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2020-07
Arts Research Africa (ARA)
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29235

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/5B6DM

THE NORWEGIAN ARTISTIC RESEARCH SCHOOL: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

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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.

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