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Inscribing Expositions: Curatorial Strategies in Packing Practice into the Journal for Artistic Research

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Abstract:

In this thesis, I inquire about curatorial strategies in research-based artistic practices by focusing on the six expositions (i.e. contributions) published in the 26th issue of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). Specifically, I'm interested in how the authors packed their practice into the expositions: What curatorial strategies were involved in this process? Furthermore, I ask whether the concept of "circulating reference" (Latour 1999b) could help to understand the chain of transformations (or inscriptions?) that allows the contributions to claim knowledge. I interviewed all the authors to reconstruct the steps they followed to transform their research/practice into a published product and I analysed the expositions as if they were online exhibitions. I clustered five areas of interest from a curatorial perspective (e.g. to implement a concept) and focused on specific episodes of the packing process that I identify as strategies (e.g. to structure the exposition as a digital ghost paper). To the best of my knowledge, no other research project

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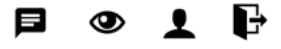
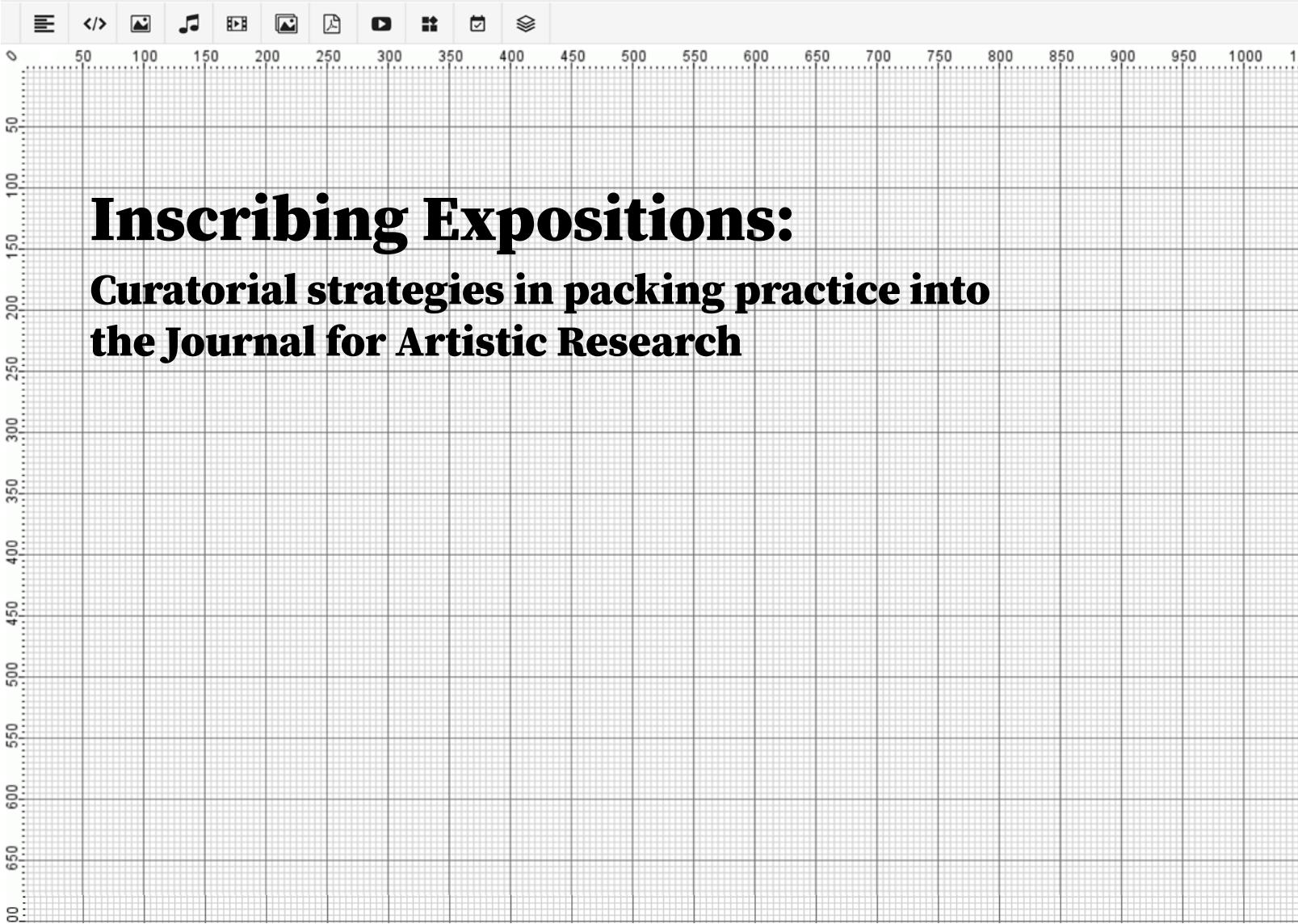
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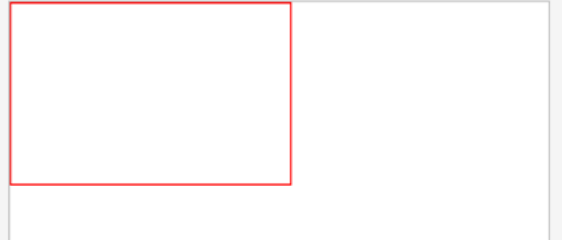
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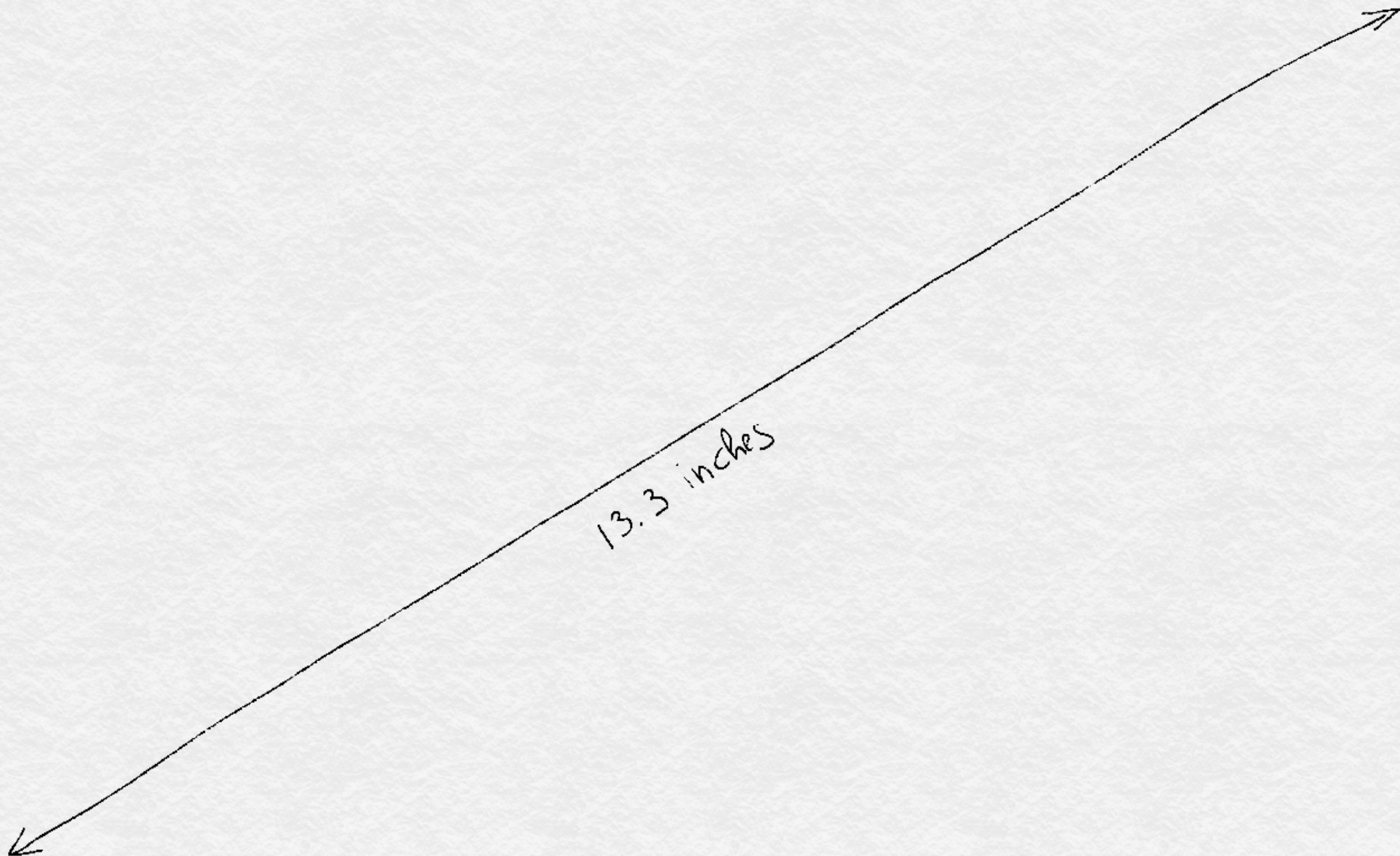
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Abstract

In this thesis, I inquire about curatorial strategies in research-based artistic practices by focusing on the six expositions (i.e. contributions) published in the 26th issue of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). Specifically, I'm interested in how the authors packed their practice into the expositions: What curatorial strategies were involved in this process? Furthermore, I ask whether the concept of "circulating reference" (Latour 1999b) could help to understand the chain of transformations (or inscriptions?) that allows the contributions to claim knowledge. I interviewed all the authors to reconstruct the steps they followed to transform their research/practice into a published product and I analysed the expositions as if they were online exhibitions. I clustered five areas of interest from a curatorial perspective (e.g. to implement a concept) and focused on specific episodes of the packing process that I identify as strategies (e.g. to structure the exposition as a digital ghost paper). To the best of my knowledge, no other research project ever analysed a whole issue of the JAR and especially not from a curatorial point of view. The choice of this perspective is a strategic one: It prompts me to linger on aspects that may not seem relevant otherwise and to further understand curatorial work outside the professional role of the curator, both in the narrow term of curating as exhibition-making and in the extended term of curating as "modes of becoming" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). The curatorial (i.e. packing) strategies I identified are not generalisable as every artist found their personal way through the process. However, I suggest that curating, if understood in an extended way, has many traits in common with the practice of exposing in the Research Catalogue.

**** I translated all the direct quotes into English. For the original formulation, please refer to the original texts. ****



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In medias res

I revisit this introduction, way too late on my schedule, after I participated in the last session of the seminar “Aesthetic cultures – research colloquium” with Ines Kleesattel and Dominique Raemy (Zurich University of the Arts). This afternoon we went through our ideas and/or almost concluded research projects. We (tried to) formulate(d) the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of our research and then focused on one (or more) difficulties. Ines brought with her ‘Oblique Strategies: Over one hundred worthwhile dilemmas’, a deck of more than a hundred cards that was created by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt by collecting their strategies to overcome creative blocks. One by one, in a way that strongly reminded me of a collective tarot-reading session, we formulated our difficulties and drew one card.

I got “remember, those quiet evenings”.

Maybe because of my struggle with terms, because of the doubts arising from finding a way as you walk it, we found it a very fitting piece of advice for the project I’ll introduce in this thesis.

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The image shows a web browser window with two tabs for 'Research Catalogue'. The address bar shows the URL 'https://www.researchcatalogue.net/editor?research=1756330&weave=1756331'. The main content area features a large grid with a horizontal axis from 0 to 1100 and a vertical axis from 0 to 700. A toolbar above the grid contains icons for various editing functions. On the right side, there is a sidebar with tabs for 'Overview', 'Media', 'Footnotes', and 'Pages'. A red rectangle highlights a specific area in the 'Overview' tab. Below the grid, there is a search bar and a table with columns for 'Name', 'Created', and 'Layer'. The table currently displays 'No data available in table'.

Figure 1: Screenshot of the Research Catalogue workspace.

To get started

“How do we pack the world into words?” asked Latour in 1999 while recounting a field trip to Boa Vista (Brazil) with a group of natural scientists. Being interested in interdisciplinary practices, especially concerning art, science and Artistic Research, I asked myself: If scientists “pack the world into words”, (how) do artists pack ‘the world’ into ... art? Does this ‘packing’ have anything to do with curating?

These questions were the main inspiration for this thesis. They guided me in the exploration of intersections between artistic and curatorial practices on the grounds of research. Specifically, they became my trace in understanding the processes, transformations and serendipitous encounters that link the messiness of artistic practices to their tidy gestures of making public, be they exhibitions, screenings, conferences or (academic) publications. To explore the big question of packing practice into communicable, shareable, presentable, exhibit-able forms, I chose a very specific form of presentation: the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). The JAR is “an international, online, Open Access and peer-reviewed journal that disseminates artistic research from all disciplines” (‘Journal for Artistic Research’ n.d.). The contributions to the JAR are created and hosted on the Research Catalogue (RC –see Figure 1): “a non-commercial, collaboration and publishing platform for artistic research provided by the Society for Artistic Research” (‘Research Catalogue’ n.d.). Specifically, I decided to analyse the six contributions to the 26th issue of the JAR from a curatorial perspective.

In this thesis, I unpack the processes the authors followed in packing their practice into journal contributions: What curatorial strategies were involved in this process? Can this ‘packing’ be further explained by the concept of “circulating reference” (Latour 1999b)? I went about this inquiry by working in a mostly inductive manner that aimed at developing a media-specific approach towards a concrete object of research i.e. contributions to the JAR. I wanted to stay as close as possible to the nitty-gritty. Therefore, I tried to avoid generalising the results beyond

the specificity of each author's process. I suggest that casting a curatorial perspective onto an unusual object for the field of Curatorial Studies helps to linger on aspects that may stay hidden and be considered neutral otherwise, such as the choices and assumptions behind how to guide a visitor through a digital environment or the way procedures like peer-reviewing transform the JAR into a knowledge-making machine. By intentionally looking at research-based artistic practices from a curatorial perspective, I contribute to an understanding of an extended notion of curating (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12) and of curating as potentially one intrinsic aspect of Artistic Research (Slager 2021, 3).

I structured the body of this paper according to six main sections. First, in *To get started*, I introduce the project, its process and justify the choice of my research subject and approach. Second, I expand on *The Research Catalogue* (RC) and *The Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR). Third, I progressively zoom into my object of research by presenting *Issue 26* and all six contributions. Fourth, in *Three debates*, I briefly introduce the areas and discourses I based my project on. I focus on Artistic Research, (online) curating and Latour's (1999b) concept of Circulating Reference. Fifth, in *Towards a media-specific analysis*, I proceed by expanding on my research approach and my methods. I divided the sixth and final section, titled *Pulling curatorial strings together*, into three subchapters: in the first, I identify milestones in each of the authors' accounts of their process and bring them together in various graphs; thereafter, I pause for a moment to explore the results of my thought experiment concerning the application of Circulating Reference to the expositions; finally, I focus on five areas of interest (e.g. *Implementation of concepts*) and unpack the strategies (e.g. to structure the exposition as a digital ghost paper). Building on this basic structure, I weave in reflections on the research process and insights from the interviews throughout the paper.

Six basic terms

So far so good for my plan but before I start, I need to pause on a few terms: Artistic Research, research-based, exposition, curatorial strategy, user and user experience.

I use **Artistic Research** to refer to the discourse produced in “communities of practice” (see e.g. Johns 1997) i.e. communities that share linguistic genres, vocabulary, activities and values “that hold communities together or separate them from one another” (500), publications, conferences, seminars and it is disciplined by (higher education) institutions and funding bodies. I use **research-based artistic practice** as an umbrella term to refer to the concrete instances: what artist-researchers work on and consider as their practice. As I discuss in *On Artistic Research*, the relationship between the two terms is not always a direct and peaceful one.

The third term is **exposition**. Both the work-in-progress and the ‘finalised’ contributions to the JAR and the other journals hosted by the RC are called expositions and not simply articles. As a common and technical term which is ubiquitous on the RC, I also use ‘exposition’ (see *Expositions and Expositionality*). Strategically, this term also makes sense in the framework of this research as it mirrors my curatorial perspective: it takes distance from an article-publishing vocabulary and comes closer to exhibition-making (see discussion in *On Curating*).

The fourth term is **curatorial strategy**. Following my inductive approach, I developed a working definition towards the end of this project (see *Curatorial Strategies*). I started with a dictionary definition, I combined it with Slager’s (2021, 3) and insights from the interviews. For this project, I consider curatorial strategies as episodes that had a significant impact on the materiality (Hayles 2004) of the exposition. These include a change in its performativity as a space for encounters, reflection and dissemination. Based on my discussion of curating, especially in digital spaces, the term strategies includes and does not

strictly distinguish between the intention of the author and other human and non-human actors (see Latour 1999a).

The last two terms are **user** and **user experience** (UX). They are standard concepts in Informatics and Interaction Design to respectively describe visitors interacting with digital environments and their experience while doing so (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). I adopt these terms from the respective discourses and integrate them into my curatorial perspective, just as Dekker (2021), Tedone (2019) and Ghidini (2019) did. The point that these terms come from design contexts does not invalidate my strategic choice to cast a curatorial perspective onto the expositions. This perspective is grounded in several reasons which I describe in *A curatorial perspective*.

Three reasons to keep reading

I focus on curatorial strategies in Artistic Research for various reasons. I'll group them into three main strands:

1. Artistic Research is relevant to the contemporary production and discussion of art beyond its own discourse and it is currently going through a restructuring and worried self-questioning phase;
2. The relay of artistic and curatorial practices into the digital sphere is increasing and it has recently become more prominent, even beyond the disciplinary discourse;
3. To the best of my knowledge, no other research project analysed a whole issue of the JAR, let alone from a curatorial perspective. Since most of the literature on the RC and JAR has been written by people who also developed them, I aim at casting a different perspective on these objects and their ways of making Artistic Research public.

Let me now unpack them. First, by and large, within the arts, Artistic Research is neither a volatile trend nor a niche. It had/has a prominent role in the restructuring of the curricula and the discourses in the post-Bologna higher education systems in the arts around Europe (Slager 2015, 7). Thereby, it is changing how art is taught, produced

and talked about (MichelkeVICIUS 2021, 15; Cotter 2019, 19). Besides the critical voices that have always accompanied its development, especially throughout its institutionalisation (e.g. see Candlin 2000) and more recently Steyerl (2021), some positions and events inside the same institutions have more recently shown a need for restructuring and repositioning of (some of) the discourse around Artistic Research. For example, in 2019, Lucy Cotter (2019) published the book 'Reclaiming artistic research', which aimed at "recreat[ing] space for artists to lead and shape conceptions of artistic research and its place in art" (15). Similarly, in 2020, the 9th Bucharest Biennale, curated by Henk Slager, suggested a 'Farewell to Research', as a way to "question the dominant trend of academized research that has reigned in art now for at least ten years." The same year, the European Artistic Research Network became the Extended Artistic Research Network, expanding and splitting into seven working groups: "since 2020 the agenda for EARN has evolved. There is now a new approach to co-development of research through thematic working groups; a new emphasis on active research generation; and a process of expanding membership (beyond the provincial boundaries imagined as 'Europe')." In 2021 the conference and book 'The Postresearch condition', edited by Henk Slager "considered the need to renew the terms of engagement after a "research decade" which saw some versions of artistic research becoming mainstreamed" ('About EARN' n.d.). Finally, Dombois (2022) picks up on the disappointment that Cotter (2019) and many others expressed and argues that

Despite all declarations, we have not, to date, managed to free ourselves sufficiently –even intellectually– from the art-science question. As interesting as the relationship between art and science is, an encounter at eye level is nevertheless urgently needed. And for this we need a movement of sovereignty of the arts in research, be it visual arts, music or architecture (Dombois 2022).

Whether by refusing 'academisation' or meddling with the art-science question, the debate around research-based artistic practices (regardless of the exact definition –see *On Artistic Research*) keeps evolving and deeply affecting current artistic practice beyond its discursive niche.

Second, the recent and ongoing corona pandemic and the development of technologies like blockchain and Non-Fungible-Tokens (NFTs) have put digital and online artistic and curatorial practices under the spotlight (Slager and Wilson 2022b). Artistic and curatorial appropriations of the web are as old as the web itself (Dekker 2021; Ghidini 2019). However, until the clamorous auction of the NFT-based work “Everydays: The First 5000 Days” at Christie’s (Palumbo 2021), digital works rarely made it into the mainstream. For various reasons, including the difficult marketability of digital art before the advent of NFTs, they are not well-known. Their documentation is fragmented and their preservation is constantly threatened by quick technological obsolescence (e.g. see Delaplaine 2021).

There has been, in the context of the Covid-19 global pandemic, a notable intensification of the relays between exhibition protocols and the culture of digital networks. (Slager and Wilson 2022b, 2). In the last two years, many cultural institutions had to close their analogue venues to the public, a new situation that forced them into a rushed and often naive ‘go digital’ (Dekker 2021, 11). These measures were mostly dictated by necessity and lacked a serious and critical intervention in and with the new playground: Just as white cubes or black boxes, web-based platforms and interfaces are no neutral exhibition/publication grounds (Connor 2021). Their infrastructures play an essential role in the politics of production and signification of artistic and curatorial practices they host and co-produce. As I keep working on this thesis, no wide-spread, general forced closures due to the pandemic threaten institutions in Europe anymore. They are open again and producing plenty of face-to-face cultural programs, begging the question of what will (or has already) happen(ed) to their digital programs.

By scrolling through museum websites, current open calls and funding programs in the German-speaking area (e.g. Deutscher Museumsbund n.d. and Kulturstiftung des Bundes n.d.), it becomes clear that the digital expansion and transformation of these institutions is not just here to stay but it will also be further developed beyond the sheer necessity of the pandemic. Therefore, it is still high time to keep reflecting on what it actually means to be (and not just to go) digital for artistic and curatorial (research-based) practices (Slager and Wilson 2022a, 2).

This urgency is reflected in the context of curating Artistic Research, for example, by the EARN working group 'Curatorial Studies Workshop' which is specifically dealing with "the relay of exhibition-making into virtual and online spaces" ('Curatorial Studies WG5' n.d.). This research strand crystallised and developed over several workshops, gatherings and publications like "exhibitions online—what for?" at Bucharest Biennale 9 (June 2020) and the workshop and subsequent publication "Expo-Facto: Into the Algorithm of Exhibition?" (Slager and Wilson 2022b).

Third, much literature has already been written on the RC and the JAR which are my primary objects of interest. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, these contributions were not written from a curatorial perspective but mostly in the framework of (academic) publishing (see Schwab and Borgdorff 2014). Given the specificity of the hosting infrastructure and the contributions, I claim that this perspective does not adequately shed light on the materiality of the expositions. For this argument, I draw on Hayles' (2004) definition of materiality as "a dynamic quality that emerges from the interplay between the text [in this case the exposition] as a physical artifact, its conceptual content, and the interpretive activities of readers and writers" (72). I expand on materiality and its meaning for this project in *Towards a media-specific analysis*. During my research, I also noticed that the articles analysing the RC and the JAR are almost exclusively written by the people who developed it and who covered important roles in the editorial board (i.e. Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff). Therefore, I start with a different, curatorial perspective and an 'external' position. I was never involved in the Journal and I do not know any of its protagonists well. I believe that not having invested a substantial amount of resources in conceptualising, developing and promoting the RC and the JAR will influence my analysis.

My research journey

This project builds on my training in Fine Arts/Painting, my Bachelor degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Major Culture and History, especially on the core disciplines (Epistemology, Logic, History and Theory of Science and Science and Technology Studies) and a Supervised Independent Study I carried out in Groningen (The Netherlands) in 2018-2019, where I interviewed participants in an art-science collaboration and a graduate from PhDArts (Leiden/The Hague) on the question of 'artistic practice' and 'academic research' coming together in their projects on an 'equal basis'. This short study was sparked by a general interest of mine in research-based artistic practices as a way to bridge theoretical reflections and artistic skills, whose separation in different educational paths (e.g. university vs. art academy) had been a painfully frustrating component of my education up to that point.

My studies in Art Education, Curatorial Studies have determined the focus of this project. The knowledge and training I gained throughout the courses and during extracurricular projects mark the vantage point from which I now look at research-based artistic practices. Moreover, I am also personally drawn to web-based interfaces as curatorial platforms as I am part of a collective working on/with a browser-based art space. KUNSTSURFER is "a browser ad-blocker extension that, instead of just recognising and hiding advertisement, replaces it with curated artistic content." ('KUNSTSURFER' 2022). Besides KUNSTSURFER, I was also involved in several user testings for the alpha version of the Dialogical Repository, "a living online archive and interactive resource for faculty and students of Shared Campus" ('Dialogical Repository' n.d.) which will be officially launched in 2024. Like the Research Catalogue, the Dialogical Repository combines an editor (i.e. a workspace for content creation) with repository functions that qualify it as an archival / dissemination platform. I expand on the trends in the creation of educational, dissemination, network and community-building platforms in *Curating online spaces*.

Bringing all the aforementioned interests and perspectives together and coming up with a "media-specific" (Hayles 2004) way of analysing

a rather unusual object from a curatorial point of view was not a linear and straightforward process. In the rest of this chapter, similarly to what I did with my interviewees, I recount the milestones of the research journey that explicitly only started a year ago but was significantly influenced by my educational and professional background. This attempt to shed light on my own research process organically spreads roots into the rest of the thesis.

Building on my interests, the research for this thesis started with a serendipitous encounter with Kris Decker's research project "Academised Artists" at the Institute for Contemporary Art Research of Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). I stumbled upon it one day as I was exploring the 'research' section of the ZHdK website for a seminar. I was intrigued its inter-/transdisciplinary perspective, which involved Science Studies and ethnographic attention to the practices beyond legitimization discourses in Artistic Research.

A few months later, I read the publication "The postresearch condition" (Slager and Beech 2021) which brought again my attention to intersections between curatorial and research-based artistic practices. My first encounter with Henk Slager's work had been at the curatorial workshop (led by Mick Wilson) and conference I attended for the 9th Bucharest Biennial in 2020. Henk Slager and Mick Wilson's work in the field of curating Artistic Research became a central reference in my project.

Between September and December 2021, I attended the Transcultural Collaboration, a semester program by Shared Campus with students from art universities across disciplines in Europe and East Asia. Due to travel restrictions, the exchange, originally planned in Taipei (Taiwan), was moved to Athens (Greece). There, we were accompanied by several local artists and curators, including Georgios Papadopoulos, who combines economics with artistic practice. During an input on Artistic Research, he mentioned the concept of "expositionality" (Schwab 2019) which immediately caught my attention (see *A curatorial perspective*). This term promised to bring my interest in research-based artistic practices together with exhibition-like (or curatorial) processes and thus offered a good starting point to reflect on a master thesis.

Moreover, my participation in the Transcultural Collaboration, with its pressure to create two group exhibitions in less than three months, exposed me (again) to the everyday struggles of creative practices. I could just be an undercover 'participant observer' of my fellow students in finding our way through experimentation and group work.

In the meanwhile, I applied to work as an art mediator at documenta fifteen. I got a positive reply only in February 2022 when I had already set most of my research design and started a close analysis of the latest issue of the JAR which, at that time, was the number 25. In conversation with my supervisors, I decided to postpone the submission of the thesis to be able to work at documenta fifteen. Yet before I left Zurich, I devoted all the time and nerves I could spare from the long and wearing visa application procedure to an omnivorous reading and synthesizing literature.

While in Kassel, my attempts to spare time and mental space for my thesis were mostly in vain. My participation in documenta fifteen did not change much in my research design, yet it did significantly expand the reflections I started during the Transcultural Collaboration on the institutionalisation and geographies of the discourses in and on Artistic Research. It especially sharpened my attention to (western, academic) universalising tendencies: of telling stories and simultaneously concealing where they came from and why they were written.

To keep up with the publication pace, in August I decided to turn my focus from issue 25 to issue 26, the latest at that time. This change in my object of analysis allowed me to later draw parallels and notice differences between the two issues. These insights have also organically grown into the thesis.

In September, I had the chance to participate in the Summer academy of the Swiss Study Foundation titled "Art and Science yesterday, Art and Research today", led by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Staffan Müller-Wille. This experience enriched my understanding of a possible historical trajectory in the discourse around 'art' and 'research'. The last part of the academy was dedicated to contemporary discourses and included contributions by Florian Dombois and Paulo de Assis which nicely overlapped with topics I deal with in this thesis. However,

it also confirmed how awareness of the eurocentricity of many discourses in History of Science and Art is regrettably still not so common, even among professors at elite universities.

I planned to carry out a first analysis of all the expositions before interviewing the authors. In reality, since I was still working full time at documenta fifteen, I only had time to quickly read through them and get a general impression before I rushed into the interviews. I could only revise, polish and code the transcripts starting in October. On the 27th October I also digitally took part in the EARN Gathering ('EARN Gathering' 2022) which was centred on the issue of making Artistic Research public (see issue 19 of the Journal RUUKKU) and included the presentation of the book "Expo-Facto: Into the Algorithm of Exhibition" (Slager and Wilson 2022b). Since then, I've been analysing, drawing, reading and writing.

A curatorial perspective on research-based artistic practices

As I mentioned above, the term 'expositionality' especially caught my attention as a way to combine my interest in research-based artistic practices with a curatorial perspective (see *Expositions and Expositionality*). I started to reflect on how exhibitions, exhibition-like processes and in general gestures of making public are used in the field of Artistic Research to communicate the results of a research project. At the same time, as these exhibitions are composed of many elements that may only work together and cannot be atomised into 'artworks', the exhibition may become an artistic medium in itself. This interest in the role of exhibition(-like) presentations in Artistic Research brought me to the JAR.

I started this research by focusing on the crafting of expositions: Why does this exposition look the way it looks? Why were these specific elements chosen and arranged in this specific way? However, I soon realised that these were only a fragment of the curatorial concerns I

encountered in the projects presented in the JAR. With O'Neill and Wilson (2015), I understand the work of a curator both in "the narrow sense of the curator as exhibition-maker, working with works that are construed as self-sufficient" (15) and in "the extended sense of the curator as (variously) co-producer, auteur, critic or agent provocateur, working with a range of different art practices which unfold in ways that are imbricated with each other within the curatorial process" (15). In this extended sense, curatorial practices are "modes of becoming –research-based, dialogical practices in which the processual and serendipitous overlap with speculative actions and open-ended forms of production" (12). As the definitions suggest, the distinction between the narrow and extended sense is not clear-cut. I expand on these and related concepts in *On Curating*.

From this double vantage point (i.e. the narrow and extended notion of curating), I am interested in the entanglement and eventual overlapping of artistic and curatorial practices, especially concerning research. From the perspective of curating-as-exhibition-making, I maintain that curating Artistic Research requires an in-depth understanding of its forms of presentation and circulation. These forms are deeply intertwined with current politics of production, debates, controversies and perspectives for further development. Concerning curating-as-a-mode-of-becoming, artist-researchers can (and often do) also take over the role of the "co-producer, auteur, critic or agent provocateur" (15) i.e. of the extended curator, as part of their practice. They also work with "the exhibition as [a] potential mode of research action" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 17). Therefore, I draw on Slager's (2021) conceptual model for Artistic Research as a dynamic relationship among three conceptual spaces (3):

creative practice (experimentality, art making, potential of the sensible), artistic thinking (open-ended, speculative, associative, non-linear, haunting, thinking differently) and curatorial strategies (topical modes of political imagination, transformational spaces for encounters, reflection and dissemination).

According to Slager, curatorial strategies (here mostly referring to the extended notion) are an integral part of Artistic Research. He argues that one should "comprehend these spaces in their mutual, dynamic

coherence as a series of indirect triangular relationships” (3). This model immediately caught my attention because it inscribes a curatorial component into the core of Artistic Research.

A strategic choice

Based on the understanding of curatorial practice I just outlined and I will expand on in *On Curating*, I decided to analyse the expositions from a curatorial perspective. This was a strategic choice that built on my expertise and subsequent vantage point:

the point is not in this choice of objects, [...] It is in the questions we ask those objects: questions of use, of affect, of pirating; of power, matter and framing; of exploitation, abuse or empowerment. In the practice of analysing visual manifestations in and of a culture, practitioners of visual analysis are keen to account for the affect-laden relationship between the thing seen and the subject doing the seeing (Bal 2008, 168).

My curatorial perspective frames the questions I ask to the objects of this research: the six expositions published in issue 26 of JAR. For example, the choice of a typeface would not be so crucial if I read the expositions as ‘regular’ academic journal articles whereas it may have/acquire a special meaning in this case (see Mousavi 2022b). This point resonates with the argument, variously elaborated by Schwab (2014; 2018b), that in the expositions, the format should be content-relevant (2014, 12):

the layout and design of an exposition can be read as an integral part of the meaning that is conveyed and not only as a secondary, transparent and decorative layer through which meaning appears (99).

I suggest that a curatorial perspective would provide “an understanding of the impact of the presentation format” (2018b, 2). According to Schwab, this insight “not only enhances the communicative powers of a research project, but also shapes the research process and is reflected in its findings” (2). Taking this claim seriously involves, in my opinion, also reading it against the grain: does the infrastructure (i.e.

technologies used to produce and visit online spaces) really allow for combining (academic) publishing with artistic 'needs'? In other words, is all the effort justified? I expand on these questions in *Towards a media-specific analysis*.

The JAR represents an interesting field of curatorial exploration as it builds on and challenges the traditions and conventions of web-based (academic) publishing, artistic and curatorial practice (Figure 2). A curatorial perspective, as an unusual point of view for the analysis of a journal issue, allows me to better understand how the JAR may both expand the notion of academic publication beyond text-based outlets and exhibition beyond (mostly analogue) exhibition-making. Moreover, it encourages me to question conventions in the writing style, structure and layout in academic texts and to consider them as forms of meaning-making. As I discovered during my interviews, not all the stories behind curatorial choices may be so relevant for the content-matter of the articles but as traces of their practice as personal anecdotes from the process e.g. the choice of the typeface in Mousavi's (2022b) exposition. All in all, I chose a perspective that, in my view, would help me in "making the familiar strange" (Mannay 2016, 27) by questioning conventional perspectives and taking risks by changing perspective.

One further thesis I questioned by taking a curatorial perspective is that expositions work so differently from online exhibitions to need a specific name. Indeed, if I bracketed for the moment the difference in contexts, the definition of expositions as discursive, mediated and choreographed sites of display (Schwab 2019, 29) begs the question of what the difference with exhibitions should be. Schwab himself writes that "there are expositional aspects in exhibitions and vice versa to the degree that exhibitions and expositions may sometimes coincide" (28). I expand on this point in *Expositions and Expositonality*.

Furthermore, curating is explicitly mentioned in the literature on the RC: next to "exposure"; "staging", "performance" and many others, Schwab (2018b) lists it as one of the "*modes of writing* that can be found in the practice of artistic research" (5, emphasis added): "Curating: Content is arranged in such a way as to open up meaning between pieces of visual, acoustic or textual information" (5). This

application of the term curating to a publishing perspective (i.e. as a mode of writing) suggests to what extent the term has expanded beyond the visual arts (see also Güntner 2014), but it also does not reflect on the discussions on the extended term and the curatorial (see *On Curating*). The description of curating as a meaning-making arrangement of content strongly reminds me of curating in the narrow term, as exhibition-making.

Thereby, I do not argue that expositions are exactly like online exhibitions, whose definition is blurry and contested anyway, see *Online exhibitions*) and that the context in which they appear i.e. the JAR does not have a major influence on their materiality (Hayles 2004). I acknowledge and value that especially because of many of the features I listed here and in the dedicated chapter, expositions in the JAR are somehow special. By questioning their exclusivity, I simply suggest that drawing similarities between these practices may be a productive strategy to understand the curatorial work that was invested in their creation. This perspective both acknowledges and questions the potential of the Research Catalogue as a platform for making Artistic Research public.

After this introduction, I expand on the RC and the JAR as the context of my digital fieldwork and on the six expositions published in JAR issue 26, as the objects of my research.

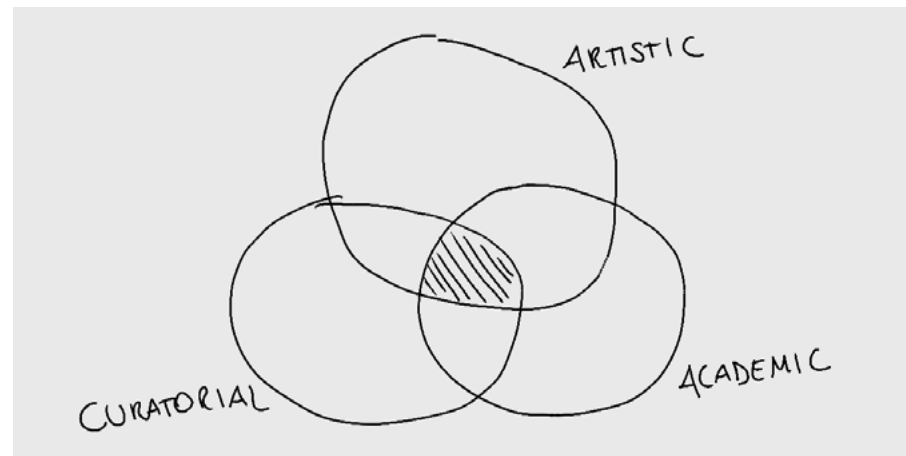


Figure 2: Visualising intersections.

The Research Catalogue and the Journal for Artistic Research

In this chapter, I introduce the Research Catalogue (RC) and the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR): how they were created and how they currently work. I take the chance to write about expositions and directly embed this term into broader discussions around exposing and curating.

The RC and the JAR were initially conceived by Florian Dombois, Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff, on an idea of the former, starting in 2009. The three artists/artist-researchers had been exploring the phenomenon of Artistic Research, especially how to document and disseminate it for some time and met on various occasions. In 2010, they co-founded the Society for Artistic Research (SAR) as an internationally active not-for-profit organisation and one year later, on 4 March 2011, Issue 0 of the Journal for Artistic Research was launched at a conference in Bern (Switzerland).

For strategic and content-related reasons, Dombois, Schwab and Borgdorff decided to develop two related platforms with different functions: the Research Catalogue (RC) and the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR): “The RC is a free, online, collaborative and mostly private workspace that also allows for the (self-)publication of Artistic Research. JAR is an academic, peer-reviewed and open access journal for the publication and dissemination of Artistic Research.” The development of the RC and the JAR is financed by several, mostly European, public and private (higher education and research) institutions. Interestingly, the Max Plank Institute for the History of Science (Berlin, directed until 2014 by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger) was also involved (Borgdorff 2012, 223). The RC is currently technically operated by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm, Sweden).

The Research Catalogue

The Research Catalogue (RC) is a non-commercial, collaboration and publishing platform for artistic research provided by the Society for Artistic Research. The RC is free to use for artists and researchers. It serves also as a backbone for teaching purposes, student assessment, peer review workflows and research funding administration. It strives to be an open space for experimentation and exchange ('Research Catalogue' n.d.).

As mentioned in the quote, the Research Catalogue has many serves many functions: It is an archive/database, a networking platform as well as a promotional, educational and organisational tool. It hosts so-called institutional portals i.e. special features that allow for institutions to use it as a teaching/learning platform e.g. for the revision and publication of theses/dissertations (Schwab 2018b); a module for the management of research funding applications; various SAR resources, like the announcements (SARA) i.e. open calls, conferences, reviews ('SARA Announcements' n.d.) and the activities of the SAR Special Interest Groups (SIGs) e.g. "Language-based Artistic Research" ('SAR Special Interest Groups' n.d.).

However, one of the main features stays the interface that allows the production of the contributions to the JAR as web-based hypertexts, where text and other various media can be easily embedded and arranged on digital whiteboards (i.e. the editor, see Figure 1). The editor allows working graphically (no need to code in HTML or other languages). It has a central workspace with a menu and toolbar on the top and a sidebar for resources on the right. It allows to create "two dimensional" (Schwab 2018b, 9) pages –see discussion on two/three dimensionality in *Implementation of concepts*– as rectangular surfaces whose size is completely customisable. On the page, image, video, audio and PDF files can be easily embedded. Basic interactive features are supported but, according to the interviewees, rather difficult to implement (Raidel 2022b; Mousavi 2022b). The contribution can be organised in chapters by either bookmarking sections on the same page or creating different pages. Similarly to other graphical user

interfaces, it is possible to switch to preview mode and annotate the contribution (e.g. leave comments). The platform supports live interaction and collaboration between users.

While JAR is peer-reviewed, meaning that only selected and approved expositions are published there, the bar to publishing on the RC, at least on the formal level, is relatively low. Anyone, with prior proof of identity, can get free of charge a full account of the Research Catalogue, create projects and publish them there. Therefore, the RC has a bottom-up approach and offers a space for exploration, without filtering and/or enforcing distinctions between (proper) Artistic Research and other practices. I created a personal Research Catalogue account to try it out myself and thus better understand the experience of my interviewees and their struggles with the interface. Unfortunately, I did not have time for extensive testing sessions.

The Journal for Artistic Research

The Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) is an international, online, Open Access and peer-reviewed journal that disseminates artistic research from all disciplines. JAR invites the ever-increasing number of artistic researchers to develop what for the sciences and humanities are standard academic publication procedures. It serves as a meeting point of diverse practices and methodologies in a field that has become a worldwide movement with many local activities. ('Journal for Artistic Research' n.d.)

The JAR works as a portal for selected expositions that were created in and are hosted on the Research Catalogue. Contributions to the Journals are peer-reviewed with a single-blind procedure (i.e. the authors do not know the reviewers) and published in numbered issues. So far, each issue bundled between four and twelve contributions (usually around five) introduced by an editorial statement. One can read a curatorial hand behind the choice of contributions, however, the issues are not explicitly put together on a thematic base as in other journals.

Given the international reach and staff, JAR's working language has usually been English. However, since JAR 18, it is possible to submit contributions in other languages depending on the expertise and capacities of the editorial board and peer-reviewers. Currently, it is possible to submit texts in English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Moreover, since issue 25, it is possible to set an overall preferred language for the journal. By opening up to different languages, the JAR hopes to become more accessible and diversify its audience and users. However, regardless of the technical hurdles of creating different linguistic paths through the journal without translating everything, the socio-cultural and political relevance of English as international academic language seems difficult to ignore. If they have the necessary language proficiency and/or tools and they haven't decided against it as a political move, native speakers of other languages may still prefer publishing in English to reach out to a wider audience e.g. at least two of my interviewees were fluent/native German-speakers and still decided to publish in English. Moreover, the tone, vocabulary, syntax used in the expositions tends to align with the academic publishing standards in the respective language. Few artists are actively playing and challenging this trend. They experiment with different voices and/or include meta-commentaries on the topic. The "Language-based practices Special Interest Group is particularly active in this regard e.g. see "Collateral Reading" by Varodi (2021). I comment on the use of language in the expositions I analyse in *Issue 26*.

The JAR is not the only journal that works as a portal for contributions created in and hosted by the Research Catalogue: from the RC, contributions can also be submitted for peer-review to RUUKKUU – Studies in Artistic Research, which works with thematic open calls (e.g. currently on activism) and accepts contributions in Finnish, Swedish and English; the Journal of Sonic Studies (JSS), with a focus on sonic environments; and VIS – Nordic Journal for Artistic Research, with a focus on the north European region. These are all peer-reviewed Journals hosted on the Research Catalogue but run by editorial boards that are independent of JAR's. As journals, they are currently based on a diamond open access model (see Fuchs and Sandoval 2013): authors can publish and readers have open access free of charge

while the Journals sustain themselves via institutional memberships and other funding schemes.

Since the editors give a lot of freedom to design the contributions according to different structures and aesthetics, the overall experience of the expositions can be very different. The only stable visual element while visiting one is the hover-over top bar, with various menus. The first four are drop-down (from left to right): “Contents” (with the Table of Contents), “Navigation” (with a schematic overview of the current page) –this menu disappears in the responsive expositions i.e. that would automatically adapt their design to fit the proportion of a tablet and/or mobile device (smaller, portrait), “Abstract” (with the complete text), “an abbreviated citation e.g. Ali Mousavi – Acoustemological Investigation: Sound Diary #Tehran – 2022” (with the complete citation in the drop-down). The last three menu items are links to other pages: “Meta” (to the page with all the meta-data on the exposition), “Comments” (to the comment section of the same page) and “Terms” (to the terms-of-use page of the JAR).

Expositions and Expositonality

Contributions in the JAR, RUUKKUU, JSS and VIS are called expositions. As I mentioned in *Six basic terms*, this word is ubiquitous in the Research Catalogue and it can thus be interpreted as a technical term. For example, when opening one of the contributions, the button shows “open exposition”. As I asked during the interviews, the artists also used it as a technical term for contributions designed on the RC (Swo-boda 2022b; Szanto and Sicotte 2022b). Some also explicitly liked the term as it fit well their practice and/or made them think about what they were doing while creating one of them (Szanto and Sicotte 2022b). Moreover, Mousavi (2022b) coined the term “visual article” as while talking with his friends, they would often complain about him using jargon while talking about his work. For him, “visual article” was a more understandable term to capture the writing, designing and curatorial process involved in creating an exposition.

Yet why 'exposition'? Schwab often wrote about it in the context of the RC (see 2014; 2019). Etymologically, the French *exposition* draws a line to the history of temporary exhibitions, fairs and expos, from the *Exposition des produits de l'industrie française* (1798–1849) to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (London: Crystal Palace, 1851) to the first and current (art) biennials (Schwab 2019). Although etymologically closely related, in English, to expose underlines the act of showing "something that is usually hidden" (Oxford Dictionaries n.d.). This meaning comes closer to its technical application in photography, where 'exposure' indicates "the length of time for which light is allowed into the camera" (Oxford Dictionaries n.d.). Both for Schwab (2019) and for some artists (see Szanto and Sicotte 2022b), it seemed useful to coin a specific jargon, one that would focus on revealing instead of 'just' showing.

Linked to the term expositions, is the concept of expositiveness, which refers to the practice of "expos[ing] practice as research" (30, 31). This entails a re-doubling: the artists and their practices become subjects and objects of their inquiry (Schwab and Borgdorff 2014, 15). Schwab (2019) writes that there is no best practice for expositiveness, but he suggests looking for examples where, for example, "media content (audio or video) starts straight away; that give visual guidance of how and in which direction to read; that create productive confusion/overload/multilayeredness [...]" (42). He limits expositiveness to the context of the Research Catalogue and to the assessment of contributions to be published in the JAR. However, he also writes that

the exposition of artistic practice is *an everyday occurrence* [...]
In fact, one may say that 'exposition' is what artists essentially do, since there is no art without the presentation and the setting forth (from the Latin *exponere*) of their work (Schwab 2014, 97, my emphasis)

Many expectations are pending on expositions. According to Schwab (2019) "in my understanding expositions are events that problematise rather than represent the artistic practice they embody [...]. Expositions are aesthetico-epistemic transpositions of practice aimed at articulating artistic research" (28, 32). According to Benshop, Peter and Lemmens (2014) they are/should be integral part of the practice:

The exposition is not a part of the work of art, it *does* part of the work of art. [...] the 'work of art', which is not just a descriptive, but also a normative insight (50, emphasis in original).

In this sense, the authors claim that their exposition refuses to be 'after the fact', mere documentation of an already complete and concluded projects (47). But does this apply also to the expositions I am analysing? Can these expositions really refuse to be 'documentation', especially in the case of degree-related projects?

Beyond the discourse on the RC and Artistic Research, 'to expose/ exposure' has also become popular in debates on 'the curatorial'. For example, Martinon (2013) while presenting Mallarmé's project "This Is" as a curatorial event writes: "This Is is simultaneously performative (it performs the Absolute), constative (it is an explanation) and it has truth-value (it will succeed or not). As such, This Is *exposes language as it exposes itself*" (Martinon 2013a, 3, emphasis added). As discussed above, the quality of revealing something hidden highlights the gesture of making it public.

Parallel to the beginnings of the Curatorial Studies discourse, Bal (1996) brought her attention to exposure by claiming that: "The discourse around which museums evolve, and which defines their primary function, is exposition" (2). Bal combines the meaning of exposition, exposé and exposure by tracing it back to the Greek *apo-deik-numai* (1) and understands it as a deeply performative act:

Something is made public in exposition, and that event involves bringing out into the public domain the deepest held views and beliefs of a subject. Exposition is always also an argument. Therefore, in publicizing these views the subject objectifies, exposes himself as much as the object; this makes the exposition an exposure of the self. Such exposure is an act of producing meaning, a performance (2).

This political understanding of exposition resonates with the extended notion of curating, especially with the debates on the curatorial. With this background on the infrastructure and the main discourses surrounding it, I am ready to dive deep into the nitty-gritty of the expositions.

Issue 26

In the following section, I summarise my experience of visiting the six expositions published in issue 26 (Figure 3). Thereby, I focus on the respective artistic practices and how they are presented. This section is already informed by the concepts and the analytical tools I will expand on later.

Issue 26 was published in May 2022 and it was the latest when I started re-thinking this research project (see *My research journey*). Therefore, it gave me the most up-to-date access to an already concluded round of selection, hosting, editing and peer-reviewing within the JAR. Issue 26 includes six expositions showing a broader spectrum of (geo-political) contexts than the earlier one, both concerning the artist-researchers' home institutions and the objects of research. Contrarily to previous issues, the question of multilingualism in the Journal does not seem so prominent (see issue 25, Schwab 2021) as all contributions are written in English.

Most importantly, issue 26 is the first one featuring responsive expositions. As Schwab proudly explains, thereby a “silent revolution” started: The creation of static pages was considered fundamental to grant as much freedom as possible in the layout and control of the visitors' experiences, by ‘making sure’ that they would all render and look the same across devices (2022) –an aspiration still far from reality, see *Towards a media-specific analysis*. However, responsiveness has become increasingly relevant as more people primarily surf via mobile devices (2022). The issue of responsiveness had and will have a major impact on the design and aesthetics of the expositions themselves (see *Testing the grounds*). On this point, Swoboda (2022b) cynically commented: “It was a compromise: before it was working really well for desktop and now it's not working really well both for desktop and for smartphones, but it works”.

Archive

ISSUE 26

On the surface, this issue of JAR may much look like the previous issues we published, but under the hood, you can witness a silent revolution. With JAR26, for the first time, we have started to embrace a shift from the fixed-position layout of expositions that the Research Catalogue has pioneered to a responsive design approach that it now also supports.

[Read full editorial and browse issue](#)



Acoustemological Investigation: Sound Diary #Tehran

Ali Mousavi

Acoustemological Investigation: Sound Diary #Tehran is a research-based project that is being developed as part of my ongoing Ph.D. research. This is accomplished by employing sensory methodology as a research tool for observing and analysing architecture and urban design. Art and architecture have always seemed to me to have the potential for social change and the improvement of the existing social order. They can be emancipatory, assisting in self-development, promoting social justice, and even, in small ways, changing the world we live in.

[...]

keywords:

acoustemology, soundscape, psychogeography, sound art, architecture, urban sonic space, practice-based research

OPEN EXPOSITION

Figure 3: Screenshot of the home page of the issue 26 of the Journal for Artistic Research.

‘Acoustemological Investigation: Sound diary #Tehran’ by Ali Mousavi

Ali Mousavi’s (2022a – Figure 4) exposition is part of the research for his PhD at Aalto University (Helsinki, Finland). It presents parts of his acoustemological investigations (i.e. acoustic epistemology, understanding sonic experiences as a means of knowing) of the city of Tehran. Specifically, it includes some of his sound diaries, with recordings of the sound of specific areas and streets. Starting from the history of the city, the author moves to a specific development project called Pardis (paradise), a huge real-estate development project situated around 50 km away from Tehran and basically only accessible by car. Notwithstanding the name, the housing development stands “in the middle of desolate desert-like land with no sign of a blade of green grass” (2022a). In the exposition, Mousavi combined the audio/video recordings with spatial analysis of the buildings linking back the modernist principles of functional zoning (i.e. the separation of residential, leisure and work areas) and Le Courbusier’s plans for the Ville Radieuse (Le Corbusier [1929] 2011).

The exposition is divided into nine chapters with a clear start, end and sequencing. I navigate from one page to the next via the buttons “Previous page | Next page” in the footer. Most pages are screen-wide but show varying lengths. The layout mostly follows a regular structure: the page starts with an image/video followed by text blocks and it always ends with more image/video/audio material. As Ali told me, he wanted to give something to the reader/visitor to look forward to at the end of long text blocks. Some of the background images are the maps documenting his walking paths. However, these images are so zoomed in that the blue and red patterns become almost abstract. Only two pages, placed towards the end of the exposition (suggesting a climax?) are wider than the screen width and thus force the visitor to scroll to the right. One of them breaks with the structure of the other pages and shows a collage of overlapping maps, pictures with graphic interventions, models, audio and video recordings. The visitor should get a sense of looking and moving around. According to Ali, this page mirrors the idea that the city is also a collage of sounds, images, people, etc.

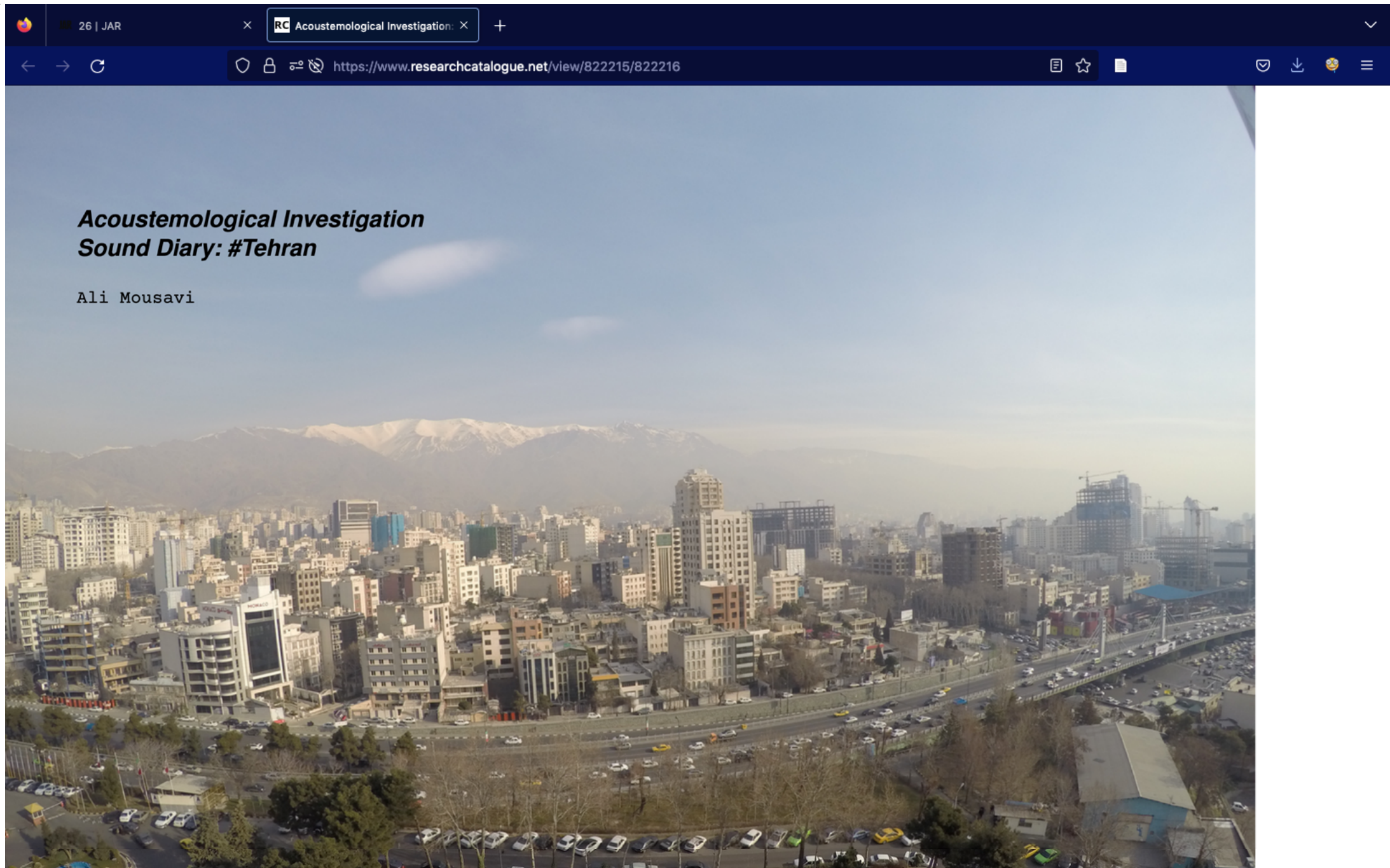


Figure 4: Screenshot of the landing page of “Acoustemological Investigation – Sound diary: #Tehran” by Ali Mousavi (2022).

‘Affective Atmosphere: A Non-Representational Method of Devising Film Performance and Fiction’ by Pavel Prokopic

Pavel Prokopic’s (2022 – Figure 5) exposition builds on but significantly re-works parts of the content of his PhD and a research project titled “Affective Cinema”. The exposition introduces Affective Atmosphere as a film production method that

focuses on the becoming of the event [...] hence making the method non-representational, through disrupting or dislocating purposeful representation in performance and the resulting film. The method aims to close the gap between the experienced present moment and the process of filming, [...] and, ultimately, blurring the line between the filmed/experienced reality and the resulting moving image (2022).

After giving some background on affective film performance and the philosophical context of affective atmosphere, Prokopic presents two films that were produced with this method: *Becoming Barcelona* (Prokopic 2019a) and *Becoming Granular* (Prokopic 2019b). Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the rhizome, a kind of “non-linear multiplicity” is central to the whole work. Both films were based on a rhizomatic script, that

it is a map ‘oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real’. The rhizomatic script creates a dissociated non-linear structure that emancipates itself entirely from narrative or dramatic conventions, and thus engenders an opening rather than a limitation (Prokopic 2022).

The structure of the exposition is also rhizomatic (see *Implementation of concepts*). It has no unique reading/visiting sequence and it brings the user from one hyperlink to the next without a clear overview. The text sections form compact blocks by being highlighted and justified. The exposition starts abruptly with the question “What is the unique expressive potential of film?”. Contrarily to an introductory paragraph, this situation forces the visitors to find a way through a rather complex setup.

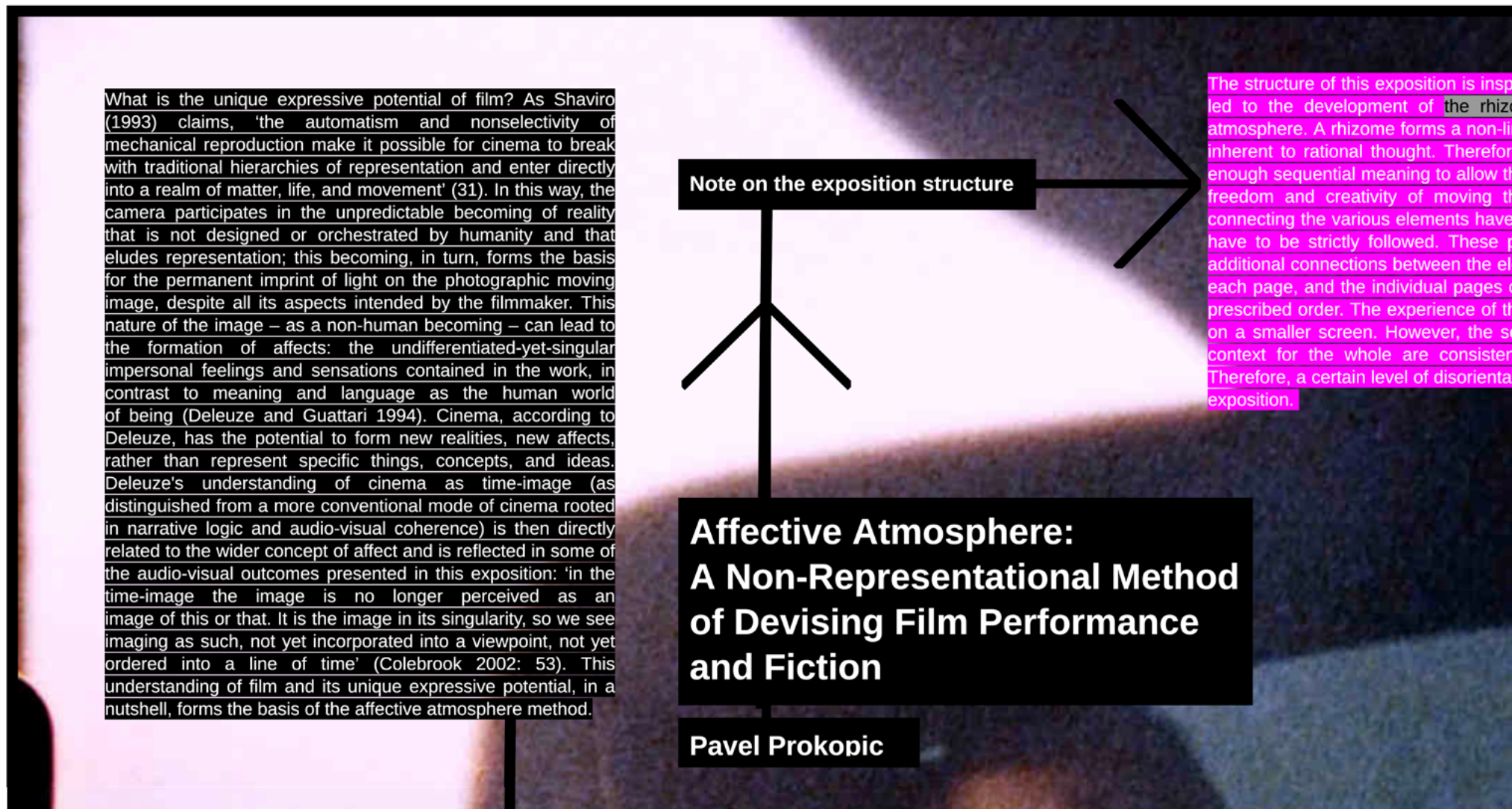


Figure 5: Screenshot of the landing page of “Affective Atmosphere: A Non-Representational Method of Devising Film Performance” by Pavel Prokopic (2022).

'Of Haunted Spaces' by *Ella Raidel*

Ella Raidel's (2022a – Figure 6) exposition focuses on her research project "Of Haunted Spaces" (Raidel n.d.) on Chinese ghost cities. The research produced the essay film "A Pile of Ghosts" (2021), the third in a series on Chinese urbanism and globalisation –see also "Subverses China in Mozambique" released in 2011 and "Double Happiness" in 2014. The exposition is a digital ghost paper. This format references the tradition in Taiwan (where the artist lived for a long time) and elsewhere of burning ghost papers (i.e. joss papers burnt as offerings to the dead). Yet it also points to the 'ghost of capitalism', ghost cities and the haunting explosion of speculative bubbles. Of Haunted Spaces "interprets the paradoxical urban phenomena where cities are built for millions, but not lived in" (2022a). The exposition is divided in six chapters that bridge the specific research project to more general reflections on Artistic Research in filmmaking and on writing on films.

The exposition starts with a magazine-like cover with the title GHOST-PAPER, the issue number (2), the year (2022) and the invitation to 'enter the ghost'. By clicking on the homonymous button, I land on the first page. The layout reminds that of a(n analogue) magazine. There are pull quotes and sidebars for contextual content to the body of the page (e.g. the video of ghost-paper burning festival). Navigation is aided by links to all the chapters on the top left sidebar. Moreover, I can digitally leaf through the pages by clicking on the arrows at the bottom of the page. If I keep 'leafing through', I come to the first page again. To get back to the cover (i.e. the 'enter the ghost' page), I would need to reload the exposition. The colour scheme is based on traditional ghost papers. This is the second issue because Raidel already created one for a conference in 2017. The first issue was an analogue ghost paper that could be leafed through and hung as a poster. Both the analogue and the digital versions were realised in collaboration with Ralph Kuo Chiang Wu, a graphic designer who took care of the layout and the calligraphy.



Figure 6: Screenshot of the landing page of "Of Haunted Spaces" by Ella Raidel (2022).

‘Petals to Light... Pedagogic Possibilities with Floor Art’, Journal for Artistic Research’

by Geetanjali Sachdev

Geetanjali Sachdev’s (2022a – Figure 7) exposition delves into the pedagogical possibilities of floor art practices like *rangoli* (i.e. the umbrella term for floor art across India) and *kolam* (i.e. a South Indian version). “Traditionally made by hand, these line drawings are created using rice powder, crushed limestone, or powdered white stone pebbles” (2022a). However, some include or are mostly composed of petals, whole flowers, seeds and other natural materials.

Sachdev recalls the process of opening a floral art department at Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology where she teaches. The colleagues commented that practices like *rangoli* are not botanical art because they are not portraying flowers in a realistic/scientific manner. This argument prompted Sachdev to reflect on the normativity of this cultural (and colonial) framework and its potential in a pedagogical context. For example, on the meaning of art as pleasure and distraction vs. as spiritual practice and how this aspect could be integrated into a more inclusive and multisensorial curriculum. As a teacher and artist, she writes that “creating a pedagogic form is both my artistic and my research practice” (2022a). She reports on various methods, like walking and building a visual archive of floor art practices and collaborations with other artists and projects.

As the table of contents reveals, the exposition’s structure is very similar to a regular article. It starts with an introduction, proceeds with background, methods, discussion and it finally draws conclusions. The design is simple and clear with black text on a white background. The text blocks are rather dense, justified to the left and follow each other in a single column. I can leaf through by clicking on the left/right arrows at the bottom of the page. As I keep reading, the text is increasingly often interrupted by blocks of images and some short videos. On the conclusion page, Sachdev used the gridline function of the Research Catalogue editor to compose a digital *rangoli*. The exposition is responsive to tablet/mobile devices.

Petals to Light...Pedagogic Possibilities with Floor Art

Geetanjali Sachdev



Figure 7: Screenshot of the landing page of “Petals to Light... Pedagogic Possibilities with Floor Art” by Geetanjali Sachdev (2022).

‘Research-Creation about and with Food: Diffraction, Pluralism, and Knowing’

by David Szanto and Geneviève Sicotte

In their exposition, David Szanto and Geneviève Sicotte (2022a – Figure 8) discuss the respective research-creation projects ‘The gastronome in you’ and ‘Signes de vie’. Both projects aimed at “(a) the pluralization of methods, knowledge, and outputs; (b) collaboration in meaning-making, reflection, and feedback; and (c) ongoing epistemic and personal transformation” (2022a). The gastronome in you is “a cycle of three iterative food performances, [that] centers on an inherited sourdough yeast culture and questions the persistence of humanity after death” (2022a). Signes de vie is an “imaginary food museum’. It takes the form of a website in which I present intimate food stories using a multimodal approach that combines words, images, and sound” (2022a).

After these one-page presentations of the respective projects, Szanto and Sicotte expose their collective process of reflecting on their practices at the intersection between research-creation and food studies e.g. about the use of language, tensions and restrictions and personal growth as part of their research. They conclude with an invitation to keep exploring the potentiality of research-creation (in food studies) as a method to obtain results that neither ‘purely’ academic nor artistic approaches could achieve.

The exposition starts with an abstract. This is quite unusual as there is a specific menu for that in the top bar of each exposition. The first page is dominated by a big coil where the cycles stand for different chapters. The coil (spiralling but with an overarching direction) is a visual concept for the exposition and a metaphor for research-creation in general (see *Implementation of concepts*). Most pages have different shapes and designs which graphically underline the content of each chapter e.g. the chapter “diffraction/discussion” is composed of four videos that cut through the page like the coil that closes and summarises the journey.

David Szanto & Geneviève Sicotte

RESEARCH-CREATION about and with FOOD: DIFFRACTION, PLURALISM, and KNOWING

"Cogito ergo sum."
—René Descartes

"Comedo ergo sum."
—anon.

ABSTRACT

A hybrid approach for artistic-academic investigation, research-creation has proven effective in addressing complex socio-technical issues while usefully undoing the dualities that emerge within more conventional research practice. In the realm of food, this is particularly relevant, given that the knowledges that constitute food culture and food systems are pluralistic. Moreover, food embeds some of our most critical contemporary challenges, such as hunger, migration, trade, climate change, and justice. Methods that address the subjective and relational nature of food, such as those of research-creation, are therefore critical. This exposition presents two food-centered research-creation projects, created by the two co-authors, each of which aimed at three objectives: (a) the pluralization of methods, knowledge, and outputs; (b) collaboration in meaning-making, reflection, and feedback; and (c) ongoing epistemic and personal transformation. Geneviève Sicotte's *Signes de vie / Vital Signs* is a digital, multimedia exhibition, largely presented through verbal, visual, and auditory content. David Szanto's *The Gastronome in You* is a series of three performances about death, life, and the microbiome, using the materiality of a sourdough starter to activate the gustatory and haptic senses. By bringing these two projects into dialogue with each other, and through an experimental, 'diffractive analysis' process, we present ways in which research-creation can help illuminate new forms of knowledge that engage with the distinct challenges and opportunities within food studies and our collective, ongoing food-and-human relations.

DIFFRACT
DISCUSSI



SIGNES DE VIE

THE GASTRONOME IN YOU



Figure 8: Screenshot of the landing page of "Research-Creation about and with Food: Diffraction, Pluralism and Knowing" by David Szanto and Geneviève Sicotte (2022).

Zoological Architectures and Empty Frames

by Katharina Swoboda

Katharina Swoboda's (2022a – Figure 9) exposition explores and reflects on zoological architecture via film-making. It reworks content she produced for the PhD dissertation (2021) which was based interests and research that started already in 2013-14. Throughout the project, she explored the relationship between film, animals and zoos through the concept of framing. Swoboda explored and sometimes re-enacted and documented famous scenes and places which involved animals in zoo environments via filmic means. For example, she mentions that the first video publicly uploaded to YouTube was shot at the zoo in San Diego and showed Jawed Karim in front of the elephant cage talking about their long trunk (jawed 2005). The penguin pool designed by Berthold Lubektin (part of the group Tecton) for the London zoo (now empty and protected by a heritage label) has also been variously portrayed in documentaries (see Moholy-Nagy 1936) and was the setting for shootings like Hans Ulrich Obrist's portrait for "London Burning: Portraits from a Creative City" (Amirsadeghi and Eisler 2015).

The exposition is the second and last responsive exposition in issue 26. It has a very clear, simple design with a white background and a navigation menu on the left. The seven sections are colour-coded: the colour of the titles and the frames around the text boxes are matching and they were taken from the video excerpts. The chapters are divided into regular paragraphs aligned to the left. Most pages follow a similar structure. They start with the text, framed by a thin line. This is followed by a video excerpt with a label, a brief contextualisation and a final aphorism which shows the artist's personal take on the issue. One needs to scroll up again to click to find the navigation menu and go to the next page.

Katharina Swoboda: Zoological Architecture and Empty Frames

- 1 intro
- 2 living images
- 3 framing as praxis
- 4 architecture
- 5 frames within frames
- 6 nozootopia
- 7 references

Unexpected zoo imagery emerged on social media networks during the Covid-19 crisis. In March 2020, the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago shared videos of penguins walking outside their enclosures in spaces designed for human visitors. The birds paddled around in visitor areas and 'met' other animals (Guardian News 2020). These videos went viral and started a trend for interspecies animal tours during the first lockdown. Stay-at-home, bound-to-their-computers humans watched free-roaming zoo animals. This simulated irony worked well. Although the penguins certainly were not free, humans watched these anthropomorphised creatures ardently. This sudden online collection of animal zoo tours arose because of the missing stream of visitors and their entrance fees. Zoos had excelled on social media promotion before the crisis, but the zoo tours reached a significantly wider and more diverse online audience through viral reposting and media coverage (Swoboda 2022).

The zoo and comparable institutions actively construct social ideas of animals and nature. Visitors are instructed to expect this 'nature' inside an enclosure. Therefore, the compound actively constructs our perception of the animal; it frames the animal. Writers like John Berger (1980), Randy Malamud (2012), and Brian Massumi (2014) linked zoo animals and frames conceptually. 'In principle, each cage is a frame round the animal inside it', John Berger (1980: 23) stated in his influential 1977 text 'Why Look at Animals?'. Human visitors might not be aware of it, but zoo architecture actively forms the material basis of a zoo and defines its vision and meaning [1].

Gregory Bateson (2007) developed his 1955 essay 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy' during a visit to San Francisco zoo. While observing apes, he identifies 'metacommunication' that defines the rest of the communication, namely signals and frames. How do apes know that they are being bitten as part of play rather than fighting when the action looks similar? Following Bateson, it is the signal – a form of metacommunication – that provides the distinction between playful nipping and aggressive snapping. While signals are the conscious form of these metacommunications, frames, in contrast, are processed quickly and unconsciously. Framing – more specifically, psychological frames – instruct without awareness of the recipient.

Conjoining visual and psychological framing is powerful. I resonate with Judith Butler's (2009) analysis of how (visual) framing creates meanings and evaluations of what is enclosed within. To protect life and living beings, life must first be 'recognized' (41). To be able to recognise life as valuable (and vulnerable, in Butler's terms), we need certain parameters or a special framing. An example of where this type of framing is often lacking can be seen in the portrayal of displaced persons in the media, where no compassion or kindness is evoked. But without conceiving their precarious human

Figure 9: Screenshot of the landing page of "Zoological Architecture and Empty Frames" by Katharina Swoboda (2022).

Three debates

After introducing the six expositions, I delve deeper into three debates (concepts, contexts, discourses) that are an important background and backbone for my analysis. I start with Artistic Research, continue with Curating and end this section with Circulating Reference (Latour 1999b).

On Artistic Research

For the sake of a short contextualisation of the debate on Artistic Research and given the scope of this thesis, I will only mention a few positions on the topic. These do not aspire to give an overview of the discourses and the practices that either identify themselves or could be identified (according to various definitions) as research-based. The positions and arguments I mention here are mostly developed and circulated in communities of practice (Johns 1997) like the SAR (and the RC and JAR with it), the EARN and the Higher Education Institutions and researchers that are directly or indirectly involved in these networks. I acknowledge that these are mostly based and/or socialised in mid/northern Europe and I believe that this fact greatly influences their topics, references and concerns.

This focus reflects my access point into the debate (see *My research journey*) and emphasises aspects that will be relevant for the rest of the thesis. I start with a definition that I think mirrors well a general feeling about Artistic Research and then follow the cracks and question marks: the more you poke the definitions and try to unpack what is what, the more you end up in infinite regress and disagreement. After expanding on concurrent definitions, I also glide over alternative terms. I qualify these groups as “communities of practice” as they developed specific ways to meet (e.g. conferences and gatherings), stay up-to-date (e.g. the SAR announcements) built a discursive basis that is shared and (r)enforced by publication (e.g. the fact that ‘artistic

research' is the dominant term, see discussion below) these aspects are linked and supported by a dedicated digital infrastructure composed of several websites and platforms like the Research Catalogue. All in all, these and many more aspects hold this community together (notwithstanding the diversity of specific opinions and affiliations) and distinguish it from others.

Let's start understanding this community by digging deeper into the term 'Artistic Research'. According to de Assis and D'Errico (2019), "Artistic research" is a recent term that relates to a particular mode of artistic practice and of knowledge production, in which scholarly research and artistic activity become inextricably intertwined" (ii). I agree with them in their view of Artistic Research as a possible intersection between artistic and academic practice, one that could have the potential to challenge conventions and assumptions of both 'sides' (2). In general, the critical potential of the arts in the context of research should lie in the questioning of academic conventions, canons, hierarchies and power structures via aesthetic means (see Mannay 2016). Specifically, special attention to the medium should challenge "the instrumental supremacy and functionality of the most widely established medium of research – the verbal language" (32).

However, I am also aware that this image of the arts and academia peacefully coming together and learning from each other is an idealisation that has already been at the centre of at least three decades of discussions in the field. Artistic Research has been –and still is– hotly debated. It is "a troubled concept" (Schwab 2018b, 3) and is often constituted by opposing definitions, by being something else than 'just art' and 'just academic research'. As de Assis and D'Errico (2019) also suggest, defining Artistic Research "remains an impossibility, exactly because the field itself makes of the resistance to definitions, closures, and disciplinary constraints one of its strongest points" (2).

Any definition of Artistic Research forces me to look at the two elephants in the room: art and research. Yet instead of getting lost in ontological discussions on the nature of these terms (i.e. is it Artistic Research?), in line with Schwab and Borgdorff (2014) I also adopt an epistemological perspective: "how do we know that a certain practice is

research?” (11). For this thesis, by following the signification produced by the institutional framework of the JAR –a Journal for Artistic Research– I assume that the practices published there can also be read as Artistic Research: “Art can be research in so far as it is exposed as such” (Elo 2014, 25).

Thereby, I do not argue that the JAR offers a representative overview of research-based artistic practices. As mentioned in the editorial of the 25th issue (2021), I also acknowledge that the projects exposed in the JAR may showcase a rather specific field or community of research-based practitioners and exclude many others. Some artists may not be familiar with the –rather compact and geographically constrained– community of practice and infrastructure (e.g. the RC) I outline in this thesis; some may not agree with / recognise their practice in the term ‘Artistic Research’ (see discussion below); some others may not see ‘publishing’ as necessary and/or beneficial for their practice and career; some more may not consider ‘publishing’ on this specific platform (with its rules and technical constraints) as necessary and/or beneficial and finally, some may be sorted out during review as non-conforming to the JAR publication standards. Given all these variables, I understand anything published in the JAR as a (small?) subset of research-based artistic practices, one that has been legitimised by withstanding the JAR peer-review process and thus conforming to the standards of its discourse.

As I mentioned in *Three reasons to keep reading*, in the last years, the discourse on Artistic Research is going through a phase of self-questioning. This is linked to the increasing impact of “academicisation” (Morgan 2001, 9) via the institution of, for example, doctoral programs on artistic practices. This concern was expressed also by Sachdev (2022b), specifically for the Indian Art Education context, during our interview:

if we are producing artists who are continuously asked to write about their work and explain their work, I think we’re shifting the field and I’m resisting that

Artistic Research discourse often appears to address an inner circle of “doctoral-artistic-researchers” and their institutional counterparts,

isolating itself from the concerns of the wider art world (Cotter 2019, 20). My interviewees partly underlined this point as all of them were working on or had already written a PhD and/or were teaching and embedded in research projects.

In his contribution to ‘The Postresearch condition’ Osborne (2021) refers to a “double-coding of artistic research”

The first is broad, deriving from the historical and conceptual relations between the concepts of “art” and “research” in Europe (and its colonial extensions) since the Renaissance. The second is narrow, deriving from the education-institutional conditions which currently over-determine that relationship, squeezing it up inside a very small administrative box, within which “art” is transformed [...] by those practices through which it legitimates itself as “research”, as the condition of its institutional existence (6).

His contribution further argues that in the narrow coding “art practice as research” negates art practice as art” and that “there is a contradiction between the broad and the narrow fields of the art-research relation. This is a contradiction that is “lived” –more or less destructively– by artists subjected to the administrative paradigm of art practice as research (9). With these quotes, I hint both at the emotionality of some discourses in the field and at the widespread narrative (partly inherited from the two cultures/art-science debate, e.g. see Snow 1961) of the ancient roots of Artistic Research in the practice of Renaissance polymaths like Leonardo da Vinci (Wilson, Hawkins, and Sim 2014) e.g. see the journal Leonardo (‘Leonardo’ n.d.).

Some artists-researchers are advocating to take distance from the art-science debate and construct a ‘sovereign’ discourse on Artistic Research. Specifically, Dombois (2022) suggests a model (see Figure 10) with three variables: who; what and for whom. With this scheme, he argues for an understanding of Artistic Research as “Research by artists with artistic methods in the interest of the community of artists”. This is meant as a plea for Artistic Research to ‘emancipate’ itself both from the art-science discourse and standards of evaluation set by other disciplines.



Figure 10: Figure in “Auf dem Wege zu den Venice obligations” (Dombois 2022).

To avoid, for the sake of this thesis, getting knee-deep into the art-science discourse, retracing 'research' may be a more interesting path. This means asking the question: "can you make art without research?" (Malterud 2010, 24) Scholars and artists have variously debated the question of research in the arts and/or art as research. For example, Frayling (1993) argues that research, disregarding definitions with small or big R (see also Malterud 2010, 25) and looking instead at its usage, has always been part of the arts. He builds and expands on Herbert Read's (not cited in Frayling 1993) distinction among

- **research into art** i.e. "Historical Research; Aesthetic or Perceptual Research; Research into a variety of theoretical perspectives on art and design –social, economic, political, [...]" (5).
- **research through art** i.e. materials research; development work (see Research and Development / Innovation) and action research (with experimental setup, diary-keeping and report of the results).
- **research for art** i.e. "the thorny one [...] where the end product is an artefact –where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication" (5).

These three terms should differentiate and concretise debates around the relationship between the arts and research. More than a decade later, Macleod and Holdridge picked up on this model and in light of the booming of new (practice-based) PhD programs in the Arts, added 'art as research' as a way to think through art (2006): "to pursue what art might offer intellectually when it is framed as academic research and thus how it might sit within a broader academic framework" (1). The legacy of the terms **research *** (the star stands for a wild card) **art** and **art * research** continues. I found it, for example, on the tightrope between plagiarism and artistic appropriation in 'luginsland (on art as research)' by Dombois (2013) where he visually and textually juxtaposes "research on art" with "art on research"; "research for art" with "art for research" and "research through art" with "art through research".

I already introduced Slager's (2021) model of Artistic Research at the intersection of three conceptual spaces: creative practice, artistic thinking and curatorial strategies (3). This model resonates with the idea of situating Artistic Research in the expansion of the definition of both artistic and curatorial practice –potentially with a common ground in 'research', as discussed by O'Neill and Wilson (2015, 15–17). However, I also agree with Swoboda's (2022b) scepticism towards the ability of general models to describe the variety and tensions that are constitutive of research-based artistic practices. When I asked her to react to Slager's model, she replied that she was sure it may be fruitful for some people, especially if you take it as a tool to analyse some practices. However, she also emphasised that she would question all the definitions contained in it and probably come to the conclusion that it's too general and therefore not applicable.

Alternative terms

The term Artistic Research itself is controversial and counts many competitors. Next to the aforementioned **art as research**, **research as art** and all their declinations, **practice-based** and **practice-led** (research) are also two prominent terms. The two terms are either used as synonyms or meaning respectively that "a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge" i.e. practice-based or that "the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice" i.e. practice-led (Candy 2006, 2). These concepts were prominently discussed as they were closely tied to the establishment of a third cycle (i.e. doctoral programs) in the Arts and Design in European higher education institutions linked to the Bologna process (starting in 1999). However, in the United Kingdom, these reforms can be traced back to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. After this reform, many English and Welsh polytechnics (including art schools) were transformed into universities. This status allowed the so-called 'new' or 'post-1992' universities to also confer academic degrees including PhD titles, a function that art schools in other countries –like Switzerland– are still fighting for. To be sure, practice-based and practice-led PhD titles are not specific to the Arts and Design, depending on the univer-

sity system, they can also be awarded in Engineering and Technology, Chemistry, Teaching, etc.

In the arts, the label practice-based (and practice-led) has been criticised as “it simply restates the old theory/practice dichotomy in a new guise” (Frayling 2006), as if a regular PhD project (and academic research in general) would not also include a significant portion of practice and vice-versa that a practice-based PhD may lack theory. Similarly, Schwab (2018a) vehemently argues that the term ‘practice-based’ brings the discourse in a “practice-theory deadlock” (54) and that what is theory and what is practice should be left to the artists to decide for themselves (2019, 27).

From the outset, the still-emerging field of artistic research has been plagued by what can be described as ‘practice-theory deadlock’. By this I mean the assumption that the extension of notions of research into tacit, experiential, or material domains is at the same time an extension of research into the field of the arts, as if the arts were identical with those domains. Notions such as ‘practice-based’ or ‘practice-led’ research that are still often used for research in the arts inscribe a practice-bias into the research activities of artists (2018a, 54).

Next to practice-based and practice-led research, another important term is **research-creation**. Although it is not so common in the discourses I look at –it is mostly centred around Canadian institutions and researchers– I mention it because it is central to Szanto and Sicotte’s exposition. According to Manning (2016), research-creation is best identified in its hyphenation (27):

it generates new forms of experience; it tremulously stages an encounter of for disparate practices, giving them a conduit for collective expression; it hesitantly acknowledges that normative modes of inquiry and containment often are incapable of assessing its value; it generates forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic; [...].

The emphasis on the hyphenation may distinguish the framing and discourses built around artistic practices that may, in the end, have very similar aims and values and follow similar processes.

Next to scholars involved in the field, research councils and other funding bodies need to define terms to assess research-based artistic practices. For example, research-creation according to the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is “an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. [...]” (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2012). Such definitions exert a disciplinary function on research and cultural policy in general. They regulate which projects are worth funding and according to which terms. One of the artists I interviewed was very pragmatic about the definitions like “Artistic Research”: she used it only if required e.g. to apply for grants and she otherwise did not bother too much about definitions as they would never be able to capture the diversity of practice (Swoboda 2022b). This point suggests a critical distancing from the discourse and eventually its strategic use for one’s purposes.

There are many more terms that are trying to capture the complex relationship between “art and science, words and worlds, art practice and art writing, discursive and embodied knowledge, original artworks and their representations” (Benshop, Peters, and Lemmens 2014, 39) that I cannot expand on here. Some try to take distance from the institutionalised debate around PhD titles, and both a definition of art and research, like Bal’s (2022) “image thinking”.

Notwithstanding of all the criticism and possible alternatives, I stick to the term Artistic Research as it is the one that characterises my object of research (the JAR) and the institutional discourses it stemmed from and is currently embedded into. After this short and partial introduction into the discourses around Artistic Research, I delve deeper into the concept and practice of curating (Artistic Research and online platforms).

On Curating (Artistic Research)

This chapter is a short excursus on the topic of curating and the curatorial. It supports my choice of applying a curatorial perspective to an unusual object of research for Curatorial Studies with a theoretical base. Starting from a general interest in the current debates on the practice and meaning of curatorial work, I zoom in on trends in the creation of digital platforms and their intersection with artistic and curatorial interests. Finally, I apply this background to curating on the RC and present my working definition of curatorial strategies for this project. Thereby, I'm not claiming that the artists are curators –none of them identified as such and was actually quite puzzled by my interest (see *Flash forward*). As I mentioned in the introduction, this is a strategic choice to both understand curatorial strategies (and curatorial work in general) that are employed outside of the professional role of the curator and to sharpen my analysis on aspects that may otherwise get lost.

So let's start with a working definition of curating. According to Tietenberg (2021)

Since the middle of the 20th century, 'curating' has been used to describe a specific practice of making public in the art context: Works of art, documents, and artifacts are integrated and shown in constellations in order to enlighten recipients, to encourage them to reflect on their perception and self-perception, and to involve them as co-players in communicative negotiation processes that balance the boundaries of artistic and individual freedoms, of tolerance and acceptance of otherness, of knowledge and non-knowledge (7).

Tietenberg mentions many central aspects of curating like making public (especially in the art context), showing in constellations, fostering reflection and participation. However, there is no one agreed-upon definition of curating. Similarly to Artistic Research, curating is a contested term –O'Neill and Wilson (2015) write about a proper "clash of models" (13)– in a field that is living through a simultaneous professionalisation and expansion out of former boundaries (Tietenberg 2021, 13). Curating is professionalising with the increasing amount of

degree programs and certificates offered in this area and processes of subjectification (i.e. of identifying and being identified) as a curator (Molis 2019). Yet, it is not a strictly regulated profession like (depending on the national regulations) ‘lawyer’ or ‘architect’. Since the 1990s, this trend goes hand in hand with its growing discourse, research and literature mostly created by curators themselves (O’Neill 2007). Curating is not just a skill to be acquired on the job anymore but (also) a topic of academic inquiry (i.e. Curatorial Studies) whose practitioners are usually expected to be familiar with. At the same time, many have felt and currently feel the need to question the traditional institutional framework of curatorial work and extend its scope.

Like other professional figures, the curator is also one in continuous becoming. It draws on the role of the *Custos/Kustode* in charge of museum collections (te Heesen 2019, 21) and at least since the 1960s from the independent curator working on temporary exhibitions, often without any long-term commitment to one collection/institution. While the term *Custos/Kustode*, is seldom still in use in German-speaking institutions, the term curator, depending on the context and role, often combines both tasks (21). Moreover, the role of the curator has often been in tension with the one of the art critic, not just by questioning its role and authority, but also by shifting the focus from the artwork as an object to the curatorial gesture of exhibiting it (O’Neill 2007, 13–14). Being a curator was and still usually is a relatively privileged position and therefore a potential gatekeeper (Tietenberg 2021, 15; Munder and Wuggenig 2012, 87). As the field expands and the understanding of this role diversifies, some ascribe to it the responsibility to be aware of the power position and actively change structures (e.g. see “curatorial activism”, Reilly 2018).

As the work of the curator may not need a home institution and keeps expanding its territory to new subjects and contexts, it can now be more easily claimed by professionals with a variety of backgrounds, including artists. Some artistic practices may already focus on the process of making public and closely working with/for communities. Moreover, to survive in the current art market system, artists need to acquire communication, organisation, management and (self-)marketing skills which may overlap again with curatorial tasks. Vice versa,

many curators (who may also be formally trained in the arts) see value in understanding curating as an artistic practice. This may happen both in the construction of an “autonomous and subjective [authorial] position” (see Grammel 2005, 30) and in the practice of curating as “an entanglement of actors, rather than exclusively a matter of presenting discretely authored, clearly bounded ‘works’” (15). The role of artists and curators keeps evolving and regularly produces tensions i.e. “position battles” (Tietenberg 2021, 39) over who’s responsible and/or more fitting to curate exhibitions (see also *Flash forward*).

Finally, research in a very broad sense is one of the main tasks in curating: curators look for artists/artistic positions, contributors/contributions, themes, discourses, theoretical backgrounds, funding, exhibition spaces and scenographic elements and (ideally) reflect on their position in the art world and society at large (O’Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). Furthermore, to an extended notion of curating, belongs also a “renewed recognition of the exhibition itself as a potential mode of research action” (17). This broad understanding of research may bring curating closer to Artistic Research, especially if the definition of a work of art is reformulated and expanded into an “ongoing endeavour of assembling agencies” (40). However, while research is usually accepted as part of the regular functions of a curator, as the previous discussion shows, the meaning and value of research done by artists are usually contested (15).

The curatorial expansion

Following up on and actively pushing this expansion of the field, groups and individuals (e.g. Curating/knowledge at Goldsmith College London / Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff; Cultures of the Curatorial at HGB Leipzig / Beatrice von Bismarck) variously felt the need to reflect on what they were doing: to “stop curating! And think what curating is all about” (Martinon 2013b).

The group Curating/knowledge at Goldsmith College London came up with the distinction between “curating” and “the curatorial”:

If 'curating' is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with setting up exhibitions and other modes of display, then 'the curatorial' operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge. (Martinon and Rogoff 2013, ix).

So while 'curating' refers essentially to exhibition-making, the curatorial lives in the blurry and multiform dimension of being "modes of becoming" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12):

The curatorial is a jailbreak from pre-existing frames, a gift enabling one to see the world differently, a strategy for inventing new points of departure, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for humanity, a process of renewing one's own subjectivity, a tactical move for reinventing life, a sensual practice of creating signification, a political tool outside of politics, a procedure to maintain a community together, a conspiracy against policies, the act of keeping a question alive, [...] etc. (Martinon 2013a, 4).

This quote shows how far the reflection on curating and the curatorial has come. The curatorial has gained "protean guises" (3). It has occasionally also taken turns, like the so-called "educational turn" (see Rogoff 2008). This describes the development (and theorisation) of curatorial projects in/about (art) education as an emancipatory practice and protest against its standardisation (specifically, in the European early 2000s, against the backdrop of the Bologna process). This and many more curatorial protean guises live with the contradiction of simultaneously being "a gift", an unconditional donation, and a profession with codes and norms disciplined by institutions, study programs and communities of practice (Johns 1997). This multiformity has become a problem for some, who see a professional definition being (over)stretched, while for others, the protean guises are "precisely what give it [the curatorial] its power and potential. [... they are] what makes it quintessentially of our time and, inevitably, a difficult thing to define" (Martinon 2013a, 3).

Recombining the distinction between curating and the curatorial, Beatrix von Bismarck has been a prominent voice in the German-speaking area. In her latest book, she defines the curatorial as "a field of

cultural activity and knowledge that relates to the becoming-public of art and culture –as a domain of practice and meaning with its own structures, conditions, rules and procedures” (Bismarck 2022, 8). She argues that

every curatorial situation [...] generates a fabric of interrelations among all of the various human and nonhuman participants –the exhibits, artists, and curators, but also critics, designers, architects, institutional staff, various recipients, and publics as well as the display objects, mediating tools. architecture, the spaces, sites, information, and discourses (8).

Thereby, she suggests a shift in the discourse: “rather than foregrounding partial definitions of the activity of curating, the subjectivization of the curator, or the-presentation format of the exhibition, emphasis should be on the interplay of all these factors [i.e. the network of conditions, processes, modes, and effects of the aforementioned dynamic relations]” (9). This point underlines the extended understanding of curating I employ for this project, especially by recognising contingencies beyond the will of the curatorial subject alone (e.g. the agency of other human and non-human actors) as crucially important factors. The sharing of agency becomes crucial in curating online spaces.

Curating online spaces: Three trends and their impact

Moving from a general discourse on curating to attending to the digital context of the RC, I would like to introduce some trends in the creation of online platforms that support the expansion of curatorial tasks to the digital space. Many areas of the art world have been relayed and expanded into the digital sphere: collections were/are being/will be digitised, many (art) magazines publish mostly or only online, advertising happens via newsletters and social media (e.g. e-flux), art can be comfortably bought and sold online, with or without blockchain technology and viewed in online viewing rooms, etc. Vice versa, the term ‘to curate’ has extended to social (e.g. ‘to curate’ an Instagram channel

e.g. see Wald 2021) and streaming platforms (e.g. MUBI prides itself to offer ‘hand-picked’ cinema – ‘MUBI’ n.d.).

The ever-evolving artistic and curatorial appropriations of the web are part of widespread processes of digitalisation. (Not-)for-profit platforms serving archival, documentation, dissemination, participatory and collaborative processes are being developed in many fields, especially where education and networking are involved. Given the scope of this research project, this chapter cannot and does not aim at being a complete or even representative survey of current trends. As the examples show, it is mostly based on my current knowledge and personal encounters.

I identify and unpack three trends concerning digital spaces that allow me to frame the development and function of the Research Catalogue (and the Journal for Artistic Research). First, the fact that coding is not a requirement for the creation of digital spaces anymore had a huge impact on the accessibility of their creation. Second, an increasing amount of (educational) working tools is being relayed onto digital platforms (e.g. ‘PAUL’ at Zurich University of the Arts). Third, more and more platforms bundle publication, archival, storage (cloud-like services for private users) and networking / community-making functions. All three trends are mirrored in the RC: its editor (i.e. the interface to create expositions) does not require coding, the RC supports learning and teaching, especially via the institutional portals and it bundles several functions.

Let’s start from the top: In general, building digital spaces does not necessitate mastering languages like PHP, HTML and CSS anymore. Wordpress and many other Content Management Systems have integrated graphic editors that allow the construction of websites without having to write code. This technology, together with facilitated access to domains and hosting, made it possible for (almost) lay people to build their websites. Interestingly, groups like ‘hotglue’ experimentally pushed this development even further by considering the accessibility gained by not having to code as their main goal: “Hotglue Content Manipulation System is a unique tool for DIY web-design and Internet samizdat” (Hotglue development community n.d.). With its open source

code and the chance to either install it on your domain or on hotglue. me, it visually –and ideologically, as an underground practice with a specific culture, e.g. see Duncombe (2008)– relays publishing practices like collage and zine-making to the web.

Second, more and more (educational) working tools are being relayed onto digital platforms. An example is 'miro's (miro n.d.) contribution to the world of digital whiteboards. Their use has boomed, both in educational contexts (e.g. schools, universities) and professional ones especially in the start-up field and project-based working sector, like many Non-Governmental Organisations. The wealth of project-management templates (e.g. Gantt charts, Kanban, etc.) offered by miro testifies to the trend towards collaborative visual platforms to support agile ways of organising and managing tasks. Next to concrete tools like digital whiteboards, the employment of platforms to support teaching and learning has become a common feature in many universities (e.g. PAUL at ZHdK) and for many primary and high schools too. These tools build on expertises in offering remote courses (e.g. by the Open University) and were further developed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, an increasing amount of platforms bundle functions that used to be separated (Schwab 2018b, 11), such as publication, archival, storage and networking. Next to regular social media and programs like 'Discord' ('Discord', n.d.), whose features and digital spaces can be taken over for this purpose, some have built their own platforms. For example, 'lambung.space', the digital platform for the lungbung community (i.e. the network of collectives and artists formed around ruangrupa on their practice towards documenta fifteen) defines itself as

1. a hangout space, digital living room
2. a publishing tool (for video, music, books, social media)
3. a library, learning center
4. pantry (storage) as a shared resource between the lungbung inter-lokal
5. takes care of the user's privacy and is aware of their political vulnerability
6. slow growing and to be unstable is part of the deal
7. is an initiative for a community-governed digital platform

Like for hotglue, for lumbung.space an open source ethos is very important as one of the principles holding together their community.

By constituting a general pressure to relay and support analogue processes into the digital sphere, these three trends have also had an impact on institutions like museums and other art/cultural institutions. The pandemic has pushed many of them to start, speed up or rethink their digitalisation strategies. A “digitalisation light” (Zindel 2020, 27) entails the digitalisation of collections. Different museums have chosen different strategies: some are working with/towards sober, scientific-database-like catalogues e.g. see (Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein n.d.); some are meant as digital extensions of their exhibition spaces e.g. Cosmo Digitale at Castello di Rivoli (‘Cosmo Digitale’ n.d.). Some are currently evolving into spaces conceived as integral tools for education and mediation e.g. eMuseum of the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (Museum für Gestaltung n.d.). Attempts to dust and open the archives via digital means have sometimes met digital creative potential, like in Jan Bot: “the first filmmaking bot hired by the Eye Museum to bring film heritage to the algorithmic age” (Jan Bot 2018). Between 2018 and 2022, Jan Bot compiled short mesh-ups out of the archival material based on trending topics. The results are now being transformed into NFTs (Nicholson 2022).

No matter which strategy, this additional channel for making public opens a whole new set of questions concerning accessibility, meaning-making, public sphere and curatorial/institutional responsibility (Zindel 2020, 31). By working with a group of students with the collections of the IMAI foundation (Düsseldorf) and the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, we noticed that both institutions rushed into uploading all the material they could without first thinking through what this really meant for their ‘new’ digital public sphere. For this reason, discriminatory content was/is still shown without a working strategy to deal with it. Some of these digitalisation attempts also run in parallel to restitution debates, making the question of (digital) access even more complicated (Chao Tayiana Maina and Molemo Moiloa 2022).

Next to the digitalisation of collections, another area of digital innovation for museums concerns the way digital structures could support

the decentralisation –and democratisation? (nextmuseum.io 2020)– of curatorial processes (see “digitalisation large” in Zindel 2020, 31–36). Examples of these are projects like “the next biennial should be curated by a machine” in the context of the Liverpool Biennial 2021: “a series of machine learning experiments developed to explore the relationship between curating and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and to speculate on the possibility of developing an ‘experimental system’ capable of curating, based on human-machine learning” (Krysa and Impett 2022, 4). Another example is nextmuseum.io a “digital community platform for swarm curation and co-creation” (nextmuseum.io 2020) developed by the NRW Forum Düsseldorf with the Museum Ulm. Anybody can sign up as a curator, start an open call for a project and let other users collaborate on it to develop an exhibition and other projects. On similar principles, HEK (House of Electronic Arts, Basel) is developing a Decentralised Autonomous Organisation (DAO), a popular decision-making structure in the blockchain and NFT community to decide on its program (HEK n.d.).

I mention these developments to showcase how curatorial practice is expanding, not only its general understanding but also its contexts and tools. These, in turn, influence and change the conditions, processes and effects of curatorial practice.

Curating online and on the web; networked co-curating

What does this expansion into, appropriation and creation of dedicated digital/online spaces more specifically mean for the practice of curating? In general, curating in digital platforms necessitates a special approach (Dekker 2021, 27) as the curatorial authority is “shared with the platform (i.e. software) and its users” (27). I would like to counter the opinion that digital curators “appear primarily as organizers of festivals and discussion rounds, as archivists [...], or as those responsible for hybrid forms of presenting projects in digital and real exhibition spaces (Tietenberg 2021, 75) with a more diverse perspective on the field. Early net artists surely played a central role in curating their work.

As Olia Lialina recalls: “I think it was a very special moment in history when to be an artist was to be a curator, a system administrator, an art critic, an archivist or a vandal of your own work” (Quaranta 2016). However, especially with the recent publication of “Curating digital art” (Dekker 2021) the writing and canonisation of a genealogy of web-based curatorial practices will construct a more diverse image of the one portrayed by Tietenberg (2021), one that reflects both the increased fluidity and the tensions between the professional role of the curator and curatorial work. Projects like C@C – Computer-Aided Curating show that online curators could also be way more than mere archivists. C@C was created as an “artistic experiment” in 1993 by Eva Grubinger with Thomax Kaulmann: “a computer application where contemporary art can be created, viewed, discussed, and purchased” (Grubinger 2005).

Much research is still needed to bring together and contextualise practices that may be almost unknown and/or poorly documented due to not only the negligence to recognise the value of these practices but also the extremely fast obsolescence of their technologies which poses a big threat to their survival and accessibility.

To better understand curating in/with web-based settings and tools and understand its diverse practices, it may be important to mention Ghidini’s (2019) distinction between “curating online” and “curating on the web”:

Curating on the web is, to me, a subset of curating online, [... curating on the web is] a site-specific approach to curating web-based exhibitions that enables new ways of producing and displaying digital art. While curating on the web is, at its core, responding to the characteristics of the web medium, its tools and interfaces, curating online is related to the practice that derives from displaying museum and gallery collections online (3).

In sum, curating online includes any curatorial practice that uses and produces online spaces. This is often an attempt to relay as faithfully as possible analogue practices into the digital world. This process is often based on remediation (Bolter and Grusin 2003) strategies whereby characteristics of other media are simulated in other media

e.g. the dog-earing or paper-clipping function on e-readers. 3d viewing rooms, either recorded from the analogue spaces or created anew virtually, can simulate an analogue visit to an exhibition space. In contrast, although the boundaries are surely not sharp, curating on the web seeks a digital site-specificity, it deeply engages, questions and critically appropriates the infrastructure it deals with... as we are doing with KUNSTSURFER.

Another important concept to understand web-based curatorial practices is “networked co-curating” i.e. “a collaborative mode of online curation which operates through the formation of strategic alliances between human and machinic agents” (Dekker and Tedone 2019, 2). Networked co-curating takes the agency of non-human actors like algorithms, servers, etc. seriously and fosters their collaboration. Online curating is especially reliant on the structures and systems it deals with, in a way that distinguishes it from other contexts: “online curation is shaped and defined not merely by its content, but just as much by the nature of the structure and the systems—computational platforms, databases, algorithms, software—that are used by curators, whoever, or whatever, they may be” (2).

Given the role of the technological infrastructures used to produce and visit online spaces and the fact that curating on the web means actively engaging with networked cultures, curatorial projects should not just be defined according to their objects i.e. what they produce), but much more by their performativity i.e. how they work under the given conditions (3). I will further draw on Ghidini’s (2019) distinction between curating online and on the web and Tedone’s (2019) networked co-curating in *Unpacking curatorial strategies*.

Online exhibitions

Performativity and the agency of non-human actors play a central role in curating on the web. Dekker and Tedone (2019) define online exhibitions as “the result of complex interactions between various differentiated systems of creation and presentation that provide meaning through often invisible, or implicit and interrelated processes” (2). With this

definition, Dekker and Tedone (2019) underline the importance of the specific context e.g. how does ebay's algorithm Cassini exactly rank items? And how can this knowledge be used to "engage in a strategic alliance" (7) with it for curatorial/artistic purposes?

In line with them, Connor (2020) argues that "online exhibition should be considered a practice that is distinct from but connected to gallery exhibition, and that the performative, variable quality of born-digital culture is a key aspect of this distinctiveness". Therefore, although the material conditions online curators are working with (e.g. the digital performativity and variability) may be very different, their practices and discourses are closely related to curating in analogue spaces. Ghidini (2019) does not explicitly mention performativity as a central characteristic to define online exhibitions but she points again to the specificity of the context: they are "a system of artistic production and display mediated not only by the curatorial role but also by the communication patterns, formats of publishing and modes of distribution enabled by web technology—the mass media of our time" (2).

For this thesis, my use of the term online exhibitions is informed by the aforementioned reflections and their emphasis on performativity. However, 'online exhibition' is a very general term to indicate any web-based space and/or collection of items. It has been used for digital library catalogues and archives for a long time e.g. see Kalfatovic (2002). With the risk of overgeneralising, institutions like libraries and archives have embraced the digitalisation turn way earlier and more enthusiastically than museums, which are only catching up in the last years. A reason for this 'delay' may be the influence and persistence of the aura discourse (Benjamin [1935] 2015) on originality and presence but also problems with sorting out their catalogues and/or an interest in not publishing them not to draw too much attention on what they actually owned –and how these objects arrived there (Bust-Bartels and Savoy 2020).

Before I come to the third and last debate (i.e. On Circulating Reference), I keep inquiring about curating (Artistic Research) with a flash forward into the interviewees' view on curating on the RC.

Flash forward: On curating, according to the interviewees

As I am inquiring about curatorial strategies, I asked three of the interviewees whether creating their exposition had anything to do with curating. None of them identified with curatorial practice and mostly found my question surprising and/or strange.

Some may do curatorial work themselves. For example, Swoboda curates screenings as a way of “putting stuff together”, but she does not identify as a curator:

Yeah, one could say that I take curatorial decisions: I take parts and put them all together [in the exposition] and at the same time [...] –as many artists now– I’m also kind of curating because I’m part of an association and we do exhibitions and screenings. Of course I’m also putting stuff together and sometimes my name appears under ‘curator’ but I know I’m not (2022).

She further mentions the distinction between a “proper curator” and an artist-curator:

as a proper curator you have to express and explain your choice, and as an artist, you don’t have to express and explain so much [...] there can be this intuitive thing of just putting stuff together and as an artist I can just go with it because I’m not a curator, I just do it. So I think it might be curatorial in the sense that I choose stuff, but it might not be curatorial in the sense that I cannot explain well why I did it (2022).

In this quote, I read double standards in the expectations of curatorial work carried out by ‘proper curators’ and artist-curators: the latter are allegedly free(er) to work more associatively than the former. This resonates with the “position battles” between curators and artists which are ongoing at least since the 1960s (Tietenberg 2021, 38–39). Whether as a description or expectation, it follows the argument that artists (should) curate differently. They would get “rid of the ‘intellectual’ and logocentric curators and reclaim[...] a genuinely artistic field of activity” (38) e.g. see the book “The next documenta should be curated by an artist” (Hoffmann 2004) and the debate around the choice of ‘artists’

to curate Manifesta 11 (Zürich) and the 9th Berlin Biennale in 2016. As I heard this distinction between proper curators and artist-curators it felt quite contradictory to me. During the conversation, Swoboda also mentioned that Artistic Research comes down to the willingness to communicate your results and your process. To me, the two definitions were potentially in conflict as both curators and artist-researchers had to be able to justify their choices in front of the public and/or their peers.

Like Swoboda, Mousavi also did not recognise his work as curatorial. However, this time it was because he projected this role onto the JAR reviewers.

I don't really call myself a curator, because I only designed the thing. I think the key elements [...] where I got feedback [...] was important for me, or became important for me, because it gave me a different dimension to think about the whole thing and change things accordingly. Their input [...] helped the text. Not only the text, it helped the whole project, because, as I said, that constructive criticism, help me. But that's why even with that feedback and the chief, the editor, I thought, it's a collaboration.

Starting from the notion of curating I just outlined, this focus on collaboration as something extraordinary prompted me to think further about different understandings of a curatorial (and artistic) role. According to Mousavi,

it really depends. Some people [artists] like to be in charge of the whole thing. Some people leave everything to the curator. So the curator becomes in charge of everything, even contextualizing the work and everything. But here I thought personally I'm not like that, I like collaboration.

The more I talked to my interviewees, the more I got the impression that, far from the extended notion of curating I was working with, they mostly understood curators in their professional role, working for museums and galleries and being something institutionally different than artists. Furthermore, there were disciplinary boundaries. For example, Raidel said: "I have friends in Curatorial Studies, but me, I'm thinking more about cinema. Yeah, I'm more embedded in film". This quote

hints at the fact that curating and its discourse, as Tietenberg's definition reminded me (see *On Curating*, has roots in the visual arts and the term may still be foreign to other disciplines, although Swoboda did understand the organisation of screenings as 'curating'.

By reflecting on the interviews and with my supervisors, I concluded that the fact that none of the interviewees identified with a curatorial position invalidates neither my approach nor my argument. My choice to look at creative processes like the composition of expositions as curatorial ones reflects my vantage point and the broader discourse on the extended notion of curating. This notion does not have to be shared with the artists as subjects of my inquiry. The choice of a curatorial perspective is a strategic one to shed light on complex processes that have to do with showing, telling and making public.

After I introduced various discourses and positions *On Artistic Research* and *On Curating*, I am only missing the third and last big topic: Circulating Reference.

On Circulating Reference

"How do we pack the world into words?" (Latour 1999b, 24).

In this section, I delve into the context of this question: the concept of Circulating Reference and the application of this and other terms borrowed from Science (and Technology) Studies (STS) to the field of Artistic Research. I focus on concepts that were coined by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Bruno Latour as they are the most common in the discourse I am referring to. I then expand on the process that led me to be more critical of their appropriations and the consequences I drew for my research.

The packing of 'the world' into 'words' (Latour 1999b, 24) was the starting point for Latour's (1999b) concept of Circulating Reference. He argues that between 'the world' and 'words' (for example, in a scientific article) there is no radical gap, but an endless and always reversible of transformations producing "two-dimensional, superposable,

combinable inscriptions” like diagrams and other figures (29). These circulate as references i.e. as ways “of keeping something constant through a series of transformations” (58). Because of this chain-like movement from matter (e.g. soil) to form (e.g. a figure that re-presents that soil) and back, Latour describes this model as a deambulatory one. He pitches it against the correspondence model which postulates a gap between ‘the world’ and ‘words’, which supports the idea that Nature was just “beneath the scientific article” (1987, 67). Questioning this correspondence sheds light on the stages in between, on how reference circulates by changing matter and form:

at every stage, each element belongs to matter by its origin and to form by its destination; [...] We never detect the rupture between things and signs [...] We see only an unbroken series of well-nested elements, each of which plays the role of sign for the previous one and of thing for the succeeding one (56).

For example, the pedocomparator, one of the instruments used by the scientists during the fieldtrip to document, store and compare soil, is a thing: a suitcase with a wooden frame filled with little cardboard boxes aligned in a square. Yet its ability to transform soil into coordinates by way of a discrete grid of rows and columns makes it a hybrid: the soil categorised in the pedocomparator has become part of a universalise-able reference system and it has become a sign (48). The parallel between ‘matter’ and ‘things’ and ‘form’ and ‘signs’ reminds here of the semiotic bases on which many of Latour’s concepts are built (Høstaker 2005).

Latour theorises Circulating Reference in the homonymous chapter in his book “Pandora’s hope: essays on the reality of science studies” (1999b) where he both textually and visually recounts his experience following a group of soil scientists (i.e. pedologists) during a field trip to the Amazon. He had already introduced the term “inscriptions” in an earlier publication (Latour 1987). On that occasion, he ‘played the dissenter’ and by doubting the results of a paper, he provoked the scientists to go back to the labs to replicate their results live. He also theorised the concept of an instrument or inscription device, which is “any set-up, no matter what its size, nature and cost, that provides a visual display of any sort in a scientific text” (68). Any composition

of equipment, visual recordings and observations could become an inscription device if it is the stage that ends up in the paper and it is “used as visual proof in the article” (68) –the one that should, as a sign, stand in the paper for ‘Nature itself’.

When I started working on my thesis, I thought that the concept of Circulating Reference could shed light on the curatorial strategies that led to the expositions. I saw a parallel between the way the scientists in the Amazon forest ‘packed’ their soil into academic papers and the way the artists-authors packed their research-based practice, with their entangled things, actors and contexts, into JAR expositions (see *Visualising* and Figure 11 and Figure 12). This intuition was building on an assignment I wrote in 2020 for the course “Science in Context: An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies” (taught by Veronika Lipphardt at University College Freiburg). For the assignment, I looked at the controversy at the beginning of the 2000s in the United Kingdom around practice-based PhDs in the Arts and Design and applied, among others, the concept of Circulating Reference to understand why their introduction and regulation were sometimes so harshly debated. Exact argumentation aside, I submitted the assignment with the feeling that Circulating Reference had a potential that I could not seriously explore in such a short (and rushed) essay. Therefore, as I found Kris Decker’s project and started working on my thesis (see *My research journey*), these thoughts came up again. This time, given my new major in Curatorial Studies, I wanted to adopt a curatorial perspective by transposing Latour’s question to the field of Artistic Research: how did artist-researchers pack artistic practice into communicable (from my vantage point as curator, into exhibit-able) forms?

I thought that the question of communication, legibility and thus share-ability in an academic reference system was a central one and that the concept of Circulating Reference could help me to shed light on them. Latour’s concept, now declined to this new context, was acquiring a slightly different meaning: What role did the ability of expositions in the Journal for Artistic Research to be referenced in academic systems with DOIs and author-date systems play? This perspective aligned with Cotter’s (2019) concerns that “the more opaque and resistant areas of art practice will be overlooked [by young curators] in

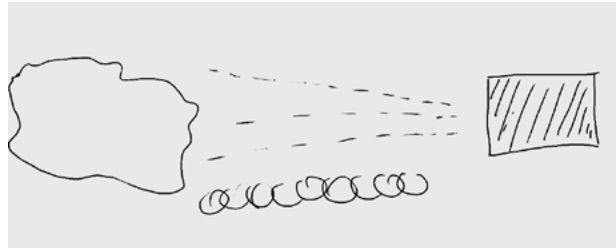


Figure 11: *Visualising transformations: packing ‘the world’ into words.*

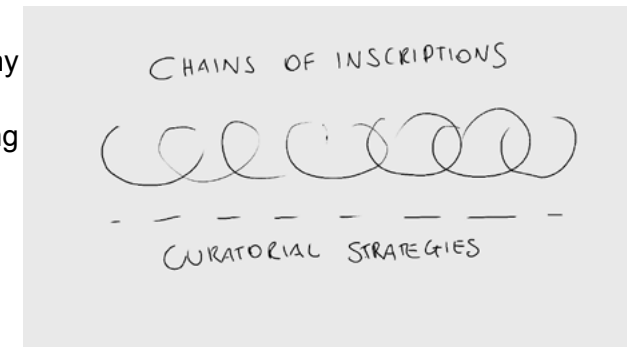


Figure 12: *Visualising possible relations between the chains of inscriptions and curatorial strategies.*

favour of the legible, whereas artistic research might arguably see an embrace of precisely those areas of practice that resist easy legibility” (19). Her argument for practices that resist legibility reminded me of Derrida’s (1991) ‘definition’ of poetry as a hedgehog on the street: may research-based artistic practices also have to be learnt by heart because ‘understanding’ them (in this case ‘making them legible’) would kill them like a car running over a hedgehog curling up to defend itself? The interviews show a broad spectrum of opinions on the extent to which the communication of research-based artistic practices should conform to academic standards (see *Inscribing expositions*).

As I kept delving into the literature around Artistic Research, publishing art in academia and the research catalogue, I got more and more the impression that my choice to employ Circulating Reference, a concept broadly employed in Science (and Technology) Studies (STS), it was nothing new and special –it was very much in line with influential voices in the field of Artistic Research. For example, Henk Borgdorff and Michael Schwab, co-founders and (former) members of the editorial board of the JAR, have often employed concepts such as “boundary work” (Gieryn 1983) e.g. see Borgdorff (2010) or Schwab (2012). The work of the historian of science Hans-Jörg Rheinberger seems another big source of inspiration for them. His (1992) ‘epistemic thing’ or ‘experimental system’ play a central role in the chapter “Artistic Practice and Epistemic Things” (Borgdorff 2012) and the book “Experimental systems: Future knowledge in artistic research” (Schwab 2013).

It should then not come as a surprise that Georgios Papadopoulos (2021) delved into epistemic things in his introductory lecture on Artistic Research (see *My research journey*) and that the first reading we got for the course ‘Aesthetic cultures – Research colloquium’ at Zurich University of the Arts was by Rheinberger (2014) and drew on experimental systems. A similar fate could be traced for some of Latour’s concepts, specifically Actor-Network-Theory (which was not his ‘invention’ but is very often associated with him, see Latour 2005), “matters of concern” (Latour 2008) and obviously, Circulating Reference. Borgdorff 2012, 217; Benschop, Peters, and Lemmens 2014, 43; Schwab 2018 have variously cited and made use of them.

Interestingly, both Rheinberger and Latour variously worked at the art-science intersection and are/were interested in Artistic Research. Rheinberger wrote about the topic see e.g. (Rheinberger 2014) and he was involved in various exhibitions, such as Hannes Rickli's 2009 exhibition "Videograms" at Helmhaus Zurich (Rickli 2011). Latour combined academic interests with (curatorial) practice and especially his more recent work on ecology has become extremely popular in the broader arts discourse (beyond the Artistic Research niche). For example, he (co-)curated four exhibitions at the Centre for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, starting with "Iconoclasm" in 2002 and ending with "Critical Zones" in 2020. The same year, he also co-curated the Taipei biennial (Taiwan), with the title "You and I do not live on the same planet". Following this discussion, I need to mention Haraway's contribution (e.g. "Staying with the trouble" 2016) but unfortunately, I have no room to expand on it.

Moving from the work of prominent authors and concepts in the discourse around Artistic Research to the specific concept of Circulating Reference, it stands out to me that this has already been variously cited and employed in the context of the RC/JAR. For example, Schwab (2018b) mentions it in a footnote as he warns that writing a thesis about a (research-based) artistic practice may overdetermine and fixate its knowledge in action (13). Additionally, Borgdorff (2012) includes a crucial point in the conclusion of Latour's 1999b text as a foreword to the chapter on the Journal for Artistic Research:

We have taken science for realist painting, imagining that it made an exact copy of the world. The sciences do something else entirely –paintings too, for that matter. Through successive stages they link us to an aligned, transformed, constructed world (78-79).

I believe (he doesn't mention this in the text) that this passage was so important to Borgdorff because it could be read as drawing a parallel between 'art' ('paintings' as *pars pro toto*) and 'science' by claiming that none of them makes exact copies of the world. However, I would suggest that the sentence right before the quote contradicts this reading. In fact, Latour writes that "this whole tired question of the correspondence between words and the world stems from a simple confusion between epistemology and the history of art" (78). Here, his-

tory of art is constructed as the (naive) discipline that is just concerned with the correspondence between the world and words (or images) and pitched against epistemology, as the discipline that is really interested in the production of knowledge. Even if we keep taking epistemology for science and history of art for art (practice) as the text rhetorically suggests, the fact that art does something else than copying the world does not logically equate it to science. Therefore, although Borgdorff uses this passage from *Circulating Reference* in an associative way to show a parallel, the text actually reinforces the impression that art has nothing in common with science and potentially with *Circulating Reference*.

Following on the texts published in the context of the JAR/RC that mention *Circulating Reference*, I found an article (Benshop, Peters, and Lemmens 2014) that argues that

the expositions are part of a chain of transformations reminiscent of the journey of Amazonian soil to the publication of a scientific article. Instead of bridging a gap between the artistic event and the presentation of this event after the fact, the expositions are part and parcel of the artistic-research process from the very start (49).

This section of the article basically argues in the same direction as I first wanted to in my thesis. Initially, this parallel in the use of *Circulating Reference* gave me the impression that I was on the right way. It supported my intuition that *Circulating Reference* had explanatory potential. Nonetheless, the article didn't suggest new or better ways to approach my analysis. Instead, it made me even more aware of the ubiquitous (and sometimes rather superficial, see Borgdorff 2012, 177) use of such concepts.

This point prompts me to provokingly ask whether this widespread borrowing of concepts coined for the (natural) sciences is a symbol of creative and strategic strength to critically appropriate discourses or a symptom of an ongoing 'colonisation' of the discourse that reflects the difference in (symbolical, financial, political?) power between the arts and "big science" (Biggs 2006) and thus the inability of Artistic Research to create its own discourse (see Dombois 2022). In the end, I do not think that there is an answer to this provocation. I bring this

point up here because it reflects my concerns in applying Circulating Reference to research-based artistic practices: Would I keep appropriating instruments to situate and understand these practices, or would I keep submitting and violently boxing them into 'alien' categories?

As I discussed with my supervisors and the research colloquium, I understood that I needed to take an even more critical distance, look deeper inside the concept and elaborate on the aspects that tie Circulating Reference to the context where it was theorised. For example, the term was coined on practices of (natural) scientists and it referred to mostly analogue processes and devices while in my case, most of the processes have a digital nature. Therefore, I decided to use Circulating Reference for a thought experiment that would follow up on the aforementioned interests and intuitions: What could the critical application of such a concept to this context yield? What processes can it shed light on and where does it fail? I wanted to employ Circulating Reference as an analytical tool to –in line with an ethnographic approach that is also typical of Science Studies (Latour 1999b, 24)– understand more of the concrete 'reality' of research-based artistic practice. I present the results of this thought experiment in *Inscribing expositions* where I delve into productive applications, play the dissenter towards Latour's (1999b) model of the chain of inscriptions and combine these observations with insights from the interviews while formulating the JAR as a knowledge-making machine.

Towards a media-specific analysis

In this section, I explain what methods I used and why to inquire about curatorial strategies in the 26th issue of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). Overall, the research process was not always as linear and comprehensible as it may sound in this section. It involved an “elaborate effort at splitting and lumping” (Buchanan 2017). For example, the interviews allowed me to split my impressions of the expositions while the coding prompted a lumping of insights into selected codes. I appropriate Buchanan’s terminology by substituting it with ‘unpacking’ and ‘packing’. Thereby, I situate my inquiry: I mirror the entanglement of my research process (i.e. my unpacking and packing) with the curatorial strategies I analyse (i.e. the authors’ packing of their practice). Yet, before I delve into the specific methods, I need to elaborate on my wish to carry out a media-specific analysis to stay close to my ethnographic material by mostly working inductively.

Given the unusual object of study and perspective, it was even more important for me to develop a “media-specific analysis” (Hayles 2004). According to Hayles (2004), “media-specific analysis (MSA) attends both to the specificity of the form [...] and to citations and imitations of one medium in another (69). MSA should be based on an understanding of materiality as property that emerges in

the interplay between a text’s physical characteristics and its signifying strategies. [...] In this view of materiality, it is not merely an inert collection of physical properties but a dynamic quality that emerges from the interplay between the text as a physical artifact, its conceptual content, and the interpretive activities of readers and writers (Hayles 2004, 72).

The point that analysis should attend to the specificity of the medium became a general principle in my research, especially concerning my methodology. Moreover, I am not aware of any other study that dealt with one issue of the JAR, especially not from a curatorial perspective.

Therefore, I looked for, questioned, modified and, if needed, (re-) invented my research tools to best fit the materiality of my object of research. I mostly drew on Ethnography and Curatorial Studies and brought them together with an interest in a Science-and-Technology-Studies perspective. These overlapped in the approach, with their way of “paying close attention to the details of (scientific) practice” (Latour 1999b, 24 – brackets added).

As I highlighted in *The RC and the JAR*, the digital framework of the JAR plays a central role in its materiality. By understanding this property as an “interplay between a text’s physical characteristics and its signifying strategies” (72), I am interested in a) the role of the infrastructure that the visitors use to explore the expositions and b) more broadly, in the interplay between the digital form of the expositions and the ways they make meaning. Both aspects, which I unpack below, have major consequences for curating on/with this platform. In turn, they influenced my choice, application and reflection on methods to analyse it.

I start with point a) which concerns the visitor’s infrastructure (e.g. browser and computer). Given the contingency of the user experience on this equipment, I would like to be transparent about what I used and based my analysis on. I visited all the expositions from my laptop. As a browser, I used Mozilla Firefox for Mac OS 10.14.06 on a MacBook Air 13 inch, 2017. For comparison purposes, I also opened the expositions from Safari (for the same OS on the same machine), a browser that uses a different rendering technology. Moreover, I also visited the expositions via mobile (Safari for iPhone SE2) to test the mobile versions of the two expositions that were optimised for that purpose and compare them with the non-responsive ones. By rendering the same exposition with different browsers, I noticed minor differences that, however, may have a major impact on the user experience and/or on the (curatorial?) intention of the artist. For example, Prokopic (2022) was startled when, while discussing his exposition via screen sharing, he noticed that one text was scrolling, even though, as he told me, they had worked hard with the editors to fix the structure so that it would not scroll. This example shows how, notwithstanding the standardisation of

internet protocols, the experience of digital space is contingent on the infrastructure available to the user (see *Curating online spaces*).

Point b) i.e. the materiality of the JAR in terms of the interplay between its form as an artifact and its signifying strategies, has even wider ranging consequences in terms of elaborating a media-specific analysis. I started testing this area early on in my research with an experiment: I listed all the features I encountered in the expositions that would not be feasible in print. This little test gave me a hint of what features may have justified the fact that the RC (and with it the expositions) needed a dedicated platform with ad hoc editors (i.e. in this case, the applications that allow composing expositions on the RC). In other words, what made the RC so special that no other medium, be it online or offline, could offer (at least) the same potential?

First, the pages are modelled on potentially endless rectangular digital whiteboards. The authors are free to design an endless amount of pages of the size they prefer, something that would not be possible in print. For example, Haagensen (2021) packed the whole exposition into one very long page. Second, I agree with Sicotte (2022b) that a defining characteristic of the platform is its multimediality. The fact that multiple media can be easily embedded on the page is something that a print publication, or even regular academic publications, whether online or offline, would not easily allow.

Third, even though the RC doesn't aim at simulating the third dimension (see *Implementation of concepts*), the construction of a digital space that, it plays a significant role in user experience. Specifically, one might even argue that the fact that the space affords a kind of interaction that needs to be learnt and understood first is the condition to notice that some –I suggest 'curatorial'– effort was put in conceiving it as a space to explore. This observation is again in line with Sicotte's (2022b) point that the RC infrastructure affords thinking through "deambulation" i.e. the way of moving around the exposition. For example, some expositions played with the user experience by starting with an immersive landing page. They included a full-page image, sound or video that playback automatically as if you just entered a room that is being activated for your visit. As I visited similar expositions in the

same and previous issues e.g. Raidel's (2022a) cover page, these features gave me the impression that someone took care of (lat. *curare*) what I should experience.

A fourth feature that would not apply to print and greatly influences the user experience is the fact that the expositions allow zooming in and zooming out while keeping the browser view at 100% zoom. This means that I, with my technical setup, could additionally zoom in up to 500% and zoom out up to 30%. However, proportions (between objects and to the page) stay crucial for the experience of the space and they were a topic of the editorial review (Szanto and Sicotte 2022b). Further features that would not be feasible in print are, for example, that texts can be placed in scroll boxes or the display of footnotes as pop-ups that appear when you hover over them. This first experiment in collecting features that distinguish the JAR from a regular journal or print publication gave me 'hints' on the materiality of the expositions and supported my further exploration.

In line with my aim at a media-specific analysis was my wish to work empirically by producing and staying as close as possible to my material. In fact, I agree with Buchanan (2017) that

qualitative methodologies at their most productive are (largely) inductive, in that they begin with a close relationship to something empirical and nitty-gritty. This does not mean that you ignore theory. To the contrary, it requires you to acknowledge that your theoretical assumptions are baked into your process from the very beginning –the way you take notes, the documents you gather, the questions you ask. This means being reflexively aware that you might be wrong.

For example, as I mentioned in *My research journey*, my interest and background in Liberal Arts and Sciences gave the impression that Latour's (1999b) concept of Circulating Reference could be an interesting lens to interpret the expositions. Based on my material and a deeper understanding of the differences in contexts and applications, this initial impression changed, sometimes in support and sometimes in dissent (see *Inscribing expositions*).

My tools

After this introduction to my research approach, I finally come to the methods I employed. I started my analysis of the six expositions with two methods: annotations and interviews. This way, I generated a lot of ethnographic material, both from my own experience while visiting the expositions and from their creation process. Confronted with the amount of material, I started visualising relations and insights that I describe in detail in the analysis section.

Annotating

How to analyse an exposition as an online exhibition?

First of all, I wanted to get a general impression. I thoroughly read and engaged with each contribution and took some notes about my first impressions. After that, I noticed that I needed to document the exhibitions to be able to further analyse them. Since it's not possible to export the files, I solved this problem by taking full-page screenshots (via the extension FireShot for Mozilla Firefox) and composing them back on a digital whiteboard (a miro board). In the composition, I tried to work with the sequence that was planned by the author. e.g. by pasting one page after the other at the same height from left to the right (see Figure 13). However, this operation became more complicated for expositions which actively worked against a linear reading e.g. Prokopic's (2022) rhizomatic exposition. In that case, I was inspired by the structure of the first page and visualised via dashed connecting lines all the paths of the hyperlinks, from the source to the target page (Figure 22).

The full-page screenshots allowed me to zoom out and provided a bird-eye view. This way I could better understand the overall layout, background, hierarchies, sequencing, number and size of the pages, navigation systems and overall structures. After I (re-)composed all the expositions, I realised how different the live, closed-up experience of being able to see only one small portion of the page (100% zoom) was compared to the arm's length I created with the full-page screenshots.

Therefore, I added a frame of the same size as a screen (i.e. an aspect), screen-sized screenshots of the first landing page for each exposition, and for eventual overlay features that could not be captured by the full-page screenshot (e.g. pop-up citations). After I composed all six expositions, I started to add sticky notes: yellow ones for 'simple' description (e.g. "Navigation system with 'next/previous page' buttons") and orange ones for first reflections (e.g. "Linear navigation, clear sequence").

This first, basic analysis gave me a better understanding of the six expositions. Now I could easily visually compare the six expositions according to their structure and the kind of user experience they aimed at. The sticky notes allowed a further reduction in the amount of visual material to analyse by codifying (for me) important aspects in short sentences. In this sense, the aim of this process could be compared to the coding of the interviews as a strategy for "data reduction" (Cope 2010) or "lumping" (Buchanan 2017).

Some expositions included a more or less extensive meta-commentary on the concept and/or process of creating the exposition. For example, in Prokopic's (2022) exposition there is a paragraph titled "Note on the exposition structure" where he introduces the concept of a rhizome by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and explains its implications for the structure of the exposition e.g. a navigation system with dead ends and bifurcations, where "a certain level of disorientation is desirable" (Prokopic 2022). In the case of Szanto and Sicotte's (2022a) exposition, the whole project is centred on the process of exchanging about their practices which they variously (re)presented e.g. via videos and transcripts of their conversations. These two examples work more as a guide for the reader and a justification for the overall concept (i.e. a rhizome; a dialogue between practitioners) than a thick account of the process. I draw on them as an extremely interesting (self-reflective) perspective but they could not substitute or have the same epistemic status as the interviews.

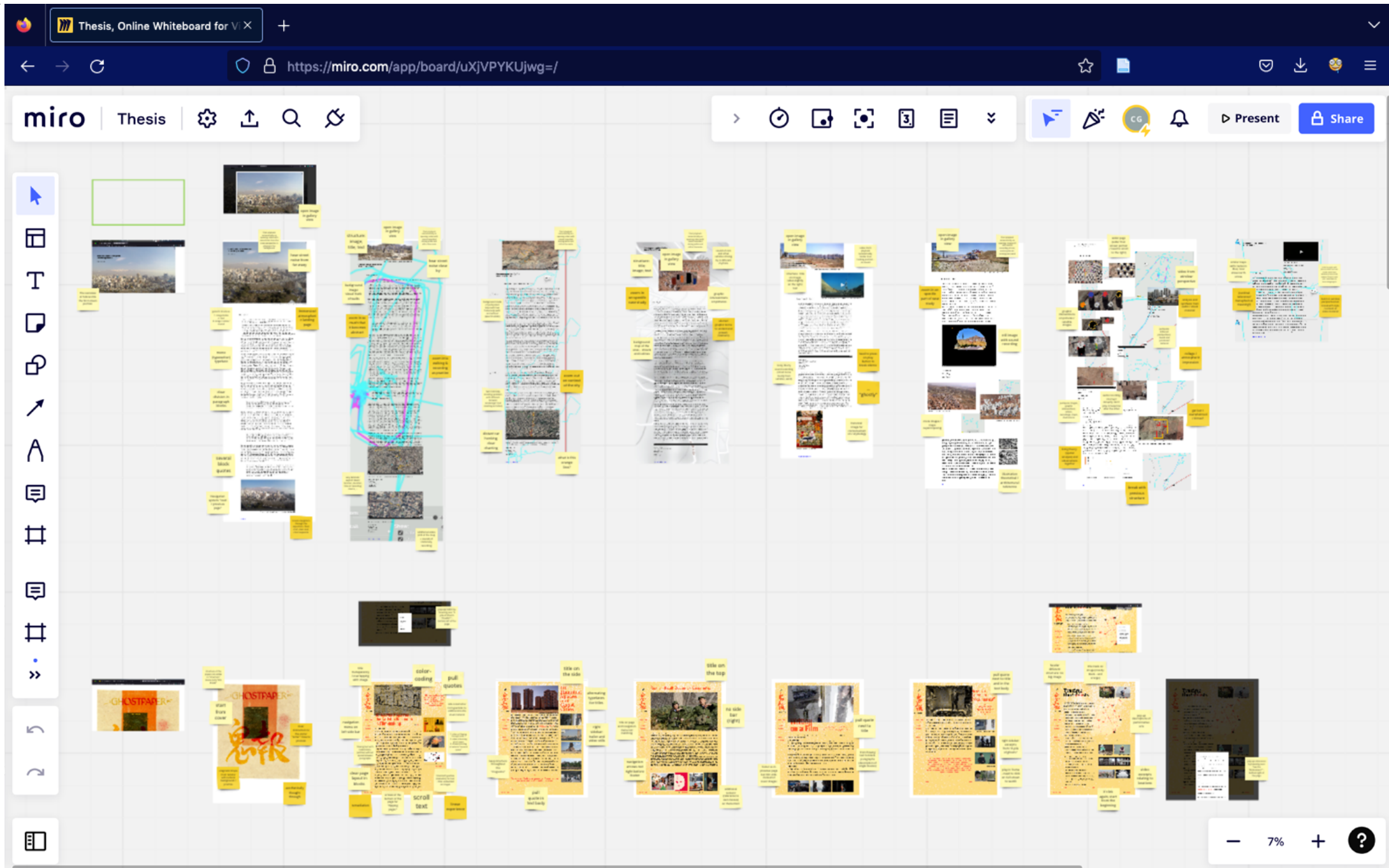


Figure 13: Screenshot of my annotations of Mousavi (2022a) and Raidel (2022a).

Interviewing

As a second method to generate ethnographic material for my analysis, I interviewed the artists, authors and, from my perspective, curators of the contributions, on how they packed their practice into the JAR.

Based on my previous experience and the belief that insights gained from listening to personal stories are invaluable, interviewing was not just a method I was already familiar with, it was also a necessary step to gain access to the processes and experiences I was researching. By merely analysing the finalised contributions, I could not answer my research question(s): how did artist-researchers pack their practice into RC/JAR expositions? In other words, what curatorial strategies are involved in this process? As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the expositions, as rationalised, mediated and as I argue, curated 'end-products' only offered hints to themes or conflicts that may be interesting to expand on.

Therefore, next to the traces I could read out of the expositions, the only way for me to additionally access the processes involved in their creation was via interviews. I asked the authors as the only witnesses of the whole process. I decided not to get in touch with the editors and peer-reviewers for pragmatic reasons as this would have extended the scope of my thesis even further. Given the fact that I'm interested in processes that lie in the past and were only observed in their 'entirety' by the authors themselves, I have very limited access to what happened. This limitation influences my analysis because I can only hear one version of the story which already lies at least one year in the past. In fact, most of the artists had only blurry memories about what exactly happened and when. For this research, I trust and rely on the interviewees' accounts, with their personal perspective and specific memories.

Nonetheless, this partial perspective also encouraged me to play the dissenter (Latour 1987, 64) and sometimes doubt the narrative of the interviewees on grounds like my analysis of the expositions and personal and professional experience. For example, during the interview

with Sachdev (2022b), she claimed that the article reflected the way she worked. I replied that in my experience, a project never starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion. For me, practice is a messy thing that mostly only makes sense retrospectively (Haarmann 2015). She appeared surprised by my comment and then acknowledged that concerning the structure, she just used the same as for other articles she wrote previously (Sachdev 2022b). In this case, playing the dissenter may qualify as a way to read my sources against the grain and attempt a triangulation.

Based on my research interests, I prepared a list of guiding questions for semi-structured interviews. I clustered them into overarching topics, such as “process” and “experience”. After having a close look at the contributions, I invited the authors and sent them an interview agreement which they should sign before the meeting. Everybody agreed to be interviewed and only one author preferred not to be recorded. I carried out individual interviews (or with both authors in the case of Szanto and Sicotte) via video call (zoom). I had prepared specific questions for the interviews but I left much room for digression, changing the sequence of questions to fit the train of thought. As I kept interviewing authors, I had the feeling that I was ‘getting better’, not just in ‘mastering’ my script but also because I could immediately relate to cases, impressions and examples already addressed by other interviewees.

During the interview, I shared the exposition via screen-sharing. The idea was to let us digitally “walk through” the exposition and on the way, remember and point out aspects that may stay hidden or not seem relevant otherwise. Although it was based on a digital setting and mediated via screen sharing, this approach was informed by the belief that the sensory experience of a place plays a central role in the production of knowledge about it (Trell and van Hoven 2010, 92) In Human Geography, this observation led to the development of “walking interviews” (92), where the interviews are carried out in the place the research is concerned with. Having shortly practised them in another research project, I thought it would be interesting to translate them into a very different setting. The major differences were dictated by the digital nature both of the interview and of the place we were experienc-

ing together. We were digitally together via video call (see Figure 14), yet our visit to the exposition had to be mediated via screen sharing. We could have independently visited the same page while talking, but we would not have had the impression of a 'shared' experience of the space i.e. look on the same page and listen to the same recording while seeing each other. Moreover, given the fact that screen sharing only allows one person to decide 'where to go'/what to look at it became difficult to make the visit run smoothly. The interviewees always preferred me to share the screen. This gave me a complete monopoly on the visit unless they guided me verbally, which I always explicitly suggested. This power position felt quite strange to me and the interviewees rarely took the initiative to show me around. Therefore, we often got stuck on one page while the conversation had already moved to other topics and sections.

If allowed by the interviewee, I recorded the video call and activated the closed captioning (CC) option. This way, I automatically generated full transcripts which, nonetheless, still needed significant streamlining for me to be able to further work with them. I deleted most of the fillers and corrected the formulations that the speech-to-text program did not recognise. During the interview I was not allowed to record, I took notes and merged them into a protocol. After streamlining, I ended up with 96 pages of material and decided, against my initial intention, to code them. I needed a method to process the content, reduce it to a manageable amount by classifying it (Glasze, Hussein, and Mose 2015) and make sure that, although in the end I may just use a small portion of it, I did not overlook potentially important aspects. That's why my coding is meant as a content analysis and it aims at being inductive, mostly 'emerging' from my material and not explicitly dictated a priori by theory.

For coding, I used the web application CATMA 6.5.3 (Gius et al. 2022), an open source program "for undogmatic textual markup and analysis" ('Home' n.d.) licensed under GNU General Public License, version 3 (GPL-3.0). Although interview-coding is not the application that CATMA was created for, I could easily repurpose it. I imported the transcripts as texts and I generated a codebook by creating a tagset. I started coding with the clusters I selected for the interview questions (e.g.

“process”) which, in terms of Grounded Theory could be considered as “categories” and I organically expanded them with more and more specific codes (e.g. interaction with the infrastructure”). This procedure seemed fitting in my case as I could start by building up already on the structure of the interviews. My questions were already directed to my research interests and I was not trying to start completely inductively. This was also a pragmatic choice to keep the process more manageable. Therefore, I did not just start with a ‘classical’ “open coding” (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 423) but I also already grouped my codes thematically as I added them, a procedure that comes closer to “axial coding” (423). As my code book got more and more precise, I avoided the higher categories or tagged them alongside the more precise codes. When I added a new code, I also checked back on the transcripts I had already coded to see whether the new code could shed light on them too. However, I was not very consistent in carrying out this task. By the end of this process, I ended up with 54 codes (see *Appendix*).

Throughout the research, I also kept a notebook which I started as a research diary to keep ‘memoing’ about the stages, reflections and processes. These annotations have grown organically into reflections which are now spread throughout this thesis. However, I have been rather inconsistent in this task. This is due (also but not only) to the non-linear development of this research project. It involved several major changes in my object and context of research like changing issues or moving to different cities.



Figure 14: Still from the interview recording with Szanto and Sicotte.

Visualising

During and after the interviews, seeing the breadth and amount of textual, audio/video and visual material we generated, I needed time and instruments to figure out how to make sense of it. I started making little sketches of the conceptual and thematic connections that were emerging out of my struggle with the material. My drawing was an aid to my reflection on the process and possible results.

Having had an artistic practice myself and being closely in touch with artists, I started from the assumption that practice is an extremely personal and messy process (Benshop, Peters, and Lemmens 2014, 39) which, sometimes just in hindsight (Haarmann 2015, 85), does have some kind of overarching direction and brings, sometimes, to results that can be shared with others and made public (e.g. exhibitions, screenings, etc.). I linked messiness with scribbles and more specifically with a classical A to B meme, whose origins I am unfortunately not aware of, but I certainly encountered as a documenta meme by Cem A. (see Figure 15). Additionally, I was also influenced by Latour's (1999b, 70) visualisation of a chain of inscriptions (see Figure 16). These two visual references complemented each other, yet messiness i.e. to consider practice as something that may (should?) stay opaque (Cotter 2019, 19) kept its priority (see Figure 17 and Figure 18).

I proceeded similarly for different subjects. I kept experimenting with these ideas and references and quickly built on them for my analysis. This visualisation phase fits the metaphor of "solving and creating a puzzle at the same time" (Buchanan 2017): I was inductively creating visual representations that were based on my empirical material, but at the same time, I was finding cases that could fit my overarching understanding of research-based practice.

In this section, I described the process that led to my methodological choices. My analysis draws on insights I got by carrying out and processing the annotations, the interviews and the visualisations, by packing and unpacking again and again my material. In the next section, I go into detail with these insights.

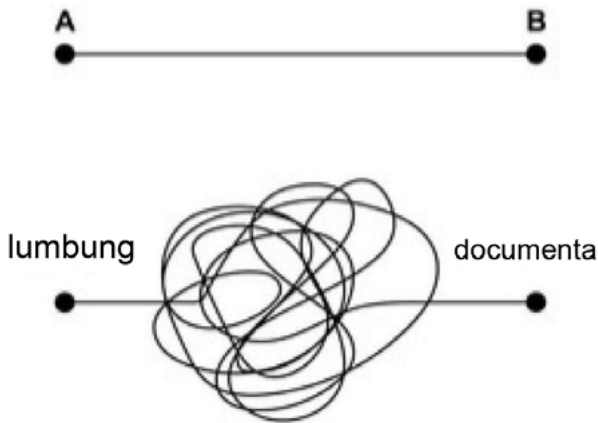


Figure 15: Cem A., *Majelis Akbar harvest by Cem A.*, September 2021.

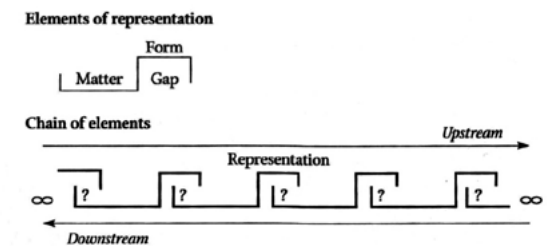


Figure 16: "Figure 2.21" retrieved from Latour (1999b, 70).

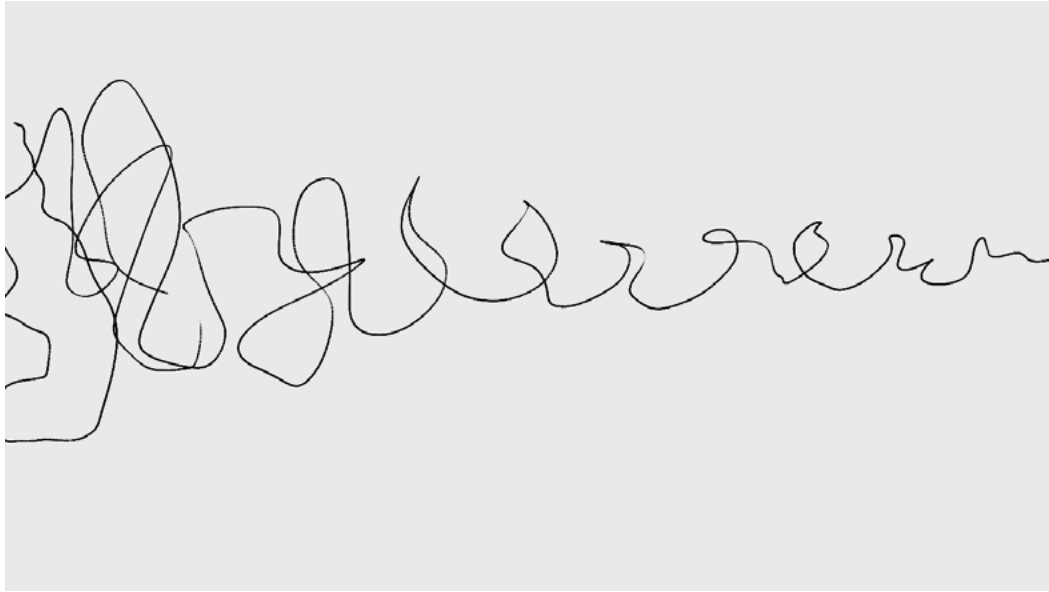


Figure 17: Visualising practice: a first attempt.

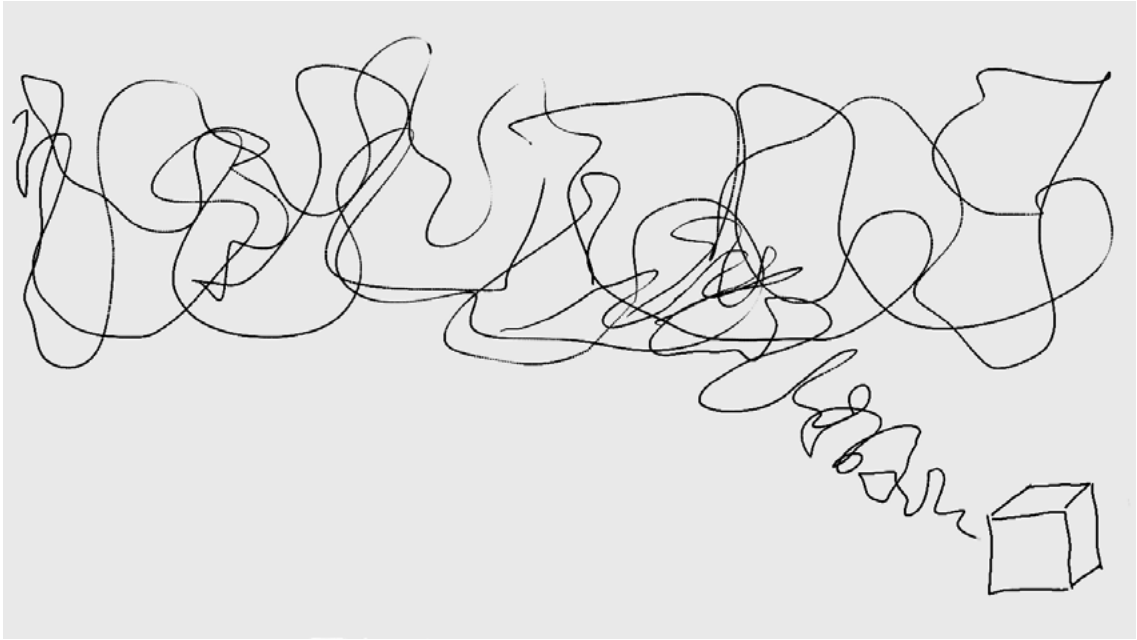


Figure 18: Visualising practice: a second attempt.

Pulling curatorial strings together

How did the artists pack their practice into the JAR? What curatorial strategies were involved in the process?

This section entails three chapters. This segmentation is meant to shed light on different perspectives. They are entangled topics building on the same material. The first chapter is dedicated to the milestones I identified in the artists-researchers' journeys towards the published expositions. I call milestones turning points that, according to the artists, had a significant impact on the design and content of the expositions. After this first stage, I place the results of my reflections on the concept and application of Circulating Reference to expositions in the JAR as an intermezzo. After introducing my working definition of 'curatorial strategies', the second part of the analysis is concerned with pulling the strings of a curatorial perspective together by focusing on five areas and delving deeper into the related strategies (see Figure 19).

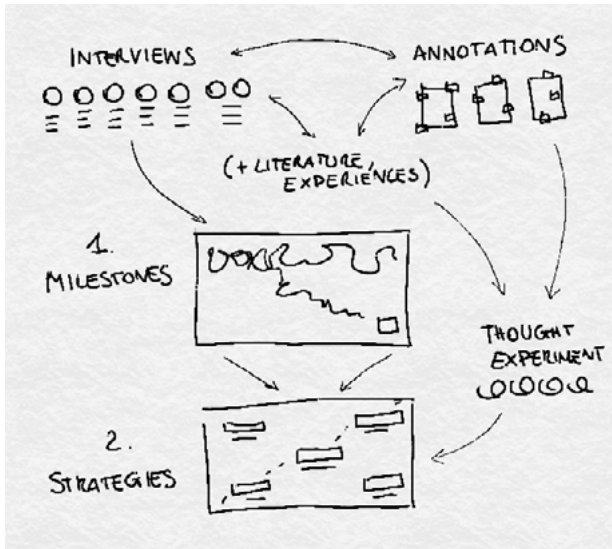


Figure 19: Visualising the relationship between different tools, experiments and parts of the analysis.

1: Packing milestones

While coding the interviews, I started collecting key moments, turning points that marked a significant change in the aggregate state or offered a snapshot that seemed relevant enough for the interviewee to point out during the discussion. These could have been a comment from the supervisor, the reviewers, a conference presentation or serendipitous encounters, etc. So I collected and summarised them into short sentences which, interestingly, I mostly formulated as actions e.g. “present” and “draw”.

This selection is based on what the artists-researchers remembered. Many had a hard time during the interviews to recall what happened. They had few vivid memories of this process as for them it was mostly

a chapter that had been closed with the publication. As I already mentioned, I can only access an already re-worked, more or less polished version where, if needed, a clear start and end can be traced. That's why there is a funnelling process that leads to this one end-product. This narrative can only emerge in hindsight, a point that resonates with Haarmann's (2015) reflections on a *nachdenkliche* –in this case, I would translate *nachdenklich* as 'having a quality of an after-thought'– methodology.

Decisive for an after-thought methodology with regard to artistic research is now that comprehensibility does not mean prescription. Method must mean no more and no less than the path of knowledge, which in its purposeful systematics and consistency sometimes only becomes recognizable in retrospect. "Post-modo" (86).

Being aware of this perspective, I went back to my visualisation attempts, especially to the one concerned with practice organically branching out and funnelling into exhibitable/communicable forms, such as a JAR exposition. One after the other, I mapped the milestones onto the picture. Thereby, I made the process leading to the six publications overlap: I was packing my research material again. After further thought, I started sorting the chronology into at least three phases. These were marked by bigger milestones that were shared by all the authors, independently of their personal research journey:

4. before they started **drafting the exposition**
5. before they **submitted for review**
6. before **publishing**

The first 'caesura' marked the branching out of the general stream of practice. This is a posthumous visualisation that blends out all the potential influences that the elaboration of the exposition had on other projects e.g. readings of literature or visits to other expositions. The publishing for review is another major point as it marks the beginning of a structured (bottle-neck?) process of conforming to the publishing standards of the JAR. This process surely started way earlier, with the influence of the educational and professional background, the efforts to master the editor of the Research Catalogue, the reading of the publication guidelines and observing what the other expositions looked like.

Some artists invested a lot of energy in surveying other expositions before they started working on theirs (e.g. Swoboda 2022b). However, the peer-review, with its structured feedback procedure, prompted major changes in most expositions, both from the textual and from the design side. All the artists had a general feeling that the JAR puts a lot of effort into thorough peer-reviewing. They complained that it was a long (and sometimes painstaking) process but they all, in different ways, engaged in it and felt that their exposition (and practice) gained something from it.

I came up with the following list of milestones:

- **work** on/write a PhD
- **present** at a conference (and **work** on a poster-like object)
- **write** and **test** concepts for classes
- **write** other papers/articles
- **realise** a sudden convergence of thoughts and opportunities

Start to draft an exposition

- **draw** a flow chart
- **understand** and **master** the infrastructure (i.e. editor)
- **explore** the affordances of the infrastructure
- **use** the Research Catalogue as a workspace
- **write** the article (for the exposition) as a text document
- **select** excerpts from the films and (re)write the text accordingly
- **develop** and **implement** a (visual/structural) concept

Submit for review

- **include** or **ignore** the feedback from the editors:
potentially **change** the design
- **include** or **ignore** the feedback from the peer-reviewers:
potentially **re-write** parts of the texts
- **make** the exposition show what you want to show
- **edit** to make responsive

The exposition is **published**.

These milestones operate at different levels. Some are singular, short-term events (e.g. present at a conference) while others are long(er) term processes (e.g. 'use the RC as a workspace'). Some are extremely specific to one of the interviewees (e.g. 'draw a flow chart') while some are very general and appear across the board (e.g. 'include or ignore feedback from the editors/peer-reviewers'). Finally, some mainly respond to external inputs (e.g. 'edit to make responsive') while others mirror personal reflections on meaning-making strategies (e.g. develop and implement a visual/curatorial concept).

After I introduced the milestones and contextualised their choice, I present the results of my thought experiment on the application of Circulating Reference to the expositions.

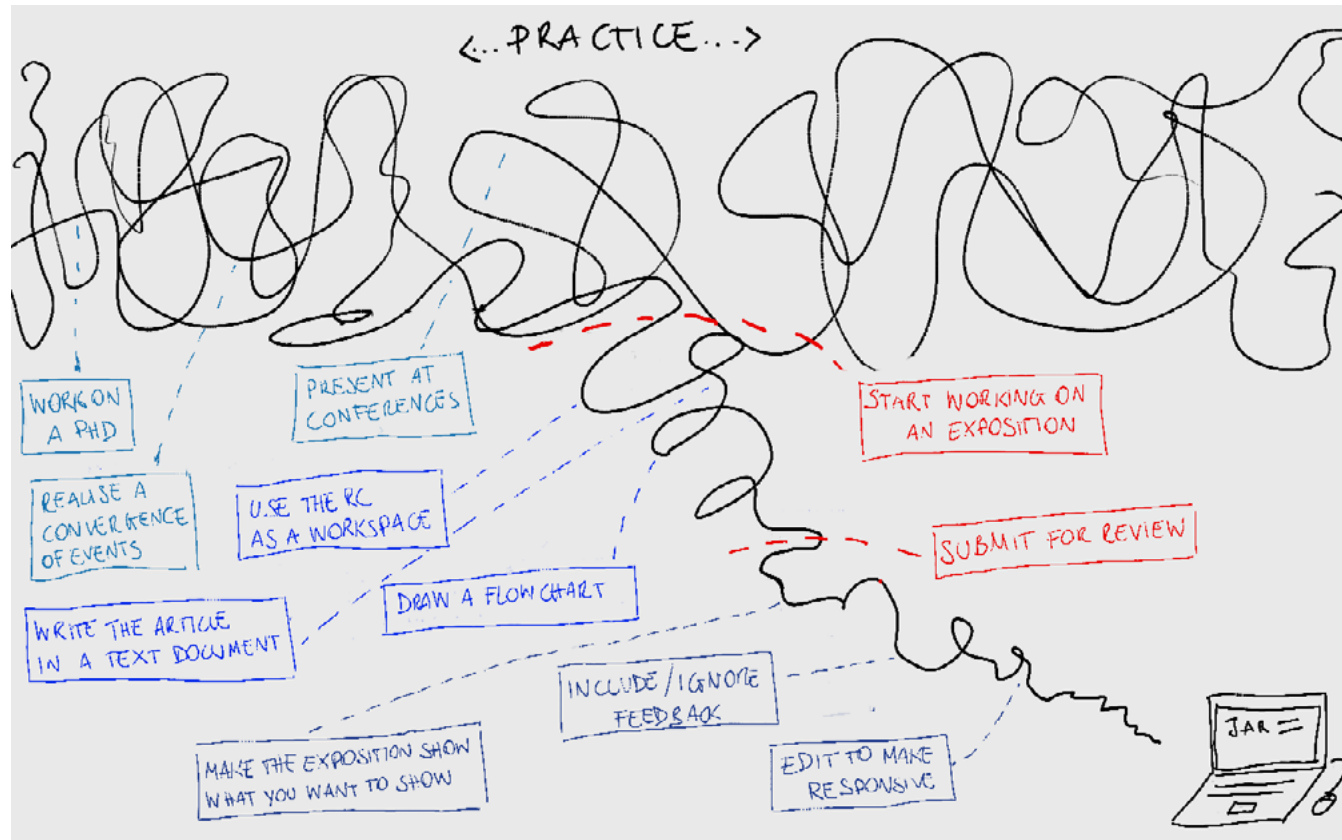


Figure 20: Visualising and mapping milestones.

Inscribing expositions: A thought experiment

I pause here for a moment to follow up on my intuition that Circulating Reference could be an interesting tool to understand (curatorial) processes in research-based practices. What processes can it shed light on and where would it be stretched too much? I start by re-assessing the impressions I mentioned in *On Circulating Reference*

In light of my interviews and annotations, I confirm that Circulating Reference strategically helps to understand the process between a research phase and the 'final' outcome, be it an artwork, an exhibition, a publication or an exposition of the JAR, as a series of transformations. The core idea/interest might stay the same and circulate while the matter and form always transform: where one visual/performative experiment (i.e. matter/thing) is processed into a form / sign (e.g. an insight), a new matter (e.g. visual/performative experiment) builds up on it again. Therefore, as many matters and forms are linked to each other, Circulating Reference may also help to understand the relationship between various stages of practice and different making public (i.e. exhibitions, presentations, screenings).

For example, between the artistic and the text-based component of a dissertation there would not be a gap to close, but a series of transformations that link a messy practice and a tidy presentation. This chain would be endless and reversible as the one theorised by Latour (1999b): one could find ever older episodes in one's practice that lead to their actual interests and the thesis or exposition could be endlessly cited in further papers and/or practices. Like the scientists in Boa Vista, artists working on expositions also gain knowledge of their practice by gaining distance from it. It is only in this distancing, that different elements can be brought together and reshuffled like cards (Latour 1999b, 38). Paraphrasing, by losing the messiness of practice, the artists gain knowledge of it.

Yet what knowledge are we talking about here? According to Latour's constructivist terms, "Knowledge does not reflect a real external world

that it resembles via mimesis, but rather a real interior world, the coherence and continuity of which it helps to ensure” (58). Knowledge is gained by “forg[ing] a pathway [through] reduction, compression, marking, continuity, reversibility, standardization, compatibility with text and numbers” (61). Latour doesn’t name anything like situated, sensuous, embodied, tacit or indigenous knowledge as knowledge. I acknowledge that the insights he presents are situated in the specific practice of the scientists he is observing. The practices are based on sensory experiences, such as soil-tasting to classify a sample as either “sandy-clay or clayey-sand” (63). These tests involve a great deal of embodied and tacit knowledge which is acquired by training and cannot be put into words, like René’s thirty years of toiling “in the tropical soils of the world” carrying a notebook with the Munsell colour-code system. Regarding indigenous knowledge, since Latour explicitly disregards the politics of the expedition, especially concerning the colonial context (see p. 27 and 63), it is difficult to judge to what extent the indigenous knowledge that the Brazilian collaborators may have brought to the study plays a role in the production of knowledge. We only read about them acting according to their disciplinary background e.g. “If all her knowledge as a botanist makes Edileusa [a Brazilian scientist teaching in a university near Boa Vista] side with the forest, all his knowledge of pedology makes Armand [a French scientist] lean toward the savanna” (27).

I acknowledge that all these situated, sensuous, tacit and embodied experiences form the basis of Latour’s study. However, he does not name them as knowledge because knowledge is gained, in his definition, as matter –and I would add perspective– is lost: “In losing the forest, we win knowledge of it (38)”. I suggest that by thinking expositions through the concept of Circulating Reference, the kind of knowledge we construct is potentially equally narrow. The (re)production of this limited understanding of knowledge implies a loss that may not do justice to a field that prides itself on questioning definitions and (academic) conventions, especially regarding the production of knowledge (see *On Artistic Research*).

Moreover, the application of Circulating Reference to different contexts inspired me to play the dissenter in Latour’s study too: If I look closer,

do I believe in the model of the one single and always reversible chain whose segments have equal shape and length and whose sequence is logically and uniquely built? How about all the bifurcations, dead ends and parallel tracks that are not just typical of artistic practice, but also of the experimental settings in the sciences that Science Studies is so familiar with?

Although Latour's model does a convincingly better job at explaining the relation between 'words' and 'the world' than the correspondence model, it does not acknowledge that in its universalising attempt it has taken a posthumous perspective. Just like my visualisation attempts of the processes leading to the expositions, it is posthumous because to look this consequential it needed a certain degree of rationalisation, i.e. of leaving out sidesteps and dead ends, that could only happen 'after the fact'. However, Latour's model looks even tidier and perfectly coherent. On the one hand, the model got so abstracted from the context where it was coined that it probably lost track of the messiness it was created from but on the other hand, some elements still tie it to the context it stemmed from. Therefore, to understand how relevant the difference in context between Boa Vista and the expositions could be, I now try to dig deeper into the concept to spell out important aspects of it.

I focus on the fact that processes involved in the experiments in Boa Vista were all very 'analogue' and on how the point that Circulating Reference was coined for the context of the natural sciences influences its rhetorics: what are the discourses it addresses and seeks distance from? The distinction between analogue and digital depends on the respective definition e.g. "discrete versus continuous flow of information" (Hayles 2004, 75). Not to complicate the argument, I stay with a common-sense definition of analogue vs. digital processes. The processes explicitly described by Latour in the text are of analogue nature (e.g. collecting and sorting soil in the grid of the pedocomparator). However, I do not see how digital processes would produce a different deambulation: would an analogue and a digital physiograph work in ways that are so different to influence the fact that they produce inscriptions? Moreover, as the text was probably written in the late 1990s and as the chain of inscriptions is supposedly endless both

upstream and downstream, it is almost impossible that central steps were not already computed (e.g. the final draft of the book). Working on an exposition presupposes that at least one stage of the chain happens through a digital interface (the RC editors) and most probably the respective practices involved way more passages between analogue and digital media. The kind of possible setups, methods, research questions, tasks, amount of processable data, etc. surely changed with the ongoing digitalisation. It would now be easier to simulate processes (e.g. 3d models, renderings) in ways that make the gap (if formulated in terms of correspondence) between ‘the world’ and images look deceptively small, so small to blend the chain of transformations between ‘the world’ and its (3d, live, high-resolution) model. Yet, I would argue that the chain of matter being transformed into signs and vice versa was not specifically affected by this change in computing capacity.

Another little experiment to test how far Circulating Reference could be applied would be to ask whether the Research Catalogue –and I specifically mean the graphic editors used to compose expositions– could be considered an inscription device, i.e. “any set-up, no matter what its size, nature and cost, that provides a visual display of any sort in a scientific text” (Latour 1987, 68). First of all, the editors of the Research Catalogue are a setup as they allow the creation of expositions. The variety of examples in the book reminds that, from the young primatologist with pencil, paper and binoculars to a tank built to detect solar neutrinos, the sentence “no matter what its size, nature and cost” should be taken at face value.

By observing the setup, like Latour in front of the gut of the Guinea pig hooked up at the physiograph, we may also be puzzled by its fragility. Some artists complained about losing pages and elements from the expositions and not being able to retrieve them again, not even with the help of JAR staff (Swoboda 2022b; Mousavi 2022b). For example, Mousavi (2022b) feared the unreliability of the interface: “by the time I got a little bit to know how it works, I thought I’m gonna stick to this. I’m not gonna move. I’m not gonna add anything new because the few times I tried, and then the whole thing disappeared.” The rest gets more complicated: Is an exposition a visual display? It would most probably be a complex composition of images, texts and audio/video

material. Is it displayed in a scientific text? The exposition overall could have the status of a scientific (in the sense of academic not necessarily based on experiments) text. Yet, if the exposition as a whole, as the product of the editor, is an inscription where is it embedded into? One layer might be missing here.

Going further down the road of differences in disciplinary contexts i.e. arts vs. sciences, I would like to avoid a two/three cultures-like debate (Snow 1961; Vesna 2001). Instead, staying close to Latour's text, I ask myself: what is the text doing in the broader context of understanding scientific practices? Latour's article is rhetorically positioning itself against a correspondence model, the one positing a gap between the scientific article and nature itself. This aim may not be so applicable to the case of the JAR where there is often not a claim about Nature in itself to be made but about the validity of the knowledge produced (see *The JAR as a knowledge-making machine*). Therefore, if the expositions in the JAR were to rhetorically aim at anything –each and every exposition has a different story– it would be working hard to show that there is, even though indirect, a connection between the words in the expositions and 'the world' out there, not to question it.

Would the artists reply to our sceptical looks "let me show you" (Latour 1987, 67) and bring us, the dissenters, to their studios, show us the raw films and recordings? The answer to this –again– provoking question might be very different from artist to artist depending on how important the knowledge-production aspect in publishing was for them and their careers.

The JAR as a knowledge-making machine

From the interviews, I collected passages that referred, more or less explicitly, to knowledge-making processes. Some of the interviewees understood the Journal for Artistic Research as what I call a knowledge-making machine. Sachdev (2022b) for example, described it as a toaster:

So let me just say, you're a designer and you're asked to make a toaster. If you put a piece of toast in, it's hot, you know the toaster

works right? But in the academy you produce knowledge. So if it's published in a journal, you know that is true. Other people have passed it. [...] Essentially, at least in traditional universities, the journal is parallel to when the toaster works. It's got published in a journal, then it's knowledge. You can cite it and build on it. It's stable, it's true.

Although I find philosophical discussions on truth mostly rather difficult, since Sachdev brought it up, I would draw another parallel to Latour's (1999b) text as truth-value is another important keyword

An essential property of this chain is that it must remain reversible. the succession of stages must be traceable, allowing for travel in both directions. If the chain is interrupted at any point, it ceases to transport truth – ceases, that is, to produce, to construct, to trace, and to conduct it. [...] Truth-value circulates here like electricity through a wire, so long as this circuit is not interrupted (69).

So guaranteeing the truth-value of the reference is a fundamental property of the chain of inscriptions. If by being peer-reviewed and published in a journal the knowledge produced by practices presented in the JAR can also be confirmed, then I see another point why it is interesting to look at exposition-making processes as a form of Circulating Reference.

Depending on the professional requirements, an additional layer to understanding the JAR as a knowledge-making machine could be more or less prominent: publishing as a means to develop and assess an academic career. At least four of the interviewees published because they either had to and/or saw an immediate benefit for their academic career in doing so. Swoboda (2022b) needed a second article published in a peer-reviewed journal to apply for a grant, Mousavi (2022b) could gain credit points for his PhD, Sachdev (2022b) also had to publish in a peer-reviewed journal for their PhD, however, since JAR is not part of the Scopus index, it did not count, Raidel (2022b) pointed at the need to survive as an artist in a 'regular' university where her career progress is evaluated by standards set by other disciplines (see *References and Expectations*).

This point brings me back to the issue of (forcing?) legibility and reclaiming opacity (see *On Circulating Reference*). In many cases, adhering to protocols that are compatible with the ways the rest of the system of making academic knowledge circulate would require a level of spelling out in a(n academic) textual form that “overdetermines and thus fixates identity in knowledge” (Schwab 2018b, 6). The JAR navigates some kind of compromise: they “consider not only whether or not a submission adheres to research standards, but also if non-adherence matters in the specific practice and research formulation reviewed.” (‘Peer Reviewing and Artistic Research’ n.d.). The expositions are marked by Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) and the tag lines for citation are very prominent, right in the middle of the bar that appears by hovering over the top edge of any exposition. Every exposition had even a whole ‘meta’ page, accessible from the same menu, with all the meta data on the exposition (e.g. keywords, date, creative commons license) the abstract, a link to the personal page of the author, etc. While for some artists these accommodations to the academic publishing system to increase reference-ability may already mean too much prescription, for some others they are not enough to feed the academic system where they work.

Next to the ability to be referenced in academic contexts, peer-reviewing is a central aspect in understanding the JAR as a knowledge-making machine. This is in line with the self-understanding of the Journal: A whole page (without author) is dedicated to “Peer Reviewing and Artistic Research”. There, peer-reviewing is described as “a widely accepted standard for the validation of new knowledge” (‘Peer Reviewing and Artistic Research’ n.d.) This goal is also closely linked to the creation of a community of peers, as a critical mass to discuss Artistic Research in terms explicitly or implicitly represented by the Journal and its community. For example, Sachdev (2022b) mentioned that the peer-reviewing forced her to look further for similar practices and this gave her a sense of community.

Mousavi (2022b) started working on an exposition on a recommendation of his PhD supervisor. At first, he did not think about publishing. He was suffering from the rather isolated process of writing a PhD, without a close group of peers and at some point, even without a

supervisor. Working on an exposition could be a way to get his ideas out of his head into a form that could be shared and read/visited. After he created a first draft, he decided to submit it for review because this meant that several people would closely and critically read it and give feedback. In turn, this would reassure him that he was “not talking or writing rubbish” (2022b). Mousavi did not use the term knowledge or truth but he also described a validation process: if all these people read and accepted what he wrote, then it should have some value beyond his personal reflection. Then the toaster worked, even if it was not called ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’.

In this chapter, I thought through what applying Circulating Reference as a tool to understand the JAR expositions would mean. There are many reasons why it might lead to interesting conclusions, especially regarding the formulation of practice, the issue of legibility and reference-ability in an academic system and their status as knowledge. However, many points require being careful and transparent about the limits of a concept that was coined in a very different context for rather different purposes. In the next chapter, I resume my analysis with the insights gained from this thought experiment and focus on pulling the curatorial strings together.

2: Unpacking curatorial strategies

In this chapter, I bring the insights from the interviews, annotations and readings together to delve into the complexities of how the authors packed their practice (and the practice of exposing) into the JAR expositions. First, I introduce my working definition of curatorial strategies. Second, I test the ground by speculating on the observations, assumptions and motivations that influenced the way the expositions look like. Finally, I pull the curatorial strings together by unpacking five areas of curatorial interest.

Curatorial strategies: my working definition

A result of the reflections on the curatorial in the expositions is my working definition of curatorial strategies. In an inductive sense, this evolved out of the inquiry. For the scope of this thesis, I define curatorial strategies as episodes (i.e. a process, action, decision, encounter, incident) that had a significant impact on the materiality of the exposition –and I mean materiality in Hayles’ sense of the interplay between the physical artifact (mostly digital in this case but equally physical) and its meaning-making strategies. These include a change in performativity of the user experience as a space for encounters, reflection and dissemination. This working definition goes back to the vocabulary definition of ‘strategy, “the process of planning something or putting a plan into operation”. It brings it together with Slager’s (2021) definition of curatorial strategies i.e. “topical modes of political imagination, transformational spaces for encounters, reflection and dissemination” (3) and combines it with insights from the analysis of the interviews. Thereby, I do not limit the term ‘strategy’ to the intentional actions of a curatorial subject. I understand curatorial (and artistic) work, especially in digital settings, as “an entanglement of actors” (O’Neill and Wilson 2015, 15) deeply embedded in networks that share agency (see *Curating digital spaces*). In this sense, serendipitous encounters count as strategies as much as conscious decisions by the respective authors.

Testing the grounds

With this definition in mind, I test the curatorial grounds by introducing another visualisation. This time, I analysed the artists' approaches to the composition of their expositions. I focused on the passages of the interviews that responded to the questions:

- How much time can I / do I want to / is it worth spend(ing) on mastering the interface?
- What affordances does the interface provide?
- What are my impressions of the other expositions?
- How much guidance does my 'ideal' visitor need?
- What kind of User Experience do I want to create?
- What are my references and implicit/explicit requirements?

Based on the interviews, I would summarise and process the answers to these questions as follows. Everybody wanted their expositions to be readable and understandable but this aspiration was concretised in radically different ways. These depended on the authors' assumptions on how much guidance was needed by the 'ideal visitor' for the kind of user experience they wanted to create. While summarising and visually processing these insights, I polarised them into two approaches (see Figure 21).

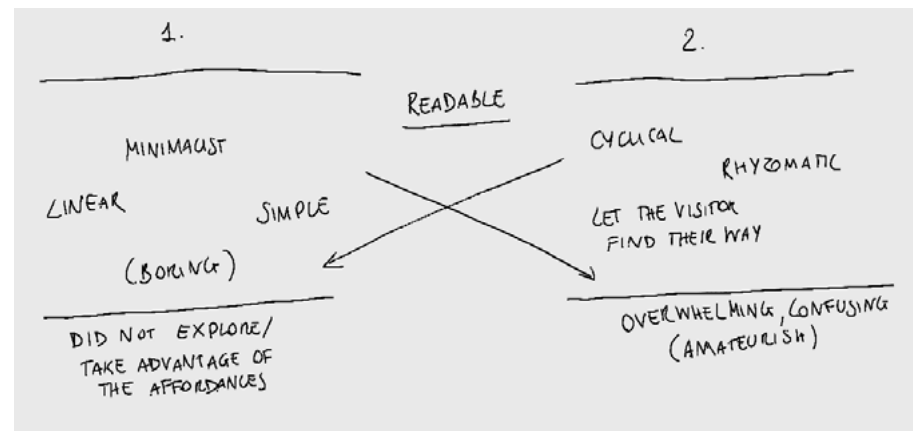


Figure 21: Visualising approaches to the layout of the expositions.

One type wanted the visitor to have a smooth reading experience. They had the impression that other expositions were confusing and overwhelming. Therefore, they opted for minimal designs with an unequivocal reading sequence. They included a navigation system linking one page to the next as if leafing through an article. These expositions focused more on the information conveyed through the text than on elaborate visual concepts. Interestingly, the responsive expositions (i.e. Sachdev and Swoboda's) are also the most minimal in design. Most probably they offered themselves better to test this new feature by being easily transposed into vertical (portrait) designs where there was no need to scroll to the right.

The second type aimed at (hopefully productive) irritations and moments of confusion. Other expositions did not make use of the full potential of the RC. Therefore, they opted for complex, interactive designs that would challenge a linear reading e.g. by creating a rhizome or a coil-like structure. They wanted the visitors to find/choose their way (e.g. with bifurcations) and/or offered contradictory indications, like dead ends. In this case, the focus shifted (to varying degrees) from the reading of a text to the experience of exploring and moving through the digital space. However, as it becomes clear through my annotation process (see Figure 22), there was a big difference in the way, e.g. Szanto and Sicotte's exposition aimed at circularity and Prokopic's at complexity: while I could 'cut open' the former into a linear structure again, the second one required me to position the pages in a cloud-like constellation and mark the hyperlinks as double-sided arrows.

The use of cycles in expositions caught my attention early on in this project. I noticed that several expositions in other issues used it to describe research processes (e.g. Diegert and Artacho 2021). I asked myself if cycles were used to rationalise messy processes, to give a better alternative to linear descriptions, but at the same time keep an impression of order, rationality and accountability. In this sense, I thought about common applications, like the research (life) cycle (e.g. see ('Overview: Research Lifecycle' n.d.), the hermeneutic circle/cycle (e.g. see George 2020) or the project (life) cycle in project management (see e.g. Singh 2022). Here again, a more detailed discussion of this point would unfortunately go beyond the scope of this thesis.

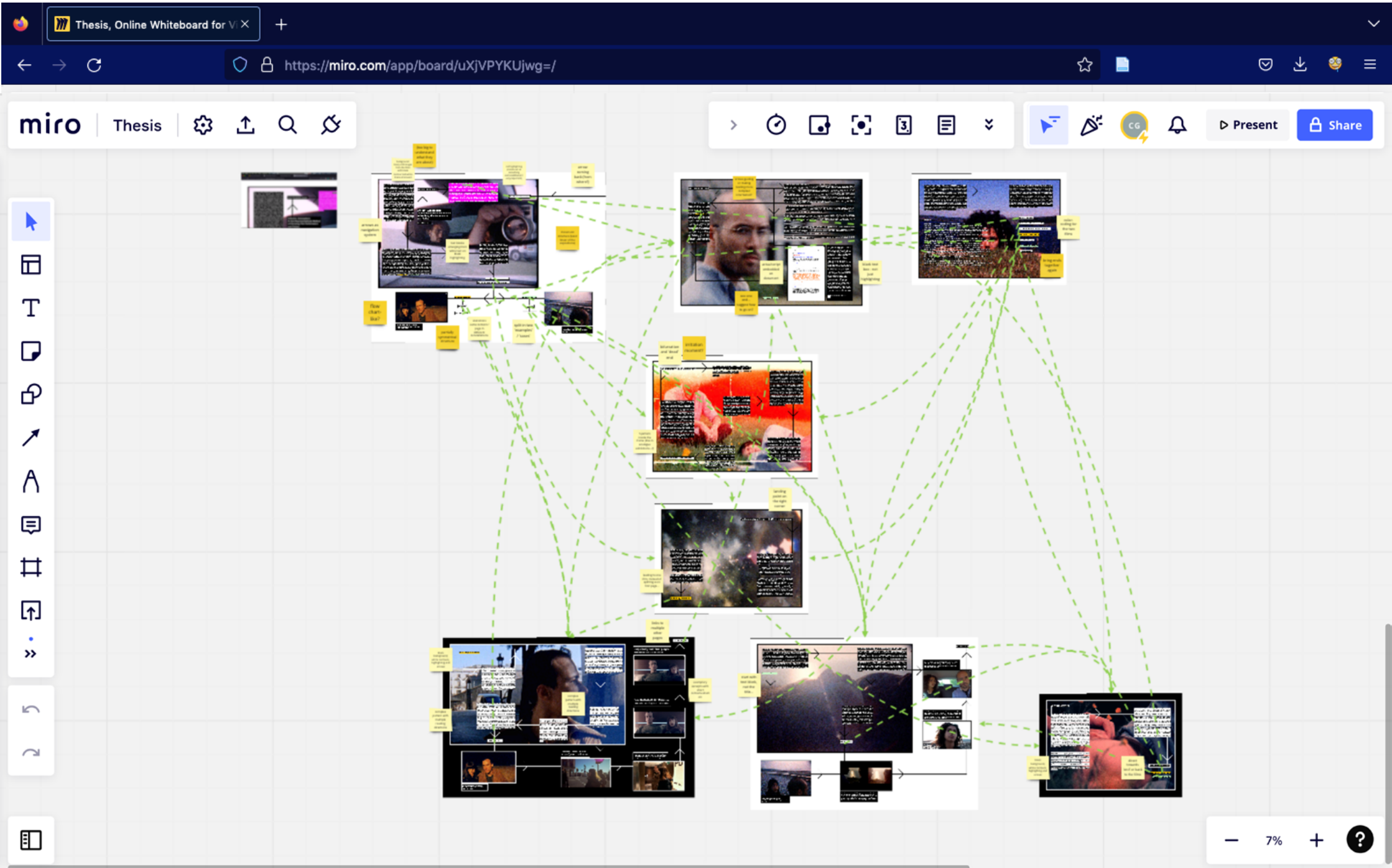


Figure 22: Screenshot of my annotations of the exposition by Prokopic (2022).

Five areas worth exploring

So what did I gain by applying a curatorial perspective? I selected and grouped the codes that emerged from the interviews into five main areas (see Figure 23). They cover different (but interrelated) contexts, processes and factors that had a major impact on the materiality of the expositions. To unpack each area, I start with a representative episode out of the interviews, which I call 'guiding strategy', and from there I unpack the tensions in the respective area. In *Interaction with the infrastructure*, I follow Szanto and Sicotte's exploration of the Research Catalogue; in *Interaction with collaborators, editors, reviewers* I recall Mousavi's discussions with the 'curators'; in *Implementation of concepts*, I explore Prokopic's construction of a rhizome; in *Expectations and references*, I listen to Raidel's concerns about her university system and finally in *Relevance*, I reflect with Sachdev on her foundation of a botanical art department.

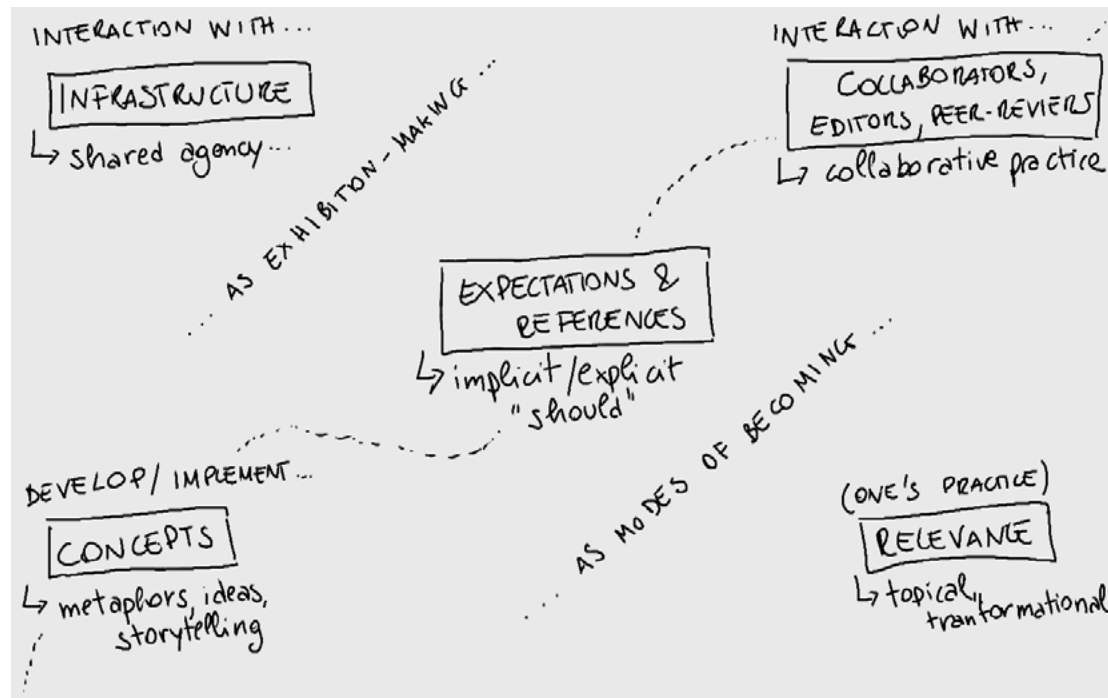


Figure 23: Visualising the five areas of curatorial interest.

Interaction with the infrastructure

I think I probably did what I just know in my practice, I looked at the inventory of tools and models that are available in JAR and tried to figure out what would make most sense for us for this work (Szanto 2022b)

Szanto and Sicotte told me that before they started to work on their exposition they had a close look at many others. They valued the JAR for its ability to support their practice both by expanding the horizon of what is considered publishable e.g. a conversation about the respective projects and how it can be communicated by crafting expositions on the Research Catalogue. Therefore, they were disappointed by the fact that so many expositions did not take full advantage of the affordance of the infrastructure. According to Sicotte:

in so many cases the web design was minimalist. There was the image of a book and then you have the text and then you click and but that's about it. So for us, it was not something worthy, to have just a web-based text that would have the appearance of being innovative, but that would not be innovative within its structure (2022b)

David decided to play with the graphic editors and explore their functions as much as possible. While testing, he discovered graphical solutions that he would not have come up with otherwise. For example, if he contoured circles with thick dashed lines and placed them next to each other they would look like cogwheels.

Interestingly, all the artists said they had a look at (many) other contributions before creating their own, they worked with the same infrastructure and still sometimes came to radically different conclusions. For example, Swoboda (2022b) had the feeling that most of the other expositions were way too complicated and overwhelming. She thought that although the interface to build the expositions offered the chance to graphically experiment a lot, they could not offer the same fine-tuning of professional design programs and thus produce only tentative results. Therefore, she preferred to stick to an extremely sleek, pol-

ished, minimal and (in her words) “boring” design which offered a very clear navigation:

I would not go into their [the graphic editors] special features, or something too much. I tried to keep it simple, because my experience of what I saw with other exhibitions is the simpler, the better. There were people using a lot of backgrounds, one image and then another video on it and then a strange text. I don't know, it felt like an experiment (2022b).

This reflection mirrors Schwab's (2014) point that “across the various expositions the RC may look messy, hit-and-miss, inconsistent and amateurish” (100). These two perspectives show the difference in observations, expectations and consequent approaches to the creation of an exposition in the RC (see *Testing the grounds*).

In general, the infrastructure was of paramount importance for the curation of the expositions. It set the framework and the tools that could be used. While working with the editors, many artists fell back onto pragmatic decisions e.g. Swoboda (2022b) switched to a regular typeface because the one she wanted did not work; Mousavi (2022b) was inspired by an interactive feature he saw in another exposition but did not feel competent enough to realise something similar himself “I thought that was quite interesting, but it was too complicated for me to do that kind of thing”. This was often due to the substantial amount of time and energy required to understand and master the interface. As Raidel (2022b) told me

I think they [people in charge of the development of the RC] want to give us lots of possibilities to show a creative input on that website but, as I said, it [the RC] has a different kind of logic than what I'm used to. So what I did is more traditional, it's like navigating other pages. [...] But this also came up because there was this frustration about doing it otherwise [...] because there's so much [...] time-consuming learning behind it.

As I asked what Raidel and other interviewees would change now in their expositions they also went back to elements that they could not implement because of missing knowledge of the infrastructure and/or time to master it.

By reflecting on the interaction with the infrastructure, I started to consider its agency on the materiality of the expositions. Prokopic (2022) summarised that if it weren't for the way the Research Catalogue and its graphic editors worked, his exposition would not have taken the shape it has now. As I explain in Implementation of concepts, the visual concept of a rhizome was inspired by its use in the research project, but it was also mostly a result of the affordance of the infrastructure, especially how hyperlinks could subvert the linearity of the table of content (the drop-down menu on the top left of the bar in each exposition).

Given the sharing of agency with the platform, the technological interface and the users, a case could be made for calling this “networked co-curating” i.e. “a collaborative mode of online curation which operates through the formation of strategic alliances between human and machinic agents” (Dekker and Tedone 2019, 2). However, it seems to me that the artists did not attempt to critically appropriate the infrastructure or build ‘strategic alliances’ with it. They were mostly struggling with understanding how to make it do what they wanted. On a similar note, positioning of the curatorial strategies in the expositions according to Ghidini’s (2019) distinction between ‘curating online’ and ‘curating on the web’ (i.e. whether the curating aims at site-specificity on the web) is difficult.

I would argue that the association of the expositions to either a general curating online or a site-specific approach like curating on the web depends on the scope of the analysis. According to Tate’s (n.d.) definition, “As a site-specific work of art is designed for a specific location, if removed from that location it loses all or a substantial part of its meaning.” Following this definition and focussing only on the context of dissemination of the works, one could argue that the expositions entail curating on the web: The expositions were created specifically through the Research Catalogue editor to be accessed within the framework of the RC. The site of the RC is a condition sine qua non for the existence and access to the expositions. Moreover, as Schwab (2014) argues, the expositions rely on the signifying framework of the JAR / RC to be recognised as expositions of practice as Artistic Research: “the branding and the URL that the RC provides make clear that a particular set

of web pages is meant to be looked at as research” (97). In this sense, they could be considered site-specific works.

However, a whole set of central concerns, for example, to the early artistic/curatorial appropriations of the web have become invisible in the expositions. For example, who is hosting the server? Where and how? Who wrote the code? When and for whom? Who owns the server and/or the code? Who has access to it? Although there is a consequent and transparent policy about the licencing of the single expositions, and with some further research one could find out more about the institutions that were/ are involved in the development and operation of the RC, none of the ‘politics’ involved with all these aspects became part of the content of the expositions. Therefore, one could also argue that the expositions do not qualify for curating on the web. At any rate, these observations remind us of how heavily curating on the web is reliant on the digital infrastructure it is based on and thus needs a special approach (Dekker 2021, 27).

Interaction with collaborators, editors and reviewers

I thought of the whole process as being a collaboration –again this might be only me and in my head, maybe the editor was doing his or her job just giving me feedback but because I was playing this game of me having an exhibition or show, I saw that person as the curator and me as the researcher, artist researcher, in a collaboration, and but a collaboration where most of the design and the kind of arrangements of the work is down to me [...]

Mousavi told me that given the isolation of the remote PhD writing and the difficulty to grasp/name the process of creating an exposition (see *Expositions and Expositonality*), he understood the whole process of creating the exposition as if he had been commissioned an exhibition. He designed the pages as if they were rooms in an exhibition space and went about the interaction with the editors and peer-reviewers as if they were curators.

Each room had a slightly different arrangement. For example, the first landing page is filled with a bird-eye perspective on the city of Tehran and a video that we can't see unless we scroll down but whose sound starts with the automatic playback. This setup creates an atmospheric, 'immersive' experience that would compare to an analogue space. Automatic playback was a point that was suggested by the editors and that Ali implemented as it fit his idea that he was working on (co-curating?) an analogue exhibition space with several rooms, together with the editors and reviewers, who were the curators of the space. Interestingly, Schwab (2018b) also suggests comparing pages in the expositions with exhibition rooms: "we move from one room to the next, but also have choices how we move. Using hyperlinks, we can teletransport to exact locations in a room, but also to a page-cum-archive or a page-cum-studio in order to drill down into particular details (9).

The authors did not collaborate just with the reviewers. One exposition was co-authored and the collaboration process was a central topic. Szanto and Sicotte reflected both on the respective practice, but also on, for example, how the different language proficiency influenced their cooperation. Szanto and Sicotte are both bilingual but with respectively a higher proficiency in English and in French. While most discussions took place in French, they decided to publish in English. The writing process prompted several discussions on the meaning of the respective texts that turned it into a diffractive process (see Haraway [1997] 2018 and Barad 2007) in itself:

In its complexity, our writing process is an integral part of research-creation. The resulting exposition is not a mere account of works and practices that exist elsewhere: it is the iteration of a work, a reflective point in a transformative process. Thus, the writing, the encounter of languages, and the diffractive analysis we do, all have a transformative effect (Szanto and Sicotte 2022a).

In all the other cases, the official author was a single one but other people were involved at various stages. Some are involved in longer-term collaborations. For example, Raidel worked with Ralph Kuo Chiang Wu, who designed both the analogue and the digital versions of the ghost paper. Other artists may, more or less often, work in

collective ways but understood this as their project. For example, Sachdev reports on several collaborations with other artists, institutions and on her pedagogical work.

Collaborations –with human and non-human actors, especially in the sense of networked co-curating– bring me back to the question of authorship:

How do categories of author and work inform each other when documenting artistic research that is typically a complex weave of collaborations? What interdisciplinary perspectives might we bring to investigate the cultural, technological and economic aspects of cultural production –not least the institutions of ownership and reward that historically legitimise and reinforce the bond between author and intellectual property? (Hughes 2014, 60).

From a curatorial perspective, (temporary) exhibitions have long become (at least since the 1960s) the medium through which the curator can speak and assert their authorship (Grammel 2005, 9). In the case of the expositions, the question of authorship is strongly framed by the infrastructure of the Research Catalogue. Like any other journal and academic publication, it uses the title, the author and the date as main descriptors and combines them into DOIs and reference lines. These, along with the personal profile pages of the authors (with personal accounts registered with identity documents out of security reasons), show very prominently in each exposition.

For this reason, Schwab's (2019) complaint about "a massive deficit in the field" that "expositions of practice as research tend still to be made first of all by the artists who put their own practice forward rather than by researchers whose work does not discriminate along lines of creative authorship" (40) seems rather misplaced. Given the current state of the infrastructure and the academic referencing system it is currently subordinated to, how would another notion of authorship look like? I leave this question open and partly as a provocation as I, unfortunately, do not have the room here to expand on it.

Implementation of concepts

As I briefly explained in the introduction to Prokopic's exposition, he built his contribution as a rhizome. The exposition was aimed at embodying Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept, which is central to Prokopic's methodology of Affective Performance. Prokopic gives the user hints on how to find their way through the exposition. For example, the first page seems to offer a basic overview of the whole exposition. Yet the amount and progression of pages do not mirror this structure, some are missing and differently named links lead to the same page. Arrows hint at possible paths but they do not show a clear reading. They bifurcate, deviate and form closed loops. The background image of each page, with its granular texture, is so zoomed in that unless by zooming out the browser view (see *Towards a media-specific analysis*) it would not be possible to see but a fragment of it.

Notwithstanding the rhizomatic structure of the exposition, the internal logic of the text sections follows a linear pattern, as if it had first been written all together and then scattered onto several pages. For example, on the first page I recognise a typical essay roadmap "I establish what I mean by affective film performance later on, before discussing the two films that emerged from the affective atmosphere process, *Becoming, Barcelona and Becoming Granular*" (Prokopic 2022). Moreover, the tone is academic with philosophical jargon, which puts even more potential for irritation into the reading experience. This point shows the constant compromising involved in curatorial choices. Prokopic's exposition is built as a rhizome, as such, it should have a complex structure. However, it also emerged from and is working in/with academic conventions (see also *Expectations and References*).

Like Prokopic, most artists developed an overall concept for the exposition. Like (analogue) exhibition concepts, they have an important meaning-making function: they embody terms and propositions that are central to the projects. For example, Szanto and Sicotte used the coil as a metaphor –for the journey through the respective research-creation projects, for their collaboration and for research-creation in general– while simultaneously giving their exposition a

spiral-like structure. The coil is also an invitation to understand the visit of the exposition also in a cyclical way: the authors set a recommended sequence that brings the visitors from the introduction to the conclusion and back but this not the only way to go about it. This point is further visualised by the round navigation menus that appear, mostly in different areas, on each page. The menus show hyperlinks to all the chapters in the exposition and like CDs, they diffract and should invite not to follow a linear path.

The concept encompasses the whole exposition and trickles into smaller curatorial choices, such as the round navigating systems with hyperlinks to all the sections. Sometimes, the concepts incorporated parts of their genesis e.g. Raidel's ghost paper was the second issue because it referenced a first analogue version she presented at a conference in 2017. In their relay between analogue and digital, there may be an interesting process of remediation (Bolter and Grusin 2003) from one medium to another (see *Curating online*).

However, developing a visual concept that would embody the practice itself was not as important for everyone and/or it was not interpreted the same way. For example, even though the JAR does not require an academic-article-like structure for the text, Sachdev did not feel the need to explicitly break with it. She mostly interpreted the contribution as an article and focused on the content of the text. In line with my choice of a curatorial perspective, I consider this as much a curatorial concept as the ghost paper or the coil. From this perspective, I can better understand what role had the format in the validation of knowledge (see *Inscribing expositions*) and focus on curating as a mode of becoming (see *Relevance*).

The writing and implementation of curatorial concepts is a central task for curators and draws parallels to analogue exhibitions. Both analogue and digital exhibitions rely on affordances and infrastructure. Yet thinking through the differences, I stumbled upon the issue of curating in two or three dimensions. Hayles (2004) writes that 'print is flat, code is deep'. She explains this statement by reconceptualising materiality as a property emerging in the interplay between the artifact and its signifying strategies. On the one hand, one could argue that curating an

exposition, especially if compared to an analogue exhibition in a room entails working in only two (spatial) dimensions. On the other hand, Hayles points at a whole set of layers involved in electronic hypertexts which make them deep (i.e. three-dimensional). These layers are only partially accessible and mostly invisible to users who may lack the relevant digital literacy and/or access to proprietary code. Therefore, I suggest that the question of dimensionality depends on how deep do you want to dig or how metaphysical you want to go concerning what is flat and what is deep. From a media-specific point of view, print is not flat and expositions aren't either, but they surely work in different ways. Throughout this thesis, I hint at aspects that distinguish curating online and offline. Unfortunately, a more detailed analysis would go beyond its scope.

Expectations and references

Again I find myself in the situation that the artists have constantly to defend what they're actually doing and why it is science and what is research and what is a research output and what is the publication and all these questions because the people we are confronting here and they are evaluating us they're often from other fields of science. So that's like an electric engineer has to decide if my work [my film] is now a tier one publication (Raidel 2022b).

Raidel argued that the effort she had to put into the whole process for publishing in the JAR was disproportionate to how much she would get rewarded in her university system. To survive as an artist in a regular university you need a double output: you keep working on your practice and you have to publish (ideally in high-impact journals) to further your career. She was disappointed by the fact that the JAR does not invest in developing ways to assess its impact. For example, the authors do not get statistics concerning the number of visits, the expositions are not indexed on Scopus or Web of Science and they are not retrievable via Google scholar. These would be pre-requisites to consider running for any journal metric in this area (e.g. the Journal Impact Factor) as the statistics they are based on come from the aforementioned databases.

Raidel's point brings me to the question of what the authors expected an exposition to provide, to do and in the end to look like. As I mentioned in *The JAR as a knowledge-making machine*, most of the artists wanted/had to publish in a peer-reviewed journal to work towards their PhD. The JAR offers DOIs, metadata and most importantly a single-blind peer-review process that aims at qualifying it as an academic publication with a claim to knowledge. In this sense, the JAR works as a knowledge-making machine that "validates an artistic way of knowing" (Sachdev 2022b) by applying academic standards like peer-reviewing and backing itself with discourse responding to academic modes of sharing knowledge (e.g. publications, conferences). JAR expositions needed to fulfil the role of academic publications.

At the same time, the expositions should also take distance from them. The JAR and its expositions are expected to offer a better platform for showing artistic practice for what is it, both in its content and in its form, or more precisely in the impossibility of easily taking the two apart. According to Elo (2014): "When publishing art in academia, the artist researcher is allowed, sometimes even expected, to invent or reinvent the format of the presentation (37). For example, Sachdev published in the JAR because there she could be free to write about her artistic process and methodology as it really was, which would not be possible in regular journals.

This point that a digital platform would be a better fit than print to expose research-based artistic practices is based on the belief that digital infrastructures offer more freedom than print. Based on the experiment I carried out while trying to understand the media-specificity of the expositions (see *Towards a media-specific analysis*), I also maintain that digital means greatly extend and simplify the inclusion of different media. Disregarding for the moment the auratic discourse on presence and originality (see Benjamin [1935] 2015), they can all be (more or less) easily digitised, pooled and held together by the same platform. However, I am also critical of a possibly misleading techno-optimism in line with Ghidini's (2019) claim that "with the massification of web tools, [...] these platforms have generated distributed systems of artistic production free from the physical and conceptual limitations of the gallery and museum space" (1). The point that a digital platform like the

Research Catalogue would (long-term) afford the exposition of practice as research seems more of an illusion. It will become more and more evident that if its development does not spend a lot of resources on keeping updated, technological obsolescence will threaten its ability to be an enabler (and disappear behind the content) instead of an obstacle (and become increasingly visible, like special effects in an old film) in exposing research. In fact, next to the difficulties with mastering the editor program, Raidel (2022b) stated that the affordances to work with video material offered by the Research Catalogue are already “a bit old fashioned”.

Relevance

I've been looking at craft for the past few years and in India a lot of our art and craft practices arose in a religious context [...] when you visit the village where this is done [...] They read mythological texts and they try to portray the stories on scrolls and on these textile fabrics, but the formal qualities arise from a specific kind of experience [...] The artist is capable of making those formal decisions under a certain state of emotion [...] call it God, call it the universal, whatever that those emotional states are [...] To keep those practices alive that spirit needs to be evoked again in students. [...] Everyone's talking about the dying crafts, the indigenous crafts, the SDG goals say: Go back to local art forms. But in that, we can't make everything Walt Disney [i.e. appropriate the formal qualities and turn them into souvenirs], that doesn't work (Sachdev 2022b)

As I mention in the description of her exposition, Sachdev told me about the discussions with her colleagues around whether *rangoli* and *kolam* could be considered botanical art as they (allegedly) did not realistically portray botanical subjects. This episode triggered a whole series of reflections and experiments. These included exploring the colonial background of botany, as a science used to catalogue plants in the colonised areas. Most importantly, it required deeply engaging with crafts as contextual practices: not by simply appropriating the formal qualities but also by understanding and including their religious context. This aspect posed a whole set of questions regarding teaching crafts in the current Indian political climate

the religious sentiment is riding so high in the country that it has to be critically addressed, and we don't bring it into the academy because it's so dangerous. [...] a lot of crafts were produced within religious circumstances but if you want that kind of art and craft to exist, and you want to teach it, you have to accommodate the religious sentiment of students and bring it into the curriculum. You can't say, leave it outside, it's too political. So I was just wondering how I could do that in the next class. [...] I know that if I put up religious things, theology as a strand of practice within botanical art on my website, it's going to be a huge "No, no" and if I said like temples are sites of inquiry [...] you can't do that today, it's too politically fraught as a subject area.

Sachdev's inspiring reflection on the (socio-political) value of teaching crafts is the entry point to the fifth and last area of interest. Like her, most artists-researchers saw a personal and/or social urgency in their topics of interest and in the way they intervened in the respective contexts. For example, Swoboda (2022) summed it up in aphorisms at the end of each page, such as "employ alternative now" to express her disagreement with how "zoo architecture fixates greatly uneven relations between humans and non-human animals".

This area of curatorial interest, as others partially did already, extends beyond a narrow understanding of curating into the curatorial and "modes of becoming –research-based, dialogical practices in which the processual and serendipitous overlap with speculative actions and open-ended forms of production" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). Thereby, it includes Slager's (2021) definition of curatorial strategies as "topical modes of political imagination, transformational spaces for encounters, reflection and dissemination" (3) and the reflections of the curatorial as "a gift enabling one to see the world differently, a strategy for inventing new points of departure, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for humanity, [...]" (Martinon 2013a, 4).

I called this area 'relevance' as a way to mirror the political (in a broad sense: social, speculative and transformative) intent behind this understanding of curating (or the curatorial). This notion generally refutes a concept of art for art's sake in favour of a more (socially) engaged

attitude e.g. “a way of caring for humanity” (4). Furthermore, the term ‘relevance’ reminds me also of the common practice of having to justify one’s (academic) research by claiming an urgency for a contemporary debate and/or future development. This is common also with artist-researchers who, in various ways, justified the relevance of their projects. Many expositions also included a (more or less extensive) note on why an artistic approach to their research topic was desirable and more appropriate (if not directly necessary) for the respective projects (e.g. Raidel 2022a). Interestingly, sometimes the perspective was flipped from the need to justify a research-based approach in artistic practice to the justification of an artistic approach to a research project (i.e. to be published according to common-sense and/or explicitly disciplined standards of academic publishing).

Informing my curatorial perspective with an extended notion of curating allows me not to strictly distinguish between the curatorial in the “putting stuff [the exposition] together” (Swoboda 2022b) i.e. curating as exhibition-making, and the curatorial in a more existential, transformative, engaged way of working in the arts i.e. as “modes of becoming” (O’Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). Thereby, I can better understand the chain of transformations that packed the artistic/curatorial practices into the expositions because a curatorial perspective encompasses the messiness of the practice too, not just the final cut. This perspective acknowledges the authorial position of the artist-researchers as I ask how *they* packed *their* practice. At the same time, it underlines the point that, especially due to the digital context they operate in, their artistic/curatorial agency is shared with many other human and non-human actors.

To sum it up

How is the exposition to be related to the art practice that it sets out to expose? To what extent does the exposition enable the artist to present his or her work as knowledge? Do the various ways in which the work of art is communicated as research make a difference to what can actually be known through the exposition? (Benshop, Peters, and Lemmens 2014, 40).

These questions sum up the fields of tension that I explored by analysing the whole issue 26 of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) from a curatorial perspective: How did the authors pack their practice into the expositions? What curatorial strategies were involved in this process?

I started by introducing some basic terms, my motivation for this research, and the strategic choice of a curatorial perspective to analyse the expositions. This perspective framed the questions I asked my objects and where I looked for meaning. To give some (more) background, I delved into three debates. In *On Artistic Research*, I introduced some key positions in the Artistic Research discourse I refer to in this thesis i.e. mostly developed in and around the communities of practice (Johns 1997) linked to the Society for Artistic Research. In *On Curating*, I delved deeper into the extended notion of curating as “modes of becoming” (O’Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). I understand curating as an “entanglement of actors” (15) –regardless of whether human or non-human (Latour 1999a)– which are embedded in constitutive relations for “becoming-public in art and culture” (Bismarck 2022, 8). I informed this general perspective on curating with the specific approach that is typically required by digital settings –see networked co-curating (Dekker and Tedone 2019) and curating on the web (Ghidini 2019). Finally, in *On Circulating Reference*. I discussed the use of concepts stemming from Science (and Technology) Studies and expanded on Latour’s (1999b) Circulating Reference. I speculated about what would happen if I applied it to understand the process of relaying research-based artistic practices to expositions published in the JAR. The application of this concept to the interviews made me re-

flect on the use of the JAR as a knowledge-making machine i.e. as an instrument that allows (aspects of) the practices exposed in the JAR to claim knowledge, just as academic journals do. In the case of the JAR, this happens through peer-reviewing and the construction of a whole discursive basis around the RC and JAR i.e. the wealth of publications I cited in this thesis and mostly written by Schwab and Borgdorff.

The research journey of this thesis entailed an “elaborate effort” (Buchanan 2017) at packing and unpacking the material I collected on the way. I interviewed the authors of the six expositions and coded the transcripts, documented and annotated the expositions by exporting full screenshots of each page. I further processed this material by variously experimenting with visualisations. Based on my annotations, interviews and visualisations, I started *Pulling curatorial strings together* and presented the insights of this process in two parts. First, I identified several milestones in the authors’ creation processes leading to the published contributions. These were episodes that, according to the interviewees’ accounts, significantly impacted the materiality (see Hayles 2004) of the expositions, such as presenting at a conference, or integrating/ignoring feedback by editors and peer-reviewers. The milestones represented turning points, not just in the way the expositions look but also in the way they perform. As an intermezzo between the two parts of my ‘analysis’, I inserted the results of the thought experiment on Circulating Reference.

In the second part, I elaborated a working definition of curatorial strategies. I brought a dictionary definition of ‘strategies’ together with Slager’s (2021) i.e. “topical modes of political imagination, transformational spaces for encounters, reflection and dissemination (3) and insights from the interviews. For this thesis, I defined curatorial strategies as episodes (i.e. processes, actions, decisions, encounters, incidents) that had a significant impact on the materiality of the exposition. These include a change in the performativity of the user experience and thus how the expositions work as a space for encounters, reflection and dissemination. Therein, I do not distinguish between the intentional action of a human subject (i.e. the curator) and the agency of other human and non-human actors.

By re-working my coding (see *Appendix*), I crystallised five areas that were important from a curatorial perspective: *Interaction with the interface*; *Interaction with collaborators, editors and reviewers*; *Implementation of concepts*; *Expectations and references* and *Relevance*. I introduced each area and focussed on a few strategies presented by the interviewees e.g. how Szanto and Sicotte explored the interface or Mousavi collaborated with the reviewers/curators. These areas shed light on different aspects of curating in the context of the RC/JAR, both as “exhibition-making” and “modes of becoming” (O’Neill and Wilson 2015, 12).

Throughout the thesis, I argued that by applying a curatorial perspective on an unusual subject for Curatorial Studies, I gained insights into the processes and gestures of making public in Artistic Research and on the expansion of curatorial practices beyond the boundaries of exhibition-making. I did not argue that by creating the expositions (e.g. by “putting stuff together” Swoboda, 2022b) the authors have become curators. The artists did not identify at all with the curator as a professional figure. However, I suggest that curating, if understood in the aforementioned extended way, shares many traits with the practice of exposing research-based practices in the Research Catalogue: curatorial strategies may indeed be an intrinsic component of Artistic Research (Slager 2021). Moreover, expositions are discursive, mediated and choreographed sites of display (Schwab 2019) just like exhibitions. Finally, the term ‘to expose’ has been variously employed in curatorial debates and vice versa ‘to curate’ has been used in the context of the Research Catalogue.

The application of a curatorial perspective to the process of packing research-based artistic practices into expositions yielded different results depending in the individual cases. Where the artists took seriously the JAR editorial claim that the format should be content-relevant, I found more material to analyse the expositions as online exhibitions. I could easily focus on how they guided (or purposefully irritated) the visitors in their deambulation through the digital environment they built for them. Yet, the background stories and observations on more minimalist approaches also yielded interesting results. They made me reflect on the power of writing conventions (i.e. of writing just the way an article ‘is

supposed to look'), visual and textual references and constraints given by the infrastructure (e.g. making an exposition responsive). Moreover, the expansion of the curatorial perspective beyond exhibition-making allowed me to observe how political concerns and engagement in the respective practices could be communicated, even though rather conventional approaches to the layout (i.e. following usual standards for academic publishing). The set of curatorial (i.e. packing) strategies I identified in each exposition is individual as every artist found their personal ways through the process. However, the approach I developed to identify and understand them as objects embedded in and resulting from curatorial practice can be applied to further expositions and contexts for making research-based artistic practices public.

With this project, I wanted to explore a possible intersection between artistic, expositional, curatorial and academic practice. I inquired about knowledge production in the gesture of making research-based artistic practices public through the JAR. Further research could expand the sample of JAR expositions, compare older expositions to explore changes over time and contrast contributions to the JAR with those of the other journals hosted by the RC. Moreover, a curatorial perspective could be applied to many other exhibition(-like) settings (e.g. conferences, screenings) to have a broader understanding of how different gestures of making public belong to and influence research-based artistic practices.

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Appendix: Codebook

- Content
 - Content matter
 - Artistic Research
 - Curatorial
 - State of the art
 - Exposition (format concept)
 - Research / Science
- Educational / Professional Background
 - Relation to other forms of making public
 - Relation to writing/publishing
- Experience (how it was)
 - Limitations/criticism
 - Expectations/requirements
 - Reading the JAR
 - Other comment on the platform
 - Appreciation (for the platform/experience)
 - Get to know JAR
 - Comparison/previous similar experiences
- Motivation
 - Topical / relevance
 - Goals, aspirations
 - Attractive, catchy
 - Media-specificity
 - Stay true to process
 - Show personal perspective
 - Readability/guidance
 - Playfulness
- Process (what happened)
 - Interaction infrastructure
 - Development / outlook
 - Practice ↔ language/exposition
 - Staging process
 - Interaction with the editors/reviewers
 - Community
 - Other collaborations
- References
 - The other expositions are...
 - Literature/Authors
- Structure
 - Arrangement
 - Text
 - Other design decisions
 - Start / accent / hierarchy
 - Simple/minimalist/boring
 - Intercultural
 - Analogue vs. digital
 - Pragmatic decision
 - Cyclicity/circularity
 - Colours
 - Naming tools/objects
 - (vs.) explore affordances
 - (vs.) linearity
 - Form follows concept/experience
- Epistemologies/knowledge-making



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Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorliegende Masterthesis selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe, alle Ausführungen, die anderen Schriften wörtlich oder sinngemäss entnommen wurden, kenntlich gemacht sind und die Arbeit in gleicher oder ähnlicher Fassung noch nicht Bestandteil einer Studien- oder Prüfungsleistung war.

Ich habe vom § 16 der ASO Kenntnis genommen.

Datum: Unterschrift:

Exposition | edit details | edit workspace | unfollow | back to previous page

INSCRIBING EXPOSITIONS: CURATORIAL STRATEGIES IN PACKING PRACTICE INTO THE JOURNAL FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH (LAST EDITED: 2022)

[Chiara Giardi](#)



OPEN EXPOSITION



About this exposition

In this thesis, I inquire about curatorial strategies in research-based artistic practices by focusing on the six expositions (i.e. contributions) published in the 26th issue of the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). Specifically, I'm interested in how the authors packed their practice into the expositions: What curatorial strategies were involved in this process? Furthermore, I ask whether the concept of "circulating reference" (Latour 1999b) could help to understand the chain of transformations (or inscriptions?) that allows the contributions to claim knowledge. I interviewed all the authors to reconstruct the steps they followed to transform their research/practice into a published product and I analysed the expositions as if they were online exhibitions. I clustered five areas of interest from a curatorial perspective (e.g. to implement a concept) and focused on specific episodes of the packing process that I identify as strategies (e.g. to structure the exposition as a digital ghost paper). To the best of my knowledge, no other research project ever analysed a whole issue of the JAR and especially not from a curatorial point of view. The choice of this perspective is a strategic one: It prompts me to linger on aspects that may not seem relevant otherwise and to further understand curatorial work outside the professional role of the curator, both in the narrow term of curating as exhibition-making and in the extended term of curating as "modes of becoming" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12). The curatorial (i.e. packing) strategies I identified are not generalisable as every artist found their personal way through the process. However, I suggest that curating, if understood in an extended way, has many traits in common with the practice of exposing in the Research Catalogue.

type	research exposition
date	20/12/2022
last modified	16/12/2022
status	in progress
share status	private
share status	private