidering—comprised of documenting the whole journey of the cloth, the sites it emerges from, and the people who contribute to its making.



Figure 2. Kathyayini Dash, 2015, walk-through installation titled *Body-House*, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Vadodara, India, photograph by author/artist.

The installation/performance was twofold.

The first part, housed within the space of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University was a walk-in installation comprising of 12 large double-sided painted panels and two sculptures. The sculptures were a split body and, in between the split, stood the panels.

The outer panels composed the outside, material body, and the inner panels composed the inside, metaphoric body. The cloth became the visual link between the inside and the outside of the body. Here, the site and the people in the site became referential images: a recalling within the painted space. The fieldwork, in this case, served simply as a process of documentation, a resource pool from which I could derive my compositions and visual images. The images of the outer panels, in particular, were seeking to understand and connect with the world/society/lived sphere.



Figure 3. Kathyayini Dash, 2015, detail of double-sided inner and outer panel from walk-through installation *Body-House*, photograph by Mahesh Padiyar.



Figure 4. Kathyayini Dash, 2015, still from *Kahat Kabir*, performance at the Vadodara Kabir Ashram, Vadodara, photograph by Gulam Mohammed Sheikh.

What made the question of spectatorship more complicated for me developed from the second part of my display, housed in a Kabir Ashram, which brought with it a whole different audience, with whom the connection formed through Kabir and music.

The panels were rearranged and, during the course of the performance, the line between performer, performance space, spectators, and audience space blurred. The exhibition bordered a local event and an art performance. Interesting ideas emerged: how sites mobilise spectatorship and how both the site and spectatorship redefine the way the artist is positioned and how the art form plays. It was here that I also observed how music combined with visual work, built an affectively engaged and affected audience.

It made me think of ways viewership and spectatorship are different, and how sites determine ways of thinking about what your work/practice do.

During my postgraduate studies, my enquiries acquired a historical salience as I discovered the body to be socially, culturally, and politically manufactured. Moving beyond notions of life and death, I looked at bodies that were dead bodies walking—historically de-humanised, humiliated, marginalised, bodies that are hoarded and segregated at the will of power. Cultures of seeing these bodies, the histories of violence, the political manufacturing of bodies, the production of production, became subjects for my practice. I began to work with the idea of a world-encompassing body. This was derived primarily from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "desire machine,"[1] Deleuze's logic of the senses (the subject and sensorium),[2] and Judith Butler's materialisation of the body.[3] They, among other explorations in my practice, pushed me to visualise the body as historically dispersed and "dismantle-able" at any given instance.

My final semester work was, yet again, twofold. The first part, titled *Floating Integers, Bound Serialities*, was an installation of many enactments of the body, each one embodying different historical costumes drawn from multiple sources—news



Figures 5, 6, 7 & 8. Kathyayini Dash, 2017, pop-up book paper sculptures from the installation *Floating Integers, Bound Serialities*.

material, Facebook posts, music, personal/public images and experiences, and art history and literary texts—taking the form of life-size pop-up books, scavenged together using packaging material/rag cloths (Figures 5, 6, 7 & 8). These were suspended in cabinets/shelves. The ambience built with sound and light was something between a library and a mortuary. The work resonated with the then-socio-political circumstance of the Dalit student suicides, lynched Muslim bodies with identity passes, bodies of women, and two-dimensional citizenship. I performed within the space, fragments from the poetry of Kabir, which attained a different colour within this context.

The second part was titled *An Archive of Miracles* (Figures 9, 10, 11 ,12, 13). This was a project born out of a six-month-long association that developed into a long-lasting friendship with five women from Ward No. 2, the Chudha colony in Mehrauli, Delhi (*dalit*, sweeper caste). We met during the course of fieldwork I had conducted for a neighbourhood pop-up community museum project. The fieldwork involved the documentation and analysis of their community singing, an investigation into the contextual quality of their music, and their repertoire of *bhajans*. I continued meeting them even after the community museum project had concluded, every Friday over six months, where they assembled for evening prayers at the Balmiki Mandir, and then, slowly, the process of documentation led, in time, to a process of collaboration,



Figures 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13. Kathyayini Dash, 2017, fieldwork and performance/event images from *An Archive of Miracles*.

where we exchanged *bhajans*, recomposing them in each other's styles. After my experience at the neighbourhood museum project, I had rejected a trickle-down approach to collaborative art practice, and I wanted to rethink the boundaries of the artist and of the artwork. I had in mind that I would not go in with an agenda and that the project must be born out of truly collaborative interaction and motive.

This engagement with each other brought to the surface suppressed social hierarchies and the perceptions we had of each other. Some of this was questioned, while some remained on the surface. There were aspects of my own social composition, of which I had never been aware, that surfaced during this project. This gave the project an interesting dimension where the fieldwork was not done in order to create a resourceful archive or in a manner that objectifies the subject but, rather, with all of its complex processes, the fieldwork was digging out the detailed subjectivities and embodied historical infrastructures in that very moment!

The fieldwork lent itself as a framework and emptied itself in order to accommodate certain artistic motives. What was produced was what Alan Sekula calls a shadow archive.[4]

The project took the shape of a local event organised within the premises of the temple and the making of a video archive of miracles that the women had witnessed in their lives (it was interesting for me to look at "miracles" as a social phenomenon). Using the loose framework of what a Friday looked like in the site and lives of the five women and I over six months, we worked out the components of the event as comprising various interactions, discussions, and ideas around the body, the singing of

each other's exchanged and re-composed songs, storytelling sessions, and a projection of the video archive.

This helped me realise how the form of fieldwork is affected because of the involvement of the artist and vice versa.

Drawing on this project and some theoretical analyses, in my postgraduate dissertation, titled 'Installing the Body: Study of the Artist, Site and Spectatorship,' I explored ideas surrounding the artist as a fieldworker, both theoretically and practically.

My research allowed me to explore the figure of the artist by establishing linkages with the ideas of "site" and "spectatorship".

I engaged with lament in my rendering of Kabir's poetry in previous visual performative work, tracing the lament as part of the Re-Centering Afro-Asia Project—Human and Musical Migrations, leading by the ear and following up on sonic hunches, the idea of a shared grief, cutting across land and sea, which resides within people through their oral traditions and systems of music. This process demanded a different strategy and approach for historicising/archival work, which I felt could be sought in the artistic research/practice-as-research methodology and framework. Furthermore, it would be an interesting procedure to explore the discourse around embodiment and body-world relationships.

This became the starting point for my fieldwork carried out between August 2018 and July 2019. My involvement as a research associate in the Re-Centering Afro-Asia Project gave me the opportunity to install myself as an artist-fieldworker and, through its practice, really think about what this figure is and why constitute such a figure?



Figure 14. Fieldwork image, Kotada, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.



Figure 15. Fieldwork image, Kuran, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.



Figure 16. Fieldwork image, Gorewali, Banni, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.

Is the artist-fieldworker-researcher a figure, a position, or both? What constitutes my work as a researcher and how does my being an artist complicate the position of being a researcher? What constitutes the field? How does the process of artistic research and fieldwork, when brought together, set up confrontations for the artist/researcher, bringing up the social and political implications of the artistic process?

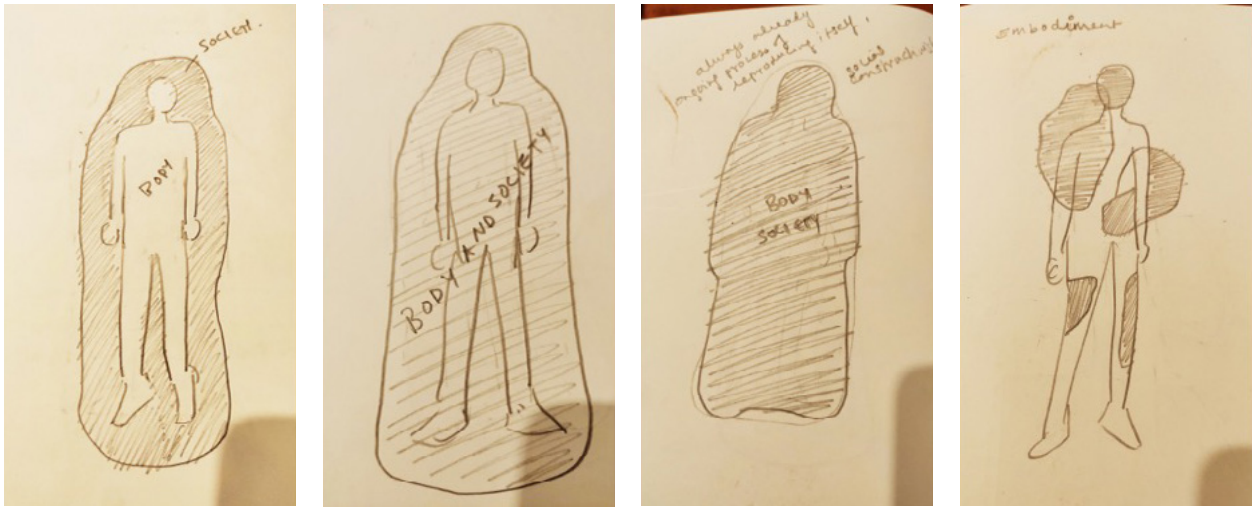
This project has suggested that, when we seek to elaborate on our own configuration, we realise we are inextricably linked to the site in which we work and the spectators/participants that compose it.

2

These engagements with questions surrounding the body, site, and spectatorship, and their constant affective and procedural interactions, led me to think of the body as an interface, as something that is defined by the way it is affected, or by the affective infrastructures it embodies to build and define itself.[5] The body is located between affects and effects as a constructive process and pushes us to look at it as a constant ongoing discourse.

With the idea of the body lying at the heart of my artistic practice, what happens when we unpack the body of an artist-fieldworker? How do we conceive this body?

The relationship between body and society/world/mind has been theorised in many ways. I present to you a broad selection through the following diagrams:



Figures 17, 18, 19 & 20 (from left). Kathyayini Dash, 2019, Diagram for Cartesian Duality. Diagram for Butler's concept of Performativity. Diagram for Bourdieu's concept of the Habitus. Diagram for the wide-ranging discourse around embodiment.

I draw on Butler's idea (Figure 18) that the construction of the body as subject,[6] in this case the artist-fieldworker, happens through the process of materialisation, where the construction is an act, a constant ongoing process. I also work with Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus (Figure 19) where structural processes help in entrenching the system physically and mentally, as well as the embodiment discourse (Figure 20), which has proposed that knowledge is materialised through and within the extent of the body.

It brings the system out of the realm of the abstract into an embodied, implicit present.

For example, when an upper caste person enters a lower caste community's village for conducting research, all the feelings of being an outsider, of being treated either with more respect or disdain based on your status, all of these things, which are usually passed off as "difference in environment/privilege" or dismissed as the repercussions of the "tragedy or inequalities of the past," are actually the ongoing process of materialisation taking place, of each other's caste/race bodies. It is through our socio-bodily interaction in the ongoing present that the historical system of caste gets reproduced, materialising into our bodies, taking visual and tangible form. As an artist-fieldworker, this is not just about the purity of personal intent or how we may personally reject caste/race as individuals living in a post-colonial, secular nation.

These systems—be they of caste, class, gender, race—are not only constantly being reproduced and reinvented by their encounter with heterogeneous moments of modernity, they are also reproduced as relative, interactive, embodied processes.

Take this image (Figure 22) of a landscape of ruins.

One can attempt to locate and simultaneously define the body/oneself either as *Flâneur* (the almost invisible observer walking across the debris of the world) or imagine every stone/remaining trace of this ruin as a body, which can be dispersed into past or pulled into present, or the landscape itself as the body composed of instances (these instances being various vantage points).

We can, then, be imagined to be self-producing, performative systems, dispersed across history, time, and region.

A piece of Walter Benjamin's exploded prison house, telescoped from the past to the present. If the body is imagined to be so flexible and dismantle-able, it could surely integrate multiple subjectivities who keep interacting with and informing each other, born out of the body's continuous time travel. If there is a line that one wants to draw between the body and the world, the affect and effect, there is not only one place to draw that line. There are, in fact, many lines that one must draw. Thus, we can be imagined as a site that houses multiple interactions and subjectivities, located at multiple places, and born out of different temporalities and interactions.

Taking this conception of the body as a premise, can we think through embodied practice in the context of a socio-eco system built of the symbiotic relationship between processes of materialisation that constitute the figure of the artist-fieldworker, and the processes of materialisation that constitute the field on and in which the figure operates, composed of the site and spectatorship?

Take for example this one instance of the body of an artist fieldworker, that I have configured with three theoretical figures emerging out of different sites that could be pieced together and integrated at the site of the artist-fieldworker body. First, Susan Buck Morss' "exploded flâneur," which draws from Benjamin's exploded prison-house.[7] However, in Morss' text, the *flâneur* emerges as the debris of the explosion, historically, temporally, and regionally dispersable. Second, Geeta Kapur's "citizen artist/secular artist" that emerges from the site of the nation, wherein the site of the nation provokes a re-assessment of particular social subjectivities of the artist in the face of the emerging secular and global nation.[8] Lastly, Partha Chatterjee's



Figure 21. Fieldwork image, Kuran, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.



Figure 22. Fieldwork image, Ruins of Kotada, Dholavira gaam, Kutch, Gujarat, India, 2018, photograph by the author/artist.

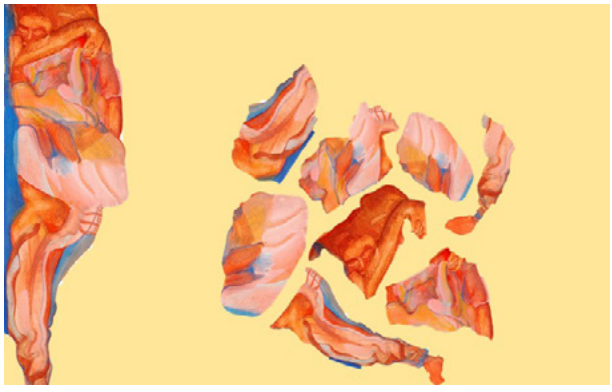


Figure 23. Kathyayini Dash, 2016, *The Dismantle-able Body*, digitally modified image from watercolour painting.

Masterjee (village school master) who emerges from what he calls the political society, mediating and negotiating between the "common folk" and the civil society, living in the post-colonial heterogeneous time of the nation.[9] All three exist in themselves, yet within the site of the body, and often end up contradicting one another or producing certain knowledges within and outside the body simultaneously. The field is, itself, a space composed not only by its own present site and spectators, but is symbiotically being constructed in relation to and along with the body that occupies it.

Theoretical figurations as embodied vantage points could become one of the ways of identifying affective infrastructures within the body of the artist-fieldworker/practitioner. Therefore, while we speak of the artist-fieldworker, rather than a personification, it seems useful to think of it as a mode of functioning.

I am interested in the potential of practice as a process of problematising history as we know it. This process opens out the real possibility of articulating and theorising as we make, on-the-go, and renders history as interpretable, advocating multiple "truths," with the potential even of decolonising the body. How can the framing of the body, help re-think the way we look at our histories that inherently reflect artistic methodologies? Framed thus, my body can be envisaged as the site where different kinds of histories and systems reside, heterogeneous, composed of multiple moments of time, and region, and histories, of systems that are pulled into the present body of my being, forging itself into my skin, my laugh, my feelings, all my affective infrastructures. It would be a body always becoming and, in doing so, one that refuses the colonisation by singular systems, hegemonic approaches and processes. So, when one speaks of the black body, or the lower caste body, or the upper caste body, one doesn't speak of them as a result of an old system or event or regime of the past, but a system that constantly reinvents itself and materialises into the present through permutations of site and spectatorship.

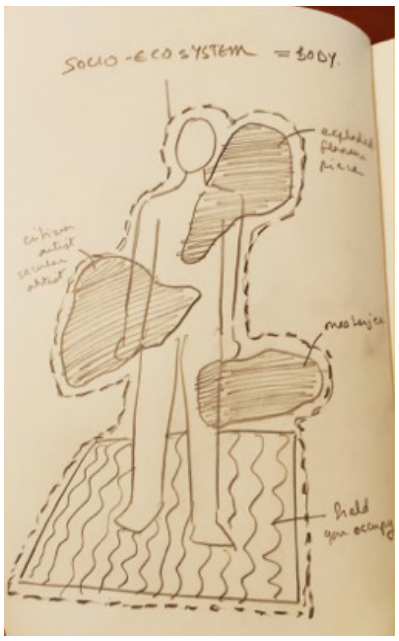


Figure 24. Kathyayini Dash, 2019, An instance of the socio-ecosystem configured with the Masterjee, Exploded Flâneur, Citizen Artist.

To conclude, I propose looking at art and artistic research as not merely performing a social function, but to look at the artwork, artist, and the field as a symbiotic socio-ecosystem, composed of double binds, multiple realities, and as continually being involved in engaging these double binds, bringing them up to the surface, and problematising the sanctity of some histories over others. By opening ourselves and making ourselves more vulnerable, this engagement with double binds, through acknowledged vantage points, exposes the continuation of violent colonial histories within all bodies, and the continued hegemony of some histories over others. The field here is considered as the present dispersed into the past and then pulled back into the present. The interstices of practice and research can give us the opportunity to engage with the form, outcome, and the process at the same time, and to respond both urgently and contemplatively, conceptually and practically, to histories in the making, by dispersing ourselves, all at once.

Kathyayini is a visual artist and musician. She is currently working on a practice-based PhD at the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, University of Cape Town; kathyayinidash@gmail.com

Notes

1 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.
2 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.
3 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.
4 Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive'.
5 Sharma and Tygstrup, 'Structures of Feeling'.
6 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.
7 Buck-Morss, 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore'.
8 Kapur, 'Secular Artist, Citizen Artist'.
9 Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*.

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PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

AFRICAN SPIRITUAL HEALING IN DRAMA THERAPY: AN EXPLORATION OF MOVEMENT AND SOUND AS A MEANS OF FACILITATING HEALING

ZANELE SIKO

Can African spirituality in African dance be used as a means of facilitating the healing of women's trauma? This performance explores the possibilities of fusing Credo Mtwa's notion of African spirituality with the ritualistic elements of the Senegalese *Ndeup* dance healing method. The notion of embodiment of trauma is the entry point into this consideration of the embodiment of African dance as a healing tool.













Zanele is researching an MA in the Department of Drama for Life in the Wits School of Arts; 1745157@students.wits.ac.za

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

DREAM TRANSLATION AND AFRICAN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

JASON JACOBS

Dream translation or the translation of dreams has been central to my process as a theatre maker and playwright by means of remembering, reviving, and regenerating stories that have been erased from my body or locked in my body. Dreams, represented as myth and filtered through present-day reality, have become a way for me to generate material for the theatre. Theatre-making inspired by dreams has been a way to facilitate a conversation between my personal archive and the historical archive of my mother line—which is unknown to me. When devising the solo performance, my body, and memories contained within my body, became the locus of intersection towards expressing my practice as research. I devised a solo performance that stems from my personal past: when I burned my feet as an eight-year-old in Kharkams, located in the Namakwa District Municipality of the Northern Cape, South Africa.

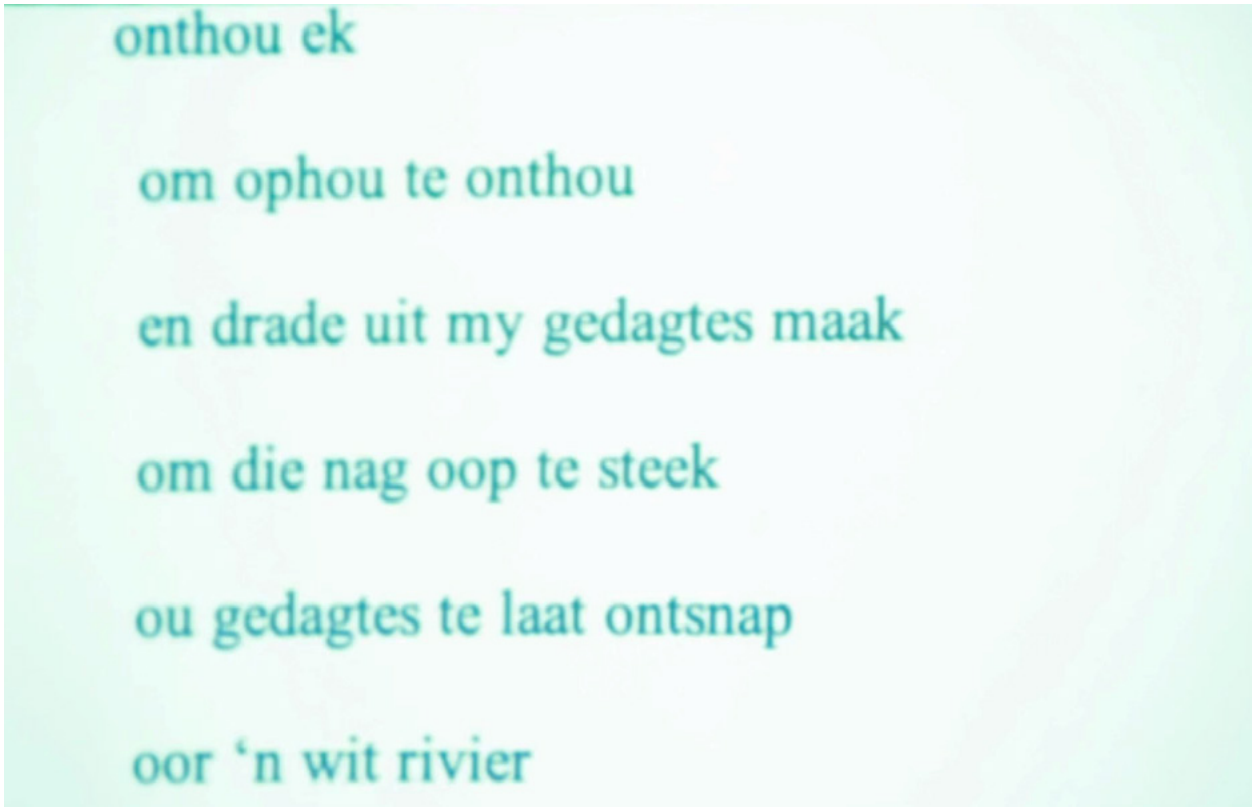
The performance lecture is not the solo performance but a letter to my grandmother in which I explain the performance to her. I wrote the letter in Johannesburg, three days before the performance lecture took place, and wrote it as an adapted response to Jolyn Phillips' *The Photograph*, a short story from the award-winning *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other Stories*, published by Human and Rousseau.






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Jason is researching an MA in the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies, UCT and is part of the Re-imagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South Fellowship, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; hello@jasonjacobs.art

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

DARKNESS AFTER LIGHT: A VISUAL PORTRAIT OF LEFIFI TLADI

KOLODI SENONG

Can the politics, art, and ideas of a complex figure such as the thinker, poet, and painter, Lefifi Tladi, be explored through a series of portrait studies? Through a series of mixed media and graphic portraits, I seek to show how portraiture can function as a source of information gathering in relation to this seminal figure in the development of Black Consciousness in South Africa.


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Kolodi is a practicing artist and occasional art writer who is completing a Creative Work PhD at the Wits School of Arts; kolodisenong@gmail.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

CULTURAL KASI'PRENEUR

DIMAKATSO MOTHOLO

How are a new generation of South African cultural entrepreneurs decolonising the perception of what education/knowledge means as they produce other forms of learning, success, and survival in the township? This hybrid presentation will be a performance of the reality of the township experience through a monologue from the play titled *Ekasi Lam* together with the selling of Retrofontein garments.







Dimakatso is researching an MA in Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts with a focus on cultural entrepreneurship in the township; didimotholo@gmail.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

URBAN TOUCH

EDDA SICKINGER

The lecture-demonstration URBAN TOUCH understands the prolific practices of screening dance as a way of touching. "Touching" holds a double character as (1) getting into contact and (2) affecting or being affected. To touch, we have to move and the action of projecting helps the dance work move and relate in time and space.[1] While any surface can potentially transform into a screen,[2] the moment of screening creates an ephemeral social entanglement of movement, memory, relation, and affect.

Within the scope of her artistic PhD research, Edda examines dynamics of touch in public spaces by intervening in the urban environments of Cape Town and Hamburg through dance. She intends to find a language that describes the realities, encounters, relations, affects, and movements of touch in urban everyday life. In doing so, she includes video as a tool for documentation, thematic reflection, and artistic means during the performative presentations of the research.

She further reflects upon her approach of touching through screening, by taking the video documentation of her choreographic interventions and performances in Hamburg and Cape Town as examples, and challenges dichotomies between visceral and digital dance, the live and the (pre)recorded, by revealing their complexified relations. URBAN TOUCH thus creates an entanglement of video screenings, a reflective lecture, and the co-presence of the participants at the conference, examining the spaces where technologically determined practices become sensory and affective, and thus create an affective spatial experience.











Edda is a choreographer and performer, currently pursuing her artistic PhD at the University of Cape Town; edda.sickinger@gmail.com; www.eddasickinger.com

Notes

1 Manning, *Politics of Touch Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*.

2 Simone, 'The Politics of Urban Intersection'.

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Manning, Erin. *Politics of Touch Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*. Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

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PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

WHITE ITALIAN MASCULINITY THROUGH THE FRAME OF VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART

NICOLA GENOVESE

This doctoral study has two interrelated components: a set of new creative works exploring the theme of white masculinity in crisis in the Italian context and a supporting theoretical paper that will frame the visual, performative output. The main goal of this research is to develop a visual, performative language through sculpture and performance that might advance critical perspectives on issues linked to non-hegemonic forms of masculinities. This means dissecting the complexity of the white male privilege trope and investigating the dynamics of the so-called "masculinity in crisis." Specifically, the research aims to analyse the red line that links national rhetoric, new populism, and masculinity in crisis in the Italian context in the frame of the economic changes and new immigration wave of the last decade.











Nicola is a visual artist and a musician who works with installation, sculptures, and performance. He is studying for a Creative Work PhD in the Wits School of Arts; 2175814@students.wits.ac.za; nicolagenovese.org

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

IF I'M LEFT ALONE I WILL DIE OR WILL I FIND NEW ROOTS, BREED, BREATHE, BLEED

MYER TAUB WITH MANOLA GAYATRI

The unorthodox relational form of this performed conversation will enable a consideration of Practice as Research (PaR) via a critical reflection on contemporary South Asian and South African performance through encounter.



Myer Taub with Manola Gayatri | Performance-lecture | If I'm Left Alone I Will Die or Will I Find New Roots, Breed, Breathe, Bleed







Myer is a playwright and multi-disciplinary artist. He lectures in the Department of Theatre and Performance in the Wits School of Arts; myersuniverse@gmail.com

Manola is a researcher, poet, and performer. She is the Convener of the International Federation of Theatre Research Performance as Research Working Group; manolagayatri@gmail.com

WORKSHOP

MOVEMENT IMPROVISATION AND REAL-TIME COMPOSITION AS A WAY TO DISCOVER DECOLONIAL ETHICAL RESEARCH METHODS

KRISTINA JOHNSTONE

The purpose of this workshop is to offer a view on how the body and movement function as places of inquiry. We explore the question of “what is ethical?”, and by extension, can an “ethical research method” can be discovered by working with one’s own body in relation to other bodies?




Screenshot









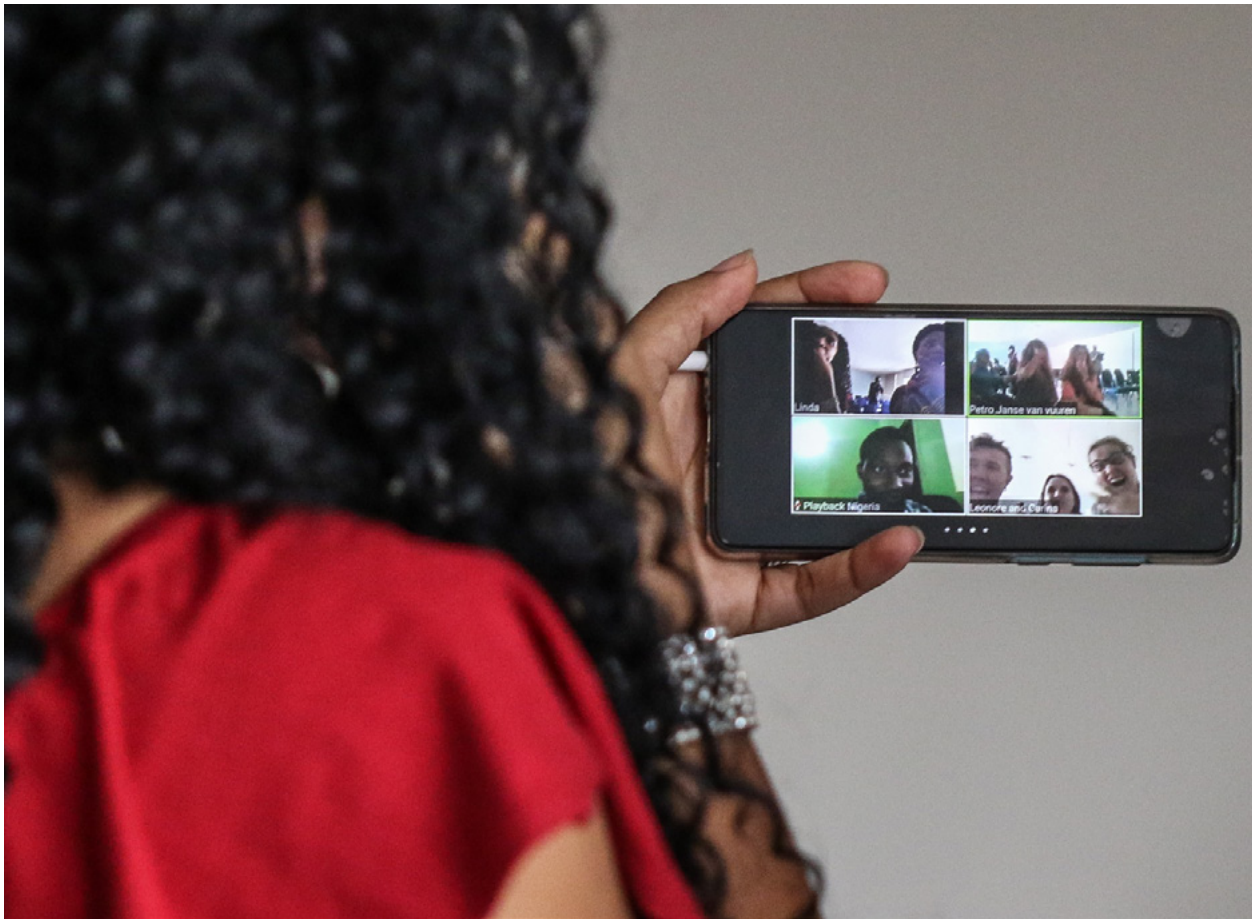
Kristina is a Belgian South African dancer and choreographer. She is a PhD candidate in Theatre and Performance at the Wits School of Arts and works as a lecturer in Physical Theatre at the University of Pretoria; kristina.helenajohnstone@gmail.com

WORKSHOP

APPLIED IMPROVISATION IN AFRICA: FACILITATING EMBODIMENT WORK IN ONLINE ROOMS

OLUWADAMILOLA APOTIERI-ABDULAI
AND PETRO JANSE VAN VUUREN

An important aspect of Applied Improvisation is using and perceiving the body and those of others in the room. Can adaptations be made to enable embodied work online without jeopardising impact? In this workshop, we present different improvisation methods that can be used in online settings.


Linda
Petro Janse van vuuren
Playback Nigeria







Oluwadamilola is an Applied Improvisational practitioner from Nigeria and serves on the board of the Applied Improvisation Global Network; damilola_a@yahoo.com

Petro is a lecturer and the Head of the Drama for Life department in the Wits School of Arts; petro.jansevanvuuren@wits.ac.za

WORKSHOP

DECOLONIAL AESTHESIS PARCOURS

SHARLENE KHAN AND FOUAD ASFOUR

The *Decolonial AestheSis Parcours* is made up of exercises informed not only by recent theories around decolonial aestheSis, but by Black and African Feminist creativities, Critical Race Theories, postcolonial histories, liberal arts pedagogies, and anti-hegemonial cultural movements. The workshop invites participants to reflect on non-hierarchical relationships, embodied knowledges, creative theorisation, the African Feminist concept of theorising from the epicentres of our agency, the use of imagination as a tool of freedom and experimentation, the need for interrogation of capitalist modes of artistic production, interconnectivities, as well as the need for critical pleasure.

However, the *Decolonial AestheSis Parcours* is not just about play, interconnectivity, and critical pleasure, but also about the fundamental understanding that each individual carries within them the seeds of memory making, critical thinking and knowledge, archive, and creative production.

"Decolonial aestheSis" is a term coined by Argentine semiotician Walter Mignolo and the Decolonial Institute.[1] "AestheSis" hints at the vast range of creative productions across the world that need to be re-evaluated, excavated, and authorised. Moreover, decolonial aestheSis, uses criticality to interrogate the fields of contemporary visual arts and art history, evidencing a politics of aesthetics and a politicisation of aesthetics, which not only questions creative production, but dissemination, reception, and knowledge-making around the fields of creativities.

Using decolonial aestheSis methodologies, the *Parcours* engages participants in exercises that activate participants' embodied knowledges. Thus, the *Parcours* asks, with Bhekizizwe Peterson, how to refigure the archive: "How do we lock into the experiences and knowledge that have had to find sanctuary in the rituals, ceremonies, songs, literature, performances and popular culture produced by black people?"[2] and to recuperate embodied knowledges that are silenced, not written, unwritten, or written out of the archive.[3]









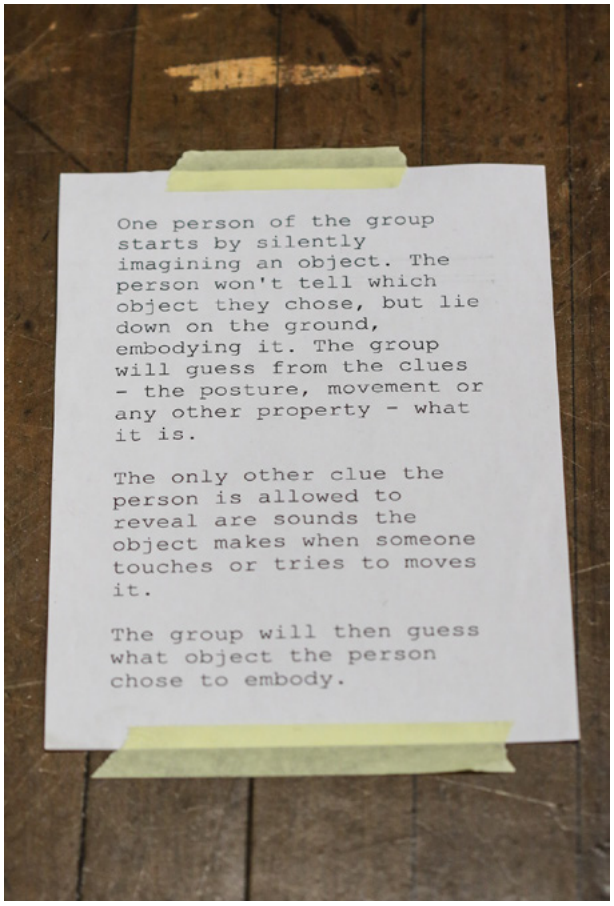




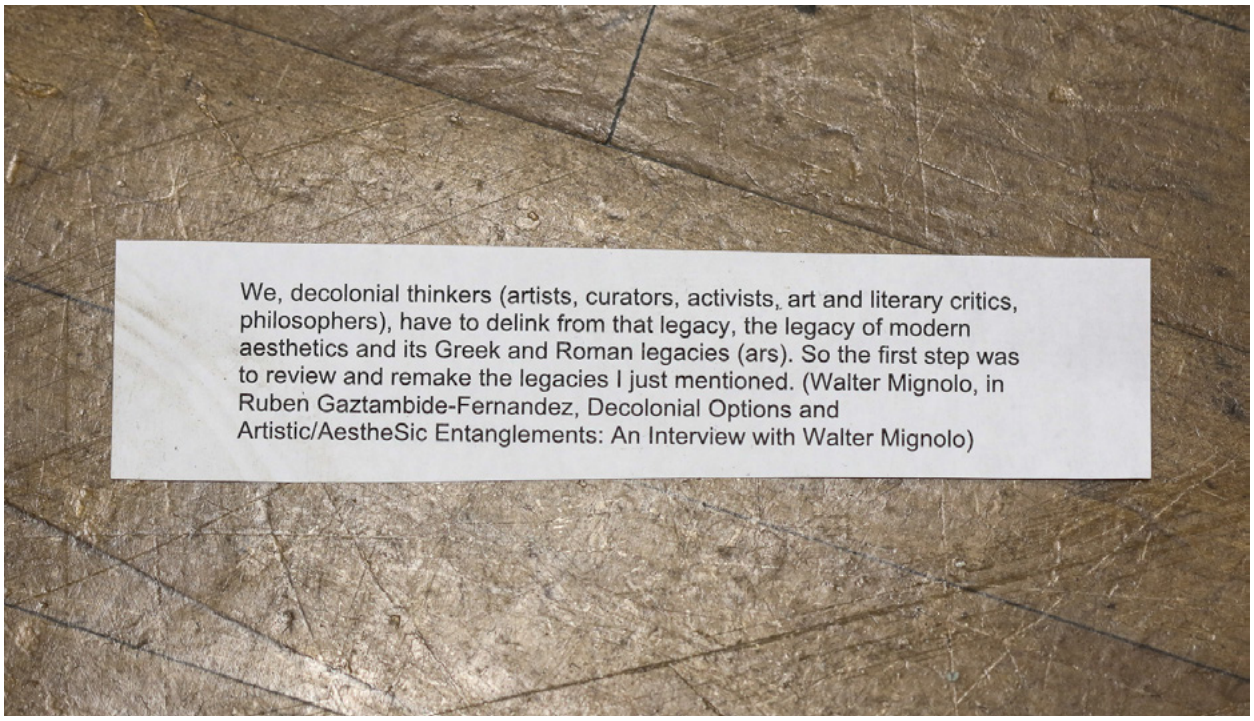












Sharlene is a visual artist and Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts in the Wits School of Arts; sharlene.khan@wits.ac.za

Fouad is a writer, editor, and publisher who organises independent spaces for discourse and artistic collaboration; fouad.asfour@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Mignolo and Vazquez. 'Decolonial AestheSis'.

2 Peterson, 'The Archives and the Political Imaginary', 34.

3 Abrahams, 'Ambiguity My Middle Name'.

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INGANEKWANE, FOLKTALE, ANANSI STORY: RECOGNISING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

JESSICA FOLI

What happens when the source of knowledge is part of a unique oral history passed down from generation to generation? How do we frame such knowledge? How do we nurture the development of knowledge based on African folktale, superstition, or myth?

Heavily embedded within the canon of academia is the need for "proper" references to be included in all academic writing. What defines the parameters of "proper"? What happens when the source of knowledge is part of unique oral history that has been passed down from generation to generation: a folktale, a superstition, or a myth? What if the source is a grandmother, aunt, uncle, or an elder in the community?

Despite living on the African continent, the requirements of academic writing make no allowances for the inclusion of oral history as a recognised source of knowledge. Through a reflection on my teaching, together with an interrogation of applicable writings and discourse, this paper aims to provide an entry point into the subject of recognising indigenous knowledge in the performing arts.

The term performing arts is very broad and can be said to encompass multiple disciplines. For the context of this paper, when using the term performing arts, I'm specifically referring to modes of performance associated with the body; namely Voice, Acting and Movement.

Catherine Odora Hoppers describes indigenous knowledge as "the combination of knowledge systems encompassing technology, social, economic and philosophical learning or educational, legal and governance systems."[1] Edward Shizha notes that African Indigenous Knowledge Systems are embedded in traditions, in customs and transmitted through demonstration and experience.[2] Indigenous knowledge is transferred through what Petros Nhlavu Dhlamini terms the "Master to Apprentice" system from one generation to the next.[3] Woven into this process of knowledge-transfer is the element of storytelling.

As performers, storytelling is at the core of our discipline. We use our lived experience as a starting point to create a story; these stories can be told with our voices, our bodies or both. The African continent is rich with stories, generational knowledge, and tradition.

The *Anansi* story and *Inganekwane* are some of the examples of storytelling traditions on the African continent. The common thread they share is that there is a message or lesson of some kind woven into the story. These stories, together with cultural practices, traditions, spirituality, songs, and dances, are rich sources of knowledge. These sources of indigenous knowledge should be recognised equally in both the practical and theoretical components of performing arts curricula.

Performing arts curricula at the tertiary level often privilege western modes of performance, to which large sections of the curricula are devoted and little to no time spent on African modes of performance. The call to decolonise teaching spaces and curricula is an attempt to remedy this. However, this process requires careful thought, beyond the token insertion of African practitioners into curricula. Abebe Zegeye and Maurice Taonezvi Vambe lament that African indigenous knowledge systems have been dismissed as myth and superstition within western thought and the academy.[4] This, combined with the status afforded to written knowledge, has ensured that African indigenous knowledge systems took a backseat in performing arts curricula.

When I look back at my own studies, African indigenous knowledge systems did not form a significant part of the performing arts curriculum. As such, creating a transformative curriculum has always been at the heart of my teaching philosophy. Teaching full-time has allowed me to implement this even further. Last year, I set about framing one of my first-year practical classes with a strong focus on content influenced by the African continent. The class, titled "Theatre and Production," is a practical class focused on visual storytelling and the practical elements of the

theatre-making process. Supported by theory, students are taken through practical explorations and tasks to raise their awareness of how a narrative or a story consists of more than just spoken text. Colour, sounds, gestures, movements, and props all form an integral part of creating a narrative and the storytelling process. It is important for me to outline the structure of the class, as this gives context to the upcoming discussion.

As an entry point into visual storytelling, we began the practical classes by exploring the theme of colour and cultural significance. I asked the students to sit in a circle in the class, and we went around the circle and one-by-one they shared their experiences of how colour and cultural significance forms part of their lives.

I emphasised that students only share information with which they are comfortable. They could also interpret the theme of colour and cultural significance freely. This is largely because one has to be careful with any discussions that draw on indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. Some indigenous knowledge and practices are bound by secrecy; Shizha describes these aspects of indigenous knowledge as being, "secretive and not for public consumption."[5]

As we went around the circle, students openly shared their experiences related to rites of passage, traditional and religious ceremonies, ceremonial events, and funeral rites. The experiences shared were diverse—ranging from isiZulu traditions, IsiNdebele traditions, isiXhosa, Korean, Serbian, Greek, and Jewish traditions. As each person in the class shared their experience, the rest of the class listened quietly and intently. This sparked further discussion within the class, and students began to ask questions to gain further insight into what was being shared. Students who shared similar experiences began to debate the nuances amongst themselves. Two students even ended up debating stages of a Tshivenda rite of passage, specifically, a coming of age ceremony. Through debate and discussion, they helped one other remember parts of the ceremony and the way in which it unfolded.

In this way, the classroom became a space where students exchanged knowledge based on their respective lived experiences. Through sharing their experiences, students provided insight into indigenous practices with nuances, which, arguably, no written source could provide. While discussing the theme of knowledge production and publication in Africa, Zegeye and Vambe state that, "published knowledge still commands a great deal of 'respect' from both African and non-African intellectuals, especially those who acquired knowledge through written media."[6] This way of thinking still plagues performing arts curricula.

As educators, how do we go about positioning indigenous knowledge within performing arts curricula at a tertiary level?

Recognising indigenous knowledge in the classroom is an intricate process. Working with these forms of knowledge in the classroom requires a degree of sensitivity and care. As a lecturer, one needs to create a classroom environment that allows for such experiences to be shared. As educators, do we actively create spaces that allow for this kind of knowledge to be shared and recognised without being dismissive or patronising?

What became apparent as the students shared their experiences was the multiplicity of identities on the African continent. One could be South African with Greek ancestry; one could be South African with both isiZulu and isiXhosa heritage; one could be Ghanaian with German ancestry; one could be African with Portuguese ancestry—the list is endless. This paper advocates for African indigenous knowledge systems to be incorporated into performing arts curricula while recognising that cross-cultural and cross-continental knowledge also form part of this knowledge.

Once the students had shared their experiences, I asked them to choose gestures and movements associated with the experience they had described in class. Later, I asked them to incorporate sound, on the condition that they didn't use any words or spoken text. The following week, students were put into groups. Collectively they had to choose a narrative that incorporated the sounds and gestures, which they then explored individually.

Over time, the students workshopped their pieces and received a combination of lecturer and peer feedback. During a peer feedback session, something I didn't expect happened: one group had a moment in their performance, where they depicted an animal being slaughtered. After the performance, a student in the class asked the group a question. He said, "Were you stabbing the animal or were you slaughtering it?" The group was quiet.

The student went on to say that the way the group had portrayed the gesture indicated that the animal was being stabbed rather than slaughtered (and he showed the students what he was referring to). He went on to say that if an animal is stabbed in that manner, it indicates that the animal was stolen. The group receiving the feedback seemed surprised and jokingly agreed, yes indeed the animal had been stolen.

The student's lived experience became an unexpected teaching moment where, through his lived cultural experience, he provided insight into a cultural practice and was able to educate his fellow classmates. As the lecturer of the course, there's no way that I would've been able to provide this kind of insight. I've never slaughtered an animal myself, so I'm not familiar with the nuances of the slaughtering process. Yes, I was able to provide insight into the group's theatre-making process, but the slaughtering/stabbing-related insight could only have been provided by the student within the context of that particular class at that particular time.

All the instances I've described refer to experiences within a practical class. This is important to mention because practical classes within the space of the performing arts allow for exploration and incorporation of indigenous knowledge. Cultural nuances can be expressed physically, visually, aurally, and in myriad other ways. However, had I asked the students to write a formal essay critiquing the work of their peers, the outcome would have been very different. They would be required to adhere to one of the academically recognised styles of referencing. In this case, it would be the Harvard style.

This raises the question: How does one reference indigenous knowledge within the framework of the academy?

Particularly at a first-year level, students are taught to write by utilising existing knowledge and theory within the discipline and critically engaging with it. The creation of new knowledge is frowned upon at a first-year level as well as at an undergraduate level. It is only at a postgraduate level that students are viewed as being in the position to create new knowledge and contribute to existing discourse.

The student who referred to the nuances of stabbing versus slaughtering may have expressed this in a written form. However, the requirements of academic writing would've required him to find a reference for what he had described. How would a first-year student, or any student for that matter, go about referencing an experience that is actually indigenous knowledge, acquired through a specific cultural practice.

Would a diluted reference need to be found to corroborate and validate what the student already knows?

These are some of the questions we, as educators, need to ask when we sit at boards and committees that create policies and frameworks. How do we start to rethink and re-frame the parameters of the academy to give equal weighting to indigenous knowledge?

I'll leave you with a quote from Zegeye and Vambe,

> It is worth repeating that the primary carrier of knowledge in African societies where large sections of the population have not had access to written material is not the published book. In these communities, knowledge is generated and expressed through unwritten songs, folktales, proverbs, masks, carvings and other modes of expressing knowledge … it is wrong to assume that those without access to written forms of expression have no knowledge.[7]

Jessica is a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Performance in the Wits School of Arts; jessica.foli@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Odora Hoppers, 'Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems', 8–9.

2 Shiza, 'Chapter 12: Indigenous Knowledges and Codification in the Knowledge Economy', 269–70.

3 Dhlamini, 'Chapter 10: Use of Information and Communication Technologies Tools to Capture, Store and Disseminate Indigenous Knowledge', 227.

4 Zegeye and Vambe, 'Chapter 5: African Indigenous Knowledge Systems', 54.

5 Shiza, 'Chapter 12: Indigenous Knowledges and Codification in the Knowledge Economy', 277.

6 Zegeye and Vambe, 'Chapter 6: Knowledge Production and Publishing in Africa', 77.

7 Zegeye and Vambe, 'Chapter Six: Knowledge Production and Publishing in Africa', 80–81.

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PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

KHULULEKA, OR THE MONOMYTH OF NOBANTU AND THE PPL

BALINDILE KA NGCOBO

Can code-switching destabilise the racist and sexist hegemonies that perpetuate themselves within the English language as it (con)figures the Black Womxn in society, and consequently, on stage?











Balindile is a theatre-maker, voice artist, and facilitator. She is a Mellon (RETAGS) Scholar currently pursuing an MA in Theatre and Performance at the University of Cape Town; balindilengcobo@gmail.com

THINKING ABOUT RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR

GERRIT OLIVIER

Are the binary oppositions postulated between theoretical and practical knowledge, and between western and African philosophy—as in the call for this conference—valid or useful for artistic research? This paper asks where this conceptual division should best be located and poses the question of whether it is valid, sustainable, and helpful to distinguish between African and European "modes of knowledge."

1

Since 2019, there is a system in place for artistic output by university staff to receive a subsidy from the Department of Education's research budget. As the papers at this conference attest, a lively discourse around arts as research has developed. This could suggest a harmonious situation in which there is a general acceptance that work done by artists—or, perhaps, especially by those artists who are also teachers and academics—is a form of research. But how comfortable is the situation?

I want to reflect on the question of whether an intellectually coherent case for art as research can be made, and interrogate a number of views or assertions that appear to have coalesced around the approach to art as a form of research.

It is necessary to make an important initial distinction between two strands of thinking about this matter. In the first of these, art is seen as research. In the second, art is not necessarily seen as research but as the outcome of activities that are, or resemble, research activities. It is mainly the latter of these two views that has infused a significant body of writing thus far.[1]

2

The introduction of research subsidy for artistic output marks a significant change in the definition of research that the Department of Education (DoE) has implemented until recently: that research is written output, judged to be a contribution to knowledge by peer reviewers. With some exceptions, the Department has accepted, before and after 1994, that publication in approved peer-reviewed journals serves as a proxy for assessments, which it would itself not be able to conduct. In doing so, it followed the established international practice whereby the peer-reviewed scholarly journal is the gold standard of research output. The peer-reviewed article also forms the basic indicator of research activity, impact, and reputation in international rating systems for universities.[2]

In managing its research budget, the DoE has thus far relied on the judgement of individuals who were deemed to know what research is and required no official guidance: scholars in the relevant field. In the absence of recognised proxies for the assessment of artistic outputs, the new system will rely on the appointment of peer reviewers by universities themselves. How well this will work remains to be seen, but it is safe to say that the system is likely to be cumbersome and labour-intensive.

All of this raises an interesting question. Can we identify, within the various artistic research communities in the world, characteristics of any written or other output that would clearly place it into the category of research and, therefore, enable peer reviewers to make reliable and accurate assessments?

Wilhelm Dilthey famously distinguished between two kinds of scholarly activity,[3] which broadly overlap with the "two cultures" deplored by C. P. Snow many years later.[4] In a nutshell, Dilthey's concept of *erklären* (explaining) refers to the formulation of generally applicable laws of cause and effect that govern recurring phenomena in the natural world. His concept of *verstehen* (understanding) was partly developed in response to the occasionally bizarre attempts by 19th-century scholars to apply this methodology in the humanities: to establish the "causes" of artworks in Hippolyte Taine's famous trio of *race* (inherited disposition or temperament), *milieu* (environmental circumstances), and *moment* (the momentum of historical and current cultural influences, what we nowadays loosely call the *Zeitgeist*).[5] For Dilthey, this form of *erklären* was not adequate to the challenges posed by the uniqueness of the historical event or cultural object.

As Dilthey saw it, aesthetics is one of the cultural systems that help us develop a fuller understanding of the human world. Understanding artworks, which are historical objects on the one hand but remain available for scrutiny in the present on the other, requires a more intuitive process (*Einfühlung*) than those followed in the explanatory sciences.[6]

The concept of *verstehen* and further publications by Dilthey were the most important point of origin for interpretive activities that have become known as hermeneutics.[7] We note the obvious, but nevertheless key, fact that the object of study is the artwork, and that, to talk in our parlance, the research is the study of that object, not the object itself.

These are broad categories that enable a basic ordering of the scholarly field, and I am by no means suggesting that in any particular case, there will be a clear dividing line between *erklären* and *verstehen*. But, returning to the question posed above, whether there is a universal or, at least globally accepted, *norm* for research, some reflection tells us that there is indeed one element that can be identified as common across the explanatory and interpretive sciences, the sciences of *erklären* and *verstehen*.

Research provides and must provide, within itself, through reference or in written form, the evidence for its own claims to truth or validity. This implies primarily two things: that the data supporting the claims must, in principle, be accessible to scrutiny by the reader, and that the way in which the data has been processed to reach conclusions must be made explicit.

This is admittedly a somewhat simplified and idealised representation. But the truth of what I'm saying comes clearly into view if we consider the expectations that will be familiar to anybody who has submitted work for peer review to scholarly journals. Apart from making the data accessible and the methodology transparent, researchers are also expected to locate their work within an existing field of knowledge and indicate what new knowledge they are contributing to that field.

Research, as commonly understood, is intimately tied to ideas of improvement, progress, and the growth of knowledge. None of this would be possible if the basic requirements of clear, accessible data and transparent theoretical assumptions and methodology were not met. This transparency has one overriding purpose: to make the research accessible to the possibility of being proven wrong. At the heart of conventional science is the acceptance of the refutability of what is presented as truth.

As Karl Popper would put it: science—or, in a more careful version, good science—is characterised not by its verifiability, but by its refutability.[8] It asserts truth in such a way that the avenues by which that truth has been reached, and therefore the ways in which it can be shown to be mistaken, are open to scrutiny. Because of this provisionality, the word "truth" becomes, strictly speaking, redundant. The hypothetical status of the assertion ensures that it can always be corrected or rejected.

In its most general terms, the Popperian picture, though mainly intended to describe the "hard" sciences, applies to the social and human sciences as well. The sociolinguist, for example, would provide evidence for their hypothesis about a phenomenon in a particular community, combined with explanations on how that group was defined, how many people were interviewed, how big the sample was, how the data was processed, and so forth. A paper that doesn't do these things and cannot be refuted is likely to be ignored—or to remain unpublished.

More ambitious theoretical propositions that extend beyond the analysis of specific historical events occupy a special position by drawing on observational data to posit broad generalisations. That normally gives them an ambivalent status. It is, for example, open to question whether Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious is

culturally specific, or can be falsified in any strict sense of the word. It certainly claims to apply to human beings in general. Even more interestingly, the interpretation of Karl Marx's view of history ranges from people who would call it purely speculative to others who would claim that it has been falsified by historical events, to others who still see it as scientific truth.

The Popperian view of the scientific procedure has, of course, been challenged. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the very influential Thomas Kuhn developed the idea of the paradigm to argue that most sciences operate within an institutionally accepted framework that is only rarely opened up to serious debate and possible rebuttal. Paul Feyerabend went much further than this, rejecting the idea that science is practised in accordance with any rationally ordered procedure and that it is, in fact, an anarchic enterprise; "Anything goes," Feyerabend claimed.[9]

Even though it wasn't presented as a polemic against Popper, perhaps the most fundamental challenge to the Popperian view of science and knowledge came from Michel Foucault. In Foucault's accounts of the history of sex and madness, language is intimately connected to discursive regimes, which capture us within conceptual frameworks that define the contours of our world.[10] By connecting language to authority and the exercise of power over human subjects, Foucault, by implication, rejected the relative innocence and self-correcting nature of the scenario presented by Popper. What remains, perhaps, unanswered is the question of whether research and scholarly work can escape the strictures of discursive regimes or are bound to remain the servant thereof. It is fair to say, however, that in Foucault's world, the desire for power and control trumps the desire for knowledge.

Foucault is a bit like Marx and Freud: his interventions have been so powerful that, in many ways, we live in a post-Foucauldian world. Yet, it is hard to conclude that this scepticism has dislodged the basic tenets of how Popper conceived of science. In fact, in his influential books, Foucault essentially does what the social historian does: assembling historical evidence in support of a theory on the relationship between language and power.

3

The above, necessarily reduced, outline illustrates how hard it is to defend the view that art is research in the conventional way that research is broadly understood. In the history and philosophy of science, the claim that art is research is by no means self-evident and, in fact, is quite startling. The reasons for this may be fairly obvious, but a brief discussion would shed some light on the characteristics of artistic output, as opposed to research output.

The transparency and refutability that characterises research can be imagined only in the most pedantic kind of art, art that we tend not to value and may even reject. Whereas research tries to use language that limits the scope of how it can be interpreted, art tends to do exactly the opposite: to suggest a variety of possible meanings. Art tends to resist meanings that can be captured in easy formulations and scholarly hypotheses; instead, it explores complexity, nuance, and ambiguity. This is closely related to a second key characteristic.

If art is a site where meaning is interrogated and complexified, this creates a relationship with the recipient that differs significantly from that which obtains in research more generally. Art establishes a different kind of contract with the reader. Whereas the physicist or the historian would attempt to communicate their findings with as much clarity as possible, the artist would, in most cases, resist such clarity

almost intuitively. Art is an invitation to meaning-making, a provocation more than it is straightforward communication. This is not simply a characteristic of art itself, but also of the way in which we have been conditioned by social convention to approach it.

Language is at the core of these differences. In other disciplines, a range of methods are employed to reduce the possible misunderstandings and ambiguities that could arise from language: the refining of common words to assume a more circumscribed meaning; the invention of new terms for new things; the design of a strictly codified or mathematical language.

As a result of contributions made by structural linguistics and semiotics, we have come to accept that a variety of languages are at the disposal of artists. These languages may range considerably in the stability of meaning associated with them. In most cases, the artist and the receiver will not attempt to reduce this complexity; instead, it is embraced as fertile ground for semantic and cultural exploration.

Perhaps the best way in which to state this is by saying that one of the most important common elements in the creative arts is the use of languages to identify, explore, and interfere with social meaning. By seeking to produce precise meaning, both the social and the physical sciences cordon themselves off from the messiness of everyday speech. The arts, on the other hand, try to reach towards and have an impact on the very domain that endangers the coherence of other sciences.

A third deviation from standard research outputs encapsulates perhaps the most important way in which art occupies a discrete and unique domain. I suspect that Dilthey was the first to fully acknowledge that the cultural object is not only *meaning* but also—and indeed, primarily—*form*. In fact, it is meaning produced through form, or what one might also call structure and internal coherence (or, in some cases, meaningful incoherence).

As any artist would know, the form of a particular artwork is not simply a received form, as is almost always the case in standard research outputs. It is a creative and critical engagement with inherited form, form *against* form. Think of Penny Siopis' "history paintings," which draw on the history of the genre while interfering with that genre in order to produce a form that uniquely combines convention and innovation.[11] W. H. Auden wrote sonnets comprising 21 lines,[12] and there are many more examples of authors deviating from the classical "rule" of 14 lines and description followed by some sort of movement to a metaphorical or metaphysical plane of meaning.

It is partly through formal means, which often entails the transgression of familiar form, that the artwork can be said to establish the conditions for its own intelligibility or create its own "rules" by which it communicates. This is related to what, in literary theory, is referred to as the fictional status of the literary text. Aristotle already grappled with the difference between historiography and tragedy writing. His answer, that the tragedy aims at verisimilitude rather than historical accuracy in order to show us the patterns of the world rather than literal truth (in other words, a different kind of truth),[13] resonates with the many ways in which literary experts and theorists of language have thought about the "as-if" world of fiction.[14]

It is almost unnecessary to point out that the performing and visual arts, too, do not produce standard assertions about the world, and do not normally claim empirical truth for any of their details. Like the author of a literary text, the artist selects, combines, organises, and transforms elements from the known world into a "text" that the reader is challenged to decipher. Art, like literature, shows a mirror to or shines a lamp on, the real world.

4

Against this background, some surprise at how we nowadays try to validate art as "research" would not be out of place. Such attempts create two possible dangers: that of reducing the multi-layeredness and multivalence of the work of art, and that of exposing artists to expectations that they cannot or, in my view, should not meet.

The more modest and most prevalent claim: that the process of making art is a research process; that artists follow research procedures in arriving at an end product, is easier to defend but creates some difficulties of its own.

The phrase "practice-led research," which seems to be the most regularly appearing concept in these matters, asks for a bit of reflection. It suggests that research is the primary activity by making it the noun, whilst indicating that it takes its cue from practice; that, in fact, it would not be possible without practice.

It is, of course, true that in planning and executing their work, artists do embark on activities that one would be happy to call research: writers filling up notebooks, composers studying scores or previous performance of a particular work, and so on. We all know, however, that such research is not necessarily systematic and that it mostly serves the sole purpose of enhancing the credibility of the creative work. Marlene van Niekerk studied the repair of fridges and farming methods in detail in writing *Triomf* and *Agaat*, respectively. But no reader of these two novels would think that the research was doing anything but ensuring a reliable factual basis for the construction of a fictional world.

The term "practice-led research" creates a number of difficulties that are hard to dismiss.

First, experience and observation tell us that no scholarly intention, no hard work, and no amount of research can ever guarantee that the work resulting from it will be deemed important, valuable, or influential. There simply is no necessary relationship between input and the quality of the output.

Second, the implicit claim in the phrase "practice-led research," that the process of making is particular to the arts as opposed to other sciences does not survive close scrutiny. Scientists, too, are in many cases led by practice. In the course of experimenting, they often make unexpected discoveries. They also are familiar with many other things that artists and everybody else know about: the apple falling on one's head, the sudden flash of insight, the serendipitous events, even the dream.

I suspect that the following applies to most scholars in most situations: if the results of their work can be presented in a coherent and falsifiable way, it ultimately does not matter in which roundabout and coincidental ways those results may have been reached. That is the domain of unlimited conjecture and freedom where, indeed, "anything goes." What matters is the outcome. It is easy to see that the same applies to creative artists as well. They may have followed many different avenues to arrive at the work in completed form, including substantial chunks of reading and research, but ultimately all of this, interesting though it may be, is peripheral to the value ascribed to their work.

It is possible to imagine, or even produce, a work based on clear research processes. A director could decide to produce Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* as farce and, in the course of doing so, study the history and technique of farce, look at Chekhov's own rather opaque statements on comedy, train the actors to perform in a suitable way, and even try to record audience responses. I once saw such a performance in London–and it was abysmal.

In some circumstances, it may be possible, even desirable, to frame a creative project as a research process. In the Chekhov example, a process familiar in both the

natural and social sciences is discernible: developing a hypothesis, mustering evidence to support it, and testing whether the result confirms or refutes the hypothesis. In such cases, there cannot be any obstacle to recording the processes in the shape of an excellent conventional research article, even though the performance itself may have had a negligible impact.

There may be a place for such controlled procedures, perhaps especially in teaching practices. But there is an abundance of evidence from artists themselves that the creative process is only ever partially deliberate; that, instead, it is more likely to be chaotic, subjective, haphazard, experiential, unpredictable—and nevertheless thoughtful as well. William Kentridge's *Six Drawing Lectures* is an example of this, and so is Jeremy Wafer's PhD writing on his own work,[15] and some of Siopis' statements on her practice as a painter. According to Siopis, the only planned element in her ink and glue paintings was to set up the conditions under which the materials could interact with themselves and the movement of her hands.[16]

Art is a response to, in principle, an unlimited variety of impulses, only some of which could be comfortably accommodated under the heading of research. Maybe the best way to approach this is to say that research activities, or activities resembling research, can be and sometimes clearly are—but never have to be—*one* of the many sources of creative energy and inspiration at the disposal of the artist.

The concept of research applied thus far by the DoE and South African universities, while clearly rooted in global understandings of research, is ultimately a bureaucratic tool. It cannot and should not be allowed to serve as a normative framework for what artists do. Interestingly, the recognition granted to creative output shows some residual doubt in the DoE as to whether artists really belong in the house of the academy as full citizens. The requirement for three peer reviews instead of two has been dropped, but recognition is still limited to two points and commissioned work (some works, musical scores for films, for example, cannot be done without receiving a commission) are excluded from recognition, while the same restriction does not apply to architects and designers.

5

Perhaps, then, the packaging of art or art-making as a form of research is to be understood as a gesture towards the recognition that artists have now gained. We sing for our supper. Nevertheless, there is good reason to ask to what extent the view of art as research is productive and sustainable.

Too strong a focus on the peculiar nature of "research" in the field of arts may blind us to other, more compelling, areas of commonality between the arts and other fields of endeavour. It is instructive to consider what the learned Ernst Cassirer says in *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften* from 1942.[17] Briefly, Cassirer argues that on important levels, there is *no fundamental difference* between the humanities and arts, on the one hand, and the natural sciences, on the other. He advances two reasons for this.

First, natural scientists, social scientists, and artists all put forward propositions about the world—but they do so in different ways. In the case of the arts, this happens in symbolic form.[18] As the same can be said about all forms of human communication, this requires some clarification. Cassirer is referring to the simple fact that the arts communicate in specific languages, or what one might also call symbolic systems, which have been established by convention over time. As we have seen, these practices differ significantly from what normally applies to conventional research in that the complexities of language (and here I mean many languages) are explored, instead of being reduced for

the sake of unambivalent communication. Cassirer's distinction between "thing perception" (*Dingwahrnemen*) and "expressive perception" (*Ausdruckswahrnehmen*), where the former is characteristic of the physical sciences and the latter of the cultural sciences and cultural objects, is particularly enlightening. For him, privileging "thing perception" is simply prejudicial because it assumes that the physical sciences have a more secure evidential basis than other human endeavours. This he disputes. The cultural sciences "take their evidence from the sphere of expressive perception—and, in the first instance, from our lived experience in a human community sharing a common system of 'cultural meanings'."[19] That sphere is obviously less concrete, less precise, and more opaque than what obtains in the physical sciences, but not for these reasons less secure. To all of this, one should add, as indicated above, that the symbolic form draws attention to itself *as form*, as an object that requires analysis and interpretation in order to release its meaning.

Second, in both the explanatory and the interpretive fields the proposition—and here I'm summarising Cassirer in terms later made familiar by Popper—is always provisional; it never is simply presented or received as truth. Even in the exact sciences, there very seldom is an immediate acceptance of whatever is put forward as a statement about the world. As in the arts, the proposition sets in motion a process of reception, evaluation, critical response, endorsement, and re-evaluation. In the case of the artist, Cassirer sees the process of reception and evaluation as a form of consolation for what he calls the tragedy of the individual artist, who almost never feels that the end product matches the ambitions with which they started. The sense of loss implied by this finds compensation in the knowledge of having produced a gift to the world that may have a significant afterlife.

As a neo-Kantian, Cassirer strongly believed in the possibility of the aesthetic experience being shared—and here he makes a quite startling claim.[20] If the continued evaluation and re-evaluation of a work of art reaches a sufficient point of convergence of judgement, the certainty reached thereby does not differ meaningfully from the certainty reached when a scientific hypothesis is generally accepted.

This probably is too optimistic a view. It does not take sufficient account of cultural diversity or of the enormous fluctuations of judgement that can occur over time due to context and taste. Reading Harold Bloom's celebration of Shakespeare as one of the inventors—together with the Bible—of our idea of the human being,[21] it might be easy to forget that there were times when Shakespeare was not considered an excellent dramatist.

What is to be gained from revisiting Cassirer?—The insight that while the physical sciences, the cultural sciences, and cultural objects make use of different forms of evidence for the claims they make, and work in different ways with language, there is, from his broader philosophical perspective, no justification for a hierarchy privileging "research" over, say, a painting or a musical composition; and that such a privileging could end up reducing rather than enhancing the richness of cultural meanings contained in the world of the arts.

6

To be sure, the new system in which artistic work is recognised and rewarded as a legitimate output for teachers at universities is to be welcomed. Yet, if this system were to encourage a situation where art is recognised only to the extent to which it is based on or led by research; or if artists were to shape (or possibly distort) their work as research merely in order to receive a subsidy for it, there would also be a loss involved. What

needs to be acknowledged and recognised above all is the value of the artwork *in its own right*, as a specific form that works in particular ways with language, conventions, and social meaning. It may even be possible to defend the view that the value of the arts resides exactly in the fact that it is *not* research.

Addressing the question of whether art is a contribution to knowledge is a theme for another paper. Many philosophers of aesthetics have indeed argued that this is the case, but always with important qualifications that tend to foreground a new apprehension of the world (or of the self in that world) instead of any straightforward "knowledge."

Artistic practice is a domain wherein the specific contexts in which knowledge operates are interrogated, as well as the effects of established or politically supported knowledge within that context. This identifies a critical and questioning role for the arts. The invitation to this conference, as well as many of the papers and performances delivered here, speak of a strong desire to challenge, rather than work within, conventional ways of doing and thinking. These can and should be explored, even though I wish to express some reservations about the direction in which the debate seems to be moving.

The following implicit or explicit claims can be extracted from a reading of the conference invitation as well as the summary of many papers and performance:

- That art is a particular or special, maybe even a unique, form of knowledge production;
- That artistic practice in Africa should, or must, or will reflect epistemologies and philosophies that are characteristic of Africa, and thus seek to liberate itself from conceptual frameworks and methods inherited from colonialism;
- In the invitation to the conference, these claims are augmented by notable statements: that the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge has its roots in Aristotle; that it corresponds to the Cartesian distinction between body and mind; that this distinction is "fundamental to much of western philosophy"; and that the distinction is inimical to more holistic notions that are "generally accepted as axiomatic in African philosophy and world views."[22]

Putting all these statements together, a bold and tantalising claim emerges: that in combining practice and theory in the making of art, artists are almost inevitably resisting western distinctions between body and mind, and associating themselves with more African philosophical notions. That would turn art into a liberating activity almost by definition. And that sounds too easy to be comforting.

Two questions arise. First, is the depiction of "western philosophy" emerging from these statements intellectually sustainable? Second, is it productive for artists in Africa to locate themselves primarily in opposition to western notions that underpinned the colonial enterprise and linger on in postcolonial situations such as ours?

Discussing these notions with any pretence at thoroughness lies outside the scope of this paper, and also beyond the scope of my expertise. Nevertheless, some critical observations and questions may be in order.

How to untangle the different terms used for different kinds of knowledge and practice in Aristotle's writings is a matter still being discussed by specialists.[23] But one thing seems clear: there is nothing in his writing on tragedy—the only artistic genre he treated systematically—to suggest that he was working with a strong distinction between theory and practice. Aristotle normatively extracted from the tragedies at his disposal a theory on tragedy in general, trying to answer questions as to the appropriate subject matter, structure, and effect of the play on the audience. The *Ars Poetica* is a

treatise on how form and function are inextricably connected in the writing and reception of tragedies.[24] Is this theory led by practice or practice led by theory? The two are so entangled as to make the question almost meaningless.

René Descartes' core proposal on the relationship between body and mind was first launched in the *Discours* of 1637,[25] and is based on his observation: I can have doubts about the existence of phenomena outside myself, but not about myself as a thinking and doubting being—at least not while I'm alive. This gives priority to mind and consciousness over matter, hence the well-known and often quoted statement: *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). However, as has been demonstrated by many, the argument cannot be deemed conclusive. Descartes does little more than use the fact that I can doubt the existence of matter to posit that mind is indeed fundamentally separate from matter. This does not address the possibility, amply confirmed by recent biological and neurological investigations, that mind is an enormously complex material system.

Two other things are worth noting. Given his radical separation of the two, Descartes never really resolved the question posed to him by Princess Elisabeth: how mind and matter interact, how the ghost gets the machine going. Secondly, despite this fundamental philosophical problem, the mind-matter distinction reverberated throughout the Enlightenment with its focus on rational enquiry and human progress. It is the supposed superiority of the rational mind, and the claim that westerners were eminently in possession of this, that features in Hegel's racism,[26] but also in many other works and particularly in "scientific" racism. Much of the critique of colonialism took its cue from the contradiction between the stated aims of the Enlightenment and the failure to apply the ideas of human freedom and equality in the territories colonised by Europe.

Whereas Descartes was most certainly very influential, his body-mind distinction can no longer be deemed fundamental to western philosophy. The distinction between theory and practice in the conference invitation obviously brings to mind another philosopher: Immanuel Kant and his distinction between *reine Vernunft* and *praktishe Vernunft*. A key component in Kant's epistemological project was to resolve the contradictions between those philosophers who saw the mind as the origin of knowledge, and the empiricists who insisted that all knowledge is derived from the sense, i.e., the body.

Philosophers generally agree that the relationship between these two forms of reason is not conclusively resolved in Kant's writings. It is worth pointing out, however, that Kant tends to give priority to practical, and not to theoretical, reason. He was sceptical of the delusions the supposedly theoretical mind—severed from an engagement with the practical world—could come up with.

7

Resistance to the racist legacy of colonialism is an obvious point of reference for any artist working in Africa. My concern is that it might also distract attention from many other forms of abuse that can no longer be deemed "colonial." This raises the question: how helpful can the view of the West as a monolithic imposition on conquered peoples be in the current fragmentation in South Africa? The little excursion to Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant above shows that some scepticism is justified towards any view that the assumed rational mind, in opposition to the more unruly body, has been predominant in western thinking. Other strands of western thinking include a focus on the immediacy of bodily experience. Think of the exquisite passages on pain in Friedrich Nietzsche and the prominent position given to locatedness in the work of some existentialist thinkers, not to mention the later contributions of Emmanuel Levinas.

The view that in African epistemology a greater unity of mind and body has generally been accepted as "axiomatic" requires further interrogation, which I am not equipped to do, but it would be surprising if a simple picture emerged from further examination. Axiomatic means unquestioningly. Even if the statement were true, then, surely, we should never identify for ourselves a position where we simply accept ancestral wisdom, whether this is European, African, or Oriental. Apart from this, adopting an "essentialist" way of thinking may lead towards a renewal of binary—and colonial—oppositions. Self-othering is a very old trap.

Despite all this, the exploration of ways of doing and thinking that differ from traditional methods is a very strong impetus in many of the contributions to this conference. Taking my cue from this and from some of the references made above, I wish to make two concluding observations.

A key element that strongly distinguishes the making of art from a scholarly endeavour is the crucial participation of the body: the musician playing an instrument, the hand of the painter—the examples are too numerous to mention, with the body movement artist perhaps occupying a prime position. Thinking about the body as it is involved in the making of art raises the possibility of conceptualising that body as a thinking body; a body with its own intelligence rooted in processes of making; a body only partially controlled by the mind and, thus, unlikely to be under the sway of any explicit research intentions. Every such body has its own history, which may be a history of suffering and repression. But art-making provides at least one important opportunity to explore the agency of bodies that may otherwise be perceived as victims. If the repressive apparatus of colonialism was above all exercised on the black body, that body eminently lends itself to becoming a site of liberation.

My second observation relates to the very particular ways in which art explores a combination of formal elements and (related) social meaning. Here, I would suggest, lies one of the reasons why a conference on art and research has attracted such interest. Art is not captive to the traditional protocols of research; it does not make its case in the way physics and sociology do. Whereas it isn't always clear what the legacy of movements like #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall has been in terms of the desire for "decolonisation," which was so strongly articulated at the time, many would find in the arts an arena for an active, even an activist, engagement with the ways in which we experience and think about our location in Africa at a particularly fraught moment, when the attempts to address the persistent legacy of a repressive past have so often degenerated into a betrayal.

8

We need recognition for the research that can and does go into art-making at times. What we do not need is for art to be collapsed into the aridity that characterises so much research, into a set of expectations that it cannot and should not meet. We need recognition for the fact that art, as a symbolic means of communication, makes as much a contribution to the world as research contributions in other fields, and does so in its own particular ways. Anything less than this is half a loaf. Works of art require engagement with their formal competence, but also with the social meanings that they present as a challenge to the reader, without reducing that complexity for the sake of the kind of transparency of meaning that is seen as merit in conventional research outputs.

Gerrit is Professor Emeritus in the Wits School of Arts; gerrit.olivier@wits.ac.za

Notes

1 Most notably in Farber, *On Making*.

2 In assessing research productivity, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, to mention but one example, looks at the number of publications in academic journals listed in Elsevier's Scopus database (6%), and the number of citations in the same database (30%).

3 Dilthey, *Introduction to the Human Sciences*.

4 Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*.

5 The key figure in developing this kind of positivist approach was the Frenchman Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893), who strongly advocated the application of scientific method in the study of art and literature.

6 "We explain through purely intellectual processes, but we understand through the cooperation of all powers of the mind activated by apprehension"; Dilthey, *Selected Works, Vol. 2: Understanding the Human World*, 147.

7 The most important of these is to be found in Dilthey, *Selected Works, Vol. 4: Hermeneutics and the Study of History*.

8 This is based on the rejection of inductive methods in favour of deductive procedures. The statement "All swans are white" can only be fully verified when all possible swans have been observed. It can, however, be falsified by the sighting of one black swan if the statement is read as a hypothesis flowing from a limited number of observations, even a single observation. Popper's views on science can be traced back to *Logik der Forschung zur Erkenntnistheorie der modernen Naturwissenschaft*, but the most comprehensive explication can be found in *Conjectures and Refutations*.

9 Feyerabend, *Against Method*.

10 Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. Vol.1: La volonté de savoir*. Later published as *History of Madness.*

11 Olivier, *Penny Siopis*, 53–67.

12 Auden, *Collected Poems of W. H. Auden*, 224-231.

13 A key statement occurs in Chapter IX of the *Poetics*: "[I]t is not the function of the poet to narrate events that have actually happened, but rather, events such as might occur and have the capability of occurring in accordance with the laws of probability and necessity." *Aristotle's Poetics*, 16.

14 The most influential of these derives from ohn R. Searle's speech-act theory first proposed in Searle, 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse'. Whereas fictional statements correlate in many ways with real-world statements, they are "as-if" statements that make no claim to verifiable truth.

15 Wafer, 'Survey'.

16 Olivier, *Penny Siopis*, 251-62.

17 Published in English in 1961 as *The Logic of the Humanities*.

18 Cassirer's work on symbolic forms appeared in three volumes as *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* and was only published in English in the 1950s.

19 Here, I have relied fairly strongly on Michael Friedman's explication in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Friedman, 'Ernst Cassirer'.

20 In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant makes the bold theoretical assertion that, whereas the aesthetic judgement relies on individual perception, it makes a universal claim as all people must, in principle, be deemed capable of sharing it.

21 Bloom, *Shakespeare*.

22 Arts Research Africa, 'Call for Contributions'.

23 For a taste of the complexities, see Parry, 'Episteme and Techne'.

24 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*.

25 Descartes, *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry, and Meteorology*.

26 An extensive treatment of these notions is to be found in Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART IN EWE VODU RELIGION

SELA KODJO ADJEI

How have miseducation and Eurocentric anthropological scholarship actively deluded Africans into perceiving their religion and arts as "inferior" and "barbarous"? Drawing from years of practice-based investigation into the art of the Anlo-Ewe Vodu religion, this paper interrogates and redefines the misleading theories of "fetishism" that have obscured the appreciation of Vodu art.

Introduction

Over the last six years, I have been researching the arts of Anlo-Ewe Vodu religion in order to attain a full grasp of its fundamental philosophies. However, the actual spiritual journey began over a decade ago. My research, my subjects, and the research topic were nothing new to me. In fact, the areas where I conducted my research were very familiar terrains because they constitute my ancestral home. Some of the sites where I conducted my field interviews and participant observations were actually just a few minutes motor ride or within a walking range from our family house in Atiteti, Ghana.

During my high school days, while negotiating shortcuts and "secret" routes through town at night, I remember that my colleagues and I would cringe in "fear" and "horror" at the mere sight of Legba or other Vodu sculptures in front of people's houses and shrines.[1] In most indigenous Anlo-Ewe societies, Vodu still actively remains the "keeper of the law and order." To make matters even more difficult, superstitions, mysterious tales, and unsavoury rumours were constantly being peddled around in school about the "ghoulish" and "dangerous" tendencies of Vodu deities (particularly Anlo-Ewe Vodu) and how the "mere sight" of some Vodu sculptures may even "zap your soul into non-existence." The fabricated tales that surround the mystical aspects of Vodu arts are so because they are literally unimaginable. Some of these "accounts" have been distorted and reproduced in publications by some western researchers as though they are concrete facts:

> Imagine a place where the dead can speak to the living through mediums, dreams, and prophesy and where malicious individuals who seek to harm have the power to kill by merely staring someone in the eye … Imagine a place where your brother can be your mortal enemy and where witches brew curses into the night, meeting undetected as owls in ominously tall baobab trees interspersed throughout most villages.[2]

Strangely enough, despite all the fear and mystery that surrounded Vodu, I mustered courage and began to develop a rare kind of appreciation and raw passion for Vodu art—a mystical connection.



Figure 1. Researcher posing with a cluster of Vodu sculptures in front of Tɔgbui Dzokpoto's Brékété Shrine Woe, Keta, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.

In retrospect, I came to a realisation that perhaps I was utterly fearless of the Vodu sculptures not because I was necessarily a "foolhardy" child but, rather, due to the fact that I merely perceived them as interesting artworks. I vividly recall going on unaccompanied trips to graveyards in Ŋɔlivimɛ and Whuti just to appreciate funerary sculptures, sometimes pleasantly lost in thought while in the process of admiring these remarkable artworks, thinking, "… this is authentic art, this is my culture, these are my people, this is where I come from, I'm a child of the Land, this is where I shall be buried when I join the ranks of the noble Ancestors, it would only be wise for me to begin my spiritual journey now…"

Indigenous knowledge acquisition and artistic research methods

Apart from desktop research, one of the responsibilities of my position is to conduct direct field observation, participate, and actively engage with the artists and practitioners of the Anlo-Ewe Vodu religion, respectively. This is where practical findings from the field are meant to complement the theories from authorities and critical

perspectives by experts in a given discipline. As a result, field studies granted me the opportunity to research and learn more about my identity, race, spirituality, religion, art, traditions, history, and the social anthropology of the Ewes in a much broader sense. A bulk of this information cannot merely be studied from books or academic journals alone; it is enshrined in Ewe societies. As an artist, as well as an Ewe scholar and curator, this opportunity placed me in a unique position to successfully conduct this research. As noted by Ananda Coomaraswamy with regard to Indian art, in 1908,

> The main difficulty so far seems to have been that Indian art has been studied so far only by archaeologists. It is not archaeologists, but artists who are the best qualified to judge of the significance of works of art considered as art, and unravel the influences apparent in them.[3]

Through the entire learning process, I also discovered that exposure to the religious aesthetics and ceremonies of the Anlo-Ewe people gives my life more meaning and value. This learning experience has complemented and significantly enhanced my academic career and professional artistic practice.

The research began through questioning—by questioning Anlo-Ewe elders from an artistic perspective. Simple questions emerged such as: what do you consider as art in Vodu shrines? What does this or that artistic expression imply in sacred Vodu spaces? What are the spiritual dimensions of Anlo-Ewe Vodu sculptures? What is the role of this or that Vodu artist? What is the significance of this body art or that scarification on Anlo-Ewe Vodu devotees? What is the notion of Anlo-Ewe Vodu religious aesthetics?

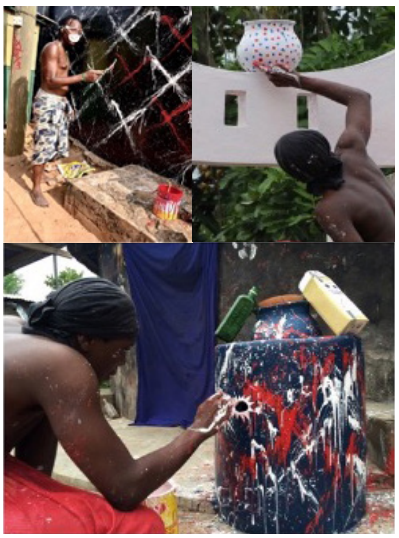


Figure 2. Researcher engaged in shrine mural/sculpture painting during experiential learning in the field. Tɔgodo, Volta Region, Ghana, 2016, photograph by the author's research assistant.

My data collection process was driven by artistic research methods. Throughout my data collection process, I didn't only engage my research associates in interviews and focus group discussions, I fully immersed myself in the creative process. Artistic research methods are slightly different from the research methods employed by social scientists. Artistic research methods require you to engage in an activity or an experience that is usually the creative process itself to gain a better understanding of the kind of art that you're researching. Practice-based learning helped me to gain more knowledge and experience for a deeper understanding of Vodu art.

Doing an ethnographic study requires the researcher to go to the field (village, market, town square, streets) or where people thrive engaging in practical fieldwork.

The participant observation I engaged began through broad descriptive observations, which later shifted to focused observation, and finally narrowed to selective observations and active participation in Vodu ceremonies, performances, rituals, and the spiritual creative process.



Figure 3. Researcher participating in the communal drinking of sacred *Aliha* at the sacred grove of Tɔgbui Adzima Shrine in Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author's research assistant.

Being an insider Anlo-Ewe artist, my ability to speak and effectively communicate with key research associates and research assistants proved to be my greatest advantage in conducting this research successfully. Being able to speak and understand Ewegbe was not necessarily the only thing that opened so many opportunities for me, which would otherwise be denied to an outsider anthropologist. My proficiency

can be attributed to a number of advantageous factors. Quite a few priests and spirit mediums were my relatives, and most of my key research associates were either acquaintances or good friends of my relatives who were generally supportive in my intellectual and spiritual journey. The principal locations where I conducted my main fieldwork (Klikor, Torgodo, Woe [Keta], Afiadenyigba, and Dagbamete) are neighbouring villages of where I hail (Atiteti). In such instances, the attitude of my research associates towards me was generally appreciable respect and great admiration for my rare and keen interest in Vodu arts. I also personally knew some of the oral historians, sage philosophers, and local researchers, such as the late Dale Massiasta, who was my father's classmate and research collaborator, introduced to me during my high school days. Massiasta was a leading sage philosopher and reliable researcher in Vodu matters.[4] Essentially, I had to unlearn "book knowledge" and became a new student in the field all over again in order to learn a way of life properly, into which I wanted to immerse myself—to "indigenise" or to learn what Africans refer to as "home sense."



Figure 4. Ngɔgbeda Sodolo Tekpe leading Mama Vena (Ablɔgame) fiasidiwo to trek in single file procession from the shrine to a sacred site to collect kaolin. The sacred site is about three kilometres from the shrine and is within the Klikor community. Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.

Evaluating the pros and cons of conducting auto-ethnographic research

In terms of methodological approach, this research is a comprehensive auto-ethnographic study that seeks to document Anlo-Ewe religious aesthetics and material culture in the broadest sense. Being auto-ethnographic, this methodology comes with its advantages and drawbacks. Some scholars have raised arguments about the validity and authenticity of auto-ethnography. A major concern among these scholars is how the background and personal beliefs of the researcher influence the findings and judgements of the research. For instance, Robin Öberg notes that,

> Auto-ethnography aims to blur the boundary through the writing process primarily. Writing the text as a story, with different narrators, that go through various elements common in storytelling, not just to build an introduction for an eventual scientific analysis, as ethnographers can often do now after the influence of postmodernism, but as the whole product itself, is part of the current tradition in auto-ethnography. It is a conscious decision, to forego values commonly associated with the scientific method, and to instead focus solely on the final text itself. This makes it very difficult to critique auto-ethnography, as auto-ethnography does not try to adhere to the same standards as regular science. It does not perturb auto-ethnography to call it unscientific, because auto-ethnography does not try to be scientific … The only validity and reliability an auto ethnographer has to follow, is in relation to credibility of the final text, and not in relation to the how the text came to be … Scientifically speaking, that makes no sense. It is not about enforcing some kind of unattainable ideal of objectivity, it is not about avoiding beautiful literary descriptions in the text, it is about the reader being able to trace the methodological choices and antecedent justifications. Otherwise anyone could write a convincing text, call it auto-ethnography, and publish it as a paper in a scientific journal.[5]

In addressing the "validity" or "scientific quality" of auto-ethnographic research, Mike Hayler and Nadia Edmond assert that,

> It raises what Gee (2005) refers to as "the frame problem" in recognising meaning as situated and opens a further area of potential debate around issues of validity and quality within educational research methodology … to summarise, our own position is that "validity" in studies which seek to authentically represent lived experience depends upon confronting the inescapable problem of representation by recognising that the link between experience and representation are inevitably problematic … Our work contributes to the "rethinking of terms such as validity, generalizability and reliability" … which Denzin and Lincoln called for in 2005. Similarly, the "quality" of research can only be understood within the reader's framework of understanding which it may in itself change or extend. Issues of validity and quality within qualitative research are necessarily subjective, inter-subjective and determined by context.[6]

Generally, in research, no matter how hard researchers strive to remain objective in their findings, they still reveal thinly-veiled personal biases because every individual has their own bias, shaped by their experience, world-view, social psychology, and personal beliefs. A critical rhetorical question might suffice here: is there really such a "thing" as "objectivity" in research? Proposing counter-hegemonic academic perspectives on the question of "objectivity" for African scholars trained in western academies and research methodologies, Marimba Ani offers a decisive solution,

> The claim to an absolute ultimate truth is a psychological necessity for the European mentality. And since we have accepted it, it is an edict that has constrained most of us who have been trained in European academies … As African scholars, it is our responsibility to create systematic theoretical formulations which will reveal the truths that enable us to liberate and utilise the energies of our people. In this view, the self-determinist, the revolutionary, and the scholar are one, having the same objective, involved in the same truth-process.[7]

Ana Alacovska and Rosalind Gill put it much more pointedly, "Like the postcolonial critic, the ex-centric scholar might be thought of as a 'party pooper' … who will upset and destabilise the taken-for-grantedness of congealed knowledge claims."[8] Building on postcolonial theory and Ani's critical perspectives,[9] it can be deduced that, in modern ethnographic and anthropological studies, one needs not to be only objective but also some appreciable amount of subjectivity is required to level the academic field which is marred by prejudice, racism, sexism, and false philosophical assumptions. This is a permissible academic practice in auto-ethnography and revisionist ethnographic work in general.

The re-emergence of divergent views about the relevance of re-examination, academic critique, argumentative discussions, and critical subjectivity in African philosophy, auto-ethnography and auto-anthropology (or modern scholarship) makes the intellectual positions of some of its noteworthy proponents very instructive. For instance, Victor Uchendu noted in his book *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* that the culture bearer,

> is emotionally involved in his culture, especially in regard to its "sensitive" zones. This fact has been advanced as a reason why he should be restricted to the role of an educated informant. But this emotional involvement is in itself relevant to our science: it guides the reader in his assessment of the writer, and methodologically, it can help us to determine the degree of objectivity (when we know how) with which social scientist in general approach sensitive topics in other areas of human behavior.[10]

Auto-ethnography has gained prominence as a methodological approach in conducting research for the "marginalised" by the "marginalised researcher"—often yielding fresh perspectives and new insights.

Reflective observation: challenges and brief analysis of the effects of how and what I did filtered through my own concepts

I realised very early on that the philosophy behind Vodu art is inextricably linked to the guarded esoteric secrets shared exclusively among the Vodu priests, spirit mediums, and some leading members of the various Vodu shrines. Sacred barriers and religious exclusivity posed a huge challenge in accessing not only important gnosis but also entering certain ritual domains to access information. In a typical ritual space like a Vodu shrine, artistic elements are required and employed in performing almost all religious rites and ceremonies. In a technical sense, the priests, the performers, and the devotees display a heightened awareness of the arts and apparently adhere to religio-aesthetic principles ordained by the deities. They also display creativity in diverse ways. I gained in-depth knowledge about the religious concepts and philosophies associated with Anlo-Ewe Vodu art and aesthetics.



Figure 5. Kli-Adzima devotees pulverising sacred kaolin (mixed with sacred water) into a fine paste while waiting for their turns to plaster the shrine walls, Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.

Presentation of findings

In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz proposes pragmatic approaches to a deep understanding of cultures in order to produce a rigorous interpretation, "thick description," and reliable documentation of cultural practices:

> In anthropology, or any social anthropology, what the practitioners do is ethnography. And it is in understanding what ethnography is, or more exactly what doing ethnography is, that a start can be made toward grasping what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge. This, it must immediately be said, is not a matter of methods. From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description."[11]

In modern ethnographic methodologies, various researchers have advanced and developed Geertz's approach to "thick description" by employing other effective means of documentation, rigorous analysis, presentation, and communicating findings through photography, tables, visual inquiry, etc. This approach aims at broadening the understanding of researchers about the powerful roles and infinite possible uses of visuals in ethnographic research. Visual data breaks down complex ideas, theories, and concepts into smaller units to support generalisations. It breaks down field data more easily into readily discernible units, which makes information-processing simple and comprehensive. Images leave visual imprints in the long-term memory of the human brain. Visual aids serve as *aide-mémoires* in storing, processing, retrieving, and recollecting information for a better understanding of any issue being discussed. What follows is a photographic presentation of the creative and spiritual process

of creating the shrine murals during the Kli-Adzima Spiritual Renewal Festival: a creative process deeply rooted in generations of modernist artistic practices.

The kaolin (clay) is mixed with holy water to form a sticky paste used in plastering the wall. The next stage of the creative process is exclusive to a single artist (known as the Xanukplɔ) for each of the satellite Kli-Adzima Shrines. The Xanukplɔ engages her creative faculties by employing dripping, splattering, soak-staining, and splashing techniques to grace the plastered shrine walls. Prayers, chants and other supplications are made during the creative process of plastering the shrine walls. The devotees engage in meditative prayers and make their final supplications on the finished masterpiece mural before leaving the shrine. This ritual performance and creative process are strictly limited to the women devoted to Kli-Adizma and Mama Vena.



Figure 6. Kli-Adzima devotees in the process of "*bailli*" (plastering the shrine walls with sacred kaolin), Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.



Figure 7. Ablɔgame Xanukplɔ engaged in the dripping, splashing, and sprinkling process of making abstract expressions on the plastered shrine wall, Klikor, Volta Region 2016, photograph by the author.

Apart from creating these impressive murals, women render many other acts of service in honour of the deities. Women are generally in charge of cooking, cleaning, sweeping, running other domestic errands, as well as ensuring hygienic and sanitary conditions within the confines and environs of the shrine.[12] Some of these modern art schools date back several centuries. Hence, the fact that these art schools have been passed down from generation to generation through indigenous pedagogies does not necessarily constrain all their essential aspects within the confines of "traditional art." African religious aesthetics is mostly employed in the ritual context or sacred space. It is also deeply grounded in the moral and the sacred. In his PhD studies on Environmental Aesthetics, Stephen Kofi Avenorgbo makes the observation that,

> In Ghanaian indigenous or cultural context, aesthetic principles are mostly related to moral and religious values, and there is usually strong emphasis on the formal aesthetic aspects of the objects (including the natural environment) and the moral and religious ideas they express.[13]

African aesthetics emphasise the tenet that different cultures have unique aesthetic values in different places in the world. African art is not necessarily reduced to "imitationalism," "art for art's sake," or merely copying what is perceived in nature or our surroundings. Kojo Fosu, Francesco Ippolito, and Jens Bertelsen also present their perspective on pre-colonial indigenous Ghanaian aesthetics,

> The creative works produced by Ghanaian traditional artists were not controlled by strict duplication of the exactness of the subject. Rather it was the idea embodied in the subject perceived, which determined the visual meaning and function of the works. Thus, a piece of art work, expressed in the abstract or in the realistic with polished or rough finish and embellished in simple or intricate decorative designs, was appraised on the basis of the communicative symbolism unified within its physical type-form. Both the functional and the esthetical values of the art were critical to its appreciation. This was the convention for the evaluation of Ghanaian classical art traditions before colonialism.[14]

Primarily, modern art is created through an array of subliminal creative processes, operating below the level of consciousness. It evokes in us primal instincts, deep

emotions, or leads us to perceive things in the spiritual world vividly that we otherwise cannot perceive in the physical world, without the impressions or expressions of a modern artist. Similarly, appreciating modern art is a highly intellectual and spiritualised activity, which arrests the human soul, engages our psyche, or evokes our extra-sensory organs to experience the divine and other profound spiritual dimensions. Other experiences may manifest in the form of ephemeral shock, grief, ecstasy, pain, love, anger, aggression, liberation, security, lust, passion, sexual arousal, or even a mystical union with the artwork itself. In the contemplative process of being engaged in a full aesthetic experience, Vodu devotees say prayers and make spiritual supplications to the deities for their divine favour, blessings, good health, prosperity, security, long life, and generally as a way to pay homage and respect. Apart from chants, mantras, and esoteric rituals, Vodu devotees use aesthetic meditation as a route to enter the vortex of Vodu psychic energy: to experience the sublime, the sacred, or forge a mystical union with the divine. Early European writers on African art mainly focused on the functional aspects merely to obscure the powerful essence and rich aesthetic qualities embedded in African creative expressions. Knowledge systems, spiritual dimensions, and deeper philosophical aspects of African art were lost to false assumptions and misrepresentation on the part of Europeans. Sónia Silva captures this phenomenon by underscoring recent attempts of western museums and galleries to "undo" the notion of the "fetish" by reconsidering renewed curatorial approaches in labelling and presenting African art.[15] Through this approach, African art has garnered a powerfully refreshing aura with long-overdue importance and the dignity that has been denied by westerners. African art can no more be classed as "inferior objects" or "primitive fetishes." In Silva's own words,



Figure 8. Vodu devotee in a contemplative pose making her final supplications on the finished "*bailli*" masterpiece mural, Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.



Figure 9. A finished modernist "*bailli*" mural on Kli-Adzima Shrine wall. The spontaneous splashing, soak-staining, dripping, and sprinkling of *edza* (a millet-based solution) produces interesting accidental effects and highly sophisticated artistic results. Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.

> Curators never researched in any depth the existing connections between materiality and transcendence in African religious life, as one might perhaps expect in an anthropology museum. Instead, they chose to undo the concept of the fetish by displacing the African religious objects to the European domain of modernist art. Mounted on pedestals and bathed in light, the African religious objects ascended to the realm of universal art. These objects were no longer "primitive fetishes"; they were cult objects surrounded by an aura of religious and aesthetic spirituality.[16]

In recent times, urban Ghanaian modern artists re-emphasise Ghana's culture through their creative works. First of all, there are those who have successfully repositioned Ghana's own cultural symbols as successful artistic tools, explored these, and given them personal and new modernist twists in diverse styles. Some major, early generation "formally trained" Ghanaian modern artists include Ablade Glover, El Anatsui, Grace Atta, Kofi Antubam, Kwami, among others. These artists and several others recreated Ghana's entire culture by appropriating old forms and reinventing them into refreshing cultural expressions. They are engaged in constant communion with both the past and the

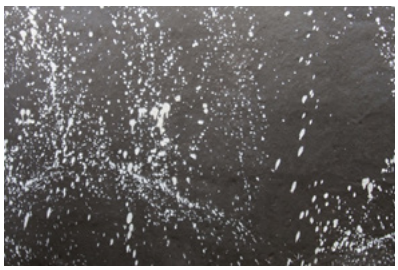


Figure 10. Close-up shot of "*bailli*" mural on Mama Vena Shrine wall, Ablɔgame, Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.

present environment. According to Wiz Kudowor, one of the leading Ghanaian modernists of our times,

> I am continually redefining my perspectives on life in general, my personal experiences in particular and my interaction with various elements of my environment … I explore elements of my cultural background using visual language inspired by African symbolic imagery, and mythology dating back to Egypt. I sometimes dwell on some of the inherent aesthetics of my immediate environment and pipe my very personal and intimate experiences into rectangles, squares, circles and colours on canvas.[17]

Schooled through a Europeanised art curriculum at the then Kumasi College of Art (now KNUST), Anatsui also had this to say about his own Sankofa paradigm shift,

> Sankofa syndrome was a reaction to a conscious and forcible attempt to denigrate a people's culture and replace it with an extraneous one … I had taken the habit of working with adinkra symbols, and the funerary cloth and symbols were intriguing … I studied them for about five years, right from when I left [Kumasi]. I set out to practice engraving the symbols that they print on the cloth, engraving them on trays used in the market to display tomatoes fish—anything.
>
> I would go there with chalk and spend the day drawing shapes, at times different forms from the regular round ones they normally produce … I did this for about four to five years and got conversant with the forms and their structures. I tried my own variations of them and begun to create my own signs after.[18]

Like Kudowor, Anatsui, and other prominent precursors, several African artists are going through the Sankofa phase to realise their own personal *Natural Synthesis*. They are digging into the past archives—the esoteric vaults. They are drinking from the "well of life."

Indeed, as a professional artist myself, I'm still undergoing this spiritual phase, where I apparently no longer make any conscious effort to integrate Anlo-Ewe symbols and sacred Vodu aesthetics in my art exhibitions. It simply emerges in my creative expressions. I have become one with the inner creative spirits. As one of the shrine artists explained to me in an informal interview, "You must have been very lucky to be among the 'chosen few'. If the 'deities themselves' have 'chosen you' as a vehicle to manifest their creative power, your creative expressions will gradually assume a 'potent' spiritual aura'."

Indeed, ever since I began to experience this "spiritual paradigm shift" as an artist, I most often feel the urge of the creative spirit flowing through the inner depths of my very soul. This enlightening research has broadened my creative vision and exposed me to an endless supply of creative essence and spiritual expressions, into which I could tap and explore, and create my own unique aesthetic values in future art exhibitions.



Figure 11. Researcher posing near a variation of Modernist soak-stained mural on the mud walls of Tɔgbui Adzima Shrine in Torgodo, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author's research assistant.



Figure 12. Note the Vodu mural by Noble Kunyegbe as a young child poses in front of Tɔgbui Adzima Shrine wall, Klikor, Volta Region, 2016, photograph by the author.



Figure 13. A group of German academics appreciating *Shaka's Military Reforms*, as part of my exhibition in Accra, 2017, photograph by the author/artist.



Figure 14. Incorporating symbols and aspects of modernist Vodu body art into the installation performance for my exhibition *Purple Harmattan*, which opened at Alliance Française, Accra, 2017. The performer being decorated is Ghanaian choreographer, Sena Atsugah, photograph by Amenyo Awoonor.

Concluding remarks

Generally, some key issues I personally observed have to do with the fact that one of the primary goals of ethnographic fieldwork and experiential learning in artistic research is to learn from one's mistakes, uncover new information, acquire knowledge, develop creative skills and harness research skills (to hone my observation skills, information gathering ability, and analytical thinking in relation to future artistic research). I certainly think that experiential learning is a very effective way to learn because individuals learn best from experiences. It also instils confidence in the learner to learn more about what they are researching. This study has greatly expanded my personal philosophies on art, aesthetics, and spirituality. Spending extended periods in the Volta Region, meeting religious leaders, priests and spirit mediums, and observing Vodu devotees and performers was a great learning experience for me. It is my hope that this study will inform future researchers on the fundamentals of artistic research methods and practical approaches to engage research associates, observe and participate in the field activities when conducting similar studies.

Sela is a multidisciplinary artist and lecturer in the Multimedia Department at the National Film and TV Institute, Cantonments, Ghana; selaadjei@gmail.com

Notes

1 Especially those brought up as Christians in Accra and other cities: those who did not grow up in the villages or get the opportunity to live and share the spiritual experiences of village life.

2 Dietrich, 'Spirit Messengers, Divine Encounters', 6.

3 Quoted in Mahn, *British Women's Travel to Greece, 1840–1914*, 45.

4 Dale Massiasta, known in private life as Samson Kwaku Azameti, was the founder of the now-defunct Blakhud Research Center at Klikor, of which my father, Dr Mawuli Adjei, was a co-director.

5 Öberg, 'Autoethnography Is Nonsense'.

6 Hayler and Edmond, 'Telling Tales on Either Side of the Teacher', 4.

7 Ani, *Yurugu*, 23

8 Alacovska and Gill, 'De-Westernizing Creative Labour Studies', 197.

9 Ani, *Yurugu*.

10 Uchendu, T*he Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 10.

11 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5-6.

12 Men also perform selected domestic roles in the shrines.

13 Avenorgbo, 'Aesthetic Impact of Ghanaian Socio-Cultural Practices on the Environment and Its Protection in Ghana', 94.

14 Fosu, Ippolito, and Bertelsen, *Transition*, 84; sic.

15 Silva, 'Art and Fetish in the Anthropology Museum', 85.

16 Silva, 'Art and Fetish in the Anthropology Museum', 82.

17 Kudowor, 'Some Trends in Contemporary Ghanaian Painting', 1.

18 Quoted in Vogel, *El Anatsui*, 26–27.

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THE NORWEGIAN ARTISTIC RESEARCH SCHOOL: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

GEIR STRØM

How has the structure and content of the new Norwegian Artistic Research School built on the two-decades-long experience of artistic research in Norwegian universities and university colleges?

In 2018, the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, also known as NARP, was merged into Diku—the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education. Diku is an agency under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and manages several national and international incentive schemes to promote quality in universities, development and innovation in education, and to encourage international cooperation and digital learning methods. Artistic Research is one of many programmes within Diku.

In Norway, artistic research has enjoyed equal status as other forms of research since 1995 when it was written into the law and other regulations; it was taken into the Norwegian Act relating to Universities in 1995. Artistic research has thus been a statutory component of higher art education in the 25 years since then. The Ministry of Education and Research established the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme in 2003 as a Fellowship Programme equivalent to a PhD. The programme secures research training at the same competence level as that of a PhD, the core of which is artistic practice. The programme gathers research fellows from 11 institutions within a wide range of subjects and is, thus, interdisciplinary. The research fellows receive development opportunities beyond what the individual institution can provide through the activities and the network facilitated by NARP. The programme functions as a platform and as a national contact point for small academic units at many different institutions.

After 15 years, in 2018, the Ministry of Education and Research established a new PhD in Artistic Research, and the first institutional PhD programmes were established. The NARP Fellowship programme will continue as a National Artistic Research School, run by Diku, and with the same aims and content as the Fellowship programme. The PhD is a three-year project with a total of 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). The mandatory components comprise forums and seminars totalling 20 credits. Each institution is responsible for the planning and approval of the project-specific aspect, worth ten credits. The PhD project shall have a sound basis in artistic practice—artistic work is the core and the vehicle for the research carried out. An artistic result shall be submitted for assessment together with material that communicates the reflection involved in the work. The reflective material should communicate:

- the process (artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and professional environments, etc.);
- the research fellow's personal artistic position or work in relation to the chosen subject area;
- and how the project contributes to the professional development of the subject area.

It is up to the research fellows themselves to select the medium and form in which to submit the reflection material. The research school comprises five mandatory seminars:

1. *Introduction*—introduction to the field of artistic research: history, status, methods.
2. *Unfolding and articulation*—introduction to different formats for documenting artistic research and reflection.
3. *Ethics and artistic practice*—introduction to relevant research ethics, art ethics, and copyright, gender inequality, power abuse.
4. *Exchange and development*—introduction to the terms "exposition," "reception," "reflection" and "relation," group work on the projects' potential for contributing to the field.
5. *Concluding seminar*—in which the fellows present the artistic development in their

projects and discuss which forms of dissemination will be most appropriate for their projects.

NARP organises two forums or conferences each year. Presence at five forums is also mandatory for the research fellows, and they must present their work at three of these.

First Year research fellows should introduce their projects. The main goal for the presentation should be to give the audience insight to the artistic ideas for the project and the processes planned: the placement of the artistic work in relation to the fellow's specific field, nationally and internationally, and how the project will contribute to the development of this field.

Second Year research fellows should articulate and reflect on methods and work processes. The research fellows should introduce their thoughts on something that, at that moment, is perceived as a particular challenge within the project. They should also use this opportunity to promote critical dialogue within the audience and to discuss ethical concerns.

Third Year research fellows should reflect upon the nearly finished project. Relevant issues for the project presentations could be: How do you recognise, describe, and note your thoughts and reflection during the last phase and until a finished artistic result? In what way has the project developed and/or changed during the fellowship period? What have been the important choices and turning points?

Presentations (60 min.): Presentation time (max. 25 min.) Feedback/discussion (max. 30 min.)

We run these forums with many parallel sessions over two days. Normally, we have about 150 participants, including fellows, supervisors, and institutional representatives.

The day before the artistic research spring forum, we gather supervisors to a separate meeting for information, discussions in groups, and exchange of experience. There are different themes each year. We will try to run a cycle of three years with different themes, and we use the supervisors to moderate when the research fellows present their work at the forum.

All institutions with PhD programmes have introduced a midterm evaluation of the projects. By the midterm evaluation, all seminars in the research school should preferably be done. The last part of the three years is to prepare to submit the material for the final assessment. The assessment takes place after the three-year paid project period.

At this moment, we have 96 research fellows active in the programme at different stages. Since the beginning, 193 fellows have begun a PhD, and 87 have completed the degree.

From 2012, NARP has supported the research project through its project programme:

- All accredited Norwegian institutions of higher education can apply for project funding
- We typically receive 15–20 applications each year
- Three to five new projects are financed each year
- Resources for research fellow positions are available and may be included in the project application
- Financing of three to four research fellows is available each year. The other research fellows are financed directly by the institutions

As of 2019, we have funded 38 projects with a total of €9 million.

Dissemination has always been central to the Norwegian programme, and we accept different formats. Our forums are also part of that but very limited to time and place. We want to reach further and to document research in open access journals. Together with Stockholm University of the Arts (Uniarts), NARP has established a Nordic journal for artistic research. Titled *VIS*, the journal publishes two issues per year and is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal. The name *VIS* has the same meaning in the Swedish and Norwegian languages. It means both "show" and "wise," but it also refers to the word "process" and "method." In Latin, "*vis*" means power or force. The Latin root words "*vis*" and "*vid*" both mean "see." They appear in several commonly used words, including "visible" and "evidence."

NARP wants to strengthen Nordic and international cooperation. The Summer Academy for Artistic Research (SAAR) has been a Nordic network cooperation since 2014. The aim of SAAR is to gather research fellows from different institutions and disciplines to discuss their research projects in depth through different forms of supervision and intensive conversation. Eighteen research fellows and nine supervisors stay together for eight days, Sunday until Sunday in August every year.

NARP has been a member of SAAR since its establishment and is also a portal partner in the Research Catalogue cooperation. We use the Research Catalogue to show ongoing projects in the research school and the project programme—it is part of our information policy.

Our research fellows are active artists, and we use Facebook to show how they contribute to the local and national art environment. We use the social media platform to show more day-to-day activities in relation to our programme. Fellows typically share their own Facebook posts in our group.

Geir is Policy Director of the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme and is Vice President/Treasurer of the Society for Artistic Research; geir.strom@diku.no

PANEL DISCUSSION

IN COLLABORATION WITH MADEYOULOOK

What is the potential of creative practice to enable new modes and strategies of research?

This roundtable discussion served as an open sharing session where a selection of young practitioners could reflect on themes such as claiming knowledge in unknowable spaces, claiming knowledge outside the epistemic bounds of the academy, and praxis as a research feedback loop.

The panellists were Nare Mokgotho, Molemo Moiloa, and Thulile Gamedze.

Molemo Moiloa [MM]: Nare and myself started working together about ten years ago, while students at Wits University, as a response to the nature of our education and the academy. Together we've been working around issues of knowledge production from the position of what it means to drive and pull knowledge from everyday black life. In many ways, the discussion today is an attempt to look at some of the questions and thematics we have experienced from our own practice. The idea is to bring together a couple of peers whose work we're interested in, who we think are connecting to the work we've been doing. Importantly, in situating this panel discussion within this conference, the practitioners we have brought together are primarily people who are working through creative practice, who are really interested in research as content, but also as form. So, these are the kinds of creative practitioners who are working with research as part of their work. We're interested in the ways in which the borders between creative practice and research begin to collapse. So, what we're trying to discuss today are some of the methodologies that emerge out of this collapse, particularly the sort aimed towards ideas of knowledge production. There are three particular strategies that we've selected to discuss today and Nare will introduce them.

Nare Mokgotho [NM]: Cool. So, our first strategy is working outside the academy, and here we're not just speaking about claiming knowledges outside the epistemic bounds of the university, but also about knowledges outside of the disciplinary revisions sometimes imposed by specialisation in the university. Here we're looking at experiences that were previously or historically excluded by the university; that were seen as possibly inconsequential, from everyday life, like orality. What is also very important for us is black subjectivities and the everydayness of that phenomenon.

Then, the second thing we want to discuss is practice as feedback and how artistic practice and the sort of discursive programming that happens afterwards (such as talks and workshops) can begin to collapse into one another. For this, we've invited black students to speak. So, in exhibiting work and speaking about work, you're opening up dialogue that comes back into the production, and you can have a kind of cyclical relationship between research and artistic production.

The third thing we want to discuss is something that's a bit more speculative, and we've termed this a "claiming of knowledges in unknowable spaces." Here, again, these are experiences that are very difficult to grasp: they seem a bit more intangible. So, Molemo and I will be speaking a bit more about speculative approaches, and our ways of trying to capture those experiences.

MM: So, by way of introduction to who we are, I've briefly introduced MADEYOULOOK —Nare and myself. The other person joining us is Thuli Gamedze, who is an artist and writer, and whose work we've been particularly interested in as a combination of writing and a kind of artistic practice, which prompts thinking through these two quite different modes of knowledge production. We're also interested in some of her more discursive and pedagogical engagements, and how these speak to our work.

The last thing to say before we get right into it is that we intend for this panel to be conversational: none of us will be presenting papers; the idea is to open up ideas. We've also invited Kundai Moyo, Sihle Motsa, and a few other people whose practices we are also interested in, and we're really open to a "sharing of practice" sort of experience, rather than a "papers and questions" sort of process. And, of course, you're welcome to ask questions. We're going to hand over to Thuli to start us off.

Thulile Gamedze [TG]: Hi everyone, my name is Thulile Gamedze, and I'm a kind of "in-betweener"—that's how I describe my practice. I started off by studying art and kind of wanted to become an artist. Then, in 2015, I was in Cape Town after studying at UCT [the University of Cape Town], and #RhodesMustFall happened, and this confused me into being less of an artist and more of an in-betweener, I suppose. So, my engagement started with writing from the experience of #RhodesMustFall. We had a writing committee, and I guess we started as an art critical movement, or something along those lines, because our practice took on a kind of embodied criticism of the imagery surrounding us. However, our practice was completely different from western art criticism—it was a criticism of consequence, and it was a criticism that made it necessary for certain kinds of action and certain kinds of education to take place. So, for me, that's where my practice starts.

A lot of my work has been as a regular art writer or critic (or something like that), and I have attempted to invite a kind of embodiment through art because #RhodesMustFall felt like a time when people felt entitled to be the ones reading images—which is not what we generally feel in the art world. Since then, I've been working between "arting" and writing and teaching. I guess my kind of little job in this situation was to write and think about what knowledge production looks like in relation to a response to the institution. In particular, I was thinking about this quote I saw in a YouTube interview with Nawal El Saadawi where she says, "You need to be aware, number one, because splitting makes us ignorant." She's talking about colonial education: "Education is based on splitting reality, you know, in dividing your head. Put here religion, and here gender, and here medicine, and here history. That's why we end by knowing nothing. But creativity is to reunite and to link."

For me, that's the kind of the approach that I try to take to whatever space I'm in—how do we find ways to bring our *entire* selves into the space and into spaces like the university? Our entire selves can, for example, come through as acting illegally or burning paintings. These can be what embodied research might look like, but there are also many different kinds of ways to be ourselves, I suppose. Any intervention that brings more of yourself than what you're supposed to "be" in the university is a useful option, I think.

So, one thing I've done, or been part of, is a collaboration with my brother [Asher Gamedze]. We go as "gamEdze and gamedZe," and we write together, and we talk. One thing we did was that we got invited to this UJ [University of Johannesburg] conference, a creative conference, which they have every year. It's a very traditional conference set-up, on a stage, and it's quite an intimidating space: the lights are in your eyes while you're presenting, and if you're in the audience, you're in the dark. We were trying to think about the ways that educational spaces are curated to indicate authority and inferiority, and what's lost in the in-between, when stuff is curated out or "split" out of you. So, it was by no means a huge intervention, but we asked for an extra space at the conference, and they gave us the pit underneath the stage. We called it the "School of the Undercommons," as a kind of "Hi" to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, and everyone else. And we used that space while the conference was going on, as kind of "underspace" of the conference: a space for people to draw and talk and invent in many ways, or express opinions, or incomplete ideas that feel less easy to say, you know, with a mic in your face or with someone holding up the sign that says "2 MINUTES LEFT." In a way, it became this alternative, concurrent space that was happening at the same time as the conference. For me, it's like there are many different kinds of ways to respond to the university. It's not made with good intent, so we need to see what we can use it for, and also what we *can't* use it for. I think in

spaces like this you sometimes don't want to talk about what we can't use the university for…

MM: So we asked Thuli to talk specifically about the idea of the production of knowledge outside of the university space because, I think, so often, conversations around art and research do end up very specific to these kinds of spaces and, of course, that brings up a whole lot of questions, which I think you've already raised. Part of why we're also interested in this is because it's part of the tradition of the work we've been doing over the last ten years; but it's also because we've been trying to think about what Nare introduced earlier: what we've been calling "unknowability." In many ways, I think it feels very well aligned with what Thuli's introduced as "unsplitting": the question of when we choose not to split these separate knowledges. When we choose to try to bring our whole selves, when we choose to enter into the space of incomplete ideas, where do we end up? It's not really where we are trained to end up. It's not really where we're used to being, and where we're comfortable. A lot of what our work has sought to achieve is seeking new knowledge forms, new ways of claiming knowledge out of everyday black life and often trying to unpack everyday practices, to reimagine ideas that otherwise aren't immediately available and obvious. What we've found is that this is quite a difficult way to work. Trying to find something that doesn't already exist is quite a difficult approach, and so we've referred to this as "looking for knowledge in the unknowable."

An example of this is a project that we did a few years ago called *Corner Loving*. "Corner loving" is a name that we gave to a practice where couples meet on the corners of public streets. It's something that both of us knew well [laughter], and we had a hunch that it meant something. For four years it kept coming up as something, an idea that means something, which we needed to go back to. But we were working on other projects, other things that kept our energy. We both work full-time, so we'd practise after hours, but there was this kind of hunch that there's something there. Part of the reason we struggled for four years was that, firstly, we didn't really understand why we were interested in this thing and, secondly, we weren't really equipped as Fine Arts-trained students to research and seek within everyday public life—or within kind of a historical sense—what this practice might mean. I also think we struggled because, in some ways, the idea that couples meet on the corner, and that you can call this thing "love," felt a little bit impossible; particularly because of the kinds of imagery of black sexuality that we're used to around the way people use corners and what corners mean, specifically in townships and the inner city where we both grew up. So, this knowledge becomes something that we're partly struggling to obtain because the kinds of popular imagery we've received don't enable access to this unknowable thing.

Over the four years of exploring multiple forms of visual practice, but also through other kinds of discursive practice, we were able to, kind of, piece together the project. Eventually, what emerged was a project that attempts to explore ideas of black love, and black love in a kind of ordinary, everyday, working-class life, and to try to articulate this in various forms. We've written a lot about the project already, and it's available on our website, so I won't go into a lot of detail, but I think the primary point of telling you about this is to lead Nare into discussing the feedback loop, which is one of the ways that we had available to approach this unknowable subject. One of the things that research enables, in this kind of practice, is to go back into the archive, to seek information not only there, but also in existing fictional texts, and then to commission new fictional texts, and to work with architects to develop architectural

plans of those spaces. Then we hosted a lecture series called "The Tenderness Lecture Series," where we tried to unpack some of these ideas, and then, further along, to develop a zip folder for the journal, *Ellipses*, and finally, to write a book chapter. So, what you see here is a kind of searching for a subject that feels quite difficult to access, but we were able to approach it through multiple forms.

NM: Yes, I think one of the ideas that resonates with me from your discussion, Thuli, is this idea of "splitting" and the idea of seeking wholeness; like bringing your whole self to the university space because there's this division of your cognitive self from your social self, from care, from affect—all these different dimensions of you that need to be brought back together. I was just thinking about how the seeking of "usness," and this "unsplitting" enables a kind of ease because I think what happens with this very hunch-based way of working, which we usually follow, is that it becomes quite messy when trying to capture something, whereas just specialising in one thing gives you the ability to actually just focus more easily. It's sometimes a good strategy.

That aside, let me continue from what Molemo was saying about the different elements and aspects of the *Corner Loving* exhibition: we had these large-scale drawings of corners and texts from archives, and then we had this lecture series as part of the exhibition, as a way of capturing the phenomenon from different perspectives. One of the other things that we do as MADEYOULOOK—and this has been a working strategy for us over the past decade—is always to have a process of reflection, but also of reiteration. One of the things we constantly do after a project is to reiterate it in other ways. For instance, as part of this project, we've gone on to publish a chapter in a book on friendship and love in South Africa. There, of course we got feedback on some of our ideas through peer review, which then fed back into the next reiteration of our work. So, for the past six years, it hasn't just been an exhibition, it's been multiple other things like the journal article for *Ellipses* that Molemo mentioned. This too received particular feedback, which then went into other explorations of "corner loving," and now we have an idea to explore black love in the form of a children's book. So, for us, all these research and production methods always seem to collapse into each other, then come back into production, and then production goes back into research. In some ways, it's also a resistance to, kind of, finalising something. We've seen that there's often quite a "dis-ease" and a disquiet around reaching a final definition: a final statement of the things we are trying to… "capture" is not the right word, but rather trying to "grasp and produce."

MM: So, to reiterate. We have these three areas that we're interested in: one is producing knowledge outside of the university space; one is the idea of the unknowable and seeking knowledge in unknowable spaces; and the last is the idea of the feedback loop, which becomes, as Nare says, a kind of open-ended space of research and then making, and research and then making, which becomes possible in this way of working. One of the things that came up in some of our discussions with you, Thuli, which I think kind of arches over all three of these strategies, is the idea of "undisciplinedness." Could you maybe speak about that?

TG: I guess for a while I thought it was pretty cool to be "de-specialised," to just do whatever. But I also teach, and I'm doing art history now as a sessional lecturer. So, although I knew that I had some sort of discomfort with the idea of specialisation, I've been trying to figure out what that thing is exactly. When we were talking the other day, I was trying to make the point that people and all living things are specialised, in

terms of having particular sets of knowledge that are useful to everyone else. You go to this person because you need to know this thing: that's a useful thing, and that's a social thing. It's a fact that people know different things, and maybe a lot about one thing. I couldn't, kind of, locate my discomfort in the idea of someone being good at knowing something. But that quote from El Saadawi helped me figure out my discomfort—it's not that knowledges are being separated from one another, but rather, that the body must become specialised in order to access knowledge properly. It's about this thing of splitting. If I'm speaking in a conference, I need to kind of sit in a certain way, I need to use certain kinds of words, I need to suspend whatever might be going on in my social or my family life and the conversations that I have with people. I must follow some sort of professional "trajectory" but, on a deeper level than that, I'm specialised according to a kind of violence. In the university, I'm specialised according to being quiet about things that I see happening and the institutional culture that might erase me, or somebody I know. I'm specialised through the way that I'm supposed to *not* respond to images. I'm supposed to *not* respond to violence, and I'm supposed to *not* respond when I see violence happening. So, it's not that I'm specialised according to what I know, it's that I'm specialised as this colonial subject under capitalism. This is because, whenever I use my knowledge, I must also reproduce the pressure from other people to become specialised in that way, and so the way that my knowledge enters into the world is through these really shitty structures. I suppose it's kind of about what it means to learn content that's going to be useful to students or to friends, but for that content not come with a structure that means, when I learn art history, I'm not myself. It means that I have to ignore the violence in the room, and my only way to access knowledge is through being specialised, which means through being oppressed, and oppressing other people. So, for me, specialisation is not about the content but about how we must take on structures and their violence.

NM: What I find very interesting about your practice is this idea of trying to reunify or make whole, in the exact same place where you have been subject to this process of splitting. Could you speak to that as a kind of strategy of importance, of locating this strategy within the institution as opposed to against or outside?

MM: I also want to add that I think Nare was commenting on the disquiet of finalisation for practitioners. What our three strategies enable is the question of what it means to practice at this moment and in this time, as people who are committed—sincerely— to a new form of political knowledge production, but have to work with the kinds of really problematic methodologies we have at our disposal. To seek new ones and to never really feel entirely comfortable in completely defining those—that's what's really interesting about your point of being "undisciplined" or "unspecialised." I really think it speaks to this kind of tension that many of us are working in, which is very particular to what it means to work through this kind of making and research process, but also to work through that process in this political moment in time, as the kinds of people we are. Do you want to respond?

TG: I'm not quite sure what the importance is of the university itself. I don't know if I believe in the university, but there are certainly people at the university; people will go wherever has potential. In terms of thinking through my practice, though, it's not quite academic because most of my work is a kind of art writing and takes place in the online space. But, in all of those spaces, the important thing for me is to define what the parameters are. We're dealing with the same parameters all the time, but how do

they appear in each space? What is the university classroom space? How can we acknowledge it? Where do we see the violence? Where do we see the potential for something? I guess that the emphasis is always on what people are doing in that space, and how we can together identify the way and the style and the texture of the coloniality in that space. It always tends more to do with us—us being split and trying to do something else—as opposed to questioning what the space is. We must look at the space.

MM: Sihle, are you keen to say something?

Sihle Motsa [SM]: Yes, I'm struck by the third strategy of knowing the unknown. Something struck me when you said that "the body must become specialised in order to access knowledge properly." What does "properly" mean within this context? Does it mean that there's a particular way—a right way—or does it mean accessing knowledge in a meaningful or a beneficial way? It's also very much linked to the idea of propriety: a particular set of rules and expectations within the institution that dictate what and how knowledge is accessed, how it's produced.

Audience Member: I'm interested in your description of the university as kind of a singular thing. You say "the university" as if it's one monumental thing, and I wonder if you can push that idea a bit further, not just to talk about "the academy" or "the university," because making art so often happens within the structures of certain constructs, sometimes its commodification—sometimes you have to make art that sells—and sometimes it's because of a gallery that you work with. Sometimes it's the academy; sometimes you need to work outside of the academy to find a certain amount of freedom, but within the academy, there are also a certain amount of resources that you need in order to make art. Perhaps you have a suggestion for us; if one wants to work outside of the constriction of "the university," where do you go? Where is your next stop and where do you make from, for whom do you make, and how do you make it sustainable?

NM: One of the things that Thuli touched on is the idea of the "in-betweener," and then she went on to speak about the idea of being disciplined. And I think with all three practices, there is definitely a relationship to "the academy" or "the university," and moving in and out of it. For instance, one of the strategies that Black Studio does is they have these public presentations within universities, using that feedback loop, and then, in the communities in which they work, like Umlazi and Thohoyandou, they will then present the same work. This yields very different kinds of results and conversations, so there's always a back-and-forth that happens, particularly when you work in a way that is research-led. So, I don't think it was necessarily about just drawing a dichotomy between "the academy" and the everyday, necessarily.

Same Audience Member: What I'm trying to push is the idea that, rather than thinking of yourself as sometimes in the academy, sometimes out of the academy, how about thinking of yourself as entirely in the academy and transforming it by insisting on change? Artistic research, I think, offers a lot of opportunities to do exactly that: to force universities to think differently about definitions of knowledge, not in their definitions of the production of knowledge, but the definitions of knowledge itself. What is it? What do we consider to be knowledge, or new knowledge, or valuable knowledge? I think, of course, one has to find spaces where you can actually create in the university, which doesn't often allow for that. I'm a huge fan of leaving the

university, but I'm also convinced that one has to work from the inside to transform institutions that already exist and to find ways to use the resources available.

MM: From my perspective, I'm not really interested in any engagement with attempting to save the university or not. But, I think your question around who we make for is really interesting. I think it speaks very much to Sihle's point around what is meaningful and beneficial. Thuli, you were talking about criticism of consequence, and this is something that Nare and I have really tried to think about, and have written about. It is *who* you make art for and *how* you make art that speaks at multiple levels. I think there are more and more people who are not particularly interested in defining themselves within a specific institutional framework. That framework is maybe not that valuable or is valuable in small ways, but I would be reluctant to let this conversation become about whether we want to save the university because I think there is some really interesting practice that's functioning in very complex ways and which move in spaces that are more productive and potentially offer us ways to start thinking differently in the way that you're wanting to. I'm specifically referring to the peers I mentioned in the beginning, whose work we're interested in, and are working in this space of collapsing research and creative-making. We're particularly interested in this commitment to knowledge production from black life, as a kind of "we" who are having to find out ways of working within that set of parameters.

TG: Sihle, you were talking about the "proper," and I guess I should probably have done some kind of [makes air-quotes] thing that alluded to my mistrust of this "proper-ness," or mistrust of any kind of space where we're not invited to be our whole selves because that same mistrust can exist in the family and even in relationships where we're asked to specialise ourselves so that we're acceptable to the situation. So, these kinds of structures are everywhere, including in universities or "the university." For instance, when #FeesMustFall happened, the response to an improper bringing of the entire self to the university was rubber bullets. Maybe, to try and link to the deeper question, three or four years later, *not* being proper has become being proper. In this space, not being proper has become the transformed, predictable, kind of space, and we see that this strategy of being improper is temporary. You can be improper, maybe for a bit. I guess you can disrupt things as one strategy for one moment but, in the next moment, it becomes proper, and it becomes transformation because you know you don't get funded to shut down a university. Then, a few years later, you can get a scholarship to go to Sweden and be a decolonial international student. So, those kinds of contradictions are very much in a room like this. You know, there are a lot of ways to respond: we could be angry, we could be upset, and we might be all of those things, but, potentially, the interesting thing is to be like: how on earth are we all sitting here in this kind of mess? Is there a possibility to source something from this, from seeing this process as it is? Going from improper, un-whole, and undisciplined, into the disciplined, the critical, the excellent scholar, while holding the space and being generative? While also having that weird, uncomfortable sense of: are we just being predictable? Are we beginning to reproduce the institution? Is transformation also another way to talk about reproduction? But, maybe that's what this space is useful for—to talk about those things. But, there are other things that need to happen and those other things can't all happen at the conference, at least from my perspective.

Kundai Moyo [KM]: I was really taken by what you were saying in relation to some sort of propriety, and I was thinking about how we hold space, or how spaces are held for us, in relation to the institution, or the academy. The image that comes to mind for me is around lectured–lecturer: the way in which lectures are conducted so that there's a person standing in front, and the light sort of hits your eyes, and the audience is always in the dark, and how that image translates or reproduces itself in spaces like this—where we're meant to be engaging in some kind of open discussion. But there's still this idea of the circle being some kind of stage, and then everyone else sort of sitting outside, not bearing the same pressure that we bear when we sit in the space. I was thinking about how that begins to limit the possibility of practice as feedback. Or it sort of begins to break the idea of potentially having a feedback loop.

Ultimately, I was struck by how this object-space relation, person-space relation, begins to feed even into the way we practice as artists. I think the reason why I was particularly drawn to work like yours is in how it offers an opportunity to walk into a space and go: "how is the space being held for me?" Because I feel like that's often what we're thinking, even as arts practitioners, when we're talking about holding space. We're often thinking about how the space is holding the art, and I feel that often limits a conversation between the work and the audience or the conversation that you're trying to have with the context, with the people that you're trying to communicate with.

MM: Personally, I'm far more interested in a conversation that isn't limited by the university. I mean, we're often on conference panels, we're often writing in Wits University Press-published books, which are all very academic forms, and yet neither of us are really academics. I think that's possible because, inevitably, our work responds to the university in some way, and I think the university inevitably comes up; it's going to be part of any conversation around research. But none of our research is particularly oriented toward the university or particularly interested in universities. We often use what we call "pseudo-scientific methodologies" as a kind of fake version of research. One of the things we're interested in, which we haven't really been able to discuss is the idea of the speculative. And, the space in which making is enabled is a much more open space. I don't think we need to feel super limited. I think there are in-between spaces, and I think there are really interesting people trying to find them. They're difficult spaces. They're uncomfortable spaces. And we're all struggling, I think. That comes out in a lot of what people are saying today.

NM: Just to add to that, is the idea of capacity, which was touched on earlier—the idea of having multiple audiences but also having a primary audience—and we do find ourselves in these spaces, obviously, to kind of confirm, to do more, to publish, and get the work out. But that isn't the focus and the ways in which people respond to our work is completely different from audience to audience. We've found in the past that, when we do write for Wits Press, for instance, we face this request to kind of translate particular things that we write about our work, which completely goes against what we're trying to do politically and epistemically, you know.

MM: Last word from Thuli.

TG: These things are all often sides of the same many-sided coin. For me to maybe try to re-say something I was saying before: it's a question of where I think artistic ideas or research might be useful. So, you don't routinely enter into a space or make

yourself part of a space, using the same methodology and the same idea that you can know something. You have to respond to the parameters given by each space. And, in some spaces like the university, operating as a full self is very un-strategic because then your full self can be disrupted. So, sometimes you're being strategic because you need the resources to take somewhere else. Sometimes you're being un-strategic, and you just want to be yourself, but those parameters exist everywhere else. And those kinds of capitalist and colonial internalisations are not limited to the university. But, for me, it's quite a useful space because it "makes itself" in many ways. It's quite transparent as to how extremely violent things can be in universities. But, by no means, is it the only one of these institutions predicated on oppression.

MADEYOULOOK (Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho) are a Johannesburg-based collective that creates interventions and curatorial projects, engaging knowledge production through experiences lived and practiced by people every day.

Thulile Gamedze is an artist, activist, writer, and member of the collective iQhiya, based in Cape Town, South Africa. She is currently studying a Masters degree at the University of Cape Town, researching and practicing creative and experimental learning methodologies framed as urgent artistic and political interventions; thulile.gamedze@outlook.com

ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC AS DOCTORAL STUDY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

REBEKKA SANDMEIER

What are the opportunities and challenges of doctoral studies in South Africa, in music, through artistic research? What are the definitions of research—specifically artistic research—in the existing educational policies, and how can research and creative practice become one in a doctoral thesis?

This paper presents a second look at doctoral studies in music in South Africa. It deals with opportunities and challenges of doctoral studies through artistic research, and proceeds from Mareli Stolp's article 'Practice-Based Research in Music: International Perspectives, South African Challenges,' taking into consideration the opportunities arising from the framework for doctoral qualifications set by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework' (2013). Tangentially, it considers ideas about creative-work-as-research proposed in Christine Lucia's article on composition and performance as research,[1] and in the 'Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs' (2017) presented by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET).

The question posed, but not necessarily answered, is: how might research and creative practice become one in a doctoral thesis submitted to a South African university? The angles considered here are from policy and university handbooks as well as from supervisors' and doctoral candidates' perspectives. In addition, this paper looks at examples of doctoral studies that include creative aspects and includes the author's own experience as a supervisor and Head of Department.

SAQA and DoHET policies

Requirements for doctoral degrees in the 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework' allow for creative work:

> It requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. However, candidates may also present peer-reviewed academic articles and papers, and, in certain fields, creative work such as artefacts, compositions, public performances and public exhibitions in partial fulfilment of the research requirements.[2]

Further down in the paragraph, the policy states that the degree is earned through "pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research."[3] Nowhere does the policy mention artistic research, as such, but it is quite open. The only limitation it places on PhDs is that any coursework may not contribute to credits, as coursework belongs to the professional doctorate. Professional doctorates combine coursework and research. Here, the definition of the research component is also open and described as follows:

> Candidates are required to undertake a combination of coursework and advanced research leading to the submission, assessment and acceptance of a research component comprising an original thesis or another form of research that is commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field and the specific area of enquiry.[4]

The phrase "commensurate with the nature of the discipline or field" could be interpreted as referring to creative work and/or artistic research.

To investigate the relation between creative work and research, it might be helpful to consider the 'Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs' (2017), which determines the requirements for creative output from South African universities to be recognised as research for subsidy purposes. In the policy, the criteria for the evaluation of creative outputs are given as originality, relevance, and newness.[5] The research quality is embodied in the creative work. Performances qualifying for subsidy are described as follows:

> Because the composer's musical score is but an incomplete guide to the musical work, for the truly outstanding performer this is also the domain of re-composition, originality of thought, exceptional creative insights, and research-informed performance practice, although the degree of re-composition or improvisation exhibited should be aligned with accepted performance practice in the genre performed.[6]

The implementation guide, however, is not as radical. The annotations, which are to be submitted with each creative output, ask for a "conceptual and scholarly framework," and a "contribution to new knowledge."[7] The allocation of units requires the performer or composer to be involved in "lecture recitals, colloquia or other public engagements of a scholarly nature."[8] This does not reflect the stance of the policy, however—that the research is embodied in the creative output—nor does it refer to artistic research. The implementation guide is much more limiting than either of these.

The universities

Universities in South Africa interpret the policy on doctoral degrees by SAQA in a variety of ways. Most university descriptions of doctoral study describe the possibility of the integration or incorporation of written and creative work. Some universities, such as Stellenbosch University (SU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT), prioritise the thesis by naming it first, others the creative work such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), or the University of the Free State (UFS).

- SU—"the theoretical component is integrated with a creative component."[9]
- UCT—"a thesis incorporating the candidate's original creative work."[10]
- UFS—"an integrated study of creative and research work that culminates in a thesis."[11]
- Wits—"creative work with a research component."[12]

Some universities specify what the creative work should be. For example, a number of recitals or a composition portfolio. Some do not specify at all (SU), and others (UCT) waver in between, stating that the creative component "may comprise" certain elements.

Most university handbooks state that there needs to be a connection between thesis and creative work. Wits, for example, describes the relationship between creative work and thesis as follows: "There must be a coherent relationship between the creative work and the thesis. This does not necessarily mean that the thesis must be a direct commentary on the creative work. It must, however, serve to contextualise the creative work critically."[13]

UCT's handbook talks of the doctoral work as a "portfolio of original musical compositions or practical performance/s which, together with the written part, form(s) a coherent whole."[14] These descriptions seem to move towards artistic research, even though the term—as in the 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework'–is not mentioned.

Another interpretation of the policy on doctoral degrees sees the creative output as the research. Rhodes University (RU) and the University of Pretoria (UP) are examples of this. At RU, "a thesis or a set of compositions" can be submitted for a doctoral degree.[15] At the UP, the two DMus programmes in performance and composition are described: "The programme focuses on research. The degree is also conferred for original creative work."[16] In the more detailed description of the requirements, RU also asks for an "explanatory statement" of the composition portfolio.[17]

Opportunities

The opportunities for artistic research as doctoral studies at universities in South Africa lie in the openness of the 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework's' description of both doctorate and professional doctorate. Everything seems possible in a PhD: 1) creative work only, perhaps with an explanation, 2) the old DMus model of a prescribed creative component and thesis, or 3) artistic research where written research and the creative work are truly integrated. Many universities indeed offer several of these variants, some under the single heading of PhD, some spread between PhD and DMus.

Why then is artistic research not undertaken as doctoral study more often? A look at what has been presented in the area of PhD with a creative component so far may be useful. In closing, I will offer some ideas on the obstacles for presenting artistic research as a PhD thesis.

The theses

Up to now, quite a few PhDs with creative components have been attempted and submitted at South African universities. The following examples of doctoral theses were all produced at SU and the UCT. Only theses available in the online repositories of the two universities are used as examples. It follows that the examples are not exhaustive.

The following discussion does not evaluate the content since all of these PhDs were submitted, assessed, and accepted. Rather, the question posed is: how do these theses deal with the idea of integrating creative work and research?

At SU, four doctoral theses that incorporate creative work are in the repository. Stolp's thesis, 'Contemporary Performance Practice in South Africa' (2012), includes performances of contemporary South African compositions. However, only the written work is available in the repository, not the performances, making it impossible to discuss the integration of the creative part with the thesis. For Hans Huyssen's 2015 thesis on complexity and composition in South Africa,[18] both thesis and creative work can be found in the repository. However, since some of the compositions were published on a commercial Compact Disc before the submission of the PhD, only snippets of these compositions can be heard. Glancing through the thesis, it seems to be an explanatory and exploratory statement on the compositional process. Maritjie Pauw also submitted doctoral work in 2015,[19] focusing on the curation of South African flute music. Here, both the creative components and the written work is available in the repository. Considering the creative work and the thesis, it is clear that both inform each other and that both forms of knowledge production are integrated into each other. Of course, the topic lends itself to such an approach as it considers the curation of music. Finally, for Peter Martens' 2016 doctoral work on the performance of Beethoven's cello sonatas,[20] both thesis and recitals can be found in the repository, even though some of the performances were released commercially on Compact Disc. Glancing through the thesis and considering the programmes of the recitals, the latter appear to be an illustration of the arguments presented in the written part.

At UCT, four doctoral studies in music started out as PhDs with a creative component. In two of these, Thokozani Mhlambi's thesis on early radio broadcasting in South Africa and Cara Stacey's study on Swazi bow music,[21] questions about the integration of the creative part with the written part, and about the documentation and presentation of the creative part became so overwhelming that—even though they considered including a creative component—the candidates decided to submit their theses as written research only. Interestingly, both Mhlambi and Stacey are active in

composition and performance today, breaking down the boundaries between creative work and research. The other two doctoral studies have performances as the creative part: Becky Steltzner's thesis investigates the clarinet in South Africa,[22] while Annien Shaw's study looks at Louis Spohr's fingering principles.[23] The performances cannot be found in the repository for either of these theses. Looking at the programmes of the performances included in the theses, they do not appear essential to the argument but, rather, function as an addition to or illustration thereof.

This short overview of a few PhDs containing creative work submitted, assessed, and accepted at South African universities so far, shows some of the challenges and considerations that need to be taken into account when producing a doctoral research project in artistic research.

Challenges

The challenges to produce doctoral work in artistic research fall into three areas: challenges for supervisors and students, challenges for universities, and general challenges.

In South Africa, supervisors that have themselves worked in artistic research remain rare. Usually, the student is assigned two supervisors, one for the written part and one for the creative part of the research. Both need to be open to the concept of artistic research. In addition, the methodology of artistic research is difficult to implement in a doctoral thesis: artistic research does not comprise writing a thesis and then adding creative work or vice versa. Both the written and the creative work emerge at the same time and influence each other, and both need to be envisaged from the very beginning. This requires a willingness from supervisor and student to explore together. Finally, documentation needs to be kept in mind throughout the entire process. Great possibilities for documenting the artistic process and presenting the creative work are available in the digital world, as well as the repositories of the universities. However, issues of copyright and privacy need to be resolved at the same time as the research process, and experts on these may have to be consulted.

Doctoral studies in artistic research pose a number of challenges for universities. Submission systems need to move away from paper to online-only, and accept formats beyond pdf as well as large files. Repositories like ZivaHub at UCT could offer a solution for large non-text files. In addition, universities need to reassess their open-access policies for doctoral dissertations to, at least, include a creative commons license for non-commercial use, so that audio-visual material can be made accessible while being protected from misuse. Finally, the examiners for doctoral work in artistic research should be able to examine all parts of the research. As with supervisors, there continues to be a scarcity of examiners that have worked in artistic research themselves in South Africa. Therefore, the information from the Examinations Office of each university needs to give clear instructions. Certain flexibility on the part of the university to allow the appointment of examiners who are not linked to a university or do not hold a doctoral degree themselves would also ease the difficulties.

The general challenges to artistic research as doctoral studies are twofold. Though the possibilities for the presentation of the research—both in its creative and written manifestation—are abundant in the digital domain, to utilise and implement them in a professional manner requires a massive support structure in terms of equipment and human resources. Impressive examples of presentations of artistic research can be seen in the journals for artistic research such as *Ellipses* and the *Journal for Artistic Research*. Here, not only are the support structures transparent, but also

the collaborative nature of artistic research. Yet, whereas doctoral study traditionally focuses on one person producing research, the production of artistic research, as well as its documentation and presentation, requires collaboration.

In conclusion, this leaves two main questions about artistic research as doctoral study in music at South African universities: considering the requirements for equipment and human resources, is artistic research in music a mode of knowledge production only for the rich, formerly white universities in South Africa? And: How can the concept of collaboration, which is necessary in artistic research, be embedded in the one-person idea of doctoral studies?

Rebekka is Professor of Musicology and Director of the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town; rebekka.sandmeier@uct.ac.za

Notes

1 Lucia, 'Mapping the Field'.
2 SAQA, 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework', 76.
3 SAQA, 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework', 76.
4 SAQA, 'Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework', 77.
5 DoHET, 'Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations', 10.
6 DoHET, 'Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations', 14.
7 DoHET, 'Implementation Guidelines', 4.
8 DoHET, 'Implementation Guidelines', 8.
9 University of Stellenbosch, 'Addendum A: Draft Regulations for Doctoral Degrees in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences', 1
10 University of Cape Town, 'Doctoral Degrees', 154.
11 University of the Free State, 'Doctor of Philosophy in Music', 71.
12 Music Division, Wits School of Arts, 'Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD): Information for Applicants', 1.
13 Music Division, Wits School of Arts, 'Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD): Information for Applicants', 3.
14 University of Cape Town, 'Doctoral Degrees', 154.
15 Rhodes University, *Calendar 2019*, 92.
16 University of Pretoria, 'Faculty of Humanities', 180.
17 Rhodes University, *Calendar 2019*, 92.
18 Huyssen, 'Composing (in) Contemporary South Africa Theoretical and Musical Responses to Complexity'.
19 Pauw, 'Curating South African Flute Compositions'.
20 Martens, 'Contemporary Performance of the Sonatas for Cello and Piano by Ludwig van Beethoven as Informed by Carl Czerny'.
21 Mhlambi, 'Early Radio Broadcasting in South Africa'; Stacey, 'The Makhweyane Bow of Swaziland'.
22 Steltzner, 'The History of the Clarinet in South Africa'.
23 Shaw, 'The Spohr Fingering Principles as Manifested in His Violinschule'.

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ENGAGING WITH SOUND WRITING

VISSER LIEBENBERG

How can forms of sound writing be used for a project in artistic research? Based on the author's own experimentation with sound writing for the clarinet, this paper argues that sound writing is a manner of engaging with sound that strengthens the link between practice and theory in artistic research.

> The stage floor shines bright against the backdrop of ruby-red seats. Row A and B closest to the stage platform have the same colour, but row C, D, and E slowly fade to blood-red and then to darkness. The platform of lined wood planks has different nuances of light-oak to light-brown. Apart from the scratch marks of force exerted on the intertwined wood planks, everything else is bathed in silence. Without warning, a low sounding drone enters the space creating a base tone of sound. After a couple of seconds, it needs to compete with a quick pitch disruption sounding a couple octaves higher. The battle of pitches is won by the higher tone as it sings with a vibrato, bending higher and lower and higher and lower and drops into the middle ground tone between the opposing forces. The sound is held in the middle ground until it plummets to the low sounding drone fading into the empty space. Sneakily, the clarinettist stationed outside of the camera shot has not moved his finger-setting to change pitch. He could've changed his finger-setting on the clarinet to create these pitches. However, he chose to keep the low sounding G finger-setting and with a versatile embouchure control and airflow, produced a variety of sound combinations out of the instrument.[1]

In the book *Theorizing Sound Writing*, Deborah Kapchan begins the opening chapter with a short, written section. Once you have read this short section, you quickly come to understand that this is her version of sound writing. Directly after, she dramatically proclaims that "sound knowledge [is] a nondiscursive form of affective transmission resulting from acts of listening."[2] She goes on to write that "sound writing [is] a performance in word-sound of such knowledge."[3]

In this edited volume, numerous scholars were approached with a simple question: "How [can we] theorize sound writing?"[4] How do scholars engage with sound knowledge when the focus of writing is turned towards engaging with sound knowledge in the form of sound writing? Would it be possible "to speak to new realities" if we engage with sound writing, a question posed by Jacques Attali in 1977?[5] Lauren Berlant, the social theorist, follows the same discerning need as presented in this book, "to invent new genres for the kind of speculative work we call 'theory'."[6]

Each of the 14 contributors to the book engages with the idea of sound writing by conversing about their field of study and their experience of engaging with sound knowledge. Their description of sound knowledge, in the form of sound writing, however, is often limited to a short amount of words of sound writing within their individual contributing parts. What results from a short section of sound writing, is often enough for each of the contributors to write extensively about their object of investigation, which is brought to life through their sound writing. This they do through acts of listening, so as to engage with Kapchan's prompt, through Sartre, to consider "the experimenter [as] part of the experimental system."[7] Their object of investigation, which features as a theme and a section of sound writing, is used to intertwine the knowledge of the subject and the object conceptually. This form of investigation, Kapchan argues, brings a stronger connection between theory and method, which Henk Borgdorff also associates with the work of artistic research.

Borgdorff writes that "research in and through the arts" reduces the distance of the object of research, and poses the possibility that the object of research can become oneself in the creative and artistic process.[8] In order for a feedback system of sound knowledge and sound writing to occur, sound writing engages with a process of translation from listening to a source or an object. This listening process must include a form of re-imagination of the source or object from which the sound comes, in what Kapchan terms "metaphor as method."[9] According to Michelle Kisliuk, whose chapter 'Writing the Magnified Musicking Moment' features in *Theorizing Sound Writing*, thinking about the metaphor is one thing, but when it comes to working with sound

and metaphoric engagement we "conceptualize emotion" and constitute "aspects of our experience in the process" as to assist the transmission of sound knowledge in sound writing.[10]

With that said, David Henderson poses a question in his contribution to the book: 'Why would we wish to theorize and experiment with the print medium in the digital age? Why write, rather than do something else?"[11] The discourse of western performance practice music criticism and music scholarship has also expanded into the interdisciplinary field of sound studies writing about soundscapes, acoustemology, sound curatorship, sound ecologies, and sound art criticism.[12] However, due to the contradictory nature of the term "sound writing," the potential lies in its imaginative possibility and potential to "listening and writing to transform experiences of temporality" and ephemerality.[13]

At the start of my integrated PhD in music, I set out with the idea to translate one sound world to another sound world, as an experiment with the translator's voice being the clarinet and the clarinettist. The coming together of different sound worlds will then show if it is possible to create a new sound world that could be used as material and data for a composer to write a solo composition for the clarinet. Sound experimentation in this project would then be part of a creation process of sound knowledge, which in its nature would be temporal and ephemeral. It is with that in mind that the sound knowledge, in its temporality, needed to be recorded in order to then engage with the same process of listening and writing as has been done by the contributors of the book, *Theorizing Sound Writing*. What is different in this PhD project is that the person creating sound knowledge would also be the person translating that sound knowledge into sound writing. This brings into play what Borgdorff refers to as the object of research becoming oneself, in the form of sound knowledge production by the self. However, before creating sound knowledge, a method of practice was required to delink me from my western performance practice sound world. The sound knowledge created in this process would then be the sound resulting from this delinking process.

My method was the practice of free improvisation. Free improvisation is ephemeral and temporal in nature. Once fully absorbed, free improvisation allows the clarinettist to engage with sound without thinking of the notation, interpretation, and the restrictions and devices of composition, often created by the composer. Free improvisation, in practice to create sound knowledge, links to what Kapchan says about the process of creation associated with sound writing: "It is not writing [sound] that is a prison house per se, but our modes of perception, of listening and translation, that must be broken through."[14]

It was on 28 June 2019 that I started with the free improvisation process in the Endler Hall of Stellenbosch Konservatorium. The Endler Hall presents a space for western performance practice, where the final product of an artistic process is performed, while the process of preparing for that performance is often neglected. As part of the process of delinking from that sound world associated with the Endler Hall, I considered that the space should present a departure point for confronting a sound world and working through that sound world with free improvisation as a process of creating sound knowledge.

This act presents a complex system of accepting, processing and making choices in the artistic creation process, which Kathleen Coessens says is embedded in a "web of artistic practice."[15] The "web of artistic practice" presents one way of viewing moments in a creation process where the artist is seldom aware of the tools and their dimensions within the artistic idea, but they are there, nevertheless. Coessens

goes on to say, "The tools of the artist, knowledge, expertise, experiences and actions, present in his or her creative endeavour, remain in the background of this act. It is often only after the act of creation, that some reflection or recollection, as a kind of re-enactment of the background, is possible."[16] My form of reflection from these free improvisation sessions resulted in journaling and rough writing about the improvisation session of the day. Later, on the same day, I would re-watch the video and listen to the free improvisation session in order to start imagining how to translate what happens in the video, in both visuals and in sound, into words.

This translation process presents a second confrontation with the style of writing associated with western performance practice and the clarinet. How would I write about my own clarinet sound and sound creation without using the devices of music notation? How would I describe the sound of the clarinet without referring to the existing jargon of describing a clarinet sound? The clarinet sound has thoroughly been researched and, through this research, created literature with a jargon of containment associated with both Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPP) and the origins of the clarinet created and built in Austria/Germany and France. The clarinet sound, from this literature, can be described as "warm," "fuzzy," "sweet," "open," "closed," "big," "small," and "thin" to give but a few examples. This sort of description is noted by Roland Barthes in 'The Grain of the Voice,' as "our writing on music that has ever been dictated to our conversation and criticism of music in the form of the adjective … this music is *this*, and that execution is *that*."[17] Barthes' writing, even though it rules out the adjective, is still captured in a mode of listening where the object and the subject are separate from the creation process of sound. Since I made the artistic choice to delink from an existing sound world as a process to create sound knowledge—with the intention of having the capacity to communicate that sound knowledge to a composer, which was part of the initial process of this project—the listening process towards the videos drastically changed.

The videos engage with both movement and sound, and as an experiment, it was worth exploring with the idea to write a verbal description of the movement and a narrative description of the sound. What started out as a lot of scribbling—attempting to find a tone to sound write from the created sound knowledge—resulted in re-listening to the videos over and over again, identifying phrases, structures, techniques, and playing styles, which may not have been possible to identify in merely reflecting on the free improvisation sessions without the video recordings. The listening process gave me the opportunity to identify familiar concepts in my existing sound world and, with the writing process, it was possible to delink from the familiar concepts and discover new sounds and new descriptions. Although those sounds might have existed before, as noted by Coessens as she refers to the artists' "web of artistic practice," it was through the process of sound writing that they could be identified.

Because Kapchan writes that "sound writing is a performance of word-sound of such knowledge," a style of writing, in the form of "reading sound from performance" was something that naturally occurred in the writing. Where the contributors of *Theorizing Sound Writing* only wrote short sections of sound writing in their individual contributions, I found it difficult to describe everything taking place within a three-minute solo clarinet free improvisation video. This resulted in writing a rather large chapter containing sound writing sections per video. During this sound writing, I could identify and index of sounds, almost like a reward for the compassionate listening process to the creation process. From creating sound knowledge as a way to delink from an existing sound world, to listen to that sound knowledge, to

write sound writing, came a re-identifying and re-listening of sound knowledge that created a different sound world.

To repeat Henderson's questions: "Why would we wish to theorize and experiment with the print medium in the digital age? Why write, rather than do something else?"[18] The practical and written work is part of an experiment to engage with a process of delinking, which also resides under the concept of "decolonial aestheSis." In their observation of the decolonial work being done in the humanities, Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez write about the term decolonial aestheSis as a "visible sign of underground conversations and activities taking place following in the trajectory" of the decolonial option as praxis.[19] What is clear from their observation, however, is how the term "decolonial aestheSis" was coined only after viewing and noticing the defiant practices of embodied knowledge that speak directly to a space of compassionate listening, which exist between modernity and coloniality. This space presents an opening where those artists, scholars, and academics can engage in a defiant process of experimenting with the containment of aesthetics associated with aspects of the colonial matrix of power. The implementation of sound writing for free improvisation, artistic experimentation in artistic research is a confrontation of the colonial matrix of power as it exists in western performance practice. In this way, the methodology can be understood as defiant, emancipating knowledge systems—and, in my project, sound knowledge systems—to create another option among the existing sound knowledge systems. Mignolo tells us that the term "decolonial aestheSis is not just an indictment of the universal validity claim of modern/colonial aesthetics, but that it asserts itself as an option" among many other options.[20] What would the implications be if we take the aforementioned concepts and bring them into discussion with the idea of compassionate listening, for compassionate scholarship in decoloniality?

> The empty stage floor is entered by a barefoot walking clarinettist. As his feet touch different wood planks, his movement is paced by a repetitive clarinet sounding motive. The step-by-step motion changes the sound reception feedback to the clarinettist. With the twelfth step taken towards the right side of the invisible audience, the clarinettist activates a squeak in the floor. Only on the fourteenth step does he reverse to retrace his foot motion to find the squeaky floorboard. Once he has found it, there is an interaction with the sound of the floor. The squeaky floorboard has a small range in pitch, which is enough for a conversation with feet pressure. This conversation causes the clarinettist to react and repeat a clarinet sound-pattern like a pendulum, swaying from left-foot to right-foot, testing his reception of the floorboard conversation. Once the discussion is over, the clarinettist walks away from the spot and makes a slow 180-degree turn to come to a halt.[21]

Visser is a doctoral fellow in Artistic Research at the Africa Open—Institute for Music, Research and Innovation, Stellenbosch University; vislieb@gmail.com

Notes

1 Excerpt from a draft chapter of my PhD.
2 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 2.
3 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 2.
4 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 2.
5 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 2.
6 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 2.
7 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 3.
8 Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 24.
9 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 6.
10 Kisliuk, 'Writing the Magnified Musicking Moment'; described in Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 7.
11 Henderson, 'Traffic Patterns'; described in Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 9.
12 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 9.
13 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 9.
14 Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 10.
15 Coessens, 'The Web of Artistic Practice'.
16 Coessens, 'The Web of Artistic Practice', 69.
17 Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 179.
18 Henderson, 'Traffic Patterns'; described in Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus', 9.
19 Mignolo and Vazquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis'.
20 Mignolo and Vazquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis'.
21 Excerpt from a draft chapter of my PhD.

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ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

MARELI STOLP

Can artistic research be understood as an African epistemology? Through a mapping of the field of African epistemology together with the key notions of artistic research, this paper argues for the decolonising potential of artistic research in Africa.

Since the first democratic elections took place in South Africa in 1994, signalling the end of apartheid and the beginning of a postcolonial democracy, issues of transformation, redress, and restitution have become ubiquitous in the country's political and social discourse. These issues were afforded a greater sense of urgency with the 2015 and 2016 student protest movements when attention became focused especially on lack of transformation within the higher education sector. The so-called "Fallist" movements accused universities of being un-transformative; of fostering a culture of exclusion, especially of disadvantaged Black youth; of maintaining an "ivory tower" mentality of elitism and superiority; and of continuing to uphold curricula that favour content heavily indebted to colonial heritage and generated from the Global North, while excluding African subject matter and indigenous knowledge.

The term "decolonisation" soon became a pervasive paradigm for these contexts, not only as it applies to curriculum transformation or university management structures but also more broadly in connection to concepts of knowledge. Concomitant to discussions of decolonisation has been articulations of the geopolitics that influence the global economy of knowledge and the positioning within that construct of countries of the so-called Global South, which includes the African continent. The juxtapositioning of core versus periphery, metropole as opposed to margin, and Global North compared to Global South have become intrinsic to arguments for decolonisation of knowledge. These discussions exceed South African contexts and can be seen to resound broadly in Global South geo-localities.

Fundamental to a project of decolonisation is a critical evaluation of the core and periphery collocation, according to which knowledge generated from countries of the Global South is too easily viewed as subservient to knowledge propounded by the institutions of the metropole, considered since pre-colonial times as the centre of intellectual authority. Raewyn Connell, author of *Southern Theory* and a respected scholar in the decoloniality field, states the following in an address to the University of Johannesburg during their 2016 discussions series "Decolonisation of Knowledge,"

> Modern universities and their staff and students exist in a global economy of knowledge, with a definite geography of production and circulation … This economy has a hegemonic centre, the knowledge institutions of the global North … This complex of institutions, as well as producing floods of new knowledge is the centre of intellectual authority in the mainstream economy. Universities in other regions generally follow US/European definitions of disciplines and research methods, and practices of publication and recognition. It is not surprising that their teaching curricula have been largely built on models from Northern universities.[1]

This paper proceeds from the premise that in order to participate productively in decolonising practices of knowledge production in the Global South, we should take seriously the project of repositioning ourselves in terms of the types of knowledge we produce and engage. This means a re-calibration of the knowledge formations we consider to be of primary significance—a resistance, in other words, to the hegemonic positioning of knowledge formations inherited from the Global North. But it also should serve as encouragement to examine rigorously those knowledges generated from our own continent and country, even the broader spectrum of geo-localities grouped together as the Global South, and to engage these knowledge formations actively in our intellectual endeavours.

In this paper, I want to explore the extent to which artistic research can play a significant role in a project of decolonising knowledge. Artistic research proposes a resistance to traditional separations in western philosophy of practical and theoretical

knowledge, proposing rather that these knowledges are mutually influential, equally significant, and deeply interconnected. This, as well as the focus of artistic researchers on tacit, embodied, and subjective knowledge seems relatable to several fundamentals of African philosophy, as I hope to show in this presentation. Artistic research has also thus far been primarily considered in terms of its origins within European education politics, and not yet as a knowledge formation closely related to African philosophy, in spite of the many resonances between these knowledge formations. Artistic research is commonly viewed as an endeavour developed in the Global North, specifically in Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. I will posit that, despite the conventional history of artistic research's origins and its current location in the academic context of the Global North, African scholars may productively approach artistic research as an African epistemology and, in so doing, pose a challenge to the hegemonic centre to which Connell refers.[2]

My engagement with African epistemology in this paper is by necessity superficial and not by any means encompassing of the very broad scope of opinions, positions, theories, existing texts, and interpretations of African thought, of which there is ever more accessible evidence available in the form of books, academic papers, and articles. I am also very cognizant of the risk involved in referring to "African philosophy" broadly, and not distinguishing between the many divergent strands of thinking that characterise different parts of Africa and the many diverse cultures that constitute the continent. I am guided in these early stages of the research by several published texts in the form of books, journal articles, and conference papers that refer to "African philosophy" seemingly to distinguish this epistemology clearly from "western" philosophy (which is, itself, quite a generalisation). I hope that further research into this topic will yield interesting conclusions regarding the term "African philosophy."

This paper is the first step in a much larger project, which includes a broad-spectrum exploration of African philosophies and systematic engagement with the multitude of philosophical strands that are interwoven under the broad theme "African epistemology." The connections to artistic research I make in this paper are based on the early findings made thus far, which support the notion that the knowledge formations commonly argued to be most appropriate to artistic research strongly resonate with aspects fundamental to much of African thinking. The interconnectedness of practical and theoretical ways of knowing that artistic researchers strongly argue for is a concept innate to much of African epistemology; tacit, embodied, subjective, and experiential knowledge, all knowledge formations strongly supported in artistic research, seem to be ubiquitous to many strands of African philosophy. This paper proceeds with some thoughts on the philosophical positions that inform artistic research, while making suggestions for how this philosophy may be seen to connect to African epistemologies. The remainder of the paper argues for artistic research as a tool for decolonising knowledge within higher education on the African continent.

Henk Borgdorff, in his 2012 doctoral dissertation on artistic research, states the following:

> In artistic research, thinking and doing are enmeshed … It is an endeavour in which the artistic and academic are united … It is an undertaking in which artistic practices contribute as *research* to what we know and understand, and in which academia opens its mind to forms of knowledge and understanding that are entwined with artistic practices.[3]

Here, Borgdorff highlights the challenge posed by artistic research philosophy to the separation in western thought of theoretical and practical knowledge—thinking and

doing. In artistic research, thinking and doing function collectively and are viewed as intrinsically connected and mutually influential. This paradigm resists the separation of "thinking" and "doing," which has been a feature of western thought since antiquity, with Plato, Aristotle, and later René Descartes and Immanuel Kant all insisting on a separation between theoretical and practical knowledge, the *episteme* and *phronesis* of Aristotle's thinking, the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*. This paradigm feeds into other separations generally endorsed in western philosophy: of experiential knowledge as opposed to reasoned analysis, of subjectivity in relation to objectivity, and of body-mind dualism.

In contrast, several African philosophers have argued that such separations are not endemic to fundamentals of African thinking and that most African concepts of knowledge are, rather, predicated on notions of holism and unity. Ghanaian scholar Kwasi Wiredu, for example, explicitly rejects Cartesian dualism. Referring to linguistic properties of the Akan language he contends, if we take the contrast of the material and the spiritual and apply it to the concept of mind in the Akan language "one can straightaway rule out any prospect of a Cartesian dualism of body and mind."[4] Another opinion is registered by Anselm Kole Jimoh who states:

> While we may accuse Western philosophy of intellectual dogmatism that permits a dualism of the subject and object, and Asian philosophy of monism in attempting to deny the reality of the material, African philosophy tries to avoid the embarrassment of both concepts by seeing a central position for the ego (subject) in the cosmic scheme. In this way, subjectivism and objectivism do not constitute a problem for African philosophy.[5]

He strengthens this point by referring to Ernest Ruch and K. C. Anyawu:

> Knowledge, therefore, comes from the cooperation of all human faculties and experiences. [The African] sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and intuits all at the same time. Only through this method does the African claim to have the knowledge of the other. So, the method through which the African arrives at trustworthy knowledge of reality … is an intuitive and personal experience.[6]

These statements resonate with Borgdorff's in that an African concept of knowledge is suggested to be generated through multiple, integrated avenues: practical, theoretical, philosophical, experiential. Jimoh continues to posit that:

> Subjectivism and objectivism do not constitute a problem for African epistemology. They are both subsumed in the unity of existence. In this unity, the subject gets to know the object. African philosophy does not demarcate between the epistemic subject and the epistemic object … they are joined together such that the subject experiences the object in a sensuous, emotive, abstractive understanding, rather than through abstraction alone, as is the case in Western epistemology.[7]

This account finds resonance with another statement by Borgdorff,

> Artistic research takes leave of the rigid opposition of subject and object of research, of fact and value, of action and interpretation. It is precisely this type of methodology—which allows for the intertwinement of researcher and researched, object and objective, and practice and theory—that seems the most suitable framework for conducting artistic research.[8]

In dealing with specific questions of epistemology and artistic research, several European scholars have argued convincingly that artistic research engages tacit, embodied, and implicit knowledges, generated from artistic experience, rather than favouring empirical enquiry. This again connects with African epistemological positions. In the anthology *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, Lee Brown states:

> A fundamental tenet of traditional African culture is that there is more to reality and the realm of experience than that which is readily accessible through empirical enquiry, and that one can acquire understanding of phenomena by appealing to experiences whose characterizations are not empirically confirmable but are nonetheless warrantably assertible.[9]

A similar argument, and one that is often drawn on in artistic research debates, was made during the 1950s by scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi who, in his book *Personal Knowledge* stresses the hidden, implicit, and tacit aspects of knowledge. Polanyi posits that knowledge is generated through an exchange, a relationship between the personal and the universal, the knower or subject and the object of knowledge.[10] Artistic research supports this idea that knowledge is, first and foremost, apprehended by personal acts of discovery—it will, therefore, never be entirely objective, nor can it be separated from personal experience. This position challenges existing intellectual frameworks that favour scientific methods and empirical data above experiential knowledge. European artistic researchers Kathleen Coessens, Darla Crispin, and Anne Douglas provide an articulation of how tacit, experiential knowledge functions in artistic research,

> The need for new or changed paradigms follows from a recognition of the empirical, theoretical, methodological, epistemic and ontological limits of existing intellectual frameworks and their relation to the world … The artistic researcher acquires his or her own personal knowledge, constructed over time by way of social and cultural, embodied and cognitive experiences, only part of which is immediately expressible.[11]

Kenyan philosopher, D. A. Masolo, makes a comparable statement in his book *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Speaking to the issue of cognition in African thought, he searches for a middle ground between foundationalist and pluralist positions, where the former privileges formal, rational procedure as the most important cognitive factor, and the latter favours diversity of human experience and systems of representation,

> The position which states that our sense of the world and of personhood varies according to varieties of experience takes a middle ground between the foundationalists and the pluralists by arguing that what are called products of the rational mind are not really conflictual with what are oppositionally referred to as the disorderly life of the body and the emotions. Rather, this third position argues, such products carry equal weight as they both are modes of thinking which illustrate the variant modalities of experience. This position avoids the Cartesian dichotomy which posits the cogito ("pure" reason) as separate from, opposed to, and more reliable than bodily experiences (sensory perception).[12]

Masolo's position, which resists Cartesian dualism, connects convincingly to Borgdorff, Coessens, and other artistic researchers' statements on the same topic.

This preliminary engagement with the broad scope of both current artistic research and some tenets of African philosophy should at least provoke interest in the many identifiable connections between the two: the reliance on tacit, embodied, experiential knowledge; the resistance to Cartesian dualism; and the integration of subject and object positions. Although the research for this paper is still in its early development phase, I believe there is already enough evidence available to make convincing arguments for the potential of artistic research to be approached as an African epistemology. In my closing arguments, I want to shift the focus from philosophical aspects back to the political motivation for this project and briefly explore the question whether artistic research, when approached as African epistemology, can contribute to decolonisation of knowledge.

The imperative for decolonisation of knowledge institutions is no longer debatable. Yet, universities face several extremely complex and intricate challenges in such an endeavour. Connell argues strongly that, in spite of these challenges, there are important reasons why decolonisation must remain a priority for all educational institutions of the Global South. She highlights these reasons for her position,

> The first reason is practical need. Our students will need a wider range of competencies to engage with the world they are moving into. Among them are competence in alternative universalisms and other knowledge formations that already exist in the world. The second is a question of justice, imperial power and the global economy of knowledge marginalized, and often disrupted, knowledge formations among colonized peoples, helping to create the inequalities of the contemporary world. Revaluing and resourcing indigenous knowledges and alternative universalisms is a constructive response.[13]

Artistic research seeks to develop new knowledge formations that depart from traditional western ways of knowing: as artistic researchers build new competencies as knowledge creators by engaging their personal practice and subjective experience as primary factors in the generation of knowledge, they simultaneously actively resist the hegemonic knowledge definitions and formations imposed from the metropole. In this sense, artistic research can play an important role in decolonising knowledge, in Africa and other countries of the Global South. Artistic research can speak to Connell's second question as well: by looking to knowledge formations already fundamental to African philosophy and foregrounding them in artistic research endeavours, a "revaluing and resourcing" of indigenous knowledge, to use Connell's words, can take place, answering the call for justice that underpins decoloniality arguments.

The word "decolonisation" suggests, in its structure perhaps, the removal of something—doing away with or subtracting colonisation from, in this case, knowledge. I want to argue, however, that there is another way to approach this term; that is, to look at decolonisation as a philosophy of addition, a philosophy of more. It can be viewed as an invitation to search for new forms of knowledge and concomitantly new ways of doing research, of generating knowledge, especially in formerly colonised countries like our own and others on the African continent.

In the Global North, artistic research has attempted to do exactly that—to develop knowledge formations that resist traditional western constructs, such as separating practical and theoretical knowledge or favouring empirical rather than tacit or embodied knowledge. What I am suggesting here is that this challenge is already encapsulated within the fundamentals of much of African philosophy and epistemology. African philosophy, although until recently too often ignored, under-researched, and under-utilised in the knowledge institutions of the metropole, is already inherently

supportive of much of the thinking that drives artistic research in the knowledge institutions of Europe, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The imperative for an artistic researcher working in Africa is perhaps then to look to knowledge formations particular to our own immediate surroundings, to draw on the richness of African philosophy, and in this way decolonise knowledge: philosophically, politically, and practically.

Mareli received a PhD at Stellenbosch University for her artistic research in Music and is the first ARA postdoctoral fellow in the Wits School of Arts; marelistolp@hotmail.com

Notes

1 Connell, 'Decolonising Knowledge, Democratising Curriculum', 1.

2 Connell, 'Decolonising Knowledge, Democratising Curriculum'.

3 Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 2–3; emphasis in original.

4 Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 125.

5 Jimoh, 'An African Theory of Knowledge', 126.

6 Ruch and Anyanwu, *African Philosophy*, 94.

7 Jimoh, 'An African Theory of Knowledge', 126.

8 Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 69.

9 Brown, 'Understanding and Ontology in Traditional African Thought', 159.

10 Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*.

11 Coessens, Crispin, and Douglas, *The Artistic Turn*, 13; 69.

12 Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, 248.

13 Connell, 'Decolonising Knowledge, Democratising Curriculum', 8.

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ADDRESSING ARTISTIC RESEARCH AT THE MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE IN MAURITIUS: CHALLENGES FOR A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE IN AFRICA

HANS RAMDUTH

Can small island contexts, through the extreme simplification of more complex processes that occur on the continents (e.g., ecocide), provide unique insights into binaries such as artist versus researcher, fiction versus non-fiction, and art-making versus writing?

It is my pleasure to share with you some aspects of the discussions and issues pertaining to artistic research from the perspective of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius. I do not directly engage with the issue of decoloniality, but it forms part of the larger framework underpinning this presentation, which comprises three sections:

1. Some background about my country and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute
2. Challenges of artistic research as they present themselves to my colleagues and myself
3. Zooming out and taking into account broader contexts and questions

1.1 Situating Mauritius

Mauritius is an island off the coast of Madagascar, a Small Island Developing State.[1] It comprises the main island of about 2,000 square kilometres and a population of around 1.2 million people, a second smaller island with an autonomous government, of about 100 square kilometres and a population of a little more than 40,000 people, and several even smaller islands, some of which are inhabited.[2] Taken together, Mauritius and its islands constitute a significant Exclusive Economic Zone of around 2.4 million square kilometres in the Indian Ocean, the 20th largest in the world.

The decolonisation of Mauritius remains incomplete as, during the period immediately before Independence in 1968, an archipelago—the Chagos islands—were administratively detached from Mauritius by the United Kingdom to allow for the construction of an American military base on Diego Garcia, one of the islands of the Chagos. The UK has lost several landmark cases in International Courts of Justice and has been ordered to desist in its illegal occupation of the island.

Interestingly, in the areas around Mauritius, while the Seychelles and Madagascar are proudly independent, the same does not apply to our "sister" island, Reunion, the closest landmass at about 100 km distance from Mauritius. It is happily part of the French state, and part of the outlying lands of the European Union. The same applies for Mayotte, part of the Comoros archipelago, with successive referendums that have made it a French department, and resulted in both Comoros and the African Union decrying the illegal occupation of that territory by a foreign power. This context is intended simply to highlight that, within the Indian Ocean islands, the relationship with coloniality is diverse and postcolonial/decolonial reflexes are not necessarily shared across the islands. Culturally, Mauritius is very diverse, with more than two-thirds of its population having their origins in the Indian subcontinent (Indo-Mauritians), more than a quarter of African and mixed origins (the creole population), about one percent of European origin (Franco-Mauritians), and a little more (2.5%) people of Chinese origin (Sino-Mauritians).

1.2 Post-independence cultural policing

To begin zooming in on our topic, Mauritius became independent in 1968.[3] However, part of the population rejected the idea of Independence, preferring the certitudes of colonial rule as opposed to the economic incertitude and possible communal instability of a country with a majority of Indo-Mauritians. Right after Independence, to ensure stability for a diverse population and as a reaction to colonial cultural policies that emphasised a Eurocentric world-view, the newly elected

government proceeded with setting up (or re-engineering) three key cultural institutions that would roll out the implicit cultural policy of the government. The three institutions would, in principle, cater for all segments of the population, in a cultural policy that would bring out the "rainbow nation" and "unity in diversity," to ensure cohesiveness of an infant nation-state. The three institutions are The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (national TV and radio), The Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC), and The Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI).

Here, I will focus on the third, to which I belong, and simply mention that it has a complex role in Mauritian society, as a relatively well-known educational institution; as a provider of cultural content to public events and television programmes; as a centrally located institution for conferences in the social sciences and the arts; and as a centre for exhibitions for performances. It is also the only tertiary institution offering diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate courses in the arts (in collaboration with the University of Mauritius).

The MGI has been associated with culture and creativity since its inception. It has approximately 1,500 tertiary students (300 full-time, 1,200 part-time), and about 100 full-time academics and 200 part-time lecturers. The tertiary section of the MGI consists of five schools: the School of Performing Arts (music and dance), the School of Fine Arts, the School of Indian Studies, the School of Indology and Philosophy, and the School of Mauritian and Area Studies.

2.1 Transitioning to artistic research

Right from the outset, in the early 1970s, the MGI was conceived as a research institute in the humanities and the social sciences (in an island that's often perceived to be a laboratory of globalisation), as is exemplified by the number of conferences and publications in the first decade of its existence. As it took on additional roles addressing the acute need for secondary education in the 1970s and 1980s, providing cultural content for governmental public celebrations, and addressing the needs for an increasing number of tertiary students in the 1990s and 2000s, the focus on research has been diluted. However, since the mid-2000s, there have been discussions on how to change focus from teaching-intensive to more research-intensive workloads, so as to better conform to international trends in higher education.

It is to be noted that the first generation of academics/artists who were active between the 1970s and 1990s, broadly, were unconstrained by academic performance criteria and had the freedom to write (fiction and poetry) and to create art. There were quite a few major figures, and I mention only four: Abhimanyu Unnuth (novelist), Moorthy Nagalingum (painter), Mala Ramyead (sculptor), and Nalini Treebhoobun (painter).

Until the past decade, "research" at the MGI meant standard qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as well as various well-established approaches in the literary and philosophical disciplines. For academics in the creative fields, a list of exhibitions and/or performances/concerts were deemed to be more or less equivalent to a publication track record. However, there has been a gradual shift, as has happened elsewhere, where there is an increasing expectation for academic publications, even in the creative fields.

This poses different challenges for the different schools. For the School of Performing Arts, the focus is on Indian classical music and dance. As such, there is little scope to write about innovation or experimentation. Taking this into consideration, colleagues are developing reflexive processes. They re-consider and analyse

their own compositional practices; Indian classical music in a diasporic context; the impact of Bollywood on classical forms of music and dance; the relationship between *sega* (the music developed by the creole population since the time of slavery) with *bhojpuri* songs (sung by the inhabitants coming from the state of Bihar, in India, to work as indentured labourers in Mauritius) and Indian popular music. These, among others, are a few themes of research.

For the School of Fine Arts, the challenges are different. By and large, the School encourages contemporary art practices, underpinned by an emphasis on individual creative voice and innovation as well as experimentation. There is a range of attitudes: earlier more senior academics argued that research in the visual arts is, and should be, self-evident. Along that line, writing about visual research was considered a waste of time, a distraction from the work. A lack of familiarity with academic writing to articulate their processes in written text compounded the problem.

However, mid-career academics have avoided this hard-line stance and have shifted gears to address key questions: what are the fundamental ideas that underlie their processes? How can one reflect upon these separately from the work of art, if only for pedagogical purposes, so that students do not perceive the creative process as a mystical or worse, mystifying, act? Artistic research is somewhat more directly addressed by early-career academics artists who start with research as an already agreed upon dimension of their work.

The School of Indian Studies, which focusses on the teaching of Indian languages (Hindi, Urgu, Tamil, Telegu, and Marathi, as well as regional languages of the Indian subcontinent) faces different challenges. The academics—some of whom are also creative writers, novelists, and poets—have the option to carry out literary studies in the humanities, or to explore creative writing. There is an alarming decrease in readership: some of the languages of the Indian subcontinent are facing the threat of disappearance on the island (e.g., Marathi and Telegu). There are creative challenges in the sense that print-based media (books, magazine articles, etc.) are losing readership, whereas audio-visual media such as television and radio shows tend to be more exciting media to keep the languages alive in a diasporic context. In addition, activities such as short plays, storytelling competitions, etc., are more engaging than print. Thus, creating or co-creating and hosting talk shows and radio programmes are ways where academics branch out of the traditional teaching route, and mix pedagogy with creative practices, opening up possibilities of reflexive research.

Apart from challenges that are particular to each of the three schools, there are also some shared issues, such as:

- The question of how and where to publish academic research on creative practice.
- The development of a peer review process, a forum, and an academic e-journal as a stepping stone before attempting publication in regional or international journals.
- How we might take into account the slow but gradual restructuring of the fields of culture and creativity as "creative industries," and their implications for creative academia.

3. Zooming out: the broader context

While this may appear to be a discussion around artistic practice rather than on the topic itself, all the aforementioned details form part of the context of the discussion in Mauritius. Because of its small size, changes on the island happen rapidly. Take,



Figure 1. Nirveda Alleck, 2010, *Continuum Chagos I*, acrylic on canvas.



Figure 2. Hans Ramduth, 2013, *Vye Zako, zako zordi zour (Old Monkeys and Present Day Monkeys)*, 11 digital prints on PVC.



Figure 3. Gerard Foy, 2011, *Mwa Sa, Twa Sa, Li Sa (That's Me, That's You, That's Him)*, unregistered metal and PVC number plates.



Figure 4. Krishna Luchoomun, 2001, *The Fight (Dark Side of the Moon)*, collage and painting on board.[4]

for example, the demographic explosion that was reined in within two decades (the 1960s and 1970s). The simplified ecosystem gives rise to unique and unusual lifeforms, such as the dodo. The latter is a poster creature for ecocide as it signalled the onset of the mass extinction of what is now termed the Anthropocene as early as the 17th century.

Due to geographical and cultural distance, the island offers a good vantage point to observe processes happening on the mainland, and we reflexively become aware of how quickly we have adopted unsustainable developmental practices. Display of wealth, in the form of expensive cars, an obsession for many Mauritians, becomes a sign of cultural poverty, and the frustration caused by conspicuous inequality has a toll on the environment and on the youth, where there is alarmingly widespread usage of synthetic drugs. This could be read as a desperate attempt to reach the promised paradise, which the island does not turn out to be for many.

Careful consideration of the relationship between culture and the environment on the island enables the deconstruction of the "Paradise Island" myth. Moreover, it

allows us to go beyond what is called the "all-too-familiar race, class and gender mantra,"[5] by reconfiguring these in more complex but more coherent frames of study. Thus, who we are (*biologies*—homo sapiens, gender, ethnicity, sexualities, age, dis/abilities, etc.); where we are (*geographies*—urban/ rural, national, regional, Global North/ Global South, how we negotiate between place and space, etc.); what we own (*class*—institutional inequality of access to resources, including cultural resources); and, more fundamentally, how we invest emotions (*affective investment* in cultural meta-narratives, namely religions, ideologies, etc.) all weave together the webs of meaning that suspend us to the planet.

How does this relate to artistic research? Creative practices both unravel and weave us back into the texture of the planet at several levels of fractal complexity. If we try to look beyond current crises and try to imagine a situation where the frenzy for more and for novelty abates, one of the rare ways to recapture a sense of embodied meaningfulness is through creative practices, which can be as simple as crafts and as complex as the integration of science, technology, art, and design (as in the work of Israeli-American artist-scientist Neri Oxman, for an extreme example).

It is in this context that the ideas of artist-craftsperson-researcher-art theoretician K. G. Subramanyan (1924–2016) become relevant once again. Belonging to the second generation of the Bengal Renaissance in India, a movement that strove for a contextual modernism (Sivakumar's term describing India's take on modernism) in parallel to the quest for independence from the British, he was versatile in the various craft traditions and popular arts that continue to exist in contemporary India. He infused his own artistic practice with this life-long interest in craft. For him, the crafts and the arts were within the same continuum, a "creative circuit."[6] In that line of thinking, participation in form of creative practice both as consumers and producers of music, art, crafts, performances, and/or contemporary collective artistic practices could and should re-orient culture towards more sustainability and overall "well-being." For fragile Small Island Developing States, this is indeed relevant to steer away from the unsustainable modes that are currently prevalent.

Within recent studies in crafts too, there is an impetus to redefine the relationship between the "ordinariness" of craft and the exacerbated uniqueness of the arts. Relying on the concept of "flat ontologies" as proposed by the New Materialists, Barbara Wisnoski argues that craft "is the ground for all creative practice."[7]

This emphasis on craft is intended to address the latent assumption that artistic research is predicated on the model of the contemporary artist-researcher who imperatively pushes the envelope to bring new insights about practice, and about art itself. As paradigm shifts occur, there are sometimes useful insights that are lost. Thomas Crow's 1996 discussion of the dependence of capitalism on the production of novelty is still as relevant as it was about a quarter of a century ago.[8]

In this view, artistic research has to be broadened to include more pedestrian crafts. In addition, it goes beyond the narrow focus of academic research and is seen as an idealistic means of addressing larger issues, namely unsustainable development and its corollaries.

Hans is Associate Professor at the School of Fine Arts of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius; hanslramduth@gmail.com

Notes

1 As per the definition of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

2 Agalega, Saint Brandon islands

3 And a democratic republic in 1992.

4 All four artists are currently academics at the School of Fine Arts of the MGI.

5 Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, 31.

6 This is also the title of his book, a collection of five of his essays on the subject of the relationship of modern Indian art with its others; Subramanyan, *The Creative Circuit*.

7 Wisnoski, 'An Aesthetics of Everything Else'.

8 Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture*.

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THE TRANSLATED LANDSCAPE: INTERPRETING SOUTH AFRICA THROUGH JEWELLERY PRAXIS

JOANI GROENEWALD AND
ERNST VAN DER WAL

Can a landscape function as a visual text that could, in turn, be translated through various multimodal practices? Through an account of Groenewald's own creative practice, which translates landscape images into jewellery/sculptural pieces, this paper unpacks the complexities of translation and language within the memory politics of the South African landscape.

Translation in the context of the South African landscape[1]

In South Africa, our relationship with the landscape is complicated and has been so for many centuries: from the occupation of the landscape when the first settlers arrived in the Cape of Good Hope in 1652,[2] to the Apartheid years where inhabitants were forcibly removed and relocated according to racial classifications and categorisations. These issues have had a lingering influence on the South African socio-political environment, where issues of land, ownership, place, and displacement are still highly polemical and of great concern. As such, the very idea of the South African landscape speaks of the trauma, loss, and brutality that shape our understanding of our living environments or the spaces through we move. The South African landscape is thus clearly embedded in the histories and memories of its inhabitants, while the very idea of who has the right to imagine themselves as part of a given landscape has perhaps never been more topical. This idea is reiterated by W. J. T. Mitchell's sentiment that the landscape is not just a physical environment, but rather, a place of dwelling that remembers, is shaped by, and is embedded in the consciousness of its inhabitants.[3]

The collective and individual memories and narratives that encompass our relationship with the South African landscape are multiple and often conflicted. In order to achieve a more inclusive and diverse account of the collective memory of the South African landscape, Cherryl Walker urges artists to express and explore the problematics of the South African landscape through their art praxis:

> We need intellectuals, artists, activists who can script a multiplicity of narratives about land. Land as an economic resource cannot be adequately understood through the simple story of dispossession/restoration that the prevailing master narrative has told. This "headline history" obscures almost as much as it reveals. Nor can the complex and varied meanings of land in contemporary South Africa be adequately analysed through the sharp dichotomies of black/white, rural/urban, commercial/communal, capitalist/socialist that have dominated so much of the debate. Despite its unbound authority, "race" itself is insufficient as a category with which to devise a meaningful programme of developmentally progressive land reform. South Africa's current land dispensation is the product not only of the past to separate black and white in the service of their own political and economic power. It is also the product of complex and dynamic interactions among differently constituted sets of people, in an often-difficult environment.[4]

The translation of multiple perspectives and narratives through art praxis is, in response to the words of Walker, of great importance to contemporary South Africa, as visual media can potentially assist in providing a more diverse and inclusive account of the South African landscape. This also provides a means to comment on the historical context of the South African landscape on a personal level, in a way that can facilitate a conversation that operates between generations.

Contemporary South Africa is marked by an urgent need for re-engagement with the landscape, as well as the critical representation thereof from a perspective that is sensitive towards the entangled nuances, histories, and layers of meaning that are present in the landscape. According to Sarah Nuttall, entanglement provides a means where sites which were "once thought of as separate—identities, spaces, histories—come together or find points of intersection in unexpected ways,"[5] and that a way to engage with spaces that are layered with different histories is "to revisit the aftermath of official segregation, [where] the concept of segregated space in socio-historical terms [can be used as] a methodological device for reading the

post-apartheid situation."[6] As such, we believe that translational theory allows us to enter into an entangled and multimodal conversation with the landscape, insofar as it provides a personal account of the artist's experience of a specific landscape, assuming a fresh perspective on the problematics of the South African landscape through its visualisation in the form of jewellery pieces. Furthermore, translational theory facilitates a conversation that can be experienced through the interaction and engagement with the work by means of non-verbal communication. The jewellery object is, thus, an operative as well as an interpretive tool, which can enable communication as well as interaction with the landscape. This will be discussed in more detail later, alongside a discussion of Groenewald's work.

In this paper, we view translation not only as a textual device, which implies the translation of text from one *language* into another but also as a multimodal device that allows for the visual/physical translation from one *mode* to another. We view the landscape as a visual text, and we are interested in how this visual text can be translated in a multimodal manner through different visual media or modalities, such as jewellery design.

Translation and visual language

Interdisciplinary approaches have recently become a topical focal point in translational studies, and suggests a move from translational studies, to post-translational studies, implying a move beyond the traditional interpretation of the term (which places translation in isolation) to an "Outward turn … that redefines itself and begins to enjoy greater exchange with other disciplines in a mutually beneficial process of importing and exporting methodologies and ideas."[7] The term "post-translational studies" was coined by Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini in their 2011 text, 'Translation: A New Paradigm'; in which they redefined translation, allowing it to operate within the broader context of culture and not merely within the parameters of linguistic borders. Nergaard and Arduini define post-translation as a form of translation studies that open up translation to function as an "interpretive or operative tool … where translation is fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open-ended."[8] This idea is reinforced by Susan Bassnett's suggestion that translational studies should expand "its self-imposed boundaries, so that the field can reach out to other disciplines and become more open to ideas about translational issues coming from other researchers who may not be primarily engaged in translation."[9] Post-translation has opened the door for translation studies to expand into topics such as translational spaces in cities, music, dance, film, fashion, and food, to name but a few.[10] And, as such, translation studies could be opened up to be applied to fields such as the arts, memory studies, semiotics, and landscape studies.[11] In this paper, post-translational studies provide us with the means to make connections between artistic research practices in the field of jewellery design and landscape theory within the context of photographic discourse.

The primary motivation for translation is often associated with a dislocation, as the translator is forced to navigate and bring together different languages in a new or different environment. As such, the link between landscape studies and theories regarding translation begins to emerge more clearly. In many ways, the translator promotes the circulation of cultural ideas and is the agent in the production of new connections or commonalities between nations, cultures, languages, and landscapes. Subsequently, cities and landscapes often demonstrate the influence of translation through cultural markers such as architecture, art, and theatre, where the cityscape

is often the visualisation, the palimpsest, of different layers of cultural influences.[12] The South African landscape (as it stands today) has clearly been altered by its inhabitants, and traces of its colonial past can, for example, be seen in the way that imported trees and plant life such as poplar, wattle, pine, gum, oak, prickly pear, and many more, dot the landscape.[13]

Sherry Simon suggests that once the boundaries posed by a traditional understanding of translation is removed and the emphasis is placed on the cultural conditions that are conducive to translation, rather than the act of translation itself, one will be able to better conceive the extent of the influence that translation has on culture.[14] When investigating the South African landscape from such a perspective of translation, the links between cultural exchange relocation and dislocation become apparent, especially when looking at visual landmarks such as architecture, monuments, and agriculture. These cultural infiltrations can be seen in the way that the South African landscape and cities have been developed, documented, divided, and farmed. Monuments such as that of Jan Marais, Cecil John Rhodes, Die Afrikaanse Taal Monument which, along with the Cape-Dutch Architecture, can be seen across the Western Cape (and in other parts of South Africa), are some examples of how cultural ideas have been translated into visual symbols that communicate, rather strongly, the colonial influences which have inscribed the visual language of the Western Cape with cultural nuances. The ways in which our urban spaces have been divided, segregated, and named would be another example of how cultural discourse has been translated into the physical landscape. Simultaneously, the South African landscape testifies to its precolonial history through the multiple works of rock art that have been engraved and painted onto rock-faces all over the landscape. Rock art paintings or engravings are often expressions of the religious belief and cultural structures of the San, Khoikhoi, and Khoekhoe people who inhabited the landscape long before Europeans arrived on the southern tip of Africa and are coded with multiple social, religious, and cultural messages.[15] As such, translation can be conceived as a cultural condition that underlies all forms of communication, rather than a purely textual device.

The physical landscape can, as such, be understood within the context of language as a visual text of sorts, which is inscribed with layers of histories of the inhabitants of a particular space and the cultural influences that helped shape that space. Fragments of these histories and cultural influences start blending together in the landscapes with which we now engage, where layers of different histories and cultural influences constitute a seemingly coherent visual language where translation functioned as a central agent in the transferal of the cultural ideas helping to shape a particular landscape.

Approaching translation as an agent that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of language and text, opens up its potential in terms of application. In the context of this paper, translation allows us to define the landscape as a culturally constructed space that can be read as a visual text. By extension, once the landscape is understood within such a context—as visual text—and translation theory is understood as a cross-disciplinary device, then translation theory also allows us to investigate the translation of the visual representation of the landscape from one visual media into another. This form of translation is referred to as intersemiotic,[16] where translation occurs between two different sign systems.[17] This concept is reinforced by Kobus Marais, Professor in Linguistics and Language Studies at the University of the Free State; he states that "translation takes a plethora of forms, depending on medium, technology, culture, time, and space, among others."[18]

Jewellery praxis as translation

In Groenewald's artistic work, she explores the potential of her jewellery praxis as, perhaps, an ideal means of cross-disciplinary translation, as jewellery is inevitably entangled in politics of landscape and culture because of its material nature, as well as symbolic function. As such, we explore the potential of jewellery praxis to function as a medium or tool that allows one to express concerns regarding the South African landscape.



Figure 1. Hjalmar/Oliver Bekker, Hasiesfontein-Molteno (1950–1970). Scanned photographic image from the Bekker Family Archive.



Figure 2. Hjalmar/Oliver Bekker, Hasiesfontein-Molteno (1950–1970). Scanned photographic image from the Bekker Family Archive.



Figure 3. Hjalmar/Oliver Bekker, Hasiesfontein-Molteno (1950–1970). Scanned photographic image from the Bekker Family Archive.

Jewellery practices often include a wide variety of materials, which function on a symbolic level as a means of communication. Over time, the variety of materials that are commonly included in jewellery pieces have kept on increasing. However, the most characteristic materials included in the production of jewellery remain materials mined from the earth, such as precious metals and gemstones. This makes jewellery a particularly interesting medium to use in order to address landscape politics in South Africa, as the mining of precious metals and minerals has, to a large extent, helped shape the landscape. Cities such as Johannesburg and Kimberly were founded around the minerals they possess. Thus, the symbolic function of jewellery is multi-layered and subtly speaks of South Africa's colonial history even before it has taken on a functional or representational form. Removed from ruptured soil, these materials act as reminders of the commodification, socialisation, and exploitation of the landscape.[19] In this process, the jewellery piece (the mined, modified, and commodified landscape) enters the symbolic realm,[20] as a form of body adornment that communicates messages of personal significance.[21] The nature of the materials with which Groenewald works thus becomes a medium through which she questions issues regarding landscape and culture, specifically because of its origins, symbolic function, and the political context that surrounds the extraction of natural resources in previously colonised countries such as South Africa. Her work often includes found materials such as fragments of discarded objects, stones, plant life, soil, and twigs—found in the agricultural landscape where she grew up—and mined minerals, such as gemstones and precious metals, in combination with artificial materials, such as plastics and resins, and fragile materials, such as glass. The distortion, unconventional combination, and manipulation of these materials speak to the complex relationship she has with the landscape in question. In this sense, an interesting parallel appears between the way that Groenewald "mines" the landscape where she once lived for objects that may be seen as mundane or discarded and imbues them with cultural significance by turning them into jewellery pieces (see Figure 8).

Ellen Maurer-Zilioli comments on the relationship between place in relation to jewellery when he states that "[i]f the body can grow, allow itself an imaginary second layer thanks to jewellery … not an outward projection but an internalisation of space. Instead of expanding into emptiness, jewellery then absorbs and incorporates it."[22] Jewellery thus provides a certain intimacy or an internalisation of space in our conversation with landscape. The intimacy, in the way that the jewellery object is worn, also suggests a sense of cultural location, which refers to the body becoming a

different type of landscape, so to speak, when the jewellery piece is placed upon it. This idea resonates with that of Robert Baines when he states that "[the] jewellery artefact and its placement … on the body informs cultural topology."[23]

The relevance of the jewellery object as artefact and its relation to the landscape becomes heightened through its symbolic implications and intimate relationship with the body. In this regard, Elizabeth Grierson suggests that "the crafting of artefacts or objects presents an innovative way to talk about place. Artefacts carry the imprint of place; they suggest, echo, trace, and design our ideas of place."[24] In Groenewald's art practice, she echoes Grierson's opinion and employs her artistic practice as a jeweller to explore the mnemonic function of the South African landscape through the creation of jewellery objects. Specifically, her work investigates how the landscape has been translated into photographic images found in an old family archive (see Figures 1–3) and responds to these images through her art-making process (see Figures 4–14). In agreement with Grierson, we believe that "[artists] carry the imprint of their surroundings and locations as they migrate from place to place."[25] Following this line of reasoning, we believe that the jewellery pieces Groenewald creates can be viewed as idiosyncratic retranslations of the South African landscape. These pieces thus function as markers of her personal connection with a specific landscape.



Figure 4. Joani Groenewald, digitally manipulated image taken by Hjalmar and Oliver Bekker of Hasiesfontein-Molteno between 1950 and 1970. Bekker Family Archive.



Figure 5. Joani Groenewald, digitally manipulated image taken by Hjalmar and Oliver Bekker of Hasiesfontein-Molteno between 1950 and 1970. Bekker Family Archive.

We are particularly interested in how the media into which the object is translated and how the placement of the piece on the body impact on the meaning of the translated "text" (in this case the South African landscape), and allows for metamorphosis and transformation that is sensitive towards the role different media play in carrying across an intended message. In this regard, we investigate how translational discourses and practices resonate with jewellery design as a methodology for translating a given "text"[26] (a message, like a photograph, that was deliberately coded to communicate a specific message or idea).[27]



Figure 6. Joani Groenewald, blind contour drawings and design development.

For Groenewald, the use of materials is a strategic decision, as each material has its own individual characteristics and cultural associations that communicate in subtle ways through their inclusion in the jewellery objects she creates. For this reason, she makes use of fragile materials, such as glass to reference the fragility of her relationship with the South African landscape and her own sense of belonging. Glass is also a material that is made by heating soil to extreme temperatures, thus also carrying with it the imprint of a specific place. The process itself also references a specific harshness and transformation through trauma. The use of soil and plant life makes direct reference to the landscape in question. She specifically includes soil from the farm where she grew up in order to make a direct connection to this landscape through her work. In some of her works, she also includes fragments of prickly pear or moulds of the plant. The prickly pear, an imported and invasive plant species, has seamlessly integrated into the South African landscape in such a way that it seems to belong. For Groenewald, this complex sense of "belonging" also speaks to her own feelings of being in and longing for the landscape where she was born and in

which she grew up. Furthermore, the use of plastics, moulds, and resins talk about the artificiality of our connections with places and our own myths that we construct around our past, while also referencing the scope for manipulation and distortion in the process of translation.

In this practice-based study, we are interested in the way that the materials and representational properties of a jewellery piece impacts meaning. Furthermore, we are interested in the role of the artist in the process of production. The artist, in this study, is seen as the translator, as they are responsible for translating an image from one medium to another. The example used here is that of photographic images that were taken of a specific farm landscape in the Eastern Cape, which were translated into jewellery pieces. This process illustrates the power of the artist or translator over the meaning of the original text. Groenewald explores the role of the translator through various practical processes in order to explore the parameters of translation on a visual and tactile level. Susan Sontag suggests that "to translate is … to lead something across a gap, to make something go where it was not."[28] She also emphasises the role of the translator as a mediator, as "the translator is the one who finds (identifies, formulates) the comparable customs in another language."[29] According to Sontag, translation is a means to explain, adapt and, perhaps, improve.[30] Based on this interpretation of Sontag's, it is evident how the translation of a text—be it visual or textual—from one mode to another impacts on the meaning of the original text. By using found materials from the landscape, for example, and manipulating them in order to assume another function, one of symbolic or cultural significance—the artisan bestows new meaning on those objects. It is exactly this aspect that Groenewald explores through her process. Her work demonstrates how the translator distorts and manipulates, through the process of intersemiotic translation, as she translates images of the landscape where she grew up (collected from an old family archive of their farm in the Eastern Cape) into jewellery pieces. Her process explores various aspects of translation, firstly through digital manipulation, where she plays with contrast and repetition in the reproduction of the found images (see Figures 3–5), and secondly through contour and blind contour drawings of the images. She then reinterprets aspects of these drawings in designs for jewellery pieces (see Figures 6 & 7). She also collects materials from the given landscape and reuses them in the physical production of the jewellery pieces that she creates. She relies on the inherent properties of the materials she uses to communicate a sense of place and attachment. Simultaneously, she emphasises her role as the translator, and highlights how the translator has the ability to adapt and manipulate meaning.

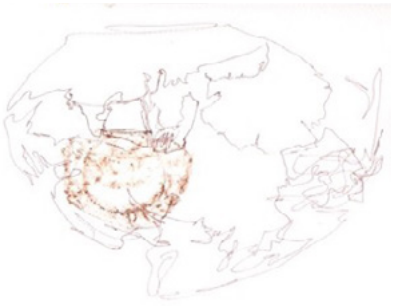


Figure 7. Joani Groenewald, object prints, blind contour drawings, and design development.



Figure 8. Found objects from Hasiesfontein-Molteno, photograph by Joani Groenewald, 2019.

Translating tacit knowledge: a conclusion

As the above examples demonstrate, contemporary jewellery design constitutes a form of practice-based research that is, at the heart of it, conducive towards the production and translation of tacit knowledge.

Tacit knowledge can be defined as the skills, ideas, and experiences people have that are not easily expressed in language (in fact, it is more felt and embodied than spoken or codified).[31] As Michael Polanyi asserts in *The Tacit Dimension*, "we can know



Figure 9. Joani Groenewald, 2019, *Time Capsule* (pendant), silver, glass, plastic resin, soil, and leather cord.



Figure 10. Joani Groenewald, 2019, *Skipping Stones 1* (ring), silver, glass, plastic resin, and soil.



Figure 11. Joani Groenewald, 2019, *Skipping Stones 2* (pendant), silver, glass, plastic resin, soil, and waxed cotton cord.



Figure 12. Joani Groenewald, 2019, *Skipping Stones 3* (brooch), silver, plastic resin, and soil.



Figure 13: Joani Groenewald, 2020, *Cast in Stones 1* (brooch), silver, plastic resin, steel wire, and soil.



Figure 14: Joani Groenewald, 2020, *Alien-Nation* (brooch), silver, plastic resin, steel wires and prickly pear.

more than we can tell,"[32] and it is exactly such tacit, bodily, rooted forms of knowing, of the body doing and making in ways that cannot be translated directly into words and that cannot always be adequately articulated by verbal or written means. Hence, tacit knowledge quite often escapes the grasp of codified or explicit knowledge systems, such as those we most often work with as academics. And herewith the challenge (and opportunity) of practice-based research, as the latter entails (and, we argue, can potentially accommodate) the translation of tacit knowledge into coded knowledge. Without trying to argue for practice-based research as an easy solution to the complex divide that still holds sway over "body" and "discourse," "doing" and "thinking," we do believe that practice-based research holds the practitioner accountable, or challenges the artist, to try and comprehend how the body, its mechanisms, mannerisms, and tacit skills, responds to a given research question. Hence, practice-based research entails the translation of tacit into explicit knowledge, and vice-versa, as it entails a process of coding and decoding, learning and unlearning, taking up and discarding, within the realm of creative practice. As Ritesh Chugh maintains, tacit and explicit knowledge are not separate in practice, and it is the actual interaction between these two modes of knowing that is vital for the creation of new knowledge.[33]

It is exactly this construction of new knowledge, we believe, that is central to practice-based research, which resonates clearly not only with the role of the artist as translator, but also with the artist's position as mediator between bodies of knowledge, be they tacit, tactile, object-based, or discursive.

Joani is a jewellery designer, goldsmith, and artist. She is a Lecturer and the Acting Coordinator (2019) for the Creative Jewellery Division at Stellenbosch University; joani@sun.ac.za

Ernst is a Senior Lecturer, researcher, writer, and artist. He is based in the Visual Arts department at Stellenbosch University; evdw@sun.ac.za

Notes

1 It is important to note that this study touches on (or is informed by) various complexities that cannot be addressed in a single paper, and for this reason, it is critical to acknowledge that we will not discuss the politics surrounding the representation of the South African landscape or the very specific role of the jewellery object as a means of communication in detail. Rather, the focus of this paper will be on the role of translation itself in the context of artistic research practices. These topics will be addressed in detail in Groenewald's PhD study.

2 Abdi, 'Identity Formations and Deformations in South Africa', 147.

3 Mitchell, 'Introduction', 5.

4 Walker, 'Looking Forward, Looking Back', 24.

5 Nuttall, *Entanglement*, 11.

6 Nuttall, *Entanglement*, 20.

7 Bassnett, 'Foreword', x.

8 Nergaard and Arduini, 'Translation: A New Paradigm', 8.

9 Bassnett, 'Foreword', ix.

10 Gentzler, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, xii-xiv.

11 Gentzler, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, 1.

12 Gentzler, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, 6.

13 Bennett, 'Reading the Land', 46; Groenewald's work includes references to some of this imported plant life, specifically the prickly pear, in order to represent her relationship with a particular landscape, where the prickly pear has invaded the landscape in such a way that it has become so seamlessly integrated that it seems to belong. See the discussion of her practical work for a more detailed account. This apparent belonging is subtly implied by some of her pieces, and also speaks metaphorically about her own sense of belonging within a specific landscape.

14 Simon, *Translating Montreal*, 17.

15 'About Rock Art, Rock Art of Africa'.

16 Intersemiotic translation is a term first defined by Roman Jackobson and refers to the transmutation of signs and "interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems," Jakobson and Brower, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', 113-118.

17 Ketola, 'Teaching Intersemiotic Meaning Construction in Design'.

18 Marais, *A (Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation*, 6.

19 Even though the relationship between jewellery and its relation to the landscape can be traced through various cultural contexts, the aim of this study is to focus on jewellery and its relation to the South African landscape as understood from an idiosyncratic "western South African perspective."

20 Assuming a post-modern disposition, we approach the symbolic function of objects—jewellery objects/artefacts included—as unstable, fluctuating, and multifarious.

21 See Barthes, 'From Gemstones to Jewellery'; Vigna, 'Heirlooms'; den Besten, *On Jewellery*; English and Dormer, *Jewelry of Our Time*; Groenewald summarises Roland Barthes' take on the symbolic function of jewellery in her MA thesis; 'Fragmented Mnemonics: An Investigation into Contemporary Jewellery as Means of Externalizing Memory', as such; "[i]t is apparent that jewellery is embedded in a framework of symbolism and myth. Roland Barthes was particularly interested in the mythologies that surround jewellery objects. He elaborates on these mythologies in his essay 'From Gemstones to Jewellery' ... Barthes explains how jewellery becomes a discourse with a symbolic language of its own. In his text, he focuses on specific mythologies that surround certain aspects of jewellery, such as diamonds and gold:

"As for the quintessential stone, the diamond ... it is incorporated into a new magical and poetic domain, that of the paradoxical substance, both lit up and stone cold: it is nothing but fire and yet nothing but ice. This cold fire, this sharp, shining object which is nevertheless silent, what a symbol for the whole world of vanities, of seductions devoid of content, of pleasure devoid of sincerity! And about gold ... gold is a substance more intellectual than symbolic ... But as a sign, what power it has! And it is precisely the sign par excellence, the sign of all the signs; it is absolute value, invested with all powers including those once held by magic ... here the gemstone becomes the very concept of price; it is worn like an idea, that of a terrific power, for it is enough to be seen for this power to be demonstrated."

In this text, Barthes addresses the mythologies surrounding jewellery during the 1950s in Europe. The relevance of this text does not lie so much in his discussion of the mythologies that surrounded jewellery at that time, but rather in what can be deduced from this discussion, namely that jewellery is embedded in a framework of mythologies and that these mythologies are inconsistent and culture specific. Acknowledging these mythologies allows the contemporary jeweller to analyse them and expose them as such"; Groenewald, 'Fragmented Mnemonics', 48–49.

22 Maurer-Zilioli, 'Remembered Places—Imagined Spaces', 135.

23 Baines, 'Intelligent Jewellery Spaces', 15.

24 Grierson, 'The Art of Migration through Contemporary Jewellery', 6.

25 Grierson, 'The Art of Migration through Contemporary Jewellery', 8.

26 With regards to the landscape as text and textuality, we will refer to Jacques Derrida's two texts; *Positions* and *The Double Session*; as well as Barthes's text *Mythologies* in relation to the way we ascribe meaning to our surroundings. We rely on these theories in our conversation with, and the interpretation of, the South African landscape.

27 Kotarba, 'Symbolic Interaction and Applied Social Research', 412–425.

28 Sontag, 'Being Translated', 15.

29 Sontag, 'Being Translated', 15.

30 Sontag, 'Being Translated', 15.

31 Chugh, 'Do Australian Universities Encourage Tacit Knowledge Transfer?'

32 Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 4.

33 Chugh, 'Do Australian Universities Encourage Tacit Knowledge Transfer?'

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THE VALUE OF AUSTRALIAN ARTISTIC RESEARCH: HOW WORKS ARE ASSESSED, THE PLACE OF PEER EVALUATION, AND THE ANXIETY OF FUTURE METRIC MEASUREMENT

JOSEPH TOLTZ

How has the issue of value been used to question peer review as a process for recognising quality and excellence in humanities and creative arts research? This paper will address issues of value in data collection, presentation, and evaluation at the national level in Australia.

In the introductory call for the Artistic Research Africa Conference, the convenors wrote the following:

> Internationally, there now exists a reasonable body of research outputs in the field of Artistic Research, generated mainly by artists and researchers active in Europe, Australia and Great Britain. However, Artistic Research has not secured a significant position within most African university systems.[1]

While this is quantifiably true in the case of my home country, Australia, my purpose at this conference is to present the precarious position that artistic research occupies in the Australian academy. This adjective, "precarious," also describes the state of my country as I present this paper today. The day I arrived in Johannesburg, the fires that raged on the eastern and southern seaboards of Australia had reportedly burned 16 million hectares of land, destroying 5,600 buildings, including 2,500 homes. At that point, 29 people were known to have died, with tens of thousands of livestock killed, and at least one billion native animals incinerated.[2] Many of our endangered species are now believed to be on the brink of extinction, including the Kangaroo Island glossy black cockatoo, and the world's last surviving population of Ligurian bees. The air quality in my hometown, Sydney, rose to the worst in the world on a number of occasions in late December 2019 and early January this year. Walking outside without a mask on the worst day was deemed equivalent to smoking 37 cigarettes. This season's Australian bush fires have contributed 2% to the increased global carbon load, and 99% of scientists acknowledge that the most likely contributor to our apocalyptic situation is climate change. The horrific drought endured by friends and loved ones in rural New South Wales (NSW) is into its seventh year now, and this combined with the hottest winter period we experienced on record, to prevent controlled burning efforts that would usually take place in July and August. In southern Queensland, fires have claimed temperate-climate wet rainforests, places that had never experienced fire before in human memory. Throughout this disaster, a campaign of misinformation from conservative politicians and the Rupert Murdoch-controlled media was waged—a blame game that pointed the finger absurdly at green policies of forest preservation and fire-bugs, with no substantive evidence that more than 1% of fires were deliberately lit.

As a response to the unfolding crisis, artists generated millions of dollars in aid and relief to communities most hard hit by the fires. Local celebrities such as Celeste Barber raised in excess of $50 million via a Facebook campaign, with global stars, Australian and otherwise, contributing significant amounts (P!nk, Elton John, Russell Crowe, Kylie Minogue, Nicole Kidman, Metallica, and others). On a local, personal level, trans-activist artist friends of mine worked on the ground with Aboriginal regional communities in the NSW South Coast to bring direct relief. And, although some would argue that it is a stretch to claim that colonisation is directly to blame for the situation in which we find ourselves, it is a fact that 230 years of colonial exploitation of our fragile, water-scarce continent has done irreparable damage to our environment.

The pattern of denying scientific evidence of climate change and its effects on the Australian environment resonates with another significant case of denial: the denial of past and continuing atrocities to the traditional owners of the Australian continent: the Aboriginal nations who, for thousands of years, built and maintained knowledge systems of how to live one country, in harmony with seasons very different to the four European constructs. The denial of dispossession,

dismissal of continuing custodianship culminated in the wholesale rejection from then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of the most recent olive branch offered from our Indigenous elders, the 2017 "Uluru Statement from the Heart."[3] This document, a "national Indigenous consensus position on Indigenous constitutional recognition" was formulated in central Australia,[4] on the land of the Anangu people and if successful, would have enshrined agreement and truth-telling processes between Australian governments (on all levels) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Denial, refusal to action, and rejection of uncomfortable truths (scientific and historical): these are features of Australian polity, and they play their own part in the way that artistic work, artistic research, and research (in general) is recognised and funded. On 6 December 2019, the Morrison Government removed the word "Arts" from the Federal Department of Communication and the Arts, a powerful symbolic gesture. For 35 years, the arts has been a named ministry, appropriate for an industry that generates over $111 billion in revenue (a figure far in excess than the sacred cow of Australian culture—sport). Arts now sits under the newly named mega-Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, and Communications.[5] During the recent bushfire emergency, the value of the arts came under specific attack. On 15 January 2020, an artist's mural on a public fire station in Western Australia was roundly criticised as being "non-essential." State government policy for the past thirty years requires a 1% investment in public art for any public building constructed that costs over $2 million, with the money coming from the government—and not being taken from emergency services equipment. Disregarding this inconvenient truth, the (conservative) shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Steve Thomas, critiqued the investment made into an emergency services building, saying "it is more important to put that money into the equipment they require rather than artwork to decorate the building."[6] Opinions from the United Fire-workers Union and the Bushfire Volunteers Organisation supported this stance. Perhaps the most famous attack on the value of arts in our everyday lives was the suggestion that Australia should sell Jackson Pollock's painting *Blue Poles* (1952), which was purchased by the National Gallery of Australia for $1.3 million in a controversial decision in 1973. Senator James Paterson argued that with its worth at the time (estimated at $350 million), the work should be sold off to help pay the national debt.[7] The attendant contempt for this monetised view of aesthetic beauty was most aptly summed up in a cartoon by Jon Kudelka, entitled "Artonomics," which ran in *The Australian* on 8 October 2016. The image became the front cover for Julian Meyrick, Robert Phiddian, and Tully Barnett's excellent 2018 study about value in Australian culture,[8] which has inspired much of this paper.

This is how the arts fare in Australian polity. The disastrous funding cuts ($104 million) to the Australia Council for the Arts in 2014 by the Minister, Senator George Brandis, saw many small and medium practitioners leave the sector because of lack of funding. Brandis attempted to create an independent patronage entity in parallel with the Australia Council, the "National Program for Excellence in the Arts", later known as "Catalyst." From the onset, it was widely derided as a slush fund with the final say landing on the Minister's desk, rather than going through the arms-length peer-review process that has been at the centre of the Australia Council's funding model for over 30 years. The attack on this process should be noted here as part of a more concerted conservative campaign of attack on peer review in the context of aesthetic judgement.

2018 was also not a good year for peer review in the academy. The introduction of a "National Interest Test" to assess the value of research projects funded by the Australian Research Council not only shaped and restricted the scope of academic inquiry, but also provided a basis for 11 rejections later that year at the desk of the Minister.[9] The funding grants in question had undergone a highly rigorous peer evaluation by the Australian Research Council's College of Experts and were almost entirely based in the Humanities and Creative Arts. Rejections were explained on the basis of value and, in most instances, value to the "Australian community." Peer review is again diminished in the cause of "value."

Given such multi-pronged attacks on arts, outside and inside the academy, it is not unsurprising to see doubts raised about the value of artistic research. In a casual conversation last August that I had with another administrator, the question was raised about the intrinsic nature of artistic research. My interlocutor, having just returned from an international conference, raised the question of quality: did creative research (known in Australian research parlance as "Non-Traditional Research Outputs" or NTROs) need to be good art as well as good research? In conversations at the conference, a general consensus was that good research often made for tedious art. This prompted a quick examination through the British and Australian research survey criteria, where no references to aesthetic quality are stipulated in guidelines. This conversation seemed to be leading down a somewhat dangerous path, intimating that the measure of good artistic research should not rest on current protocols, but should also have some sort of value-based judgement introduced. But *whose* values? In a landscape dominated by conservative attacks on arts, research, and the essential contribution that aesthetic expression makes to our lives, I felt (and continue to feel) somewhat nervous about the direction of this discussion.

Artistic research goes through a rigorous process of verification and assessment before it is accepted and recognised in the academy. It is subject to internal university reviews with peer colleagues, after which claims are verified administratively, and in the case of the University of Sydney, an anonymous external peer assessor is employed to give a final ruling before a work enters the collection. This process repeats in preparation for the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) assessment, our equivalent to the British Research Excellence Framework (REF). In the ERA process, the output collection is reviewed internally, assessed (anonymously), filtered, and then sent to the Australian Research Council who put the outputs through yet another three-tier review process. Many subjective eyes have glanced witheringly down on artistic offerings before they make it to the final ERA collection.

Speaking now from a specific discipline (music), until the last ERA round, there has never been a music faculty or conservatorium who has achieved the golden Level 5: "well-above world standard." In 2018, for reasons still not apparent, the University of NSW (UNSW) was successful in obtaining the golden Level 5 in the Australian and New Zealand Research Code 1904, "Performing Arts and Creative Writing." The major Conservatory-style music departments around the country (WAAPA at Edith Cowan University, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne, Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music at The University of Sydney) all sit at a number 4 ranking, pipped at the post by a traditional University music department.

And, while the explanation of UNSW's submission remains opaque at the time of presenting this paper, there are some important factors that are influencing the status of artistic research in music in Australia:

- there are few ARC-College members with practice-based research as their discipline, mostly because of the low success rate of grant applications
- Very few researchers have sat on the Humanities and Creative Arts Research Evaluation Committee for ERA assessment, and there is currently no music researcher on the ARC College of Experts
- From reliable sources, it is known that the presentation of creative work in the online platform is cumbersome and confusing to navigate. Presentations of portfolios are almost impossible to access.

So, is it peer review that is the cause of our research woes in the creative arts (and music in particular)? I did a quick analysis of ARC funding results for the 2018 ERA round (encompassing research submitted from 2011–2016), focusing on funding in six two-digit codes, which were only in the peer review disciplines: Code 12 (Built Environment and Design), Code 18 (Law and Legal Studies), Code 19 (Studies in Creative Arts and Writing), Code 20 (Language, Communication and Culture), Code 21 (History and Archaeology), and Code 22 (Philosophy and Religious Studies). In my analysis, I calculated that Code 19 received only 7% of the funding to peer-reviewed Humanities disciplines listed, with the bulk of funding awarded to 20: "Language, Communication and Culture," and 21: "History and Archaeology." These codes produce tangible written research, which allows ease of measurement, and more importantly, the application of metrics in a meaningful way to understand how the rest of the academy and the wider world is engaged with this research. Peer review is working in tandem with this metric evaluation.

But, to summarise Meyrick, Phiddion, and Barnett's study in a most unfair manner, metrics simply do not work when it comes to the performing arts.[10] Metrics is where we are in administrative conversations, especially with the introduction of engagement and impact narratives as part of our next ERA exercise. Metrics have entered the land of arts management and cultural programming. As they eloquently put it, "quantitative measures have achieved dominant power over the least quantifiable area of human endeavour—culture."[11]

How meaningful is it to measure the number of plays on Spotify? How truthful will people be in an immediate online survey after a concert or cultural event? Will they feel it an invasion of privacy? Is it a disruption between the unspoken relationship that exists between audience and performer? A certain amount of engagement statistics will be captured by metric measurement but, as far as impact is concerned, a *very long game* needs to be played to understand what ramifications a cultural object or moment plays. It could be years, decades, or even longer.

There is a reason we should be even more anxious about metrics. If we proceed from Shoshana Zuboff's important work on the rise of surveillance capitalism,[12] we need to ask the question: how will metric analysis shape our future aesthetic tastes and offerings? If metric analysis follows the mercantile pattern of predictive mass psychology utilised in the data scraping and mining by Google, Facebook, Twitter, et al., then we are at risk of erasing the essential process of rumination, consideration, and thought that lie at the fundamental heart of the relationship between ourselves and artistic works. We must exercise a great deal of caution in proceeding down this path.

There are other ways to improve the recognition of artistic research. Ian Pace profiles Darla Crispin's paper at the 2019 Royal Music Association on his blog.[13] Crispin raises the idea of expert subjectivity being reintroduced into assessment, in order for artistic research to develop a broader, more trenchant model of self-criticism. This needs to be extended throughout the peer review process in the creative arts in order to convince the rest of the academy of the place and value of the work of artistic research.

We also need to turn around the anti-intellectualism of artists outside the academy. We must fight against the devaluation of artistic research—against the "auditory cheesecake" argument that the Steven Pinkers of the world wish to feed us.

When Zanele Madiba asked me to respond to the question: How does artistic research decolonise knowledge and practice *in Africa*?, I asked whether I could respond to the question without the geographic qualifier, being unqualified to speak on behalf of Africa. My response was as follows:

> Embodied practices and recognition of subjectivity lie at the heart of artistic research. These core values directly challenge positivist tendencies that are embedded in the colonial understanding of the aesthetic encounter—tendencies towards appropriation, subjugation, and assimilation.

Of course, artistic research can go beyond the remit of decolonising. In a country that does not acknowledge its own colonising imperatives, where art as research is under constant attack, we need strong leadership to argue for intrinsic value without qualification. Such value must be built on recognition and consensus from a significant body of practitioners and researchers committed to valuing art qua art.

Joseph is Research Services Manager, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney, Australia; joseph.toltz@sydney.edu.au

Notes

1 Arts Research Africa, 'Call for Contributions: Conference on Artistic Research in Africa: 22–24 January 2020, Johannesburg, South Africa'.

2 Resnick, Irfan, and Samuel, '8 Things Everyone Should Know about Australia's Wildfire Disaster'.

3 Melbourne Law School, 'Uluru Statement from the Heart: Information Booklet'.

4 Melbourne Law School, 'Uluru Statement from the Heart: Information Booklet', 3.

5 'Australia Cuts Federal Arts Department'.

6 Shine, 'WA Emergency Services Levy Funding Used to Pay for $100,000 Worth of Artwork at Fire Stations'.

7 Doran, 'Painting Blue Poles, Worth $350m, Should Be Sold to Reduce National Debt: Senator James Paterson'.

8 Meyrick, Phiddian, and Barnett, *What Matters*?

9 The text of the test is as follows: "Outline the extent to which the research contributes to Australia's national interest through its potential to have economic, commercial, environmental, social or cultural benefits to the Australian community. Write the description of the national interest simply, clearly and in plain English between approximately 100 and 150 words."

10 Meyrick, Phiddian, and Barnett, *What Matters?*

11 Meyrick, Phiddian, and Barnett, *What Matters?*, 284.

12 Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.

13 Pace, 'Rethinking Contemporary Musicology'.

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WAYFARING: A MUSLIM JOURNEY OF BECOMING

LEYYA HOOSEN

What are different ways of doing knowledge production and practice? This paper presents an approach to research that combines ethnographic analysis and poetic analysis. By using the structure as well as the content of the writing, this research seeks to explore the process of unfolding, during the *dhikr*, or practices of remembering, which occur for Sufi Muslim students as they seek spiritual knowledge within the conceptual and lived framework of wayfaring.

The presentation space is set up in the format of a Sufi dhikr *(meditation) space, with prayer mats laid out, rose and sandalwood incense lit (to open the mind and heart to receiving and channelling knowledge), and rose water sprayed around to cleanse the spiritual space. The attendees and I sit in a circle on the prayer mats, with our shoes removed, and on the same level. No enhanced audio was used; I chose to project my voice across the circle to allow for a more intimate setting and avoid the feedback that often accompanies microphones. It was important to have a stilled and peaceful environment, and to focus our attention, wholly, on the space we were creating. I decided to hold the presentation in this manner to challenge what we consider to be a space of learning and pedagogy. Sufis believe that the process of knowledge transmission is one that must engage and discipline all the senses to receive knowledge.*

As-salamu alaykum (peace be upon you), reader. Thank you for entering this space with me. I would like to blur the lines in terms of what we consider to be spaces of knowledge exchange. The focus of my MA degree, based in social and cultural anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, was on Sufi *dhikr* (meditation) practices and pedagogy. Specifically, my study explored how spiritual knowledge and the transcendental are not merely embodied processes but ensouled ones. It is in the spirit of ensoulment—rather than only embodiment—that I offer a Sufi inspired presentation of knowledge transmission.

Incense is burning, smoke trailing into the air, as we are all seated…

The focus of my MA sought to understand the ways in which *dhikr* (meditation) practices and pedagogy in a Sufi community in Johannesburg leads to spiritual development and transformation. Within the Sufi community, the conceptual and lived framework of wayfaring is prominent. I engaged this framework through the *dhikr* (meditative) practices of a Sufi youth group based in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg (the majority of the academic literature on Islam in Johannesburg has dealt with the migrant experience of Muslims in Fordsburg, and, while this is important, there is a significant gap in the research regarding other forms of Islam and everyday Islamic practices). The activities of the group revolve around *dhikr*: practices of "remembering," which are acts of past, present, and future-making, involved in spiritual transformation. Drawing on experiences from the year I spent (2018) attending the *dhikr*s, I focused on wayfaring as a constant state of *dhikr*, and a means through which Sufi Muslims are reshaping and negotiating notions of personhood and belonging.

My research is concerned with questions around different ways of *doing* knowledge production and practice. The thesis was written as a combination of ethnographic and poetic analysis, which considered—through structure as well as content—the process of unfolding that occurs for a Sufi student as they seek spiritual knowledge within the conceptual and lived framework of wayfaring. I would like to mirror that amalgamation of the poetic and ethnographic analysis in this written paper, as I did in the presentation format. I invite you to join in a brief guided meditation where I share a few of the poetic sections from my MA thesis regarding the nature and process of awakening to spiritual knowledge. Thereafter, I outline the central theme of my paper—that of ensouled knowledge.

Sufi poetry is an inherently social practice and is shared between community members as a tool to express and engage the transcendental. By adopting a meshwork methodology of autoethnographic approaches, participant participation,[1] and poetic analysis, I found that I was better able to engage the transcendental in a manner that acknowledges not only belief systems, but complex knowledge systems and cosmologies in a deeply embodied, and ensouled, mode of research. Hence, pulling through the

artistic impetus from the conception of the research project right through to the final product, produced as a meditation and dialogue between the ethnographic and poetic analysis, allowed a more nuanced understanding of Sufi *dhikr* practices and pedagogy. With this in mind, I invite you to partake in a guided meditation, as I recount a part of the process that I have undergone in learning how to treat, and be treated by: the spiritual knowledge I learnt attending the *dhikr*s during my year of fieldwork.

Close your eyes…
breathe in Al—meaning 'The'…
breathe out Lah—meaning 'One'…
Al… Lah… 'The'… 'One'…

Dear Earnest Scholar,
There are many things that you will not come to know in this life. More so, most things you cannot know in this life.

Do you know this? Do you know that, no matter how much you come to know, there is so much more you will not? Do you know that your body, your mind, cannot hold the knowledge of most things? Do you know this?

… And, knowing this, what does this knowledge mean for you? What does knowing there is knowledge you cannot know—cannot hold—mean for your scholarship? What does learning first what you cannot know, mean to you?

Before you learn to know anything, you must learn to un-know; to empty yourself of all you think you know. You must scrape away all the arrogance in your being that makes you think you know anything. Mine yourself for knowledge. Learn where knowledge sits in you. Learn how knowledge moves in you, animates you, emanates within you.

Qalb—*meaning heart. Your heart is a channel for knowledge, a tightrope between your material body and your soul… learn to dance along this line. Do not focus on the rope, nor the destination, too much. Rather, focus on refining your movements along this rope, on its textures and length, on other ropes around you with their own dancers. Spin webs from these ropes, immerse yourself in the fibres.*

Extend. Extend your awareness beyond your own rope, beyond the awareness of other ropes around you, beyond the awareness of others tripping or clinging or hanging about their ropes, frantically reaching for others to help them create a sturdiness that cannot be… Extend… Create not illusory bridges but webs… Extend… find other seekers, know them by their dancing upon their ropes, by their skilled web-spinning…

Be gentle with yourself, move lightly through your learning. Knowledge emerges from the alchemy of these webs, it hovers ever-present in the spaces all around; it is your medium and your materiality… it Is.

Dear Weary Traveller,
You pass so many on this journey… so many versions of yourself. This path is made of mirror. To find it, you must wipe away the dirt and grime. But before you can even start to follow it, you are immediately faced with your own reflection staring back at you.

I can see your feet are calloused from treading upon the glass,

I can see your eyes are searching for others beyond their own reflections,

I can see your body is calling upon all its reserves to push further,

I can see you, Weary Traveller, I can see you even if you cannot yet see me.

Keep walking. At your pace, in your time. Keep walking. Keep polishing that glass to find the Path. Keep confronting your reflection in its infinite varieties. Keep following the Way.

I know that you are wearied, but this is not your home. Resting places lie upon the path, yes, but these are not your Home.

Keep taking those steps, Dear One, your Beloved awaits your return at day's end…

Dear Teacher,
Learn. Learn to bring bodies and spaces into the music you are dancing to. Weave them together in ways, such that the spinning captures the Light in all and shines forth for all to see.

Let your students be your guide—each one contains within them the pattern in which they wish to be spun. Seek the pattern and bring it forth.

Continuously read the textures, gestures, vibrations, and movements. Write yourself into the moment so that those around you can learn to be scribes themselves.

Above all, dear teacher, be taught.

When you are ready, please open your eyes.

During my year of fieldwork, the Sufi youth group was in the process of establishing itself. Since Sufism refrains from becoming institutionalised, it is common to see groups moving through periods of expansion and contraction in terms of membership. The format of the group over this time changed to accommodate the students' progress. Initially, as the students were new to *dhikr*, the meditations of the group were focused on transcendence meditations: going beyond the body and the material world. The main purpose of these meditations was for students to be initiated into the practices of *dhikr*, and to learn the differences between their body and their soul (between the experience of ultimate Duality and Unity). The interpretation of texts, during this initial phase, was used to frame the experience of the body.

As the students became adept at experiencing nuanced *dhikr* sessions, the meditations of the group became more theory-based. These were known as the grounding meditations and were intended for students to become fluent in practices of *dhikr* and to focus on crafting their bodily presence. During this secondary phase, the experience of the body was used to frame the interpretation of texts.

Abd al-Qadir Al-Jīlānī explains that, in Sufism, souls are created from the Divine Light of Allah and have descended from this realm into the material world. He goes further to explain that a "time came when these souls started binding themselves to the flesh and forgot their source."[2] Within this understanding, *dhikr* is the act of

remembering one's source of creation, and living in this life with the practical understanding that all of existence comes from the same source.

During the *dhikr*s, by framing the body as a vessel through which the interpretation of texts is filtered and as a mechanism of filtering the interpretation of texts, Sufis engage in a process of knowledge production that is more resonant of knowledge *transmission*. By acutely disciplining the body and learning how to filter and make sense of experiences of the body, the body becomes a tool in knowledge transmission to be used at the will of the individual.

These movements of interpretation, from being text-based to be more body-based seems to refer to an embodied sense of knowledge. However, considering the expanded sense of the body, and acknowledging rather, the bodily presence, students explore a process of knowledge transmission that is *ensouled*. Talal Asad describes ensoulment as "the idea that the living human body is an integrated totality having developable capacities for activity and experience unique to it, the capacities for sensing, imagining, and doing that are culturally mediated."[3]

Tim Ingold speaks about the body's capacity to remember when he says that "*only the body remembers* ... The hand can bring itself into use, and in its practised movements can tell the story of its own life."[4] Thinking about this through the lens of *dhikr*, ensoulment is more than just an enactment of remembrance or remembering—it is, as al-Jīlānī outlines, the intimate remembrance of Allah, despite the forgetfulness of the flesh-body. *Dhikr* is more than embodied learning because knowledge is not produced or consumed by the body. Knowledge is *awakened* to by the spirit within the forgetfulness of the flesh. By this we can understand that knowledge is not considered as located within the body, but rather within the spirit that is enrobed by the body.

Dear Seeker,
Reach.

Leyya is a PhD Candidate in Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand; Wadsworth African Fellow; Wenner-Gren Foundation; Social Science Research Council (SSRC)Fellow; Mellon Mays Fellow; and Re-Centring AfroAsia Research Fellow; leyya.hoosen@gmail.com

Notes

1 Kersenboom, 'The Faculty of the Voice'.

2 al-Jīlānī and Bayrak, *The Secret of Secrets*.

3 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 89.

4 Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 57; emphasis in original.

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REVISITING DOROTHY MASUKA'S HAMBA NONTSOKOLO: TALES OF WOMEN, MIGRANCY, AND JAZZ IN THE 1950S

PHUMELELE MZIMELA

How does a classic song like *Nontsokolo*, discussed and newly imagined, tell us a larger musical story that South African jazz history has forgotten? This paper revisits the "classic" vocal jazz piece *Hamba Nontsokolo*, which was composed, performed, and recorded by the late Dorothy Masuku in 1954. In contrast to the focus in the existing literature on the lives of black jazz singers and the socio-political contexts of their time, this paper examines the music of the song and offers a new arrangement, as a process of creative research, suggesting how the "classic" may be re-imagined today.

This paper revisits the "classic" song *Hamba Nontsokolo*, composed and sung by Dorothy Masuka. *Nontsokolo* was Masuka's first hit record and is generally recognised as an important part of the blueprint for vocal jive music. The song marked her entry into the South African jazz scene, was arguably the most popular song of that year, and was later recognised as one of the most popular songs of the 1950s. The song remains significant because—along with a few other notable songs of the decade such as *Lakutshon' Ilanga*, *Meadowlands*, and *Ntyilo Ntyilo—Hamba Nontsokolo* has become part of the mould for what we now recognise as the sound of South African jazz and, in particular, jazz vocals.

Much of the existing literature written on vocalists, save for the work of authors like Lara Allen,[1] focuses on the lives of these singers and the social-political contexts of the time in which their songs were popular. This is important because apartheid South Africa erased this music, even as it was a crucial context to the music's making. In this paper, I examine the music of *Hamba Nontsokolo*—the nuts and bolts—using transcription and analysis. This work is critical in order to begin to highlight the musical significance of the songs of this era to the development of South African jazz. It will also help to begin a shift in the narrative surrounding these vocalists beyond the realm of the political and onto their musical contributions, which, however, does not equal a reversion to older musicology that falsely claimed an apolitical position for music. In doing this sort of analytical work, I aim to shift the focus away from the lives and celebrity of singers like Masuka, and onto the music they left behind. In this way, instead of seeing vocalist as mere custodians of melody, we can begin to recognise the importance of vocal music to the broader development of South African jazz, thus, exploring a larger and seemingly forgotten musical history.

Hamba Nontsokolo was recorded in 1953 and was released by Troubadour Records. The song featured the Golden Rhythm Crooners, an all-male singing group from Bulawayo. As to the origin of the composition, there are varying accounts. One of the more likely stories is that Stewart Cook was sent by Troubadour Records to sign a contract with Masuka's mother and, while in Bulawayo, Masuka penned the song and teamed up with the Crooners and Cook to record it. The lyrics deal with the migrant labour system that affected many black South Africans during the apartheid era. Unusually, the subject in this song is a woman leaving her loved ones behind to seek better economic opportunities in Johannesburg. This goes against the popular cultural narrative at the time, which depicted men as the ones who left home to work and women as those who waited at home for their return. That said, it is clear that women formed a substantial part of the migrant labour system as documented by authors like Belinda Bozzoli.[2] The lyrics of *Hamba Nontsokolo* describe being left behind as the character Nontsokolo (presumably meant to embody a person as well as a personification of poverty) heads to Johannesburg to seek out her fortune.

It should be noted that several problems can arise when transcribing recorded music, most of which are to do with pitch and key. This is because of the recording and playback technology available at the time of recording. *Hamba Nontsokolo* was most likely recorded on an LP, upon which rotation speed was far more controlled compared to the earlier 78 rpm (revolutions per minute) discs. Rotation speed matters because playing a record at an incorrect rpm affects its pitch. On earlier technologies, the rpm at which the song was recorded could vary even though the accepted standard at this time was 78 rpm. This standardisation improved with the advent of the LP, but these still depend upon both the speed of the original tape recording and the speed of replay. As Roger Beardsley argues, "Early tape transports such as the EMI BTR 1 and 2 and the Ampex 200 and 300 series were essentially mechanical devices

without any of today's computer speed controls. Even in the 1960s mistakes were made."[3]

This information is crucial as it casts some doubt on whether what we hear on the record was indeed the originally intended key. As Jed Rasula highlights, "recordings are vexatious for historians precisely because they are a medium of inscription; the act of writing a history must covertly contend with a history already in the process of transcribing itself, rendering the historian's account a surrogate act masquerading as authority."[4] Accounts of the original context of this particular recording are hard to come by and, as such, we don't know in what circumstances the recording was digitised when it was reprinted in the early 1990s. For the purpose of this analysis, I use the key of F# as heard on the 1993 Gallo Records re-release of the 1953 recording.

Hamba Nontsokolo is structured in the AABA form typical of many a jazz standard. As Allen highlights, the generic structure of jive songs typically consisted of a short harmonic cycle (in most cases chords I, IV, and V were repeated).[5] She states that over this progression, short repeated melodic phrases would become the standard in later years.[6] In the case of *Hamba Nontsokolo*'s melody, the repetition in the A section is rhythmic, and the pitches of the melody vary with each new melodic line.

The song is quite simply arranged, consisting of a single guitar as accompaniment along with two male backup singers (the Crooners) while Masuka sings lead vocal. The Crooners provide a two-part harmony backup and, in the B-section, the Crooners serve as part of a call-and-response.

The first thing that one hears when trying to analyse the song is that the accompanying guitar is slightly off-tune. This could be due to a variety of factors and important to note in an analysis. That said, we are still somewhat able to hear the intended chord(s) in the recording.
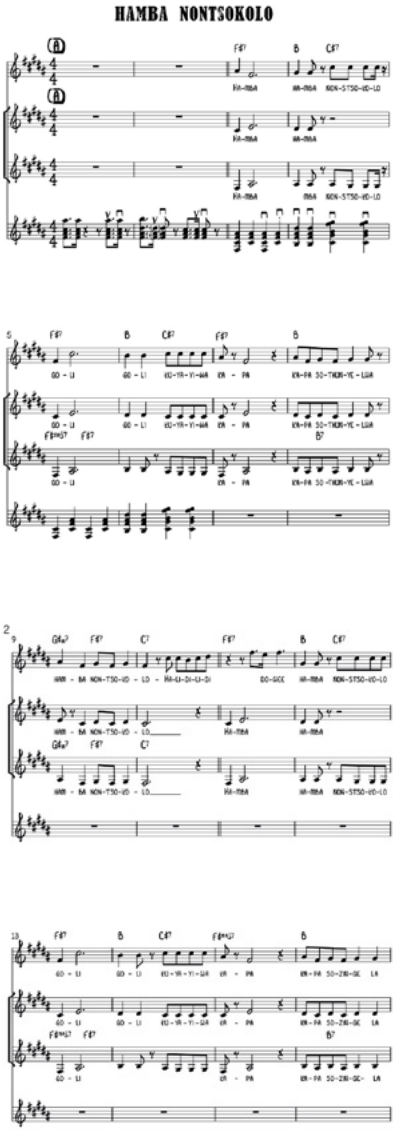


Figure 1. Scoresheet for *Hamba Nontsokolo* 1991. Composed and sung by Dorothy Masuka, *Hamba Nontsokolo and Other Original Hits from the 50s*. Gallo Music Productions CDZAC 60.

The harmony structure of the song is a short I IV V repeated cycle. In the A section, chord I is played for a full bar and chords IV and V take up half a bar each. The accompaniment consists primarily of closed-voiced triads, dominant 7th, and chords. The B section begins with a prolonged chord IV, slowing the harmonic rhythm considerably. The Crooners part consists mainly of chord tones and, in the instances when Masuka and the Crooners sing together, the choice of notes usually provides an outline of the chord using scale degrees 1, 3, and 7. The simplicity of the ensemble configuration serves to make Masuka an integral part of the ensemble as she is not only the lead singer but, in many instances, the third harmony reminding the listener of the all-male close-harmony singers of the 1940s.[7] This distinction is important because placing singers back in the ensemble in this way renders them integral to the performance rather than simply a featured extra. This should be coupled with the fact that Masuka was known for composing (at least, in part) her own material, thereby taking further ownership of her music. *Hamba Nontsokolo* is demonstrative of Masuka's aesthetic, which was heavily influenced by American swing and the blues. This is illustrated by both the guitar and the vocal parts. In the way of traditional swing, the guitar emphasises beats 2 and 4 with the use of accents produced by palm muting.

Figure 2 shows a duration graph for *Hamba Nontsokolo*, based on the measurements of the distance from one beat to another. The higher points mean a longer duration and each point measures the time difference from the previous point. If you look at the graph, you will see that there tends to be more time taken when playing beats 2 and 4; this pattern becomes more consistent as the song progresses. While the time differences are very small, this pattern points to another way to illustrate the swing feel. In a piece of music that adheres more strictly to metre, the graph is usually much straighter although there are, of course, differences in durations between beats. Without going into too much detail about individual time differences between beats, what you see in the duration graph is a zig-zag pattern—a testament to the push and pull feel of swing. Although the exact durations differ, the important thing is that the establishment of such a pattern creates the swing feel in the song. The voices follow the same method of emphasising the offbeat in order to achieve the swing feel, although this may not occur solely on beats 2 and 4. This is better illustrated by a spectrogram.

On the spectrogram, we can see the exact onset of the notes relative to the beats marked by vertical lines. Beyond only tempo, the spectrogram also shows us dynamics as well as pitching, using frequency markers. By following the spectrogram as the song plays, one can more closely study Masuka's vocal delivery choices. Her voice is easily distinguishable because it is the brightest orange colour, indicating that it's the loudest. On the shorter lines, we can see there is a clear dip at both ends of the notes, indicating a slide up to the desired pitch and a drop at the end. Sliding on and off notes is consistent with the traditional intonational traits of blues singers and those slides are further exacerbated by the use of a wide vibrato. The Crooners keep with the stylistic note dips but collectively use much less vibrato than Masuka.

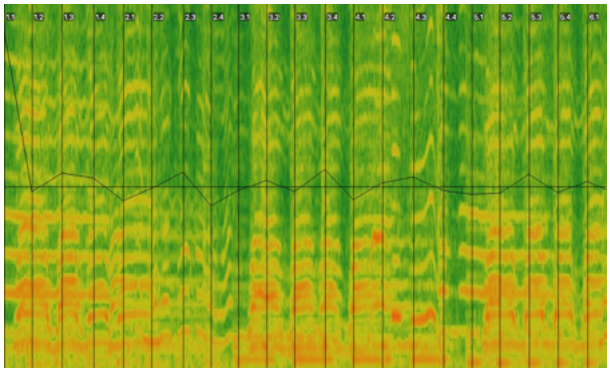


Figure 2. Annotated spectrogram and duration graph of the B Section of *Hamba Nontsokolo*.

As Nicholas Cook and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson explain,

> Acoustically, vowels and consonants are patterns of relative loudness among the sounding frequencies across the spectrum. Vowels are made by changing the shape of one's vocal cavity, and the effect of that is to change the balance of harmonics in the sound. That balance will remain the same whatever the pitches one may be singing. When singers want to change the colour of their voice, they shift the vowels up and forward (brighter) or down and back (darker) in the mouth, and the spectrum changes as a result.[8]

In the B section, the Crooners sing the word "waah" repeatedly, which offers us a clear example to see this tone analysis at work. The balance of the Crooners' harmonics shifts especially towards the end of the B section, as the tone of their part gets considerably "darker." If we look at Masuka's voice (again distinguishable because of the bright orange colour), we can see that the balance of the harmonics hardly changes. Rather, it holds steady in the upper partials, indicating a consistently bright tone on the part of Masuka. It may be interesting to note that many of the vocal jive songs of the era dealt with quite heavy topics in this way, by combining lyrics that told of the brutal realities endured by black South Africans with the jovial musical characteristics of jive.

This data illustrates some of the stylistic choices that went into creating what became recognised as vocal jive. The data itself is not mere cold data. What I've shown today has been carefully curated, which is a necessary precursor to re-arrangement because re-arrangement involves the selection of parts of the original to extract and weave into something new. That is to say, a new way of hearing the music as opposed to a re-orchestration, which just reorganises the existing music. Careful stylistic choices such as these begin to take centre stage in the absence of traditionally prized jazz performance practices, such as extensive improvisations and more complex harmonic structures. This is in stark contrast to how vocal jazz has been discussed and dismissed, usually by South African jazz historians invested in the instrumental tradition of the music. It is important to note that Masuka's vocal choices were made carefully, so that she could bridge the gap between sounding distinctive and remaining an integral part of the overall texture. These choices are bound in the basic principles of improvisation used by jazz musicians. In the supposed "absence" of these, we are left with the building blocks for an interpretation of jazz that, while clearly paying homage to traditional swing and blues, is uniquely our own.

By analysing *Hamba Nontsokolo* in this manner, with the recognition of Masuka as a pioneer in this genre, we start to see mechanics of this style and, perhaps, this may serve as a springboard for understanding how this music weaves, along with its instrumental counterparts such as *kwela*, into the greater tapestry of South African jazz. Recognising the musical characteristics of this composition serves to highlight Masuka's musical skill (which would only improve as she continued to write additional material) as well as to remind us of the importance of this song and other vocal music and singers to the overall development of South African jazz. By analysing work in this way, I have attempted to shift the focus away from the life and celebrity of Masuka and to the music that she helped to shape. I must concede, however, that the role music like this played in society and the anti-apartheid struggle is as critical as the music itself and is part of the reason why it has stood the test of time. Historically informed music analysis serves to extend the lives of *Hamba Nontsokolo* and other 50s classics, where their longevity is relatively autonomous to the original context. Indeed, considered in these ways, paying attention to the aesthetic shows how these classics may well speak back to their contexts and question our separation of South African jazz from black popular music.

Phumelele is an MA candidate in the Department of Music, Wits School of Arts;
phumelelemzi@gmail.com

Notes

1 Allen, 'Seeking the Significance of Two "Classic" South African Jazz Standards'; Allen, 'Commerce, Politics, and Musical Hybridity'.

2 Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies'.

3 Beardsley, 'Speeds and Pitching of 78rpm Gramophone Records'.

4 Rasula, 'The Media of Memory', 135.

5 Allen, 'Seeking the Significance of Two "Classic" South African Jazz Standards'.

6 Allen, 'Seeking the Significance of Two "Classic" South African Jazz Standards'.

7 Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*.

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PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION BETWEEN ART AND MUSIC

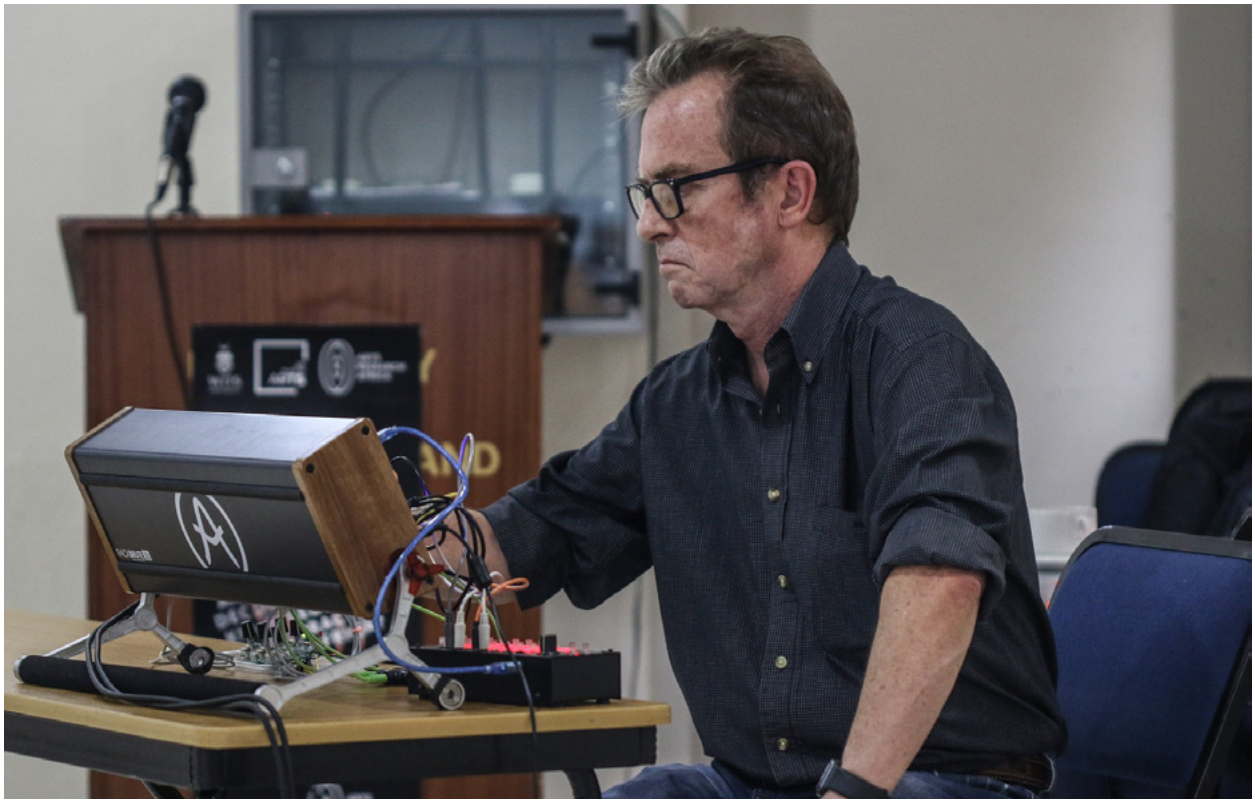
MARC DUBY AND
PAUL COOPER

This improvised performance drew from a shared body of knowledge in which the aesthetic outcome (as "product") is considered as of lesser significance than the underlying artistic and creative processes (the real-time "making" aspect) underpinning the venture. This session explored processes of cooperative and circulatory reciprocity in a triangular encounter between musician, artist, and audience.




(A)







Paul teaches in the Department of Art and Music at the University of South Africa, Pretoria; dubym@unisa.ac.za

Marc is a performer, composer, and arranger. He is a Research Professor in Musicology at the University of South Africa, Pretoria; coopeps@unisa.ac.za

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

UNINTENDED ARTISTIC RESEARCH ON MEMORY, MASCULINITY, AND AFRICAN BEAUTY: THE CASE OF SERURUBELE

KATLEHO KANO SHORO

What does it mean to re-evaluate ideas of beauty in Africa? Using performance as a research methodology and the idea of *serurubele* ("butterfly" in Sesotho and Setswana) as a heuristic device, this performance-lecture explored the value that critically engaging with people's relationships with butterflies, butterfly-games, songs, and memories holds in the context of decolonial, African-centred scholarship. Could interrogating the idea of butterflies, as well as the tenderness that comes with black African men's memories of butterflies, offer a more nuanced perspective of black masculinity and gender identity?













Katleho is a South African-based performance poet, author, and independent research consultant with an MA in Social Anthropology; katlehokano@gmail.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

TRASH, BOER, AND BRAT— A REDEMPTIVE THEATRE PERFORMANCE

TSHEGO KHUTSOANE, LES NKOSI,
AND PETRO JANSE VAN VUUREN

Can an arts-based research enquiry reach into the silences between us as South Africans? This workshop on “Redemptive Theatre” showed how playing with dominant, habitual, and unpopular narratives can disrupt boundaries, challenge stereotypes, and, potentially, redeem us to each other.









Tshego is a theatre director, and lecturer and project manager at the Department of Drama for Life in the Wits School of Arts; tshegokhutsoane@hotmail.com

Les is a Drama for Life alumnus and a professional Applied Theatre practitioner; lesnkosi@gmail.com

Petro is a lecturer and the Head of the Drama for Life department in the Wits School of Arts; petro.jansevanvuuren@wits.ac.za

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

DEAR IRREDUCIBILITY ... APPROXIMATING ÜNCERTAINTY AS A QUEER ETHICS OF RELATIONS

NICO ATHENE

This performance-lecture explored embodied, relational practice as an experiential site of queer, non-exploitative modalities.









Nico is a Cape Town-based artist and former stripper, filmmaker, and academic. She is studying towards an MA in Fine Arts in the Wits School of Arts and is an ARA Fellow; nicoathene@gmail.com

PERFORMANCE-DIALOGUE

PRACTICES, PEDAGOGIES, AND DESIRES: UNTETHERING RESEARCH

DAVID ANDREW WITH HEDWIG BARRY

What does it mean to engage in artistic research over a period of a one-year Master of Arts in Fine Arts (MAFA) project? In this discussion, a student (Barry) and supervisor (Andrew) reflected on this digressionary trajectory from the vantage point of the Global South.











David is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Fine Arts in the Wits School of Arts; david.andrew@wits.ac.za

Hedwig is an MA researcher in the Department of Fine Arts in the Wits School of Arts; hedwigbarry@icloud.com

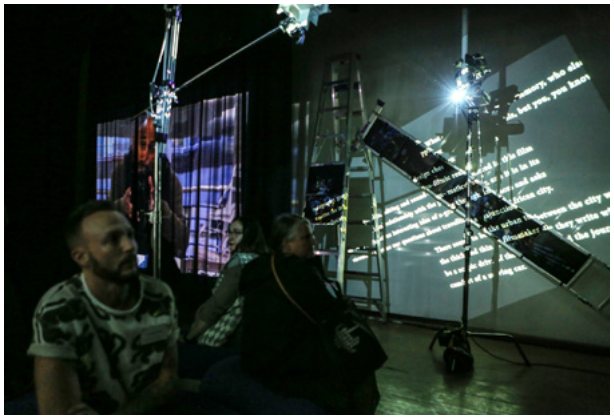
INSTALLATION-LECTURE

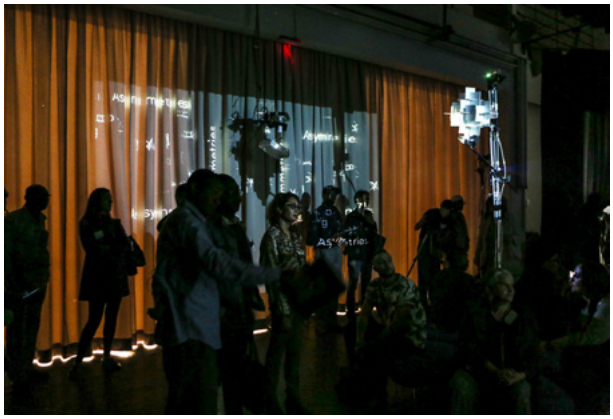
ITINERANT/ITERATIVE CARTOGRAPHIES: EXPLORATIONS IN CINEMATIC PRACTICES

NDUKA MNTAMBO

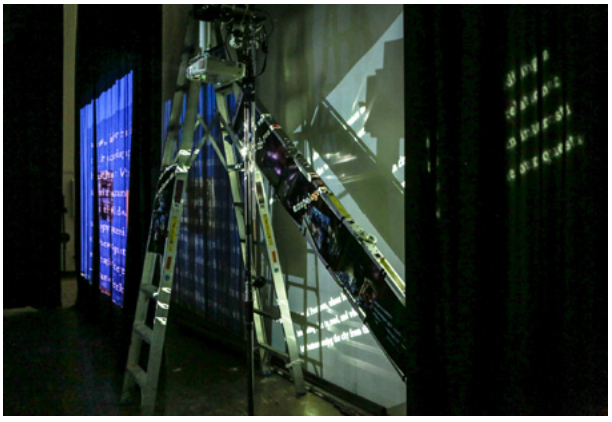
The performance lecture served as an exegesis for the installation project on the city titled *Asymmetries* (2018/19/20). The installation and its various iterations were conceived as a making-thinking-spectatorial research project on the urban, premised on strategies developed through modes of artistic research. The project explores various forms of contemporary film practices in order to explore and re-imagine city life beyond the confines of teleological conceptions. In particular, the installation and its iterative explorations relates to cinema aesthetics and its political confrontation with the mono-focal conception of cinema and its projection norms. The work invites the reader to momentarily suspend the position of the passive spectator and assume the position of a collaborative explorer or experimenter in various acts of cinematic cartography. The suspension of the inactive spectator position might lead to the re-examination of equivalences between the reader's learned gaze and of epistemic prompts offered in this artistic research project on the city.













Nduka is a Lecturer and Head of the Department of Film & TV in the Wits School of Arts. He is an ARA Fellow; nduka.mntambo@wits.ac.za; ndukamntambo.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

EDUCATIONAL EMCEES IN THE ACADEMY: SPOKEN WORD POETRY AS SCHOLARLY PRAXIS

CRYSTAL ENDSLEY
AND ANTHONY KEITH

This new form of scholarship explores the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological possibilities for spoken word poetry to function as a social justice pedagogy and leadership praxis. Collectively, this research situates critical race theory, Black feminism, participatory action research, Hip-Hop, and artivism as epistemological positions that decolonise White, American, patriarchal ways of knowing and empirical methods of discovery. Specifically, Anthony's research about "Educational Emcees" seeks to expand what is known about educational leaders who are also spoken word artists, poets, rappers, and emcees, and who embody Hip-Hop culture in their work to improve racially suppressive learning and engagement conditions for Black and Brown learners. Crystal's work illuminates the voices of girls and women around the world engaged in social action and human rights advocacy by invoking poetry, monologues, and multimedia as data to inform policy makers, governments, and organisations about health, education, and gender equality.









Crystal is Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York; crystal.leigh.endsley@gmail.com; www.drcrystalleigh.com

Anthony is an Adjunct Professor of Diversity, Culture and Hip-Hop Perspectives at the University of the District of Columbia, Washington D.C.; tony@tonykeithjr.com; www.tonykeithjr.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

MATSHIKIZA'S KING KONG RE-HEARD: A PIANISTIC INQUIRY

YONELA MNANA

How did Todd Matshikiza, the famed *Drum* magazine reporter, pianist, and composer of *King Kong*, the South African hit musical of the 1950s, straddle these multiple worlds in his music? Drawing on my own experience as a jazz pianist, I attempted to answer this question through a performed analysis of an unreleased solo piano recording by Matshikiza. As a performer, my research aims to be not only about, but in the culture of South African solo jazz piano tradition.


YAMAHA



Yonela is a jazz pianist, teacher and PhD candidate in jazz scholarship. He is an ARA fellow in the Wits School of Arts; yonelamnana@gmail.com

PERFORMANCE-LECTURE

GODOT-LOGUE IN GAUTENG: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AS A (RE)PRESENTATION OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

BONGILE LECOGO-ZULU
AND CALVIN RATLADI

To what extent can devised collaborative performance practice be considered research? How does an artist whose practice is housed in interdisciplinary collaboration be recognised as a researcher? A performance demonstration (by Bongile Lecoge-Zulu and Calvin Ratladi) of Lucky's monologue in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* will serve as commentary on the association of research with academia. Is there scope for reframing the associations around arts research to include the actual doing of the art?











Bongile has an MA in Music Research and has been involved in numerous collaborative artistic projects; combongilecz@gmail.com

Calvin is a theatre-maker and an arts-administrator who is researching towards his MA; calvinratladi@gmail.com

CLOSING ADDRESS

BERHANU ASHAGRIE DERIBEW

I am sure you have all had an engaging and productive time during the last couple of days. I would like to thank the organisers of the conference for making this wonderful engagement happen, focusing on the notion of artistic research, which I believe is a relatively new subject in the African context. I feel honoured to find myself here with you, taking part in the conference and actively witnessing the journey towards contextualising the subject of artistic research. Merely having this platform for sharing and discussing knowledge is critical, no matter whether there might be misunderstandings and tensions between different worlds, which I believe are also very productive encounters.

During the conference, I have had the privilege to participate in presentations, discussions, performances, and performance-lectures, focusing on many issues related to African philosophies, endogenous knowledge, embodied experiences, epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies … Struggles for life and to live with dignity (what Latin American endogenous scholars call … "Good Living"—*Buen Vivir*) … Institutional and educational conditions, challenges, limitations, and opportunities … Decolonising strategies and the role of artists, artist-researchers, artist-fieldworkers, artist-scholars … The power of music, drama, theatre, poetry, storytelling, dance, performance, installation, therapy, architecture … Also dealing with the urban and the township, the centre and the periphery … The intention of journeying to the unknown, to the not known, to the unknowable, to the undiscovered, to the unrecognised, to the unintended, to the unimagined, to the unexpected … Also involving through a process of healing and dealing with the ghosts of violence from the past … Loss, mourning, grief, and indignation … Care and becoming … Relations, translations, representations … The physical, the digital, the spiritual, the dream, the hope, the desire, the memory … Interdisciplinarity, participation, collaboration … The queer, the oppressed, the marginalised, the unprivileged … The personal, the ethical, the political … the logical, the geographical, the historical … Beauty and order … Gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality … The South African, the African, the Global South, the European, the Euro-American, the International …

The conference facilitated a platform for us to come together and engage with issues related to artistic research and ways of decolonising knowledge in the African contexts. I am not sure if this conference is the first of its kind to be organised in the continent, but it is crucial to have more platforms like this to discuss the subject in a way that makes more sense to our causes.

As we know, for many western individuals, Africa is considered to be smaller than it is. I am sure many of African professionals have the experience dealing with such, either ignorance or arrogance. Time to time in different academic and professional platforms in the West, … I have been asked questions related to artistic research practices in "Africa." I always have problems trying to respond properly to such questions. Maybe … a few of us have the audacity to give a clear answer but, for sure, many of us have struggled to make sense of the context from which we are speaking. The reason why I am mentioning this is to remind ourselves to avoid making similar mistakes when we discuss artistic research in "Africa." It's very important to keep in mind that there are different cultural, political, and institutional structures, resources, and understandings that should be negotiated and recognised through such discursive platforms.

As it was reflected during this conference, in one way or the other, artistic research is a subject that is not yet fully clear in its function. Even if the subject seemed to be lively from the outside, I strongly doubt whether it has really been as effective as it is theorised and discussed so far. As one of the trendsetting European countries on the subject of artistic research since the 90s, the United Kingdom is still accommodating

the largest number of artistic research programmes. Even if many European art institutions have already adapted and are adapting the subject of artistic research into their art education programmes, it should also be noted that some of the programmes still have issues of accreditation and nomenclature to be recognised as independent research programmes of study in the arts. There are powerful European countries where there are no PhD programmes in the arts. This is because (of course, among other factors) educational policies even in some European countries do not accept the fact that art can be research or intellectual practice.[1]

This tells us a lot about how far we have to go to make the subject of artistic research recognised and available or accessible as an independent programme of study through our art institutions. We have to understand, translate, and refine the subject carefully and continue fighting for its existence and accessibility. The main question here is, how do we incorporate and activate the subject, considering our own institutional and cultural realities and worldviews?

Having an art institution inside a bigger research university has been considered a sign of institutional advancement in many contexts (inside and outside the continent). And, indeed, it is because a university that is incapable of handling its common and popular departments like Engineering, Chemistry, or Medicine, wouldn't think of adding an art department to the institutional context, which will clearly become an educational disaster. But, unfortunately, that's how we mostly experience the conditions of many art institutions in African contexts.

In a few cases, in the West, art institutions are organised under the structure of an Academy, with an independent University status, such as the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts (where I am currently working as an artist-researcher). There are also other cases where art institutions are part of bigger research universities. I would say, the latter institutional structure is far more common in the African continent, where art schools are subjected to deal with bigger institutional politics of universities, like the Alle School of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa, where I teach, and Wits School of the Arts in Johannesburg, where we are having this platform. On the one hand, such institutional structure can be a benefit for art education and research, through which different disciplines can be accessible for collaboration. On the other hand, however, the gap in the system and incapability of university leaders or officials to encourage multi-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaborations has been making it difficult to realise productive engagements.

Some of the components of artistic research are to have cross-disciplinary, dialogic, and participatory engagements. With that, either art academies or art schools under bigger universities in the West have the privilege to decide with whom they want to work or collaborate through different artistic research projects. But, in many of our contexts, the nature of institutional structure has kept art education unable to break out from the stigma that labels it as a craft that does not contain intellectual content. This distorted understanding of art has made art schools a comfort zone for many of those who neglect the importance of updating themselves toward better educational engagement, which should be ethical and political. In addition, the role and function of the arts as critical engagement couldn't claim its position through different research activities performed in the different disciplines under universities;

> Art practice and the making of art represent a unique form of knowledge production, is a huge asset for research universities. Our mission is not simply a matter of unity, of making other disciplines more creative. Rather, to have the possibility to bring interdisciplinary and cross departmental research endeavors.[2]

As you may have witnessed, many university officials or administrators neither know nor care about the role and contribution of art departments in higher education and research activities. Understanding the ongoing institutional realities in the African context, I believe that art schools may function better without being inside bigger universities. I am not saying this to compensate for the incapability of art institutions to demand their positions as part of the intellectual hub. Rather, I am saying this because their independent position would make them deal with the naked reality that they are on their own, without the umbrella of a research university, which, by default, made them part of the intellectual arena. But, even if the institutional structure seems to be hard to change in many cases, what art institutions can do about it should not be limited.

Six years ago, after passing through all institutional and administrative bureaucracies, we developed a new graduate programme at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University. In the program, we have primarily adopted the subject of artistic research, in a way that works for our context. The programme was formulated under the nomenclature "Inter-Disciplinary Artistic Practices." I was one of the very few staff members who worked hard on the development of the programme. Since the programme enrolled the first batch of students, we have experienced layers of problems and challenges in relation to translation, resources, references, fieldwork, collaboration, creative production, writing about it, … endless challenges. To make a long story short, the programme has consistently been full of moments where disappointments and inspirations continuously eliminate one another. With all the problematics that are and will be, I strongly believe that the programme has been an effective learning platform that should continue with whatever cost it requires.

Beside the experiences I have acquired through developing and working in the programme, I have also been activated myself in multiple research-based artistic projects locally as well as internationally. I am also currently working in a two-year-long artistic research project at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, funded by the FWF-PEEK Science Project Fund. Using my experiences dealing with artistic research projects and programmes, I would like to try to share a few concerns, insights, and directions for our ongoing discussions on the subject of artistic research in relation to the African contexts. I will briefly raise points connected to the questions of "Translation" and "Epistemology," the role of "artists/intellectuals," and the notion of "Participation."

Unfortunately, the formal educational or pedagogical systems in the African continent were mainly generated through our colonial relations, which did not fit with existed epistemological realities in the different locality. The Cartesian understanding is central to the western mode of knowledge production, which is not the case in different African traditional knowledge production systems and worldviews. Adapting such unfit knowledge production structures into the different contexts in the continent resulted in indigenous or local knowledges and embodied experiences to be neglected—brutally so—through many academic engagements and community or place-based artistic and research projects. I strongly believe that artistic research can play a huge role to bring these distorted epistemological conditions (what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls "Epistemicide")[3] into intellectual discourses at a wider level.

All western thinking, whether critical or not, is grounded on the Cartesian idea that nature is, as such, an unlimited resource unconditionally available to human beings. The explanation that western thought gives to this conception is weak because it only recognises those problems that can be discussed within the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model. In such a model, there is no accessible room to understand the different non-western traditions that consider nature as though it

has its own agency and rights. How will it be possible for the Cartesians to recognise that there is even a nation in the Global South that provides constitutional rights for nature? How do they understand why people in many places are struggling against extractivist projects? Thus, the Cartesian paradigm does not at all address the fundamental problem underlying questions in the Global South. Moreover, and most importantly, it fails to understand the strength and logic of social movements that have been organised within the relation between nature and society, according to which nature appears as Mother Earth, a living organism to which we belong and which is entitled to her own rights;

> Our knowledge is intuitive; it goes straight to what is urgent and necessary. It is made of words and silences with-actions, reasons-with-emotions. Our life does not allow us to distinguish life from thought. All our everydayness is thought of every day in detail. We think of our tomorrow as if it were today. We have no important questions, only productive questions.[4]

If the notion of artistic research can carefully be studied, understood, and translated into the different local realities, it can work more effectively in the Global South. Artistic practice, as a unique mode of knowledge production, has more legitimate possibilities and spaces in the Global South where there is no singular understanding of the world; where multiple worlds are accommodated beyond the "One-World World" conceptions of the West (the world as a pluriverse), where relational ontologies have been a strong part of cultural understandings, where fear of violence and vulnerability have been societal realities, where there are different ongoing social struggles, etc. All these and other existing dimensions have huge potential to be discussed and incorporated through the translation of artistic research subject into our contexts.

As artist/intellectuals, our struggle should not be about becoming avant-garde through our ideas and creative engagements. The vanguard theory should not be our concern anymore, because it's not ours and doesn't work well for us. We, artist/intellectuals, mainly based inside research institutions, should redefine ourselves differently. Unlike the West, where revolutionary theories are entertained inside reactionary institutions, we must encourage ourselves and our students to go to communities and nature to learn from embodied knowledges that are not yet in books.

With that in mind, through our art education, students must not only be bombarded with a pile of theory books. Communities and nature already speak our languages and have a lot to teach us. The fact that we, as educated professionals, have mainly been baptised through Eurocentric knowledge production systems means that it is taking us too long to realise what knowledges we already have and what is more important for us. We all know that most scientific researchers in the continent have obsessively trusted recorded knowledge from books, through which embodied experiences, knowledge from communities and nature has been neglected thus far.[5]

One of the major reasons why artistic research has been difficult to understand, process, and engage in our contexts is that we have tried so hard to adapt mainstream academic languages and to imitate scientific research strategies. We must understand that artistic research should be critically engaged differently. This can also be a major direction through which we can inspire and invite professionals from different disciplines in the university to collaborate with us. When we manage to maintain a clear stand on such directions, it is not only art education or artistic research that will be liberated as a "practice of freedom,"[6] but also the distorted mentality of research institutions toward local and embodied knowledge production systems and the pedagogy of the land.[7]

The proposal to incorporate embodied experiences through our education doesn't make structured knowledge from books less important. In fact, we can't be able to maintain what Santos calls "the ecology of knowledge"[8] without incorporating structured knowledge and academic platforms. It's just that we have to find a way to negotiate with both knowledge production systems, which takes time. But still, there must be understandings and conceptions that we should accept with reservations, while some should be rejected without reservations because they don't go along with our understanding of knowledge. We know this because we have tried and failed many times. In fact, we have failed so badly, in such a way that we cannot fail anymore. So, the desire to have endogenous or local knowledge incorporated into our curriculums cannot be a project of failure. Instead, it might also bring us alternatives and solutions for our modern problems, which are not resolvable via modern solutions.

So, in that sense, popular theories cannot be the only way to guide and determine our engagements. We have to recognise that theory and practice have ghostly relations. Between theory and action, there may be correspondence, but there is no sequence. As it was very well explained and discussed by influential scholars and educators, like bell hooks, our curriculum and education, in general, should centre itself on what they call "engaged pedagogy."[9] Such engagements are not only about generating the possibility of participation, with which you can stand by what you believe, but also becoming an active witness thereof.

Artistic research engagements usually contain elements of "participation." The question is, how do we understand, initiate, and activate the concept of participation in our artistic research projects. Participatory art, as it has been discussed by many scholars, following the legacies of European art movements as well as the Latin American emancipatory praxis (e.g., Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal), feminism, civil rights movements, and Stonewall in the United States, etc. provided a solid foundation for the "social turn" in the 90s, when artists and art collectives like Suzanne Lacy, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Ultra Red, and many others challenged the division between the artist and the audience, and approached social relations as the subject of their aesthetic concern.[10]

Following that, many contemporary artists around the world have been working intensively on artistic research projects that mainly involve participation in different levels and contexts. But, the fact is that we have witnessed layers of problematics in participatory art because many artistic research projects involving participation have been attached to strong, self-possessed artist individuals, and many dispossessed bodies, struggling with what André Lepecki calls the heritage of participatory art—a "disengaged participating passivity."[11] Participatory art has secured the position of artists as knowing entities—vanguards, creators—while communities, participants, or audiences remain to be known subjects. Lepecki mocks the conditions of participatory art, and asks, "How much in participating and by participating do we actually engage with a kind of moving that takes us no other place than where we are (always) already (properly) expected to arrive at?"[12] Through artistic research activities in our continent, it is very important to find a departure point in the method/ology of participatory art that we should include in our curricula and research engagements.

Santos insisted that the vanguard theory has come too far already, and we need to reconsider it as a more effective strategy through non-Eurocentric conceptions, for which he proposes a "rearguard theory." Neither artists nor intellectuals nor artist/intellectuals should consider themselves as vanguards, creators, or leaders in their different forms of engagement anymore. They can be initiators for an effective

encounter within audiences or communities, but then, they should *follow*–through careful listening.[13]

Through my experience during this conference, I have witnessed multiple forms of engagements, which clearly have the elements of careful listening and the notion of "initiating and following"[14] in their artistic research activities, such as the cultural entrepreneur who worked with young people in the township around the idea of the return, crossings, and remaining.[15] It also includes the Ghanaian artist and educator, who has worked with communities on the Vodu religion and who extended the knowledge he has acquired to develop materials to teach children about themselves and their values.[16] I am simply referring to very few of the presentations of which I happened to be a part, but I believe there are many more.

> How you fight determines who you will become when the battle is over.[17]

Rearguard theories can only validate themselves by their practical results, by the evaluation of the changes made by all their protagonists, among whom artists, intellectuals, and activists are always minor figures.[18] This theory of the rearguard can be adapted and accompanied by different African philosophies, ontologies, and cosmologies. Various embodied local and endogenous knowledge in the different regions—on how we relate ourselves to each other, to the land and nature, how we negotiate with non-human agents in the everyday, how we deal with ghosts, ancestors, and monsters, etc.—should also be considered through the translation process of rearguard theories.

In general, it is very important to recognise that all these might be difficult to achieve, but they are not impossible. But it takes time—time long enough to lose our patience. But our aim should not only be toward the outcome but also the quality of the process.

> What we (societies in the Global South) have in common is that we all have to fight against many obstacles in order to live with dignity—that is to say, to live well … But our struggle depends less on our objectives than on the quality of our actions and emotions in striving to attain them.[19]

After all, we are families, friends, neighbours, and allies of communities who believe that "I am, because you are." Our continuous task and responsibility should be to add carefully, "… so that we become."

Thank you.

Berhanu is a visual artist and Assistant Professor at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design at Addis Ababa University. He has been actively involved, as contributor and organiser, in many educational, artistic, and research projects on both African and international platforms; berhanu.ashagrie@gmail.com

Notes

1 See, for example, Wilson and Ruiten, *Share Handbook for Artistic Research Education*.

2 Colangelo quoted in Otten, 'The Role of Arts Practice in the Research University'.

3 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

4 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 12.

5 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

6 See hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*; Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

7 Dannenmann and Haig-Brown, 'A Pedagogy of the Land'.

8 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 115.

9 hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

10 Thompson, *Living as Form*; Lind, *Selected Maria Lind Writing*; Kravagna, 'Working on the Community'; Kester, *The One and the Many*; Jackson, *Social Works*; Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*; Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*; Bishop, 'The Social Turn.

11 Lepecki, 'From Partaking to Initiating', 28.

12 Lepecki, 'From Partaking to Initiating', 29.

13 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

14 The notions of initiating and following are borrowed from performance studies as discussed in Lepecki, 'From Partaking to Initiating'.

15 See Motholo's contribution to this volume.

16 See Adjei's contribution to this volume.

17 Taiaiake, *Wasáse*.

18 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

19 Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 6.

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