

Call for applications: doctoral studies on the topic of

The Artist-Researcher's Transgressive Roles in Art and Beyond

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Three-year funded doctoral studies for researchers from all over the world

The call for applications is now open for candidates who not only have their creative practice record that resonates with the topic, but also have already realised several projects and now aim to research both theoretical and practical aspects of the proposed topic of the practice-based doctoral studies.

Art Project Guidelines for Creative Work and Research

Art doctoral students and artists-researchers contribute to the expansion of the artist's roles and functions not only in the fields of art and research, but in society as a whole. By freeing up the non-typical identities of scholar/scientist and artist, artistic research allows for the realisation of creative potentials and gives researchers the freedom to choose the most suitable methods and approaches. Over the recent years, art discourse saw the rise in popularity of the so-called “hyphen identities” – e.g., “artist-curator-critic-theoretician-activist-historian-model-actor” (Skerritt, 2013), which expresses the instability of identity and liberates the researcher from the modernist fixation on singular specialisms.

The artist and theoretician Graeme Sullivan (2004: 152–154) offers a complex schema that shows how an artist can be active as a theoretician. An artist creates within the systems, communities and cultures, and in each case s/he also appears as a reflexive, involved, and localised theoretician. Alongside this position we can also envision other configurations of roles: ‘theoretician as an artist’, ‘curator as a theoretician’, ‘curator as an artist’, etc.

The Goal of the Doctoral Project

To reveal the roles and practices that an artist can take on and perform today in the field of art and beyond.

Preliminary Aims of the Research:

- Analyse the development of the notion of artist-researcher over the past few decades.
- Investigate the ways in which artist-researcher expands the functions of art.
- Find out whether the new roles that the artists take upon themselves can still be considered as forms of artistic practice, as opposed to social or other forms of practice.
- Find and analyse the successful cases of the kind of research, when the artist carried out their practice outside the field of art only to introduce the research results in art institutions and artistic contexts.
- Create and implement an individual artistic research project that corresponds to the interests of a particular doctorate student.

The Relevance of the Problem

As we saw the world having been changed by the quarantine realities, the question of the new roles of art acquired a new importance: how can an artist help solve problems during the times of crisis? Some sought for new ways of reaching out to their audiences (performances and concerts in balconies; digitalisation and virtualisation of creative work), others turned to social and civil rights activism, or art therapy.

Since the 1960s, both the notion and function of an artist in society have gone through a radical change. Someone who was once a fine arts practitioner and an aesthete, is now an activist and protester (e.g., Laima Kreivytė; Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas), a catalyst of social change, a social problems solver, or even a social worker (who works with the vulnerable), critic, curator, art (psycho)therapist (who solves the problems within the vulnerable groups), cook-chef (e.g., see the case of Rirkrit Tiravanija mentioned in Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)), networker, manager of circumstances, founder and provider of the food services for fellow artists (e.g., Robertas Narkus), etc.

Yet the public understanding of an artist is still too inert, and many think that an artist only works with the aesthetic realm. Which is why there is a need for a part artistic, part scholarly research, and a systemic analysis of how the roles of an artist changed over the last decades.

Research Guidelines

Some of the possible models have already been discussed by Suhail Malik in his *On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art* (2019), but we still lack a more comprehensive inquiry into the problem. Therefore the doctoral candidate is expected to critically overview the history of such developments.

The artist-researcher can take up various other roles that are not part of the artistic practice because she either has relevant experience or feels obligated to do so. According to Hannula et al. (2014: 69--70), artist-researcher has four roles that correspond to different sets of ethical problems – because an artist is never isolated or confined to a single area of arts or humanities, s/he can also function as a professional, a political consultant, a public speaker, and a critic.

Compared to their predecessors who mostly navigated around the aesthetic and social discourses (e.g., portraiture of the nobles and rulers), contemporary artist takes up an increasing number of functions. This way they fulfil the identity of a contemporary artist who, instead of reproducing art, reproduces knowledge and its products instead. An artist presents knowledge in various forms and contexts thus experiencing a wide range of identity transitions. Meanwhile, contrary to Hannula, Lina Michelkevičė (2015: 69) argues that all these social roles are not additional but rather are the integral parts of the fluctuating artistic practice itself. According to Michelkevičė, language is the main factor that changes the artist's identity.

Creative Work Guidelines

In her art doctorate studies, an artist is expected to support her creative and research practices as well as her analysis of other art practitioners' work the relevant theories.

While discussing the changing roles of a researcher in her own practice, Hannula introduces a gradient of researcher's positions according to the degree of their involvement in the research. The different positions can range from an interested observer to an actively involved participant. Hannula (2014: 62–63) offers a scale the left part of which corresponds to the lowest degree of involvement – this is where the intensity of the relation with the research object is lowest. After the initial position of a non-participating external observer is established, we can talk about the isolated conditions of a laboratory where objectivity is pursued. The degree of involvement increases as we go further to the right. While an ethnographer participates and lives in the community, they does not try to affect it. However anthropologists are rarely able to remain neutral because, as they adapt their research methods and get closer to their research objects, they also have to get involved and integrated in a closed community. A researcher-activist not only carries out research but also seeks to change the situation or the world she lives in because of her personal or communal interests. On the farthest point of the right side of the scale, we have a researcher who lives and breathes her research, and is both the subject and object of their own research. For them, practice (and even life) itself is a method of research, therefore any change in research will affect the practice. This position is named after Martin Heidegger's notion of *Mit-Sein* – i.e., 'being-with'.

An artist-researcher (at least in theory) is someone who coexists together with their research object (themselves and their work), and the main question here is not *why* but *how* they researches, which is a question of methodology. An artist-researcher can also be

an interventionist or activist-researcher, particularly if she works with the forms of participatory or communal art.

Topicality

One of the areas that make the problem more urgent is the fate and future of artistic practice after leaving the academy, as well as the art pedagogy from the points of view of a client and a service provider.

In their book *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public* (2014), Finnish philosophers and art pedagogues Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén define the exclusivity of artistic research through its methodological relations with *power*. The authors consider the methodology of artistic research in terms of the process of liberation from the two areas that contribute to the formation of skills, expertise, and knowledge: guilds (workshops) and traditional forms of sciences – natural, social, and humanities (Hannula, Suoranta, Vadén, 2014: 55).

Education administrators and researchers do not know how to resolve the questions of the employment and professional success of the art school and academy graduates. Who is supposed to be the artist's employer, and when can we say that the artist's job is relevant to their speciality, education, and degree? Many people graduate from art academies and adapt their skills in many other areas, but then it is unclear whether they still remain artists. Do they stop their artistic practice or do they transform it? At what point and in which cases their activity leaves or returns to the field of art? In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to expand the notions of artistic activity and its research indicators. This can only be achieved through the practice of the artists-researchers themselves.

Sources

Hannula, Mika; Juha Suoranta, Tere Vadén (eds.), 2014: *Artistic research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public*, Peter Lang, New York.

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