
# European Journal of Philosophy in Arts Education

## Special Issue on Arts Based Research

Editors:

Ferm Almqvist & Vist

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# Editorial
# Special Issue on Arts-Based Research

## Arts-Based Research in European Arts Education: Philosophical, ontological and epistemological introductions

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# Arts-Based Research in European Arts Education: Philosophical, ontological and epistemological introductions

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## Introduction

Educational settings where arts subjects or aesthetic forms of expression (such as visual arts, music, dance, film, drama, fiction or poetry) play an important role are considered rather complex. Consequently, communicative and artistic aspects that constitute the arts educational phenomena can be difficult to understand, analyse, document and share, without the risk of losing important nuances. A growing research movement that aims to address these challenges is *arts based research* (ABR). We claim that ABR – with its variety of methodologies and onto-epistemologies – offers substantial support in grasping even more of the mentioned complexities. The question is, does it also lead us closer to a multi-modal turn?

Over the last few decades, ABR has become a common concept and research approach – one that also encompasses various phenomena related to arts education. When this special issue was first initiated (in 2018), Ferm Almqvist emphasised that the field of arts educational research has experienced several scientific turns, which have influenced what has been considered valid research, the methods that has been

1 This guest editorial has gone through blind peer review

used, and the results that can be delivered. These turns have also influenced the researcher's role and the relations between the perspectives and people that have been studied. She underlined that the interpretative turn, the language turn, the bodily turn, the ontological turn, the action turn, etc. have changed what can be achieved and in what ways within the field of arts education research. Nonetheless, these turns do not fully capture the complexities of arts educational phenomena.

## Arts-based research – an umbrella term

In line with Bresler (2006), Finley (2008) and Leavy (2009), we use ABR as an umbrella term "that encompasses all artistic approaches to research" (Leavy 2018b, 4). Given the focus on arts education, we could have chosen the term arts-based *educational research* (ABER), but it appears that the acronym ABER is less in use today and that the dominant voices in ABER and ABR (in arts education) are often the same, alternating effortlessly between the two terms. ABER is ABR within the domain of educational discourse (Barone 2006, Barone and Eisner 1997, Eisner and Powell 2002). Even in his chapter 'Arts-based Research in Education' in Patricia Leavy's *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (2018a), Rolling does not use ABER and instead explains, 'ABR becomes arts-based educational research when the aim (...) is to address problems rooted in educational discourse' (Rolling 2018, 494). Similarly, researchers like Sinner et al. (2006, 1223), while reviewing the practices of 'arts-based educational research as documented in dissertations' point towards the now common term of a/r/tography, another methodology within ABR that explores the artist-researcher-teacher roles as living inquiry.

It is quite common, when new research terms and paradigms are established, for terms to become confusing. Elliott Eisner introduced the term ABR in 1993; however, the first European Conference on ABR was not held until 2005 in Belfast (Eisner 2006). For many years, 'artistic research' seemed to be the most common term

connecting arts and research in Europe. While it is difficult to say if ABR and artistic research are used in the same way in all the relevant discourses today, to our knowledge, some differences now seem to be more or less agreed upon. Artistic research more often refers to professional artists investigating artistic processes and disseminating the results artistically (Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén 2005, Jullander 2013, Hultberg 2013, Borgdorff 2012, Vist 2015). In Europe, one may find artistic research defined outside of, and in opposition to, ABR. In their discussion on ABR traditions in Europe, Suominen, Kallio-Tavin and Hernandéz-Hernandéz (2018) also distinguish between ABR and artistic research. They claim that while 'the idea of *research about self and using self as a tool, or as an instrument in the research process/project*' and 'a wider interest in phenomena within the sociocultural context' are significant in ABR, artistic research 'is mainly interested *in researching artistic processes and artistic phenomena* (...) exploring particular artistic perceptions, awareness, orientations, or practices' (Suominen, Kallio-Tavin, and Hernandéz-Hernandéz 2018, 104, italics in original). Used as an umbrella term, ABR may include artistic research, but, more importantly, it includes research where the topic and results may go beyond the arts, but where arts-based research processes constitute a major contribution to the project.

Although Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén claim that 'music and music pedagogy are the most developed fields' (2005, 16) of artistic research in the Nordic countries, 'musicians and music educators have seemed to be the least interested among arts educators in exploring art-based enquiry' (Smith 2013, 90). We agree with this view. Music education, at least in the Nordic countries, has been more occupied with traditional, scientific research. Also Bresler claims that 'in the conversation about the arts in research, literature, visual art and drama have taken a leading role' (2008, 225), and we cannot claim that this trend has changed. What has changed, though, is the increasing number of ABR projects, multi-modal research approaches, and the explicit use of the term and its methodologies in all arts educational fields.

Barone and Eisner (2012, 24) explain ABR to imply 'a continuum that extends from qualitative research projects that, while being officially tagged as science, effectively deploy a few aesthetic design elements to those who exhibit maximum artistry'. As such, it could be defined as qualitative research that draws inspiration, concepts, processes and representational forms from the arts, exploring the 'alternative researching possibilities that fuse the creative and imaginative possibilities of the arts with social science research' (Knowles and Cole 2008, xi). Today, however, it is increasingly common to consider ABR to be its own paradigm (Leavy 2018b, 4) or to be within a performative paradigm (Haseman 2006, 2007, Ellingsgaard and Gjærum 2016).

According to Barone and Eisner (2012), arts-based researchers combine the traditional use of written and spoken language with alternative forms of expressions such as pictures, film, sculpture, sloyd, textile art, dance, music, poetry, theatre or digital technology. Similarly, Leavy (2018b) places ABR at the intersection between art and science. Referring to recent research in neuroscience, she writes the following:

> . . . art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement, make lasting impressions, and therefore possesses unlimited potential to educate. (...). Researchers tapping into the power of the arts are doing so in order to create new ways to see, think and communicate (Leavy 2018b, 3)

## Onto-epistemological diversity in ABR

Borrowing the term 'onto-epistemology' from Barad (2007), we have already traced our inspiration to certain post-modern and post-human philosophies. However, we, the editors of this issue, are both primarily qualitative researchers within a hermeneutic-phenomenological paradigm. According to Suominen, Kallio-Tavin and Hernandéz-Hernandéz (2018), early artistic research in Finland too was founded in phenomenology and hermeneutics. Even today, Finnish ABR is said to 'have a theoretical emphasis on embodied phenomenology and sensorial knowledge'

(Suominen, Kallio-Tavin, and Hernandéz-Hernandéz 2018, 106). However, in our experience, at least in Scandinavian countries, there are clear differences in the scientific philosophies underlying different arts education discourses. While music (education) still sometimes seems rooted in late modernity, dance, drama and certain visual arts have been exploring post-modernism and post-humanism to a wider extent, not to mention Barad's agential realism. This tendency is partly confirmed by the contributions of this issue.

The newly published *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (Leavy 2018a) also acknowledges ontological and epistemological diversity, including Eisner's stance when he introduced the term ABR. Quoting Barone and Eisner, Gerber and Myers-Coffman (2018) write that ABR is 'an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable' (Barone and Eisner 2012, 1). Using the concept of *translation*, Gerber and Myers-Coffman discuss the construction of new knowledge in ABR or 'the transformation of one form of knowledge into another' (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 587). We also believe that ABR can be used to understand philosophies, and philosophies can in turn motivate ABR, which can also be seen as processes of translation (Heidegger 1993, Schwieler and Ferm Thorgersen 2015). ABR methodologies are used to shape and *translate* preverbal, sense-based forms of knowledge into art forms and text. Hence, their 'aesthetic epistemology' (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 591) is about sense-based, embodied, emotional and relational ways of knowing:

> It is from this epistemology that our perceptions, memories, symbols, relationships, narratives and values emerge, take form, and inform the existential, ethical, and phenomenological nature of our human condition most often investigated using ABR. (Gerber and Myers-Coffman 2018, 592)

Whether or not one agrees with the claim that such sensory and emotional forms of knowledge 'are not expressible in words' (2018, 592), the symbolic languages of the arts, with their 'evocative and emotionally drenched expression' (Barone and Eisner 2012, 9), facilitate formative phases of translation and provide better opportunities for insight and engagement. This affords another rationality that departs from traditional science, but it is still within an onto-epistemology according to which research mirrors reality. It is useful to remind ourselves that thinking with art(s) (Heidegger 1993) is not a new phenomenon, and neither is trying to understand or cope with the world through dwelling in arts.

Rosiek describes this view of transformation as 'a form of empiricism, subject primarily to the ethics of accurate representation' (2018, 634). Rosiek himself endorses a post-human perspective of ABR. Referring to Barad's (2007) agential realism, he turns his attention to 'the ontologically creative aspects of science and the ethical responsibility that comes with such creation' (Rosiek 2018, 637). He argues that agency is not only a feature of human consciousness, but of all things. Inquiry, then, becomes 'the establishment of provisional onto-ethical relations that constitute human and nonhuman agents' (2018, 638). These relations are referred to as intra-actions; hence, agential reality can be the result of the intra-actions of inquiry.

The articles in this issue derive their inspiration from these views and other stances. Rosiek also calls for a critical approach to social inquiry where subjects are not only overlooked but also suppressed by ideological processes. Onto-epistemologically, this view is rather similar to the first 'empirical-referential' one, which claims that ABR can provide affectively compelling portraits of ideologically suppressed aspects of reality. The ethical focus, on the other hand, is different. Yet another perspective is the post-modern or post-structural one, which questions taken-for-granted norms and arrangements. It does not offer one single solution or vision but instead problematises any authority, claiming that 'meaning is socially

constructed within the activity of human discourses' (Rosiek 2018, 637). Related to this is another question of ethics: whose voices are allowed to be heard in and through research? Arts-based approaches can allow a multitude of voices, and forms of expression, to be heard. They offer possibilities to acquire a deep understanding – from the inside of 'the other'. For example, Kallio (2019) shows how she stepped outside her comfort zone, both personally and professionally, in co-operation with the Sámi people, when, for example, *jojk* was used as a way of communicating research results.

In the context of different ontological, epistemological and ethical issues, we also want to touch upon performativity. Gergen and Gergen, illuminating the performative movement in social science, claim that it 'falls within the family of arts-based research' (2018, 54). They use the term performative for three reasons: in relation to the way research is presented or performed for others, in relation to the research(er)'s consequential actions in and changes in the social world, and in the way the researchers carry out their inquiry. This understanding is considerably wider than the one within artistic research, describing a third, performative research paradigm (e.g. Haseman 2007, 2006, Ellingsgaard and Gjærum 2016).

We find Gergen and Gergen's wide use of the term performative enriching. Within research discourses that no longer rely on theories of truth as correspondence, the line between arts and science blurs, and performativity becomes an inevitable part of both. Hence, researchers as well as artists can include 'the entire range of communicative possibilities – music, dance, sculpting, painting and more' to expand 'the social scientists' potential for *enriching cultural sensitivity*' (Gergen and Gergen 2018, 56, our italics). Ferm Almqvist's multi-modal contribution in this issue can be seen as inspired by this perspective. Maximising our 'ways of looking' becomes imperative when science is more about 'increased potentials of action' than 'a march towards truth' (Gergen and Gergen 2018, 57).

To claim that performative expressions provide a better representation of a given phenomenon, however, may run counter to the very logic of this approach as performativity is liberation from claims to privileged representation. Rosiek unfortunately claims agential realism to be 'a better fit for the practices of arts-based inquiry'. We find such a claim irrelevant, especially in the context of Barad's ideas that favour sensitising oneself over seeking final clarity. Barad's notions are also well in line with Bresler's approach to ABR, or aesthetically based research, as she names it. Bresler (2006) states that:

> [...] aesthetics is at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research, and that artistic processes, in particular, the space surrounding art experiences, can illuminate significant aspects of qualitative research, including data collection, data analysis, and writing (Bresler 2006, 52).

The four articles we present below confirm this plurality in onto-epistemological possibilities within ABR – they stretch from hermeneutic-phenomenological views of knowledge to post-structural and post-human traditions. As Camargo-Borges summarises, we have 'moved away from the logic of either-or... towards the spectrum of opportunities' (2018, 90).

What the following four articles here have in common is the importance of the arts media and arts practices in content as well as methodology. Hopefully, this leads us closer to a multi-modal turn and decreases the tendency to be less explicit of arts' role in research compared to the role of verbal tools (Vist 2015).

When artistic forms of expression are used in the development of research questions, in the production of material, in the analytical and representational phases, or in the documentation, communication and publication of research, possibilities for communication and meaning making are broadened. This includes the possibility to reach a broader audience (Cole and Knowles 2008, Leavy 2009, Hultberg 2013) and to enable wider interpretation. According to Denzin (2004),

artistic ways of getting to know something allow for varied interpretations to a great extent, but these interpretations lead researchers to lose control of what is actually mediated at several levels. This also relates to Holgersen's contribution in this issue about ambiguity around quality and validity. ABR can also be about creating settings where specific forms of expression and research methods inform each other. Holmgren (2018) noted and showed, in an earlier issue of this journal, that arts-based researchers (or a/r/tographers in his case) ensured that research informed the art form and that the art form informed research.

Such an approach demands close collaboration between participants, researchers as well as teachers and learners of art, who quite often are the same persons. Several senses are used by the participants through the various stages of research, in addition to perception, communication, artistic expression, teaching, learning and exploration. For example, the use of a movie – or podcast, as Ferm Almqvist does in this issue – to present the results can influence what is possible to understand.

To us, the editors, certain elements have been important to consider and encourage in this issue. When the aim is to broaden the tools and media where (research-based) knowledge can be developed and expressed, knowledge can be tacit and non-verbal as well as propositional. Hence, the body becomes important and heavily involved in knowledge development as do feelings, emotions – or affects, whether as in Stern's (1985/2000) vitality affects or as described by post-modernists (Hovik 2014, Deleuze 1990) – and relations, seen as aesthetics as well as epistemology (Rasmussen 2010, 2014, Bourriaud 1998/2002, Vist and Holdhus 2018). Further, the researchers' imagination (Camargo-Borges 2018) becomes important in several ways – it encourages playfulness as well as theorising, it places value on contradictions and plurality, and it explores questions and answers. In summary, what Bresler (2006) describes as aesthetic habits of the mind – increased sensibility and empathic understanding (as well as imagination as embodiment) – have also inspired us in this work.

## ABR and philosophy of arts education

While there are many connections between ABR and the philosophy of arts education, and they can be categorised in several different ways, in this issue, we describe and explore the following four categories of philosophy of arts education (PAE), primarily developed within the field of music education philosophy (Ferm Almqvist, 2019b): *my philosophy, teachers' analysed philosophies, philosophers' philosophies,* and *scientific philosophies as a base for methodological choices*.

*My philosophy* of arts education is defined as personal statements that make the best of how teaching is performed. A Google search on 'my philosophy' of music or art education yields a multitude of personal reflections on the motives behind choices of content and form in music and art education. The relations between PAE and ABR, in this case, concern *how artistic expressions could be used to translate or communicate 'my philosophies'* based on experiences and embodied theories. It is possible to assume that teachers' reflections should become more explicit if they were translated into, for example, a picture, a sculpture or song. As living inquiry (Irwin and de Cosson 2002, Springgay, Irwin, and Kind 2008, Vist 2016), ABR affords an opportunity to live and inquire into our personal philosophies on an everyday basis.

The second category of relations between ABR and philosophy of arts education – *teachers' analysed philosophies* – can be described as insights into and implications for arts educational practices. One example of a research project where teachers' philosophies are analysed through artistic expressions is Anna Houmann's (2010) dissertation in music education on the possibilities and limitations of music teachers' discretionary power. In Houmann's study, student teachers were encouraged to construct three-dimensional models of what it meant to be a music teacher. In other words, they were asked to translate their philosophies about music teaching, and these were then used as a basis for meaning-making interviews about the same. It can

be stated that the creation, interpretation, treatment and translation of PAE led towards an awareness and openness for further interpretation.

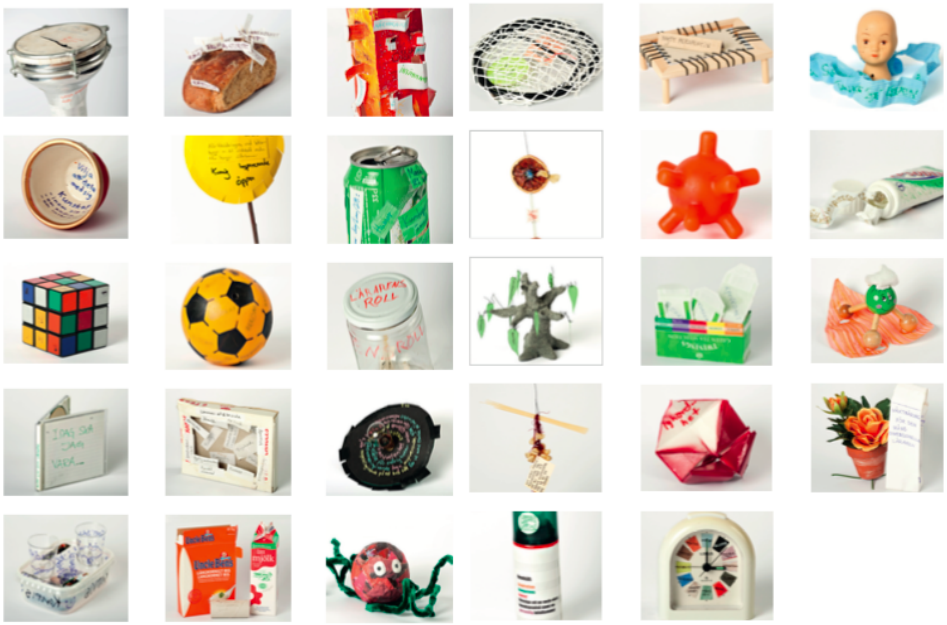

*Image 1, Three-dimensional models of what it meant to be a music teacher (Houmann, 2010, p. 248-249).*

*Philosophers' philosophies,* the third category, focuses on understanding other philosophers' works and ideas for creating ways of understanding (existing) and imagining (future) the prerequisites of music educational practices. In such investigations, conceptualisations of the world, society, being, music, experience, communication, learning and teaching are explored, defined and implemented, including ABR methodologies. Here, the relation between PAE and ABR concerns how artistic expressions can be used to make meaning of the philosophies for understanding and imagining the prerequisites of music educational policies, practices and research. One example of how the art form of cartoons can be used in such a case is Cathy Benedict's conference presentation where the concept of Bildung

is explored and made easy to understand in a wider sense. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO1QqQSRgjE


*Image 2, One example of how the art form of cartoons can be used (Benedict, 2011).*

Another example is how the philosophies of de Beauvoir are used in the radio show in this issue. The study is based on de Beauvoir's existential–philosophical way of thinking, including her view of human beings independent of their sex, which contains implications for music educational practices, and her ideas on how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way. The aim was to create a situation in which the reader-listener comes close to the experiences of the female guitarists and understands these experiences from an existential philosophical perspective.

The fourth category, *scientific philosophies as a base for methodological choices*, concerns arts educational researchers' philosophical–scientific starting points, which influence their methodology and approaches to empirical material. The relation under focus in this category is how artistic forms of expression can offer processes of

meaning making, where one's understanding of methodological choices in relation to scientific–philosophical bases is deepened. This in turn deepens one's understanding of the research phenomenon. Ferm Almqvist (2019a) employed her understanding of Heidegger's philosophy, and specifically the concepts of dwelling and un-concealment, to investigate dance activities among elderly people. In the study, the processual nature of Heidegger's philosophy was a starting point to understand the processes of (musical) thinking, acting and learning that occurred when 20 amateur dancers developed an artistic performance based on their life stories, led by a professional choreographer. Of particular interest was the development process of a common artistic life story among the elderly dancers and how musical learning took place during that process. The philosophy, the artistic as well as verbal expressions of the dancers, and the movies created by a professional photographer were related to each other continually. Heidegger's views on how to come close to the processual situations under study and how to understand the activities guided the process. Movies shot by a professional photographer were used to provide insight and a multi-modal experience of the philosophical investigation and its results. Eventually, in this issue, it becomes evident that within all four categories, the relations between ABR and PAE concern reflective, present, translational processes, as earlier explained by Gerber and Myers-Coffman (2018).

*Image 3: An example of philosophy and art in interplay (Ferm Almqvist, 2019a).*

# The four articles

Below we present the four articles of this issue:

In the first article, 'Arts-based research of participation in music education', Sven-Erik Holgersen aims to discuss the criteria for, and the relations between, 'meaning' and 'validity' in 'arts-based research'. Meaning, he explains, revealing his hermeneutic-phenomenological starting point, can refer to ABR considered as a matter of lived experiences. At first glance, he continues, meaning and validity may seem incompatible because lived experiences are hard to validate. What is to be found, what kind of meaning, implies aspects of validity. From a methodological point of view, the article proposes that the aesthetic experience – ABR in particular and qualitative research in general – concerns some defining aspects connected to the discussion of 'meaning' and 'validity'. Sven-Erik's studies, which form the basis of his discussion on validity, can be considered as belonging to category three of relations between PAE and ABR. He discusses how, to what extent and on what grounds, video recordings of children's musical participation can be valued as valid and meaningful contributions. In his discussion, he addresses the following questions on meaning and validity:

- What makes participation in music education meaningful?
- What or who constitutes meaning?
- In which context(s) and to which extent can the meaning in question be considered true or valid?
- How can aesthetic meaning support validity in the reported study?

By pondering these questions, Holgersen naturally arrives at the concept of ambiguity, which he defines as an identifying aspect of meaning in, for example, aesthetic practices, artefacts and experience. Sven-Erik finds that phenomenological analysis of artistic experiences and ABR can provide further philosophical grounds for the validation of research based on the experience of aesthetic meaning. In research areas dominated by written and verbal language, it is important, he

underlines, that the result categories refer to relevant concept areas, to ensure validity. He also emphasises the value of validating arts-based music educational research, which crosses borders with different arts educational areas such as visual arts, dance, or other physical forms of creative education. He concludes that validity in arts-based research can be difficult, and even irrelevant, to measure. Instead, he suggests that it may be fruitful to talk about validity in ABR in terms of *confirmability*, *dependability* and *transferability*.

When it comes to confirmability, the author discusses triangulation and adds that sharing experiences and knowledge, through video recordings, for example, could be one way to develop understanding of aesthetic meaning making among children. On dependability, Holgersen sheds light on the importance of a dialogic relationship between theoretical and empirical knowledge within ABR. Regarding transferabilbity, he underlines the usefulness and the recognition as important aspects of validity. Further, Holgersen presents an important discussion of the implications of meaning and validity related to ABR, based on the following themes:

- how theoretical basis and consistency can support validity in the study of participation strategies
- how ambiguity and recognisability of aesthetic meaning relate to the problem of validity
- the role of aesthetics in ABR and connections between artistic meaning and validity
- the aesthetic attitude

The whole discussion leads to an interesting and important conclusion about meaning and validity in ABR.

The second article authored by Samira Jamouchi, 'Exploring a performative approach to felting wool. An autoethnography for two?', can be labelled as belonging to category four, as she, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, uses the actual artistic process of hand felting to understand the learning process, with her colleagues

serving as dialogic outsiders. She wants to offer a creative approach to learning and teaching the arts. She wants to encourage imagination and self-understanding among the students and wants the students to experience the unknown. Jamochi returns to the ancestral technique of hand felting, a form of handicraft she learned several years ago. Fabric is often the outcome of woven treads, she states, but felted fabric is the result of non-woven, entangled material such as wool fibre. In the study, she gains insight into the sensoring, tactile, felting process, guided by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'smooth space'. She describes the process and her emotions in the following words: 'The becoming of the fibres, under the manipulation of the material, are for me moments of promises: an unknown becoming of the material in my hands. Those moments nourish my imagination and bring moments of wellbeing' (Jamochi, 2019, p. 54).

She underlines that exploring a performative approach to felting wool may lead to articulating moments of making, during a felting process, rather than focusing on a final product made of felted wool. In the article, she presents a performative approach to research that is based on creative sharing between colleagues. To explore a performative approach to felting, she uses contrasting examples from previously conducted creative learning workshops, where the process, including the aesthetic experiences, focused on the end product.

She also motivates the arts-based approach by underlining the possibilities concerning closeness between action and reflection, which implicates a discussion regarding the dual roles of a practitioner and researcher and to the connections between validity and quality of research material. From this point of view, she introduces her arts-based imagined research methodology, which is based on post-modern ideas of materialism: auto-ethnography for two. Jamochi discusses both possibilities and limitations of the approach and connects them to pedagogical issues. The author expects the readers to use the text as inspiration for developing research

approaches that are aligned with post-modern, post-humanistic ways of thinking about the arts, teaching and learning.

In the third article, 'An embodied approach to academic writing? Reflections from an artist on her journey towards becoming an a/r/tographer', Signe Alexandra Domogalla shows how she – a dancer, choreographer and novice arts-based researcher – struggled with making meaning of the processes of academic writing. Exploring how she can make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice and how she can better understand her artistic practice through academic writing, she learns that the very process of writing the article becomes an answer or result – embodied and ecological as well as verbal and theoretical. Epistemologically, she draws from several areas within modernism as well as postmodernism, which also place this article under the third category of relations between ABR and PAE. Although this stance is typically postmodern, she admits to being inconsistent and unconsciously falling into modernists thought, which, however, are made conscious in the writing process.

Drawing on different theoretical views of embodiment, embodied- and neuro-cognition, dance, ABR and more, she presents and 'translates' theoretical concepts into an embodied dance or artistic practice. Three log excerpts, originally performed and produced for a PhD course in ABR, are presented and analysed. She explains that the practice then served as a catalyst for new ideas and perspectives, which finally assumed the written form of the article. Domogalla reveals how embodiment of thought through movement and dance can be important for linking an artistic practice to a theoretical field. The three excerpts reveal several perspectives and a stepwise bridging of theory and practice – or fieldwork and analysis. It is not an easy task to exceed the traditional separation of the body and mind. She also reaffirms Bresler's (2006) claim about the importance of time in such processes, adding that prolonged engagement and immersion allow the researcher to move closer to her/his

topic. Encountering other researchers' attempts with her own process of bridging an arts practice with academic writing, she proposes a 6-point technique or algorithm:

1. *Encountering theory* through literature or a mentor or a peer.
2. *Physical exercise*—any preferred exercise, such as, running, yoga, hiking or skiing.
3. *Arts-based encounter of theory* through different artistic expressions or media, and translation of theories into an artistic expression, close to, or in opposition to, the artists' own expression.
4. *Inspiration* and meaning making through the environment and the site or consulting an alternative site.
5. *Connection* of theory to earlier experience in artistic practice.
6. *Reconnection to theory through artistic practice*: a back-translation and embodiment of theory through the artistic practice

Finally, Cecilia Ferm Almqvist in 'How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex: An episode of the radio show *Music and Equality*', shares a study presented as a radio show. The study is presented as text, drawings, and aural/sounding drama, which afford a multi-modal experience of the project. The article could belong to both categories three and four of the aforementioned relations between ABR and PAE. The format of the written article is very close to a transcript of the imagined radio show episode. The radio show includes a programme leader, two young female guitarists, and a prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir. We claim this format may engage a wider circle of readers than a traditional scientific article. The article is intended as a thought-provoking speech directed at ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education, primarily based on the existential–philosophical thinking of Simone de Beauvoir.

The dialogue is a result of a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis of interviews with two former students in a specialist upper secondary music programme. The inquiry examines the challenges and possibilities for equal

opportunities in becoming an ensemble guitarist within popular upper secondary music ensemble courses in Sweden. Issues from the inquiry, chosen for the current article/radio show, are all crucial from an equality perspective: *transcending boys and immersing girls, the male gaze, relations to patriarchal repertoire, possible projects* and *the role of the teacher*. Within all these issues, the body – the musical body, the female body, the teacher's body and more – becomes important, in transcendence as well as immanence. Simone De Beauvoir, in the radio show, says that each human existence is at the same time transcendence and immanence, and that it is of great importance that music teachers see all students as musical bodies, and not as female and male bodies.

It is interesting but also disquieting to hear young female voices of the 21st century describing educational settings as lacking a conscious focus on gender and equality issues to the extent that Simone De Beauvoir's (1949) theories, seventy years after *The Second Sex*, seem relevant even today. This situation probably appears differently, or may not appear at all, in different arts education discourses. However, Ferm Almqvist's conclusion probably has relevance beyond popular music ensemble courses: '[U]sing popular and jazz genres and connected forms and values, in an un-reflected way, and step back as a teacher, is not possible, if we are heading towards a more equal music education and society'.

In summary, it can be stated that ABR, in this issue of EJPAE, contributes to the holistic experience of complex theoretical and practical phenomena within arts education. Holistic arts education experiences, thinking and research are communicated in sensitive situated ways: they mediate the complexity created and explored in human relational situations. The articles offer possibilities to take the 'other' perspective, while providing alternative perspectives on the world, at the same time as they widen possibilities for communication and meaning making in broader target groups where several senses come into play.

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# About the Guest Editors

PhD **Cecilia Ferm Almqvist** is a professor of music education, and professor in education at Södertörn University. She graduated in 2004 on a phenomenological thesis about teaching and learning interaction in music classrooms. Her philosophical and empirical research focuses upon democracy and inclusion in diverse music educational settings, and special educational contexts. She has presented her work internationally at several music educational and educational conferences and in well-known scientific journals such as RSME, PMER, BJME, IJME, VRME, and Reconstruction.

**Torill Vist** is professor in music education at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Department of Early Childhood Education. She holds her bachelor and master degrees as well as her PhD in Music Education from the Academy of Music in Oslo, and has another master degree in piano performance from SMU, Dallas. Torill Vist has developed and taught at several PhD courses in arts-based research and has special research interests in early childhood (music/arts) education, in music and emotion knowledge, and in arts-based methodologies.

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# Arts based research of participation in music education

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# Abstract

In search of validity in arts based research, the present article takes meaning as the point of departure asking the following questions:

• What or who constitutes meaning?

• In which context(s) and to which extent can the meaning in question be considered true or valid?

• How can aesthetic meaning support validity?

The context for the discussion is a previous study aiming to understand children's participation strategies in music activities. Using a phenomenological approach, the study aimed to understand in which ways participation proved meaningful to children.

After presentation of the study, the discussion focuses on concepts of meaning and validity and how they relate to arts based research in particular. Four different themes are briefly discussed: the theoretical basis supporting validity, aesthetic meaning in terms of ambiguity and recognisability, the role of aesthetics in arts based research, and finally the aesthetic attitude in aesthetic experience and research.


Keywords: Aesthetic meaning, young children, participation, validity

# Arts based research of participation in music education

Sven-Erik Holgersen[1]

## Introduction

The main aim of the present article is to discuss criteria for and relations between 'meaning' and 'validity' in 'arts based research' (in the following: ABR). Phenomenology forms the primary philosophical basis for 'meaning' implicating that meaning in ABR is considered a matter of lived experiences. At a first glance, meaning and validity may seem incompatible because lived experiences are hard to validate. The phenomenological approach aims to offer another perspective. For this purpose, the article revisits a study of participation strategies in music education with young children. This study was searching for aesthetic meaning[2] as experienced by the participants as well as by the researcher observing the musical practice. Theoretically, the study was based on a phenomenological approach and investigating how aesthetic experience may be constituted, it represents a genuine example of aesthetic or arts based research.

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2 # The term 'aesthetic meaning' is not restricted to the appreciation of art as such or works of art and it does not implicate a particular taste, rather one may as well appreciate aesthetic qualities in any everyday phenomenon.

From a methodological point of view, aesthetic experience, arts based research in particular, and qualitative research in general share some defining aspects connected to the discussion of 'meaning' and 'validity'.

The following questions will guide the discussion about 'meaning' and 'validity':

- What makes participation in music education meaningful?
- What or who constitutes meaning?
- In which context(s) and to which extent can the meaning in question be considered true or valid?
- How can aesthetic meaning support validity in the reported study?

# Participation strategies revisited

Revisiting the study as ABR not only refers to the musical practice under investigation, it implicates a particular emphasis on how research was conducted searching for aesthetic /musical / artistic meaning.

In the following, details about the case study will be presented including methodology and its philosophical underpinnings. As part of the case study, a model was developed as a tool for analysis. Results will be summarized referring to the model and with a few examples from the case study.

After presentation of the study, the discussion focuses on concepts of meaning and validity and how they relate to qualitative research in general and to arts based research in particular. Four different themes are briefly discussed: the theoretical basis supporting validity, aesthetic meaning in terms of ambiguity and recognisability, the role of aesthetics in arts based research, and finally the aesthetic attitude in aesthetic experience and research.

The discussion leads to a conclusion in which the phenomenological approach embraces a broad theoretical basis.

## Methodology and philosophical underpinnings

The study in question (Holgersen 2002) was conducted between 1995 and 1999 and it focused on music teaching with young children 1-5 years of age.

The general objective of the investigation was to understand in which ways young children's participation in musical activities may be connected to perceived meaning, hence the title of the original study: *Meaning and Participation* (Holgersen 2002).

This was a longitudinal study of different groups of young children 1-5 years of age (n70) participating in music classes. A trained music teacher taught songs, singing games, dances, and playing simple percussion instruments. Invented stories or fairy tales in which children and adults played different roles often framed the music. The groups were formed in different ways:

- One day care group including 20 children 1-2 years of age + 7 day care mothers
- Two Kindergarten groups each including 18-20 children 3-5 years old + 3 early childhood teachers
- One family group including 12 children and their parents.

Most of the parents (n=55) answered questionnaires providing information about the children's background and musical habits in the family and in addition a few interviews were conducted with selected adult participants.

The main method applied to the study was participant observation during roughly 140 classroom periods over two years including video recordings from 38 periods. The video recordings were analyzed through several steps from over all

description of the activities down to microanalysis of single movements and interactions in selected situations. Video analyses went hand in hand with reflection based on theoretical knowledge as well as on the researcher's experience of being present in the situations.

Thus, analyses of the empirical material took place through abductive procedures in which phenomenological "techniques" formed a general modus operandi (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Levinas 1988/2002; van Manen 2016). The procedures may be very briefly explained as follows:

- epoché, i.e. openness to what appeared as meaningfully related to children's participation. Re-viewing situations on video over and over again to see new details unfold.
- phenomenological reduction, i.e. to describe how various forms or symptoms of participation could be related to (re-duced to) various qualities of meaning.
- imaginative variation implicated a conceptual analysis of what might or should be designated as participation, constantly asking "what else could it be"? Or what could possibly not count as participation.

The three procedures should not be seen as a stepwise script for phenomenological research, rather they are present as perspectives at any time of the research process.

The focus of observation was how participating in musical activities became meaningful for the children. A central reference for 'meaning' was the phenomenological concept of intentionality implicating that being in the world, "we are condemned to make meaning" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. xxii). Following Merleau-Ponty (1962), consciousness is always about something, that is, consciousness is constantly striving to make meaning through the merging processes of act- and

object-intentionality. As part of the case study, a tool for description and analysis (Figure 1) was developed focusing act- and object intentionality.

The circle on top of Figure 1 conceptualizes the act-intentionality (i.e. how consciousness is making meaning), whereas the layers exemplify the 'aboutness' of object intentionality (i.e. what consciousness is directed by and towards). The model does not intend to represent all relevant aspects of aesthetic meaning in music activities, rather it points out some basic and inherent qualities of the aesthetic phenomenon.

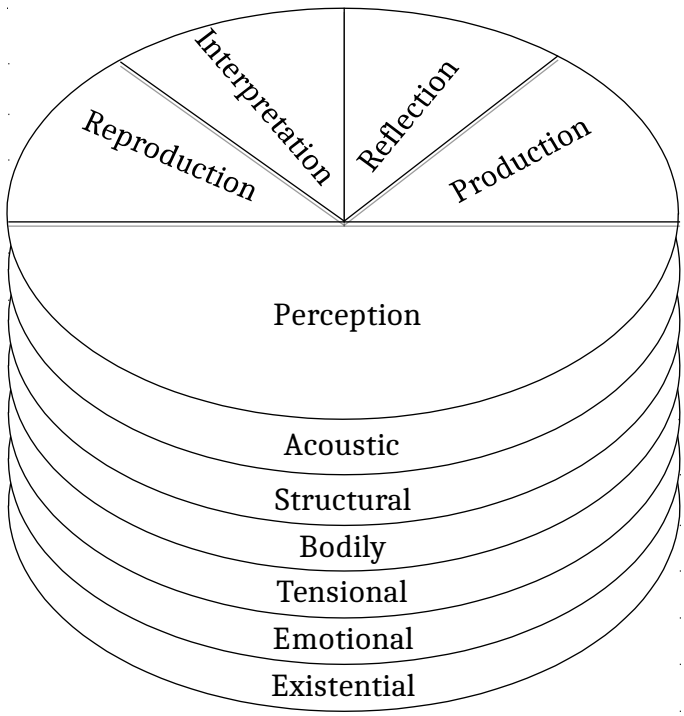


*Figure 1: Aspects of meaning constituted through act- and object-intentionality. This figure was originally published in Danish (Holgersen 2002)*

The model combines two sets of concepts provided by Frede V. Nielsen (1998) in his analysis of music as a teaching subject and in his theory of music as a multi-layered universe of meaning.

The first set of concepts (the circle on top of Figure 1) denotes forms of music activity or modes in which consciousness may be directed by and towards music in various forms of activity, namely through perception, reproduction, production, interpretation and reflection. Perception is the general way of being present as 'body subjects' (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Thus, the model illustrates that at any moment and in any mode of intentionality, consciousness is striving to make sense through perception and at the same time, one may engage in music through other forms of activity.

Paraphrasing Dufrenne (1973), music is "destined to be perceived", that is, consciousness cannot help making meaning of music whether it is a live performance, electronically mediated, an imagination or a memorization of a previous performance. Singing or playing music may be a reproduction of something previously heard, yet, at the same time a creative or improvisatory aspect may be present in the performance. For example, young children may be simultaneously aware of music as something previously heard (memory) and of his/her own performance or reproduction (acoustic feedback). The processes of perception, reproduction, production, interpretation and reflection, however, make no sense without an intended object; again, intentionality is always about something.

The second set of concepts (the layers in Figure 1) are describing this "something" that becomes meaningful through acts of consciousness. These concepts denote multi-layered meanings in music: Acoustic, structural, bodily, tensional, emotional and existential layers of meaning that may be analytically distinguished as objects of investigation, yet they form a unity of lived musical meaning. Trying to separate them would destroy the identity of the music or even the holistic and aesthetic

phenomenon called 'music'. As Nielsen (1998) put it, the multi-layered meanings belong together because they are heard together. Following Nielsen's approach, I suggest the multi-layered meanings are perceived together, since they are simultaneously present in perception.

Furthermore, aesthetic meaning in music activities inevitably depends on previous experience beyond the actual situation. As Dufrenne put it, "Before the aesthetic object [...] I am neither a pure consciousness in the sense of a transcendental cogito nor a pure look, since my look is laden with all that I am" (Dufrenne 1973, p. 404).

Even when a child is self-forgettingly occupied with a musical activity, previous experience, embodied knowledge and lived relations in the situation form parts of the child's lived experience. Imagine a 4 year-old girl participating in a farewell song concluding a music lesson. She is sitting on the lap of her father listing to the gentle voices of the adult participants singing this very simple but expressive tune, the lyrics saying, "No one in the whole world is as lovely as you". Suddenly, the girl whispers to her father, "maybe they are all singing about me". Recently, the girl had a little brother, and not least for this reason she enjoyed very much the time together with her father. Obviously this song was meaningful in many ways and in this particular situation, existential meaning became a central dimension of the aesthetic phenomenon.

The very schematic conceptualization in Figure 1 cannot do justice to the lived experiences of (young children) being directed by and towards musical activities. It is a well-established truth that meaning in music and music experience cannot be verbalized without loss of meaning. As seen from this perspective, it may be a dubious endeavour to discuss criteria for meaning and validity in ABR. Nevertheless, as always in phenomenological oriented research trying to capture preverbal (or pre-

conscious) aspects of meaning, it is necessary to refer to relevant concepts as tools for description and analysis.

## Results

The longitudinal research design allowed the researcher to obtain a nuanced impression of each participant and to recognize or determine particular characteristics of children's participation in musical activities.

A pivotal question in the present study was, how young children's experience of meaning gave way to different forms of participation. Thus, the aim was to contribute to rendering visible such aspects of meaning as may otherwise remain tacitly implicit, lost to reflection or possibly completely overlooked in young children's participation in musical activities (Holgersen 2002). The result categories were established through a critical dialogue between the empirical material (observations, video descriptions, etc.), the researcher's lived experiences, and theoretical concepts that were discussed throughout the research process. The main result categories were four general participation strategies epitomizing young children's many different ways of grasping, imitating, identifying with and elaborating music activities.

*Imitation* means to give expression to selected and disconnected aspects of meaning. The participant is directed towards and by overt structural features of music, words or related movements, e.g. when a child immediately mimics a song reading the lips of another participant (grown up or peer) or imitates single gestures, movements or other aspects of the whole. Children often learn a song or a dance movement by imitating parts of it, which implies that a model must be present to "fill in the gaps". On the other hand, children often reproduce selected aspects of a song with or without accompanying movements only from memory. Referring to Figure 1, imitation is a matter of reproduction rather than production, interpretation

or reflection. A very obvious example was a 3 year-old boy clapping his hands as part of a song with accompanying movements. He did not attempt to catch the rhythm or the pulse of the music, yet for him at that moment it was a fulfilling experience to clap his hands as a token of social bonding with the other participants. Eventually, the boy turned his attention to the music-movement connection and he switched from imitation to identification.

In short, imitation relates to aspects of meaning for example doing what other participants apparently do.

*Identification* means to give expression to one's understanding and sympathetic insight in the music activity as a whole and/or identify with the way other participants articulate meaning in the situation. Imagine children singing a well-known song: It is easy to point out those who tend to follow other models and those who personalize the models. Identification implies understanding how musical meaning may be expressed in various forms such as the layers of meaning in Figure 1. Referring to forms of activity, identification is a matter of production though reproduction is still included and with potential aspects of interpretation and reflection. Identification may also take place in the absence of a model, but it is not merely a matter of copying social behaviour (Bandura 1986). Imitation may eventually change into identification, but basically they are different strategies, since meaning is connected with different goals. The clapping boy described as an example of imitation was participating together with a mate who at first was clapping not exactly the pulse of the music, yet after a few seconds of listening to the music he hit the exact pulse and he concluded by following the stressed notes in double tempo at the end of the music. The two boys were participating together but directed by and towards meaning in different ways.

In short, identification relates to the comprehension of musical meaning in music activities.

*Elaboration* means to give expression to or deliberately perform one's understanding and sympathetic insight in the music through the elaboration of a personal and complex expression form. Referring to Figure 1, elaboration is primarily related to (creative) production, interpretation and possibly reflection, though often in connection with reproduction. Imitation may sometimes turn into elaboration that, of course, never comes out of nowhere. A vivid example was a girl 2,5 years old who in the course of two months created a personal choreography of a dance for which the teacher had instructed quite different movements. The girl apparently picked up elements of her dance from other dances or from activities outside the music class, but she composed a very complicated choreography that far exceeded her motor capability. The video analysis, however, revealed a tight connection between her dance movements and the rhythmic structure and energies in the music, only the movements were slightly delayed.

In short, elaboration relates to aspects of meaning that are new to the situation.

*Reception* means to be present in a receptive way, yet without deliberately giving expression to one's participation. Reception includes the latent possibility of partial as well as total comprehension or fulfilment. The 4 year-old girl in the example above incarnates reception as a participation strategy as she imagined herself being the centre of the activity. Another version of reception is when children apparently do not participate through deliberate forms of expression, yet suddenly from one moment to the other they participate through other strategies displaying deep familiarity with the activities. One very obvious example was a 1 year-old boy who during his first 5 weeks in the music class sat outside the group together with his day-care mother, he was very upset and he very often cried loudly. A particular song including a maraca (which the boy held in his hand) with accompanying movements convinced him to participate together with the group and from moment to the other, he became a full participant demonstrating his knowledge of the whole repertoire of

songs and dances. Referring to Figure 1, reception is primarily a matter of perception, yet it involves the latent possibility of reproduction, production, interpretation and reflection. Reception may even "cover up" for virtual participation or averted involvement including imitation, identification or elaboration. Reception may give way to learning new songs or (dance) movements through observation and imagination.

In short, reception means to be present in an open and sensitive though often restrained or even reluctant way.

The participation strategies do not form a hierarchy, since each one of them at any time may be intensely meaningful for the child, i.e. from a first person perspective. And they are certainly not meant as a typology about children, since children may pass from one to another participation strategy across various activities as well as in the course of one single activity.

Participation strategies run their course in parallel or in mutual competition, occurring discontinuously as they do, i.e. depending on the situation, and not in any predictable order. Furthermore, the participation strategies are main categories open for any variation that prove meaningful in music practices. Basically this study was a matter of understanding children's lived experiences as participants in music activities.

The study aimed to expand standard interpretations of 'participation' often described by the dichotomy of participation / non-participation or by 'imitation' as a generic term to explain a variety of child behaviour.

The relevance of participation strategies for pedagogical practice is that they may serve as eye openers for practitioners who for example may tend to deem reception as non-participation and elaboration as if children are not applying to the goals or rules of a set situation.

Applying participation strategies as a descriptive and analytical tool for reflective practice may help understand how mutual intentionality forms generative practices in music. What for the inexperienced music teacher may look like chaos in the room may also be interpreted as different participation strategies being intensely meaningful for each participant. In musical practices – with children as well as adults – it is the variation of meaningful participation that makes them generative practices.

## Discussion of meaning and validity in Arts Based Research

Validity in ABR and other qualitative research depends on transparent procedures supporting internal as well as external validity (Barone and Eisner 2011, p. 162). Critique of ABR should be taken into account especially when discussion is about validity. In the present article, the general argument relies on the phenomenological approach that could also be the subject of critique, but then the critique would concern phenomenology rather than ABR[3]. Striving for validity, researchers aim to establish trustworthiness through *confirmability*, *dependability* and *transferability* (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 323ff).

In order to obtain *confirmability*, analyses of video examples and concepts were triangulated and discussed with research colleagues and participating preschool teachers. In some cases the meaning of experiences and articulations seems to be obvious while in other cases it may be ambiguous, difficult to grasp or even overlooked. Sharing knowledge about the participating children added perspectives

3 Jagodzinski and Wallin (2013, pp. 56, 93), for example, offer critique of many concepts and ideas in ABR including meaning and validity. The critique, however, does not concern phenomenological arguments, and therefore a discussion of this critique is not included in the present article.

to my (and to everyone's) understanding of what became meaningful for the children as they were directed by and towards the musical activity and other participants.

*Dependability* implicate that the conceptualization of participation strategies was established through a dialogue between theoretical and empirical knowledge. This argument is fundamental for the phenomenological approach entailing a critical and open-ended consideration on the internal empirical loyalty (that is to recognize participation as it appears rather than as presupposed) as well as the external theoretical anchoring of the result categories (Jørgensen 1989).

External validity in qualitative research also implicates transferability, that is, if the participation strategies are recognized as meaningful in a certain group, they should also apply to other similar practices, which they apparently do[4].

The following discussion does not address the analysis of qualitative data as such (as for example in Silverman 2006); rather it unfolds four different but interdependent themes concerning implications of meaning and validity in the study of participation strategies.

First I discuss how the theoretical basis and consistency can support validity in the study of participation strategies.

The second theme concerns ambiguity and recognisability of aesthetic meaning and how it relates to the problem of validity.

The third theme is concerned with the role of aesthetics in ABR. A short excursus into visual arts aims to emphasize and explain connections between artistic meaning and validity.

4 According to Copy Dan registrations, selected texts about the participation strategies have been included in the curriculum of Danish preschool teacher education during the last two decades.

The fourth and last theme unfolds the aesthetic attitude, which is at the core of both aesthetic experience and research, and this leads to a conclusion about meaning and validity in ABR.

## Theoretically based validity

The following discussion is concerned with the theoretical basis and consistency. The participation strategies form a coherent concept family combining musical meaning (Figure 1) - based on phenomenology of aesthetics - with the notion of mimesis as described by Aristotle (384-322 b.c.). Basic ideas can be traced back to Aristotle's analyses of artistic principles in his small but momentous work "Poetics" (from ancient Greek: poïesis ~ to make, do, create). This small treatise describes the root of creativity in a range of art forms and mimesis is the basic notion in which (re)presentation, performance and creative practices are rooted. Thus, mimesis is not restricted to imitation; rather mimesis can include all participation strategies. For Aristotle all kinds of artistic expression are ways of miming acting humans or human behaviour, and he explains poetry including the ancient tragedy as created by artists' improvisations. In "Poetics", *mimesis* includes aspects of recognition as well as surprise (cf. imitation, identification and elaboration). Mimetic artists (poets, musicians, actors, etc.) can delineate the human world as it really is or was, or as it appears or is said to be, or as it could or should be – better as well as worse, as Aristotle put it. Recognition should be understood in a very wide sense including experience of the well known as well as surprise and discovery of the unknown (Aristotle 2005 § 11 and 16). As it appears, this description may include all forms of imitation, identification and elaboration. Reception including virtual participation may designate the artist as "observer" or provide an appropriate example of the audience.

Historically and within different theoretical areas, each of the four main concepts designating the participation strategies has implicated different meanings. In the present article, I shall mention only a few central references to the concept history of participation strategies. The tradition of Vygotsky and cultural psychology has produced a lot of theory about participation that formed one point of departure for the notion of participation strategies. The different roles of participants and the relation between enculturation and participation were the focus of many analyses, and particularly the notion of 'guided participation' (Rogoff 1993) contributed to the delimitation of what a participation strategy might be. Guided participation is a teaching strategy that functions well in music activities as described and as such, I would describe it as secondary to the four main participation strategies.

As previously mentioned in the above description of imitation and identification, these concepts have been used in a more specific sense in social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986). In developmental psychology, the notion of imitation has been interpreted in different ways implicating a continuum from mimicry to identification (Meltzoff 1999; Meltzoff and Moore 1997; Piaget 1962). Already from birth, infants use different participation strategies as they are directed towards and by the environment. Newborn infants are attentive to and able to mimic intrinsic meaning in facial and vocal expressions, which is an early sign of the ability to identify with another person. Furthermore, infants only few weeks old are able to initiate and conclude social interaction through eye contact, vocalizations and gestures. This is the basis of what Stern called the intersubjective matrix, i.e. the ability to understand the Other and to participate in social interaction (Stern 2004).

Malloch and Trevarthen (1999) have conducted similar research about 'communicative musicality'. Their research strongly supports the validity of mutual meaning making in infant communication. Further research has documented how communication through music, gestures and voice form the basis of intersubjective

knowledge as aesthetic experience (Malloch and Trevarthen (eds) 2009; Stern 2004, 2010; Godoy and Leman 2010). Recent brain research on mirror neurons has confirmed that human mind is hardwired to decode aesthetic experience communicated through sounds, facial expressions, postures and movements (Freedberg and Gallese 2007) – and in some cases more accurate than through language.

Stern (2010) established the concept of 'dynamic forms of vitality' to explain the basis of (aesthetic) meaning making. Stern defines dynamic forms of vitality as "the fundamental dynamic pentad of movement, time, force, space, and intentions" that alltogether form a prerequisite of meaning making in music, dance, theatre and cinema.

To sum up, different participation strategies are theoretically based in the history of 'mimesis' from Aristotle to modern psychology. The four main concepts are rooted in theory and practice and as they are closely connected on the same level of abstraction, they form a coherent concept family.

## Ambiguous meaning and validity

Ambiguity is an identifying aspect of meaning in aesthetic practices, artefacts, experience, etc. The ambiguity of aesthetic meaning, however, is not a problem for validity, but lack of recognisability would be. The ability to share aesthetic experiences has always puzzled artists as well as researchers, but as explained in the previous section, we are coming closer to an explanation of how aesthetic communication may be accepted as valid knowledge.

Human beings share basic experiences of meaning, not because we all have had exactly the same experiences but as Merleau-Ponty (1962) said, because we all have access to the same field of experience. Musicians, music teachers, participants in and researchers of music teaching and learning share some fundamental aspects of

aesthetic experience. Merleau-Ponty described this as a particular bodily readiness that allows us to understand the Other.

Music and other aesthetic phenomena always give way to multifaceted and ambiguous meanings and it is therefore important that fellow participants (and a potential researcher) are able to recognize the participant's subjective experience as a real experience. Subjects legitimately expect that other subjects are able to recognize and share their experience even if it is multifaceted and ambiguous.

We never doubt that our own experiences are real whether or not we are able to explain them in language. For example, the experience of aesthetic distance or alienation is well known for listeners and participants in music activities and though it may be difficult to describe, it is easy to recognize the feeling of being lost in the unfamiliarity or lack of resonance with this peculiar musical experience. The same goes for the experience of fulfilment when we participate in a concert, in a music performance as amateurs or professionals, or when we listen to a favourite piece of music. We never question the truth or validity of our own experience.

Singing may serve as an example of the perceived reciprocity in musical meaning. Singing may be a touching experience both for the listener and for the performer as well as for fellow participants in a choir; certain reciprocity is embedded in this kind of musical experience (Stubley 1999). This is the experience of simultaneously touching and being touched by the music while we sing, play or listen to it. This also explains, why it makes sense to understand intentionality as being simultaneously directed by and towards something meaningful in music activities (Holgersen 2010). Why is it, then, that one can know that the Other can recognize ones own musical experience?

For reasons already described in the previous section, we may assume that our emotional and bodily experiences are not hidden to the Other, rather they may be recognized as embodied. From a phenomenological perspective, our emotional and

bodily experiences are "unhidden" as Heidegger would describe them referring to the Greek term "aletheia". Even if we do not have access to the Other's first person experience, there is no reason to doubt that we are able to recognize expressions of the Other's embodied experiences. In other words, second person experience is no less valid than first person experience (Zahavi and Gallagher 2008).

> We should respect and maintain the asymmetry between the first-person and the second- (and third-)person access to psychological states, but this is not a difference between an immediate certainty on the one side, and an insecure inference on the other. we should recognize that each type of access has its own strengths and weaknesses. (Zahavi and Gallagher 2008, p. 185f)

We do not have to enter other persons' minds to understand them, because we already have access to the same field of experience. In addition to the shared field of experience, we also share narratives and metaphors that for the recognition of aesthetic meaning may be more accurate than other measures.

## Artistic practice as Arts Based Research

To illustrate and unfold the idea that aesthetic practice per se is ABR, I shall refer to one of the earliest and most genuine examples of ABR that I am aware of, which is the brief essay by Merleau-Ponty called "Cézanne's Doubt". The essay was published in 1945 – the same year as Merleau-Ponty published "Phénomènologie de la perception" and long before the term 'Arts Based Research' was established. The general idea of "Cézanne's Doubt" is that for Cézanne, painting is an open-ended investigation of the nature. Cézanne continuously doubted his own ability to capture the 'origin' of the motive, his favourites being the still life, the portrait and the landscape. The 'origin' of the motive does not signify any historic or physical origin rather the ways in which the aesthetic object is constituted in perception as a totality of meaning.

Scientific investigation and artistic reflection went hand in hand in Cézanne's analytical approach, painting techniques, and philosophical wonder. Cézanne prepared a painting of a landscape by investigating its geological elements, thus his artistic work should be seen as a continuation of – or rather as a continuum of – scientific knowledge. Turning to the lived experience of the landscape, he stood still for a long time gazing at the landscape. Suppressing (or bracketing) his scientific knowledge, Cézanne strived to capture the landscape as a *whole*. This was his motive. (Merleau-Ponty 1945).

Throughout his entire life, Cézanne doubted his own project, and "[h]e thought himself powerless because he was not omnipotent, because he was not God and wanted nevertheless to portray the world, to change it completely into a spectacle, to make visible how the world touches us." (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 69f). Cézanne's doubt was real (i.e. phenomenologically valid) and it gave way to a profound anxiety that at the same time formed his most important motivation.

Merleau-Ponty compared Cézanne's lifelong doubt on his own artistic ability with the philosophical problem of the boundary between reason and unreason. He claimed, "We must form a new idea of reason that is not restricted to logic and mathematics, but wide enough to comprehend the meanings expressed in novels, poems and paintings [...]" (Johnson 1993, p. 3). Throughout his essay about Cézanne's doubt, Merleau-Ponty maintains that artistic meaning is neither a mystery nor pure technique rather it is the artist's lived experience of nature captured in colours on canvas, yet still open for interpretation. This is the reason why Cézanne never managed to finish his work. Cézanne's doubt illustrates what might be labelled 'aesthetic responsiveness'. Cézanne had no reason to doubt his first person experience, but due to his aesthetic responsiveness he was painfully aware that despite his efforts capture the essence of his motive he could only come close to it. My point is that aesthetic responsiveness is a prerequisite of doing ABR as much as for the

artistic practice itself, which brings us to the last of the four sections about meaning and validity in ABR.

## Aesthetic attitude at the core of experience and research

The investigation of young children participating in music activities provides an example of double phenomenology, that is, the researcher's first-person perspective focussed on the participants' first-person perspective both relying on aesthetic responsiveness. Thus, the investigation was conducted very much in concordance with the view of Liora Bresler (2006) stating that

> *[...] aesthetics is at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research, and that artistic processes, in particular, the space surrounding art experiences, can illuminate significant aspects of qualitative research, including data collection, data analysis, and writing.*

'Aesthetically based research' seems to be an adequate term for the reported research, since it is not only concerned with music as an art form, rather focus is on any relevant aesthetic aspect of a music education situation.

Merleau-Ponty's quest for "a new idea of reason" is concerned with the validity of aesthetic meaning in and beyond the arts. Merleau-Ponty's claim had and still has fundamental implications for the discussion about criteria for truth and validity in qualitative research in general and in ABR in particular. Merleau-Ponty made only few references to the field of music education, but his analyses of how aesthetic meaning is constituted resonate with music education research as well.

The focus of the reported study was how young children engage in music activities and find them meaningful in many different ways. This focus demanded a very sensitive approach very much like the 'aesthetic attitude' that generally is related to aesthetic experience.

Dufrenne (1973) contributed substantially to the notion of the 'aesthetic attitude', which he explained as a prerequisite for the experience of art. It is essential for artists and for everyone engaging in aesthetic experience as well as for qualitative researchers trying to grasp the meaning of the object of their attention. The aesthetic object should not be seen as a concretion of the work of art; rather the aesthetic object is completed only in perception (Dufrenne 1973, p. 232). Whereas Dufrenne was concerned with the experience of Art, the aesthetic attitude is generally accepted as an open and sensitive attitude to the experience of aesthetic aspects in any phenomenon (cf footnote 1).

Benson (2003) continues the work of other phenomenologists, in particular Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer, in his endeavour to formulate a phenomenology of musical performance, interpretation, improvisation, composition, listening, etc. Considering any musical activity an open improvisational dialogue, musicians, audience as well as researchers have to acknowledge the potential openness of the situation. Benson refers to Husserl's notion 'spaces of indeterminacy' meaning as a defining characteristic of music and other forms of artistic expression.

Validity in ABR relies on the researcher's willingness to constantly reviewing the empirical material and emerging results searching for 'spaces of indeterminacy'. This may sound as a very general virtue that applies to all researchers across different fields, yet it has very specific bearing on the field of ABR that is entirely dependent on the possibility of validating aesthetic meaning.

# Conclusion

The aim of the present article was to discuss relations between meaning and validity in an investigation of young children's participation in musical activities.

The experience of multi dimensional and ambiguous musical meaning provided the empirical basis for the understanding and conceptualization of participation strategies in musical activities.

A growing body of research in developmental psychology and theories about embodiment emphasize the close relations between infant communication and aesthetic meaning making. These relations support that different participation strategies may be described as lived experiences, as ways of being directed by and towards aesthetic meaning in musical activities. Phenomenological analysis of artistic experience and arts based research provide further philosophical grounds for the validation of research based on the experience of aesthetic meaning. It is important to notice that the phenomenological approach embraces knowledge from ancient philosophy to modern psychology.

The question of validity in this kind of research is also connected to language as the most widely accepted medium for the presentation of results. It is therefore important for the discussion of validity that the result categories refer to concepts within philosophical and psychological traditions that form a coherent basis. In the case of participation strategies, the main concepts are grounded in philosophy from Aristotle to modern phenomenology as well as in modern psychology.

In support of validation, the concepts about participation strategies and generative practice may apply to other aesthetic practices. The aesthetic attitude as well as the participation strategies may be transferred to research of other aesthetic areas e.g. visual arts -, dance -, physical -, or related creative education.

As it appears, validity in arts based research may be hard to measure; on the other hand validity in terms of *confirmability, dependability* and *transferability* (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 323ff) should be considered a matter of meaningfulness rather than measurability.

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# Exploring a Performative Approach to Felting Wool

## An Autoethnography for Two?

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# Abstract

This text treats the author's imagined research design based on her artistic research and pedagogical views. She tentatively call this arts based approach an autoethnography for two. The starting point of this approach is her critical view on a certain confine pedagogy in teacher education and a desire to walk away from being the object of a research project. She aspires for a teacher education in the arts subject that recognizes and values the working process as a significant part of creative processes, also within school contexts. Furthermore, she wants to join the multiple identities that compose the identity of many actors in school settings, which comprise the artist, the teacher and the researcher.

The ambition of this text is to articulate a plausible research design that can inspire others in their quest when embarking with arts based research in their artistic work and/or educational work. Her research in this text relates to her re-turning to the ancestral technique of hand felting wool. She questions and approaches this traditional technique by adopting a performative approach to the making. This approach suggests that making sense (as knowledge production) is intimately connected to the making (of felting wool in this case). By inviting peers in an autoethnography for two, to share impressions and reflections, this research design can elicit diffractively, a working process.

Keywords: Visual arts, teacher education, arts based research design, performative processes

# Exploring a Performative Approach to Felting Wool

## An Autoethnography for Two?

Samira Jamouchi[1]

## Preamble

I shall now return to the ancestral technique of hand felting a couple of decades after I first learned to felt wool. Fabric is often the result of woven threads. However, felted fabric is the result of non-woven, entangled materials, such as wool fibres.

The felting process involves physical vigour, gestures that are robust and gentle at the same time, as well as demanding closeness to the material. The metamorphosis of the wool fibres through the changing texture, their touch, the humid alternating with the dry and the variable temperature of warm and cold water are some of the tactile aspects sensed during wool felting. Beyond the purely technical aspect of felting, however, a unique sensory experience takes place. The becoming of the fibres under the manipulation of the material is, for me, a moment of promise—an unknown becoming of the material in my hands. This moment nourishes my imagination.

During the felting process, one can experience what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) define as a smooth space. They refer to felted fabric to express how a smooth space can be envisaged. They see felt as anti-fabric—there is no interweaving, only an

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entanglement of the fibres achieved by threading (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 594). They describe felted fabric as a set of entanglements that is by no means homogeneous: it is infinite, open and unlimited in all directions. The event, or haecceity as Deleuze and Guattari (1980) express it, characterises a smooth space. Exploring a performative approach to felting wool can lead to articulating moments of making during the felting process rather than focusing on the final product made of felted wool.

The process of felting wool as a performative approach to material is the event I aim to explore. I am interested in the qualities of 'affect, more than properties' and in 'haptic perception, rather than an optic one' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 598) that the felting process can unfold. Working towards this aim, I imagine a research design that I tentatively name an *autoethnography for two* as a possible way to articulate my own felting process by inviting colleagues to see me felt and to give me their feedback on the event. In a longer time perspective, I wish to see how this performative approach, which is closer to an artist's practice, can enrich teacher practice in school settings. My methodological approach is rooted in my previous artistic research and unfolds in the realm of artistic-based research in the academic world (Leavy, 2009). The two concepts, artistic research and arts-based research (ABR), are often considered similar. Even if their difference is blurred, however, artistic research is used more frequently in the context of fine art faculties when researching artistic topics, whereas ABR is used more frequently by education faculties when researching educational problems (Marin-Viadel, 2017). My theoretical approach is inspired by new materialism, especially in relation to Barad's (2007; 2014) concepts of re-turning, intra-action and agency.

# Introduction

As an artist, I have knitted and felted wool to create large-format sculptures and immersive installations. As an arts and crafts teacher since 2005, I have trained teacher students in different textile techniques, including hand-felted wool.

Today, I have become more aware of and interested in the profound significance of the making/felting process and the material awareness one can experience when working with this highly transformable material. I desire to articulate a performative approach to the process of felting wool, considering the intra-action, experimentation and haptic sensory aspects as significant for the creative process in the subject of arts and crafts.

Standard measurements and regulated outcomes in schools might reduce a creative approach to the subject of arts and crafts. The risk would be to disenchant the very core of the subject: imagining alternative approaches during a working process (the making). The risk to minimise an independent and imaginative approach would also diminish students' self-understanding and the understanding of the possibilities that a material can offer. My aspiration to change a certain art pedagogy that is close to a manufacturing way of making is stimulated by the desire to let students experience the unexpected. As a first step[2], during the writing of this text, I imagine a research design to articulate those experiences as an artist during the process of felting.

2 In a longer time perspective, I aim to include in the subject of arts and crafts the pleasure of making, experiencing and continuously gaining insight into oneself, others and the world as not only a rewarding experience but also an important source of knowledge. When it comes to the educational context, these aspects are crucial for teacher students to become acquainted with so that they can fully understand the subject of arts and crafts.

The first part of this text unfolds some of my seminal ideas about a performative approach to the subject of arts and crafts. Inspired by conversations with my fellow artists and scholars, I try to position my research, echoing my desire to see if a performative approach to the subject of arts and crafts can enable a shared creative experience.

The second part of this paper relates to my earlier experiences with performative drawing sessions conducted with teacher students in Norwegian universities. These experiences and the students' feedback revealed the importance of the making process, as well as the students' unexpected aesthetic experience of the sensory aspects. As a continuum of these earlier experiences with performative drawing, I now wish to explore a performative approach to wool and felting. By doing so, I shall relegate the recipe-like approach in (re)producing a product/object in the background and rather focus on the pleasure of making during the felting process itself.

The third part is about the situated knowledge that can unfold in a studio and how it can be elicited by the practitioner himself/herself. By using ABR, we can both be closer to the phenomenon we are studying and the reflections made by the practitioner, how one is making the work and at the same time reflecting in and on the work. This poses the question on the researcher being an apparatus and the nature of the collected data.

In the fourth part, I share what I imagine to be a possible and plausible research design. Inspired by performance art, new materialism assumptions and ethnography, I propose a research design I call an autoethnography for two. In this part, I reveal to myself and to readers an imagined research design as an inspiration, rather than give a systematic methodology to follow.

In the fifth part, I question the limitations and possibilities of an autoethnography for two. Likewise, I connect it to pedagogical documentation and

its possibility to help us see how the felting process can be thought of and, later on, how it can be taught.

I conclude with a short summary inviting readers to approach this text as a motivation to imagine other research designs related to their own context.

# 1. Narration: My germinal ideas put in motion

In 2018, I came across different research groups and discussed with colleagues about their ABR within the art education and teacher training context in Norway. The ideas conveyed during our meetings highlighted the interest and question I had in mind for a long time: *Can a performative approach to the arts and crafts subject (in this case, using wool and felting) enable shared creative experiences?* By experiences, I mean those that enable the exploration of alternative possibilities rather than the repetitive production of foreseen felted products. Experience and experimentation are linked to open-ended processes and are inseparable from the idea of discovery. Allowing one to get to know the material and its agencies without necessarily knowing what the outcome would be is crucial to getting to know the material. Experience and experiment in artistic research approaches are not the same as the production of an object. Østern (2017) describes the field of research with art as something complex and diverse, as well as including both exploration and experimentation. Hence, allowing for experimentation might be a relevant way to take heed of unforeseen outcomes.

Inspired by conversations with fellow artists and other scholars, I recall the following ideas: inhabiting a theory, eliciting ideas, embodied/non-verbal, attentiveness, issue as a concern or care not necessarily as a problem, producing meaning, relational aesthetics, ethnography and autoethnography, and trust in emotions and imagination. Without discussing the meaning of these ideas, I can say

that these words and concepts considerably resonate with me. They reveal and disclose an attitude, or a state of mind, that indicates the epistemological and/or ontological perspective of the researcher. If one believes that reality is multifaceted and that the truth is, in a sense, individually constructed and constantly evolving, then these words and concepts become important—they resonate. Leaving aside the problematic aspects of these beliefs, such resonance is an essential precondition for getting to know something.

The important moments one can address are *truth as an event* and *data as kreata*, considering that data are fiction, that is, data are not something we find but something we make. 'Data', from the Latin word 'datum', meaning 'something given' or 'the act of giving', facilitates different understandings of this word. Ellis et al. (2011) examine reliability, generalisability and validity in the work of autoethnographers. 'Autoethnographers also recognize how what we understand and refer to as "truth" changes as the genre of writing representing experience changes' (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 7). They write further, 'For autoethnographers, validity means that a work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true' (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 7).

The question of making and experience in this research is clearly related to the researcher's understanding of a phenomenon and his/her own way of expressing the experience of a phenomenon. One can also think about how the researcher tailors the research design to study the phenomenon or case and the need to be attentive to the phenomenon with one's whole body in order to understand the situation better and more adequately.

I shall come back to the idea of how we create data (Barad, 2007) and how we make sense by using embodied research (Groth, 2015) in the fourth part of the text.

I have seen moments of entanglement which occurred in some of my teaching sessions when I invited teacher students to perform drawing together with me during my arts and crafts classes. These earlier performative drawing sessions constituted my first steps toward an aesthetic experience considering the working process as an essential part of the subject of arts and crafts (Jamouchi, 2017). In the following section, I relate to performative drawing as a decisive phase that initiated my wish to undertake the project I write about in this text: exploring a performative approach to felting wool.

## 2. Performative drawing as a first step towards aesthetic experiences

Basing on my earlier experience of performative drawing with teacher students, I now aim to explore the possibilities of performative approaches inherent in the process of felting wool fibres. By looking at the agency and intra-action that can occur in the felting process, I shall acknowledge the primordial role of experience and experimenting in teacher education. In my study with wool, I will take on a general perspective known under the labels post-humanism and new materialism, and I am particularly interested in the intra-action and agency (Barad, 2007) that can occur between the material and the practitioner. By examining closely the process of felting, I wish to see how being of the world (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) can connect human beings intimately with the materials they work with and the situations they experience. First, however, let us take a step back to earlier performative drawing, which was my first step towards an aesthetic experience together with my teacher students.

The written feedback I collected earlier from students with whom I undertook performative drawing underlines the evocative and emotional experience they had during the drawing session (Jamouchi, 2017). The method for data collection was empirical and qualitative (Creswell, 2013; Halvorsen, 1996; Repstad, 1993). The data

gathering of written feedback from the students just after the drawing session was meant to capture the phenomenological approach of the aesthetic process: 'a study of [the] lived experiences of persons' (Creswell, 2013, p. 77). I emphasised the perspective of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) related to the body subject and the subject's awareness of experience.

Bodily engaged with the task, we performed drawing on a large space in the classroom, we evolved collaboratively by drawing on wide-ranging Kraft paper displayed on the floor and the wall, and we explored this two-dimensional form of expression through non-verbal communication. In the previous study (performative drawing), most of the written feedback focused on the aspects of flow, musicality, the bodily experience connected with the drawing process, the room and the material (Jamouchi, 2017). After this performative approach to drawing, the students expressed this experience like an unexpected use of the body and the room, as well as a practice that values the process of drawing. The drawing process indeed often competes with the seductive, aesthetic aspect of the final product, which is habitually seen as the main part of the drawing practice.

This awareness about the working process, the unexpected richness of the material and the explorative approach to paper were rather new for the teacher students. This is despite paper being one of the most common materials we can find in a classroom and one of the most traditional materials used in the subject of arts and crafts in schools.

*Image 1: The performative drawing session with teacher students, 2017.*

Drawing as an activity spans a social range from individuals acting alone to collaboration. Performative drawing draws from performance art, which is interdisciplinary, involving the combination of two or more forms of artistic expression. Performance art relates to conceptual art, which emphasises ideas over the formal or visual components. The action is the main component of a performance, and the relation between the public and the performer is the object of this artistic expression.

I organise a performative drawing session by transforming the classroom; I display a large-scale thick brown Kraft paper on the wall and floor. This metamorphosis of space is immediately noticed by the students, triggering their curiosity.

Performative drawing is a playful way to communicate with others through bodily movements, improvisation and cooperation whilst evolving in a shared space and creating two-dimensional forms (Jamouchi, 2017).

The students' written feedback mentioned moments of flow, mutual inspiration, an almost meditative experience, the autonomous transformability of shapes, entanglement with the material and a sense of musicality, as well as pleasant silence. Some students expressed this as follows in their written feedback: 'I became a part of the paper', and 'Silence and movements became art. Combining dance and colours' (Jamouchi, 2017, p. 9). The drawing process and not only the product became essential in the students' understanding of what an arts and crafts session could be.

However, after 14 years of working as a teacher trainer in the subject of arts and crafts, I can see that being creative or explorative for students who are not used to applying their creativity and imagination can sometimes be challenging. It seems like in the school system, what some of the students have gone through is inspired by behaviouristic educational settings. Some students are afraid to make an independent decision based on their own appraisal. Nevertheless, most of the students quickly expressed their desire to experiment further with what we are doing in the university's studio and to try similar performative approaches with the pupils in their respective schools.

Taylor (2016) uses 'edu-craft intervention as a matter of knowing-in-doing', which is inspired by the idea that 'environments and bodies are intra-actively constituted'; she adds that 'These edu-crafting activities sometimes produce profound discomfort and sometimes generate desires for greater risk' (p. 21). Taylor's way of teaching contests usual modes of knowing, learning and writing. When we challenge the usual mode of teaching by allowing students to take part in creative and imaginative processes, we also welcome transformative processes. This kind of

transformative process does not only change the material, the shape or the colour; it also transforms the person during the working process.

Hohr (2015) describes an experience as a transformative process in interaction between an organism and the outside world, leading to new insights and feelings. He also reminds us that the general task of education is not to teach children to become artists but to open their experiences for the aesthetic dimension so that they can develop, differentiate and criticise their experiences. At the same time, Hohr (2015) argues that children's aesthetic challenges concern the mastery of everyday life and not just artistic exploration.

Experiencing a piece of art, as Greene (2011) describes it, when releasing our imagination is similar to the creative process I wish to elicit. As an experience when undergoing different possibilities, a creative process demands us to dare to imagine non-preconceived possibilities involving the use of space, materials and our body not only to solve a problem but also to gain 'new resonance that aesthetic experiences do and ought to break with the banal, the routine, the mechanical' (Greene, 2011, p. 5).

With my upcoming study with wool, I would like to see how the making process (in my artistic practice) can be brought to the surface when trying to take a glimpse of the felting process. The focus here is on the process of felting rather than the finished product. In other words, I wish to bring forth my artist–teacher role in order to help me in my arts and crafts pedagogue role. Hopefully, this will inspire others to broaden the narrow definition of an arts and crafts teacher when it is understood as one who leads learners through some techniques and evaluates the outcome, which is a foreseen product.

As mentioned earlier, I learned to felt wool about 20 years ago during my short stay as an art student in Norway. Later, as a visual artist, I used wool fibres and felting to create monumental installations and sculptures. As a teacher in the subject of arts

and crafts, I have been teaching this method to Norwegian teacher students since 2005.

Now, as a researcher, I wish to see if and how my artist–teacher role can bring a more creative approach to felting wool in the classroom beyond being a technical procedure to achieve a given goal or a foreseen product. The purpose of this arts-based exploration (in a longer time perspective after this study) is to contribute to an extended understanding of what an arts and crafts teaching session can be, inviting students to intra-act with the materials in a playful and explorative way. By doing so, we shall undergo a shared creative process that is close to artistry and that one can recognise in contemporary visual art, especially within performance art, a form of expression that creates situated meaning in action. It is indeed the action itself that is the piece of art in a performance and not necessarily a physical object (Ferrier, 1990; Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

Fischer-Lichte (2008) mentions the performance 'Lips of Thomas' (1975) by Abramović as one of the works within visual art that marks a fundamental shift in our experience and understanding of a piece of artwork independent from the artist. This transformation from a traditional work of art into an event is called the performative turn (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). In her book *The Transformative Power of Performance,* Fischer-Lichte (2008) describes performance art as an alternative approach to the traditions and standards of the visual or performing arts that stresses the present, lived moment and that challenges the classical interpretation focusing on the artefact and its visual components. In a context such as this, the spectator is not a passive watcher anymore; the spectator becomes an active participant of an aesthetic experience.

The notion of an aesthetic experience, as defined above, draws attention to different moments. In the educational context, Lenz Taguchi (2010) sees students as being of the world, not detached from it, and consequently as entangled and in intra-

action (Barad, 2007) with it. Hohr (2015) and Greene (2011) stress the broad aspect of an aesthetic experience—an inner activity that is both creative and critical, as well as contributing to the mastery of everyday life. From the context of the visual art world (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), an aesthetic experience demands active involvement; it is the transformation we undergo when experiencing a piece of art (also understood as an event), which is the core element of such an experience.

In this first part of my study[3] with wool, I will focus on my own practice and praxis (in action) when working with wool and felting. Drawing on an autoethnographic approach, I will investigate the intra-action and agency (Barad, 2007) emerging from a deeper awareness of an embodied approach to the material. In addition to reflections on my artistic work, I plan to invite two arts and crafts teachers in the studio and ask them to write their impressions when watching me working. These impressions may include sensitive cognition, affect and effect, as well as the visual, auditory and olfactory senses[4].

These impressions may or may not mirror my own reflections. In any case, the gas and impressions of others on my making process would inevitably engender a dialogue between our different, nuanced or similar impressions. By inviting peers to watch my working process, I am not giving up my positions when I am involved in both the making and the reflecting. I regard my peers as individuals who can help elicit moments of *savoir-faire* from another perspective, in addition to mine, in the very moment of the work in process and in progress.

3 This first part of the study is mainly related to how I work with wool and felting. This part is the first phase of a large project connected with the subject of arts and crafts in school.

4 The feedback of other arts and crafts teachers has not yet been collected. That part of the study (data collection) is therefore not presented here. What I introduce here is an imagined research design.

# 3. Situated knowledge: A *savoir-faire in situ* to be unfolded

The attempt to acknowledge moments of a savoir-faire *in situ* needs to emerge from those moments of making, always in a state of becoming. This approach should be associated with my lived experience of felting. As an echo to the making process, it cannot be built on theoretical discourses disconnected from what happened in my studio.

It has not been common for craft practitioners to undertake research on their own work, especially when involving subjective experiences and emotions (Groth, 2015). Gray (1996) claims that '... traditional 'research' (largely theoretical/critical) has been carried out *into* Art & Design, *on* artists & designers, *for* Art & Design primarily by non-artists & designers! We have usually been content to practice and allow others to critique that practice' (p. 8). Barone and Eisner (2006) express dislocation of theory when 'theory tends to be fashioned from within a preselected framework, one that is identified with a particular research subcommunity' (p. 97) Barthes (1977) makes a distinction between two ways of understanding a method: on the one hand, a method can be understood as a routine following some protocols of operation that fetishes the goal of the research. On the other hand, a method can be understood as a violent force, breaking routines or conventions to allow the researcher to take a different or unknown path and leading him/her into a place of discovery and creativity.

The researcher, designer and philosopher mentioned in the paragraph above (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Gray, 1996) unveil the distance that a research practice can generate when observing a dichotomy between the object and the subject of the study. They also sustain the idea that a more intimated and creative approach to research can reveal unique insights through a practice-led self-study research

approach (Groth, 2015) and can lead us to unexpected discoveries (Barthes, 1997). Situated knowledge and integrated reflection are therefore necessary to my study.

The French expression *savoir-faire* expresses the complex kind of knowledge that artists process in their praxis. This noun phrase means the ability to successfully make what we undertake and to solve practical problems; it means competency and experience in the exercise of an artistic or intellectual activity (Le Petit Robert, 1990). Harrap's dictionary (1982) translates *savoir-faire* as follows: 'ability, know-how'. This denotes the knowledge and reflection that are intrinsic in the making of our profession.

Embodied knowledge in action is what I experience in praxis, and it is also the way I learn about and through my artistic praxis, rather than reading texts about arts. Knowing in action or informal knowledge is also called tacit knowledge, a concept introduced by the Hungarian philosopher–chemist Michael Polani (1966) in his book *The Tacit Dimension*. This kind of knowledge can also be related to the form of knowledge that Aristotle called *phronesis*—a kind of knowledge connected with the wisdom we acquire during years of practical experiences. Schön (1991) provides us with an understanding of knowledge connected with reflection *in* action—reflecting on the action in the very moment it is taking place. He describes reflection *on* action as a reflection made after the action or event. This is a part of the reflexive practice, a fluctuating and fruitful pattern of reflection that looks 'not at [the] thing but [at] the doing' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 63).

As pointed out above, the performative drawing sessions I undertook with teacher students generated reflective notes written by the students. Using a qualitative reading of the feedback gave attention to what the students motioned as important, not on what I deemed to be important aspects of this drawing session. By doing so, I did not use my own voice in that previous study (Jamouchi, 2017). I just sought to understand how a performative approach could make sense for students

and to enrich what an arts and crafts session could mean for them. That previous study with drawing shows, amongst other things, that the students were not used to a performative approach to the subject of arts and crafts, that they enjoyed working collectively on a large scale by freely using their body in the space and that they experienced a flow close to the meditative state (Jamouchi, 2017).

Now, I wish to look at my own understanding of the performative approach to felted wool fibres. ABR is a suitable approach, as it may 'also take the form of non-linguistic arts, including the plastic and performing arts' (Barone & Eisner, 2006, p.95). With a research design drawing from ABR, I want to actively think of and discuss the metamorphosis of wool fibres and the capacity for personal and collective transformation. From a new materialistic perspective, this transformation can be understood as the intra-action between entities emerging during their entanglement. Barads' idea (2014) of intra-action echoes that of the current project. Her post-humanist performative framework that proposes an ontology in which entities are not taken as given but as constituted through material entanglement contests the classical dualist view in scientific research (object/subject, material/discourse, nature/culture). Her concept of intra-action, describing a phenomenon as a relationship that emerges between two entities from within a relationship (not prior or outside it), is relevant for my study. This view can help unfold and articulate what happens when my hands and wool entangle during the felting process.

## 4. The imagined research design: Autoethnography with two observers?

This part of the text is a reflection on an imagined research design in the search for a possible and plausible way to articulate and bring my work forward. This part of the text is not an account of a method as a recipe to follow on who to study with regard to the experience of a performative approach to wool fibres and felting.

Making research is not a neutral affair. Questioning data as something we make, not as a neutral entity to be found *out there*, is close to Barad's view (2007) when she underlines the awareness we should have about the researcher as an apparatus that shapes and determines a phenomenon. For Barad (2007), nothing is inherently separated. All elements of the world are entangled, and all elements are entities (human, as well as non-human) that intra-act in a way that make them dependent on one another. Following this reasoning, a researcher would *per se* use himself/herself as an apparatus, and he/she would be entangled within/with/in the phenomenon he/she studies. Using myself to explore my own work, I am aware of the role I play as a non-neutral apparatus, as well as my entanglement within the phenomenon of felting wool.

From a new materialism perspective, 'Materials have agency, they change ideas in certain ways, and they "diffract" human agency in unexpected ways' (Hickey-Moody, 2018, p. 2). Intra-action is related to the inseparability not only between the practitioner and the material but also between the phenomenon investigated and the researcher.

Autoethnography is comparable to Barad's ontology, as it seeks to correct the erroneous position that art and science are at odds with each other. 'Autoethnography, as a method, attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art. Auto-ethnographers believe that research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical *and* emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena' (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 8). For auto-ethnographers, the most important question is 'Who reads our work, how are they affected by it, and how does it keep a conversation going?' (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 8).

Groth's work (2015) on making sense through making by using the embodied research method clearly reveals the uniqueness of subjectivity and how this strengthens research when having a practice-led approach. Even if Groth's work

emphasises the embodied approach during making, I see the bodily aspect in relation to material when the body and the material enter the dynamic of intra-action. Both have agency and are inseparable from each other during making. 'This theoretical approach rests on the assumption that nothing is inherently separate from anything else, but rather, separations are temporarily enacted so one can examine something long enough to gain knowledge about it' (Hickey-Moody, 2018, p. 2).

Stake's (2018) statement that an *issue* is not necessarily connected with a problem[5] resonates with me and relates to my work. In my study, the making relates to the artist–researcher, and the issue relates to my concern and care for the students I meet every day and with whom I endeavour to explore what the world of art can be about in the school setting. This concern is connected with the attention I give to an alternative way of teaching the subject of arts and crafts and my choice of an explorative performative approach to wool felting, in contrast to the traditional felting procedure I learned two decades ago in which I was guided safely towards obtaining a felted product.

Groth's (2015) subjective approach to making and my interpretation of Stake's (2018) idea of issue as a concern are statements that shape the idea of a journey of exploring felting as an intertwined experience that can benefit students.

There is a difference between the *how* of teaching and it's *what* (Andrews, 2018). As teachers, we constantly work, using written or other visual forms of notes, about and on the content (the what) of our teaching. The way we enact a curriculum (the how of our teaching) seems to be less the subject of our written or visual notes about our teaching practice. In a comparable way, within early childhood education, Lavina and Lawson (2018) invite us to examine 'the self and teaching that influence practice' (p. 3). 'In this way, teachers are provided means to critique potentially romanticised images of working in early childhood contexts' (Lavina & Lawson, 2018, p. 5).

5 Personal virtual conversation, April 10, 2018.

Examining ourselves might reveal (even the non-conscious) meanings we put in our teaching practice.

Andrews' (2018) work on artistry in teaching focuses on how the teacher enacts the curriculum in the classroom and less on what the teacher conveys to the students. However, as the content and the enactment of the subject matter are interconnected, the teacher needs to have a certain level of understanding of the subject matter in order to see how he/she uses his/her body as a tool for communicating ideas and concepts (Andrews, 2018). The researcher will then need to understand both the how and the what of the working process. In my study, the understanding of the subject matter (wool as the material and felting as the technique) is intimately connected with the making and its enactment (the felting process).

I regard an autoethnographic research design as a *conditio sine qua non* (indispensable) to be able to undertake my research. The constantly shifting impressions and associations I have during the process resemble, in Skjerdingstad's (2018) words, what 'might first seem ungraspable, fluid and volatile' (p. 512). It relates to a desire or urge to share an experience with others. To be able to investigate our own artistic processes and their sensorial/aesthetic meaning, we need to inhabit that process ourselves and reflect on what it does to us.

Groth (2015) concludes in her article that sensory experiences and emotions influence a practitioner's decision making and problem solving during the craft of making something. She also points out that many academic research practices exclude important factors in craft practices. The reason for this negligence is as follows: 'An objective view from a non-practitioner would not have been able to access this information, as the objective researcher would not possess the tacit and embodied knowledge of the situation' (Groth, 2015, p. 150). Furthermore, she argues that a practice-led self-study research approach allows practitioners to couple their own

subjective experiences with a serious attempt to describe and explicate the experiential knowledge they process (Groth, 2015, pp. 150–151).

These general points made by Groth are substantial. In my study, however, I am thinking of inviting other arts and crafts teachers to participate in the reflection on the action. I am planning to hold a session in a studio when I felt wool. I will film myself and have a colleague watch the process and write down his/her impressions. My goal is to obtain my peers' feedback on the ongoing process. This two-pronged observer approach could perhaps serve as a kind of method triangulation. Method triangulation refers to the use of multiple and different data sources in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Other observers might capture moments that I am not completely aware of because of the intense involvement of my mind and body in the process of felting wool. The impressions of my colleagues would enrich and deepen my own understanding of the process.

The *added* observer in autoethnographic practice-led research can be related to the concept of empathy in qualitative research. According to Bresler (2006), this allows for empathic connections and an empathic understanding. Empathic connections 'provide a space for others to articulate experiences, to create "arcs of narratives" in the process of reflecting on meaning' (Bresler, 2006, p. 25). Empathic understanding 'involve[s] resonance, an embodied state of mind that is cognitive and at the same time, affective and corporeal' (Bresler, 2006, p. 25). It is those articulated connections between the observer and the ongoing felting process that I wish to collect. This connection to my work (experienced and expressed textually by the invited observer) will hopefully expand my own understanding of the felting process by making me aware of others' perceived meanings. The responses, which are based on the experience of my hands transforming wool fibres, demand involvement and attention. Armstrong (as cited in Bresler, 2006) identifies five aspects of the process of perceptual contemplation of an art work. Although he refers to a finished art

work, such aspects can be connected with the artistic creative process, especially the aspects of lingering caress and mutual absorption:

> When we linger, 'Nothing gets achieved, nothing gets finished – on the contrary, satisfaction is taken in spinning out our engagement with the object. [...] mutual absorption refers to the transformative character of deep engagement'.

Armstrong writes further,

> When we keep our attention fixed upon an object which attracts us, two things tend to happen: we get absorbed in the object and the object gets absorbed into us (Armstrong as cited in Bresler, 2006, 26).

Drawing from Armstrong's aspects of the process of perceptual contemplation of an art work, Bresler (2006) proposes a new one based on performance. Although she relates performance to a musical performance, there is a clear connection between how she describes how 'performances unify performers and listeners in a shared experience' (Bresler, 2006, p. 27) and performance as practiced in contemporary visual art when the action itself is the piece of work. Bresler's understanding of a performance is close to Vist's appraisal of relational aesthetics. Inspired by Bourriaud, Vist (2018) views art works as a social interstice that is also relevant in the relationship within educational research, in which each participating body means something in the constitution of the artwork.

# 5. What am I actually imagining?

The title of this section sounds somehow paradoxical in the sense that I bring together the actual (fact) and the imagined (nonfactual) as the focus of the project. What I imagine is perhaps what I envisioned but without programming it out of my previous knowledge and experiences and not being dictated by them. Imagining non-

facts is what has allowed people to develop ideas and be creative. In my case, it goes for artistic, pedagogical and research work. Improvisation is what puts us in motion. It has to do with what we have done before, but it is dealt with in a different way. Improvising can be seen as a way to embrace differences, to immerse oneself in positive differences (Melaas, 2012). It is an attempt to experience displacement, re-commencement, trans-position, dis-location and re-turning. When Barad (2014) uses the word 're-turning', it does not mean reflecting on or going back to a past that was. She means 'turning it over and over again – iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetime mattering), new diffraction patterns' (Barad, 2014, p. 168).

When I now go back to felting, a method I learned 20 years ago, it is not to do again what I did in the 1990s. My intention or my imagined fact is to intra-act differently with the material and the experience of felting. Would that be to produce kreata? As I mentioned, the truth is an event in which we invent data rather than find it as something neutral to be discovered. Would I be able to intra-act with the material by acknowledging its agency and at the same time being able to respond to its ability to metamorphosise when meeting my hands in movements? Would this idea of an autoethnography for two slow me down in my will to inhabit the felting process and see what it does to me? How can I inhabit an experience and let go when somebody is watching me? I even think about being filmed on a video camera so that I can see what I did during the felting process. Would a camera intimidate me?

When Armstrong (as cited in Bresler, 2006) mentions involvement and attention, as well as the mutual absorption between a material and a person, I then question the core of my imagined research design, which is to involve another person in witnessing this process, as well as having a video camera film the felting process. The idea is to use somebody else as a device (in a post-humanistic sense) in order to study a phenomenon. Would this device disturb and interfere with the intra-action? What

would I gain from an autoethnography for two? I expect to gain feedback from peers that can challenge or expand my own understanding of the felting experience. However, do I risk truncating my own experience of a performative approach to wool fibres? This is a risk that I look forward to taking.

Imagining an autoethnography for two can be related to collaborative autoethnography and pedagogical documentation. In both cases, we observe, study, reflect and present a fraction of a phenomenon. This can relate to the term agential cut used by Barad (2014, p. 1). What could/should be selected as foci in an autoethnographic observation or a pedagogical documentation is a question that both the auto-ethnologist and the teacher need to ask. The moments we observe and what we observe matter. Where we place a camera and when we record matter. These would have an impact on the foci, such as the space, actors, activities, objects, events, time, goals, emotions, rhythm, movements, actions and sounds.

Barad (2014) views the agential cut as a man-made cut (as the researcher is, in Barad's view, an apparatus of observation entangled in the world). As an apparatus that is unable to grasp the whole phenomenon, the researcher will proceed to some inclusion and exclusion. The cuts might be a result of our culture and habits of thought that can make some moments visible and others not visible. Then, the agential cut also accounts for the moments we do not include in our observation; therefore, the moments we do not study and are held away from knowledge production and a fortiori are not included in the presentation of our research.

Chang (2013) states that autoethnography is a highly personal and social process, as auto-ethnographers use their personal experiences as the primary material to contribute to the understanding of human experience. She also states that auto-ethnographers find their material where the fieldwork happens and that they enter their field with a unique familiarity with how and where they may locate relevant data; however, the first step of the research is to identify a research topic and method.

For my study, I chose not to do autoethnography on myself. I decided to have a participatory study with peers that can 'create [a] reciprocal relationship as equal and gain something meaningful from each other in the process' (Chang, 2013, p. 110). This would diminish the concern with the privileged perspective of the auto-researcher–participant. By having a collaborative autoethnography, one engages with multiple perspectives and needs to consider one more layer of intersubjectivity (Chang, 2013). Chang distinguishes between full collaboration and partial collaboration. In my case, it will be a partial collaboration. I will work together with other teachers during the data collection phase, but the analysis will be my task. The outcome and dissemination of the study will also be my responsibility. However, this does not exclude other forms of communication and meaning exchange after our meeting during the felting process in the studio. As I will be in the phase of meaning-making of the collected data, inviting peers to express their view on the material might be relevant. This material will be a part of the outcome of this project. Moreover, the outcome can have several forms. 'The end product of autoethnography takes different forms: research reports, poetry, performative scripts, songs, films, performing art (Chang, 2013, p. 118). Addressing the outcome of this project now is premature, but it would probably be a visual product, combining still and moving images, as well as spoken and written words.

Another aspect of autoethnography as a pedagogy of freedom is provided by Denzin (2003). He believes that autoethnography will 'contribute to a conception of education and democracy as [a] pedagogy of freedom' (Denzin, 2003, p. 262). When the subject of arts and crafts undergoes disenchantment caused by the absence of imagining working processes that allow experimentation, we should look closer at our practice; we should look for approaches that would help dissociate from a manufacturing way of making and allow the practitioner/research to experience the unexpected. Following Denzin's ideas, it is from the school site that we can make changes to empower the quality of teacher education.

Lenz Taguchi's (2010) work on intra-active pedagogy and pedagogical documentation, as the title of her book suggests, goes beyond the theory/practice–divide in education. For her, the quality of pedagogical documentation 'puts in motion [the] process of learning and new becoming' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 67). She recognises what Barad calls the agential cut as a temporary constructed distinction. Lenz Taguchi (2010) also states that a piece of documentation, the result of a constructed cut, makes it possible for us to identify a material of the practice that we can talk about and study. Åberg and Lenz Taguchi (2010) likewise see pedagogical work from a democratic perspective. For them, the voice of the other, students or children, needs to be heard in order to respect different points of views and ideas. Through a pedagogical documentation, this approach is not static; it is continually in motion. It makes our practice as teachers more visible and enables the idea of working concretely with it and adapting to the different realities we encounter in schools.

Other teacher–researchers in Norway work with pedagogical documentation from a postmodern thinking. Kolle, Larsen and Ulla (2010) introduce pedagogical documentation as an inspiration to transformative practices in the field of education. Based on a Deleuzian approach to knowledge, their assumption is to look at not only what things are but also how they work and their potential becoming (Kolle, Larsen, & Ulla, 2010, p. 71). This means that pedagogical documentation should help us be creative in our teaching practices and not just deal with replicating activities. Because if teachers, they state, follow specific ready-made programs for educationally organised activities, this will mean that teachers become functionaries who follow recipes (Kolle, Larsen, & Ulla, 2010). In the school context, one should ask how teaching could work and not only how it works. Still inspired by Deleuze, Kolle, Larsen and Ulla (2010) praise experimentation to broaden the idea of didactic and nomadic thinking (Kolle, Larsen, & Ulla, 2010).

My understanding of autoethnographic and pedagogic documentation makes me think that my own understanding of making—coupled with the comments and feedback of some of my colleagues—and the documentation of the working process that praises meaning making, experimentation and critical thinking would help me examine how the felting process can be thought of and, later on, how it can be taught and still be understood differently. As I encounter different situations, schools, colleagues and, above all, different students, who may give non-expected itineraries to my work.

# 6. Summary

The pleasure of making has always been a part of my creative process. My awareness about it grew stronger when I took on the role of an artist–teacher in the subject of arts and crafts. When I gave more room to my artistic practice in the classroom by inviting my students to perform drawing together with me, we could co-create another understanding of what the subject of arts and crafts could generate in the school setting as, for instance, moments of entanglement with the material, when movements and even silence become art/aesthetic experiences. This means that the object of art has become the event (making) itself.

Drawing on my earlier experience with performative drawing within the subject of arts and crafts, I intend to unfold a performative approach to other materials and techniques. My general assumption is that a performative approach to felting wool can involve more than cognitive knowledge. It allows an approach that is comparable to performance art. It can emphasise the process rather than the final object, focusing on the sensory aspects of an experience.

By considering the subject of arts and crafts as an artistic–creative event, I approach this creative event from a Baradian use of re-turning, intra-action and agency. Inspired by autoethnography and pedagogical documentation, I imagine a

research design that could elicit my own working process by inviting peers to add their impressions to my reflection in and on the making.

This text presents a short account of the methodological and theoretical background that forms the framework of my project and my intention to reflect on a creative approach to the process of felting wool. Working towards this aim, I propose an imagined research design inspired by ABR, including agency and intra-action seen from a new materialist perspective. I think that the imagined research design presented here, called an autoethnography for two, can be an interesting one to try out.

This imagined research design still needs to be enacted. Nevertheless, I hope that this text manages to relay some suggestions to readers as an inspiration to undertake research on their own creative working process.

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## About the Author

**Samira Jamouchi** graduated from the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts of Brussels in 1997 and from the National Art Academy of Oslo in 2001. She is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher and works as an associate professor in visual arts at the University College of Østfold, in the department of teacher education.

Born in Brussels, Jamouchi is now based in Norway. Her artistic works include textiles as sculptural expressions in small and monumental scales, immersive site-specific installations, and workshops. As an artist-teacher, she questions the traditional teaching practices by exploring performative approaches that organizing pedagogic sessions as creative events. Space, time, sounds, movements and gestures are essential components of her works.

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# An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing?

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# Abstract

This essay is the reflective writing of a novice arts-based researcher on her way towards becoming an a/r/tographer. Through the research questions 'How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice?' and 'How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?' the author searches for a way of including her art, dance, and the physical experience of the art, in the writing process, hence, an 'embodied artistic practice'. She seeks foundation in theory, drawing on different views of embodiment, neurocognition, meaning-making in the brain, embodied cognition, and embodied understanding. She searches for a way to make meaning of abstract concepts through movement in relation to the world (hence, ecological), and how she can translate these concepts from written form into an embodied (dancing) artistic practice that will function as a catalyst for new ideas and perspectives, and then back into written form again (academically).

The goal of the essay is to provide the reader, artist or otherwise, coming from a practice-based field of knowledge, with inspiration when embarking on a process of theorization through academic writing. The main focus of the essay is on the learning process of the author, and the style is personal. However, the author attempts to provide a six-point algorithm for the inclusion of an embodied practice to a writing process, based on her findings. This algorithm might be applicable for other a/r/tographers, as well as serve as catalyst for further research on the bridging of practice and theory. Both for artists going into research and students in higher arts education.

An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing? Reflections from an Artist on Her Journey towards Becoming an A/r/tographer

Keywords: embodiment, dance improvisation, artography, academic writing, artistic research, writing, dance philosophy

# An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing?

Signe Alexandra Domogalla[1]

## Introduction

In April 2018, I attended a one-week seminar on arts-based research. Working as an associate professor of dance in the young institution of The Norwegian College of Musical Theatre (MTHS) and having to produce research for the institution, I felt that I did not have adequate knowledge of the methods and methodology of research to actually make a valuable contribution. Research, arts-based or otherwise, and academic writing felt like one big mysterious sphere that I had trouble initiating interaction with.

Cvejić (2015) writes about how the binding of movement to the body (in dance) — subjectivation — pose two problems that are to

> [...]the core of dance's resistance to discursive thought coupled with dance practitioners´mistrust of theorisation, and the difficulty in establishing the work of dance [...]. (p.9).

This might be at the heart of my reluctance. Moreover, I come from a practice-based field that witnesses or has witnessed artistic production as research without making

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the demands that apply to research in other fields, as criticized by Borgdorff (2012, p. 133), Roar (2016, p.315), and Østern (2017a, p. 8).

Wanting to enter into a more academic understanding of arts-based research, as something that happens within or in contact with an academic framework that demands reflexivity, theory, transparency and being critical (Østern, 2017a, p. 12), I struggle and have struggled with everything. Such as making meaning of different ways of articulating ontology and epistemology, as well as drawing the line between artistic work and dissemination of the research in dialogue with peers and relevant fields of knowledge.

However, I was fond of literature in general and academic literature in particular, which functioned as inspiration for my artistic practice[2] before the seminar on arts-based research; the perceived problem of the coupling of theory[3] with practice[4] became more evident during the seminar as well as in my reflections in log notes during the week and thereafter. Nevertheless, communicating with fellow artist-researcher-teachers at the seminar acted as quite a catalyst for me during the week, and I found a way into academia through my artistic practice. Still, when I got back home and attempted to articulate my experiences on paper in an essay, I had trouble finding the same inspiration and really feeling the coupling of theory and practice. The current essay is my reflection upon the mentioned process, as well as an account of my discoveries and questioning.

2 The way Cvejić (2015) explains that '[...] 'theory', or rather the reading of texts by Derrida, Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari and so on, became a resource for choreographic texts[...]'(p.13) we use the word 'text' as choreography here. Thus, I have used literature on philosophy as inspiration for my work, but I have not engaged in the reading as critically as I would do if I were to do research.

3 Here, this is the academic linguistic presentation of concepts relating different fields of knowledge in a written text.

4 Here, it is used as the execution of my art form — dance and choreography.

Borgdorff (2012) considers the application of academia to art as a means for art to transcend:

> [...] its former limits, aiming through the research to contribute to thinking and understanding; academia, for its part, opens up its boundaries to forms of thinking and understanding that are interwoven with artistic practices. (p. 143)

Through the research questions 'How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice?' and 'How I can better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?' I explore how, as an artist, I need to, or can, make meaning of the interrelation of art and academia. Bresler (2006b) considers aesthetics at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research. In order for me to be inspired to engage in academic writing, I needed to find the aesthetic value of engaging in dialogue with academia. I have chosen to let words be my main vehicle of presentation here, as '[...] language does remain a highly functional complementary medium to help get across to others what is at issue in the research [...]' (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 167) and as academic writing is an integral part of my research questions. However, I use theories of embodied cognition (e.g. Varela et al., 1991; Johnson, 2015) in the exploration of abstract concepts.

# Methodology

The creative process has formed the pathway '[...] through which new insights, understandings, and products come into being' (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 146). The formulated research questions did arise from an experienced problem. However, the process of formulating them has undergone such a creative process in the negotiation of meaning, going back and forth between analysis, literature and art, that I find it to be an abductive (Østern, 2017a, p. 19) rather than an inductive approach (Befring, 2017, p. 61). Rather, it could also be called an abductive hermeneutic (Borgdorff, 2012,

p. 172; Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991, p. 149) approach, where the play of the different domains go back and forth between existing theories, artistic practices, and experiences.

I aim to establish empathic understanding by mediating back and forth between the personal and the public (Bresler, 2006b, p. 53). I employ an impressionist approach to the analysis of the research material (Befring, 2017, p. 113) which has consisted of log-excerpts and artistic representations, such as dance improvisation and photography, as well as academic literature. During my analysis and in the manner in which I have approached the different readings of theory, based on ideas that emerged as I went along, I have attempted to be as open and critical as possible with my own preconception of concepts in the interpretation of the research material (Østern, 2017a, p. 17; Tjora, 2017, p. 251).

However, to be critical while analyzing oneself and one's interpretation is a strenuous task because of how intertwined the artistic practice, and, consequently, the research, is (Østern, 2017a, p. 9). I have touched upon themes that make me question the basis of who I am as a human being and an artist, as well as why I do what I do. It has been frustrating at times, but I hope I have managed to avoid oversimplification (Bresler, 2006b, p. 65) so that the essay can contribute to discourses in philosophy and arts-based research and not only to my own well-being. However, after reading Østern (2017a) I realize that my feelings of exhaustion (p. 18), inadequacy, insecurity, and doubt in the process are not unique, and that other artists, in general, and movement artists, in particular, embarking on a similar journey, may benefit from reading about my experiences.

# Methods

The main methods in dealing with the research questions have been: reflective poetic writing and maintaining of logs[5], dance improvisation outdoors, writing about the improvisations, as well as the analysis of the written log and improvisations. In addition, I have used hiking, sleeping outdoors, skiing, and running as methods for reflection on abstract concepts from the literature. Further, in analysing the collected material, I have read theory from several fields of knowledge as a means to interpret my artistic renditions and to better understand my own meaning-making process.

The material that has served as the main basis for my analysis are three log-excerpts that were written during the week of the seminar. The style of the log-excerpts is both poetic and, to a certain extent, analytical, or mediating back and forth between the two. In addition, video of several short dance improvisations[6], relating to the third log-excerpt, serve as additional material in the analysis of the log-excerpts.

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5 I am aware that the maintaining of log as a method for research is well documented and widely discussed. However, when I started this writing process I used an intuitive approach to the log that was inspired by my artistic practice and free writing more as a stream of consciousness. The log did not have any particular form and I did not write with any other purpose than merely trying to articulate thoughts in writing. The form that the writing took might have been inspired by a workshop in theatre led by Norwegian theatre director Claire deWangen, at Franje festival in Arendal in 2017, where writing was an integral part of the material being researched. It might also have been inspired by a round table discussion with amongst others professors Per Roar and Theodor Barth at Oslo National Academy of the Arts Artistic Research week in january 2018. The main topic of this discussion was not the maintaining of log, but the topic came up through a conversation about notepads. However, in the case of the logs referenced in this essay there was no particular, pre-planned form in my writings, because I did not start writing with a particular goal or research question in mind.

6 The use of video is one of the most common methods while working with dance and choreography. We use it both as a tool of assessment of our own performance, as a maintaining of log of motions as well as a tool for creating new choreography.

Simultaneously, in the process of writing the essay, I have attempted to recreate the catalyzing events of the week of the seminar through dance improvisation, hiking or otherwise being in contact with nature. I did not maintain an elaborate log of these hikes or experiences, but they affected how I approached the literature, and to a certain extent, which keywords I used for finding literature. One example being that I, at one point, read everything I could find regarding ecology, eco-phenomenology and arts because I experienced a connection with nature while dancing outside.

The final analysis of the log-excerpts was done after several months of writing, re-writing and researching relevant literature, and after receiving reviews from other researchers and the editors. The effect of this distance in time from the original event has been that the analysis is connected more to theoretical concepts, even in my impressionist approach (Befring, 2017, p. 113). This might be due to the fact that my vocabulary has evolved throughout the process. I attempt to look for patterns and developments in my analysis, particularly regarding the choice of words in the log-excerpts, which might describe an embodied approach to learning (e.g. Varela et al., 1991; Johnson, 2015), or serve as examples of a development from a dualistic to a non-dualistic view of the body-mind problem, or the theory-practice problem. However, this analysis, even if not on paper, has happened throughout the writing process, going back and forth between the log-excerpts, the improvisation, and the literature, reflecting the abductive approach mentioned before (Østern, 2017a, p. 19).

## Epistemological Stance

This essay draws from several epistemological areas. As expressed in postmodernist thoughts (Gladsø, Gjervan, Hovik and Skagen, 2015, pp. 143-144; Borgdorff, 2012, pp. 136), I do not think that truly original work is possible. Truth is situated, abundant, and non-absolute, and I believe in the floating domains of the arts. However, as I will show later in this essay, I am not always consistent in this stance; occasionally, I

unconsciously fall into modernist (Gladsø, Gjervan, Hovik and Skagen, 2015, pp. 143-144; Borgdorff, 2012, pp. 136) thoughts. The basis for the contradiction probably stems from my education, as both a classical ballet dancer and a contemporary choreographer. I will attempt to explain this more thoroughly below.

Bourriaud (2007 [1998]), in the first chapter of his book *Esthétique relationelle*, describes a push and pull between the various modernist paradigms and postmodernism, in a way that I find relatable.

The creation of knowledge is best expressed through Merleau-Ponty´s perceptual phenomenology. I see my body as '[...] *a perceptual field, a surface in contact with the world, a permanent rootedness in it.'* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 240) Nevertheless, phenomenology is a method to characterize the structures that make knowledge possible (in me), but does not purport to absolutely establish certain truths (Pakes, 2011, p. 43).

I also draw on ecological views with regard to how I view the world in relation to me and myself in relation to the world. One of the unifying concepts of the different eco-ontologies, the way I interpret it, is a notion of a certain degree of non-hierarchy between the human world and the other-than human world. Humans are *in* the world, not *on* the world (Owen, 2016; Giannachi and Stewart, 2005; Garoian, 2012; Glasser, 2011; Gamlund, 2012). Eco-phenomenology (Brown and Toadvine, 2003) seeks to bridge different eco-ontologies with phenomenology. 'Eco-phenomenology is the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other creatures' (Wood, 2003, p. 213).

When I seek to find an ecological approach to academic writing, the goal is to engage in the creation of knowledge through non-hierarchical interaction with the world, and to be able to learn from the world, which consists of both human and other-than-human nature (Stewart, 2010, p. 32). The importance of including an ecological approach to creation of knowledge originates from an analysis of my

process at the arts-based research seminar, where I interpreted the feeling of being outside, in nature, as critical for my meaning-making process.

Projects of coupling theorists (philosophers and others) with practitioners within the arts and sciences (Lehman, 2017, p. 12), and across different modalities in various forms, are widely known and appreciated.1 In this essay, the aim is to make the process I underwent in the coupling of theory (read literature) and practice (read artistic practice as dance) visible to the reader. However, I did not work completely as a free agent, as the writing process included valuable feedback from editors and reviewers; I will attempt to provide as clear a picture as possible of the process of me as an artist-teacher on my way to becoming an a/r/tographer (Østern, 2017a, p. 11; Springgay, Irwin and Kind, 2005).

I begin by discussing my educational background and how that probably triggered my resistance or reluctance towards the coupling of theory and practice. Through three log-excerpts from the arts-based research seminar and in analysing them, I provide insight into the process that triggered the research questions. Then, I discuss how I applied, or could have applied, the findings from the material in the process of writing the current essay. In my conclusion, I indicate possible themes for further research and exploration.

## Who I Am as an Artist

I see myself at the intersection of several aesthetic systems[7] and this has been true for me throughout my career. In addition to working with a range of different

7 By aesthetic system I mean the different aesthetic rules that govern various art disciplines, or even styles within one discipline. For example, in classical ballet there is a different aesthetic measure than in jazz dance or contemporary dance, based on the different discourses that are prominent within the different disciplines. Another example might be contemporary dance and musical theatre as different aesthetical systems. This also relates to the conflict of modernist and postmodernist thought, described by Østern (2017b), as described below.

movement techniques and approaches, I have worked with different acting techniques, spoken word, and voice techniques. I have also collaborated with visual artists and musicians, both in the more traditional sense, such as with scenographers and composers, and on a more experimental level. Choreography, performing, and teaching are the three unifying concepts of these aesthetical systems.

In my practice, choreography is the writing of a performance, the connection of various narratives and modes of communication (light, space, landscape, movement, and sound) with the organisation of the movement of the *human body* in relation to the other narratives, for example light, space, and sound, as main focus. Choreography could also be defined as the organised interaction between humans and non-humans (animal or landscape) or the interaction between humans in the environment in a performative situation that is mediated in front of an audience. The physicality of choreography and dance goes beyond everyday movement in terms of, for example, repetition or abstraction of concrete movement. Choreography is the organizing principle, or facilitator, of movement and communication[8].

## Art and the Academisation of the Performing Arts

Artists are continuously asked to validate themselves either through their benefit for other academic fields[9] or through their economic value in contribution to the capitalist growth of society. Here my question is, 'Why should I have to validate my

8 This description of choreography is my own attempt at articulating my practice. However, the focus and the wording is inspired by the literature that I was reading at the moment. The literature made it necessary to stress some aspects of the work, such as differentiating between humans, and non-humans in regards to choreography. The description is not a static manifesto, it is, as I am, in constant change inspired by my daily interactions with literature, people or movement techniques. The wording "the writing of a performance" for instance was inspired by a seminar with French choreographer Gisèle Vienne in October 2018 where she used the word "write" about her performances (Personal communication, 27.October 2018).

art through anything else (writing/theorization) than my art itself?' Dancer and researcher Andrews (2018) expresses what has been a concern for me for a few years regarding dealing with writing about my artistic practice:

> When I am dancing the body and mind are in constant dialogue but this conversation isn't communicated through language. However, it can be articulated, but that articulation is a translation, as all experiments rendered in language is. (p. 2)

During the week at the seminar, I became exceedingly aware of my own strong separation of art, and the making of art (practice), on the one hand, and the written academisation of art (theory) on the other. The unwillingness to connect the two is something that is discussed by, amongst others, Roar (2016) in his paper *Artistic Research And The Dance Of Tomorrow* [my translation]. Artists are unwilling to see the value of reflexivity of method and traditional presentation of research through papers (p. 315). This incompatible dichotomy of theory and practice was something that I also had, consciously or unconsciously, related to. Lately, I have used some time to attempt to uncover the origin of my separation of the two.

Pakes (2006) highlights the tendency within *parts* of the dance community to strongly oppose the term 'Cartesian dualism'. She states that to even think of the connection of mind and body as a 'problem' is to get off on the wrong foot. Thus, the dance community fails to recognise the last fifty years of debate regarding the mind-body issue (p. 88). In the analysis below I register similar views in myself. Previous to this writing process, I was convinced that I did not relate to a dualistic view, mind and body were one. However, in my analysis, and in the very research questions that serve as a base for this essay, I do find remnants of the mind-body divide throughout my education (academic and artistic) as well as in the log-excerpts

9 Exemplified by Eisner in his 1998 paper on the validation of art education in the American school system (p. 143).

presented here. Johnson (2015) indicates a long history for disembodied views of mind, in Western thought and language, that I can recognise (p. 2). I was taught to sit down to read and write (thus disconnect from my body) and to be physical in Physical Education or dance (engage my body, but not necessarily intellectually).

Another factor might come from my dance education and my artistic career. In her narrative study *Norwegian contemporary dance educations — between modernism and postmodernism — former dance students reflections on the impact of a dance education* [my translation], Østern (2017b) highlights an ambivalence among former students regarding different discourses of body and technique (among others) that may be derived from the contrast in education:

> [...] a contemporary world where modern and postmodern pedagogical and aesthetic paradigms still co-exist, or in the foreground or background, often in unresolved and silent ways. [my translation] (Østern, 2017b, p. 5).

This ambivalence is something that I can recognise in myself and that I struggle with in the making of art, teaching of dance, and here, in how I think about the academisation of and writing about art.

I was educated as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer in Norway during the first eight years of this millennium. The dance and teacher training focused on classical ballet, while the choreography training focused on more contemporary methods for working with, and creating, dance. During the period of my education, we witnessed a turn from a field where the classically trained body was still the epitome of a dancer. Now we witness a field where alternative ways of thinking dance, body, and choreography, so-called 'new choreography' or 'conceptual dance' (Cvejić, 2015, p. 13) have become mainstream, at least for professionals. Ingvartsen´s proposition of '[...] a non-anthropocentric notion of dance and the body[...]' (Ingvartsen 2016, p. 9) and the choreography of space, cities, and things is an example of the latter.

Parallel to this (or maybe because of), there has been an academisation of the field of performing arts. Cvejić (2015), in her article entitled *From odd encounters to a prospective confluence: Dance-philosophy*, provides a great overview of the academic turn in dance. The need to be able to write and philosophize in writing about art has become a much more articulated demand during the course of my career. Not only for the sake of academisation of the field, providing dance artists with a language to communicate with each other, and with researchers on and in dance, but also in the way the performance is communicated to the audience. In my opinion, perhaps to the point where the writing/reading about, and not the performance itself, occasionally becomes the main event.

What I love about the performing arts, is the manner in which I can experience the performance through my body and my senses. I appreciate the possibility of dealing with both concrete and abstract narratives through the different levels of consciousness within my body. I believe that good performance art should be able to stand alone without a written text to guide the experience of the audience. A linguistic text can serve as an extra layer to a performance, but if it is imperative to the experience, I do not necessarily believe that what I am witnessing is performing art. Actress May (2005) expresses something similar: '*[...] the experience is uprooted in the act of writing it down.*' (p. 347).

Greene (2011) expresses the notion that through dance, the body of the dancer, while realizing itself in motion, is creating a realm that '*[...] fuses the dancer and onlooker, body and consciousness, thoughts and perceptions in intensely focused presence'* (p. 4). In my opinion, dance is a great medium for conveying alternative narratives and changing the way people perceive the world. Believing in this, throughout my work as an artist, I have focused on face-to-face dialogue, and in performing for non-professional audiences using (amongst others) site-specific dance (Hunter, 2012). I see the face-to-face encounters as a means for defusing

contemporary art and the contemporary artist as intimidating concepts[10], as well as adopting a political stance with regard to community and interaction, which are other concepts that I am concerned with. The accompanying linguistic text has seemed like an unnecessary extra layer.

However, there might be a middle ground. More and more Norwegian venues are using both academic texts together with other means of interactions with the audiences in the dissemination of the works that they present. One example being Black Box Theatre in Oslo who extract the academic writing about the performances from the program into separate publications, or small books, which are distributed at the theatre. This provides the audiences with several choices regarding how they want to engage intellectually with a performance.

I see the value in the academisation of performing arts as a means of conveying expertise across fields of knowledge and as a means to reflect upon my own artistic practices. The philosopher Arne Næss articulated that: '[...] Individuals have a responsibility to try to articulate their total views. [...] Coupling theory to practice and action to reflection are essential to this endeavour [...]' (Glasser, 2011, p. 62). Nevertheless, I have this fear that an academic approach in my artistic practice might lead me in a completely different aesthetical direction out of necessity within the rules of the selected ontology. I am apprehensive that this would somehow be in conflict with the artistic vision of aesthetics in my inspiration.

In this portion, I show the basis for my second research question: How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing? My initial fear of

10 I don't know of research stating that contemporary art is something intimidating to the public. In Norway, however, I believe that the public dialogue in traditional and social media has had a focus on (contemporary) art as something weird, unnecessary and elitist (a word with negative connotations in Norway). One example could be the Facebook-site "Sløseriombudsmannen"'s treatment of several Norwegian contemporary dance artists among others Mette Edvardsen in 2017 (Røssland, 2017).

academic writing came both from my education and from a personal fear of losing myself, or alienating my artistic vision through philosophy. This is also the basis of my main question: How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? Although I am obliged to engage in research through my institution (and I want to), I need to make the research, and particularly the writing process, relevant to me and my foundations as an artist.

However, being inspired by the presenters at the arts-based research seminar, I embraced the uncertainty and began exploring the writing.

## My Body and Mind as One – Embodied Learning?

There has been a 'practice turn' in contemporary theory (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 148; Eisner, 1991, p. 14) with regard to the legitimacy of the body as a place of knowledge; however, this is not only in phenomenology, as referred to earlier in this essay (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

'In the context of discovery, pre-reflective artistic actions embody knowledge in a form that is not directly accessible for justification' (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 148). Nevertheless, the term embodiment is a term that embraces a multitude of meanings throughout different discourses, not only in the cognitive sciences (Galetzka, 2017, p. 1), but also in the field of arts-based research (among others in Tsouvala and Magos, 2016 and Gulliksen, 2016).

Several studies show how physical activity enhances human beings' ability to learn (amongst others Harvey et al., 2017 and Liu, Sulpizio, Kornpetpanee and Job, 2017). One study by Clement et al. (2018) assessed the function of active learning spaces in libraries, including users' perception of the space. Although the main focus of the study was on the health benefit of active learning spaces, the authors state that '[...] students enjoy the space and attest that it is nice to have a moment to get up and

move around to clear their minds' (p. 168). The idea that physical activity can 'clear the mind' is recognizable through my run towards the Esso tank, featured in the first log-excerpt below.

However, when searching for an embodied approach to academic writing, I aim for a fuller understanding of the term; such an understanding is more related to communication through movement — my artistic practice: dance — and my meaning-making through an embodied practice. If one assumes that the body and mind are not two separate entities, but parts of one biological system that can process and make meaning of abstract concepts, one can view embodiment and cognition through different lenses.

The cognitivist theory sees the human brain as a computer that processes information (Galetzka, 2017, p. 1), and physicalism argues that not all mental phenomena are embodied, but must be explicable in terms of physical science (Pakes, 2006, p. 89). In the field of education, 'embodied learning' could be used simply to explain a learning situation where the student and the teacher are physically present in the same room at the same time (Emig, 2001). Further, in the field of anthropology, related to movement, 'embodied knowledge' could be used to explain how physical concepts and physicality is a bearer and conveyor of identity, as articulated by Downey (2010), or how cultural values shape embodiment in different body practices, as described by Mullis (2016).

The cognitive sciences examine how concept formation and abstract thinking happen within the human brain, and embodied in this sense could just mean physically 'in the brain'. Several studies examine how abstract knowledge is related to human beings' ability to relate language to images (Eisner, 1991. p. 15) or how metaphors show how sensorimotor activity is related to the processing of abstract concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, [1980] 2003; Galetzka, 2017, p. 4). Neurocognition looks at how '[...]the abstract cognitive process and the physiological bodily process

are intertwined and inseparable' (Gulliksen, 2016, p. 2), through the physiology of the brain and neural patterns (also in Bläsing, Puttke and Schack, 2010).

I find that both a common ground of phenomenology, and the cognitive sciences are necessary to take into account to be able to explain both the physiological processes of cognition, as well as my own perception of meaning-making, abstraction, and learning in relation to the world around me. Varela et al. (1991) employ the term 'embodied action', stating that '[...]sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition' (p. 173). Cvejić (2015) connects to such an approach when advocating an upgrade of existing philosophy of dance processes, to include both phenomenology and cognitive sciences (p. 19). In addition, the term 'embodied understanding' as used by Johnson (2015) constitutes one way of articulating an inclusive view of embodiment.

> Human understanding is profoundly embodied. That is, it is rooted in how our bodies and brains interact with, process, and understand our environments in a way that recruits bodily meaning, neural stimulation, and feeling to carry out both concrete and abstract conceptualization and reasoning. (p. 7)

Articles written by dance researchers on embodiment reveal some of the same content, but articulated from either a phenomenological stance (or that of the researcher) (Fraleigh, 2017; Mullis, 2016 and Pakes, 2006) or 'embodiment of thought' as a more abstract artistic concept, as employed by Bentsman, Finbloom, McKinley and Traub (2016). The term 'analytic somaesthetics', as proposed by Shusterman (2000), is another way of bridging the gap between phenomenology and cognitive sciences, as it describes '[...] the basic nature of bodily perceptions and practices and their function in our knowledge and construction of reality' (p. 222).

As I have shown here, the term embodied is a complex term that exists in numerous discourses that are often overlapping and multimodal. To me, it makes sense to search for a middle ground between the cognitive sciences and

phenomenology in order to understand how I make meaning through interaction with the environment and in my body.

A combination of the views expressed by Varela et al. (1991) and Johnson (2015) appears viable, as does recognizing the importance of physical activity as a means to 'clear the mind' or maybe better put to direct attention: 'Attention aids perception, which is alive with motility and receptive phases in dance processes' (Fraleigh, 2017, p. 251). Fraleigh (2017) also expresses that phenomenology is a practice of observation and meaning-making that teaches human beings to pay attention to movement and its innate meaningfulness (p. 249). Taking into into account that dancers experience a:

> [...] deep engagement with the physical body and the various modes of expression, feeling, and understandings that can come from a developed practice of thinking and moving concurrently. (Andrews, 2018, p. 3)

and that

> Dance has always been a live expressive organism, based on a fundamental physical-sensory relationship to space and the world, to perception/cognition, and to subjectivity, if we retain an anthropocentric perspective. (Birringer, 2005, p. 307)

In view of the above, it becomes more clear why it is important for me as a dancer to search for an embodied and ecological entry to academic writing through my artistic practice of dance. Dancers may not do embodied cognition differently from non-dancers, but our phenomenological account of it may differ. Hence, movement as a mode for learning to articulate about abstract concepts, may not be such a remote idea after all. '[T]he potential for the body to move around the object to approach it from a different perspective.' (Pakes, 2011, p. 41) could be a metaphor for an embodied means to approach research.

# The Embodiment of Theory through Improvisation, or Back-Translation to the Artistic Domain

Dance improvisation is one of my main methods in the creation of new material as a dance artist. Through improvisation I explore new movement patterns and intentions in relation to other dancers and/or the environment. Hence, improvisation could function as self-reflective embodied research (Mullis, 2016, p. 61). Bresler (2006a) explains improvisation from the musicians viewpoint as a '[...] disciplined, knowledgeable, and highly attentive response to an emerging reality.' (p. 32). I find such a definition applicable to dance improvisation as well. In addition, improvisation '[...] involves [engaging] with space and place both as mobile, fluid concepts' (Hunter, 2012, p. 259). Apart from the stage, other sites of performance have been important for me throughout my career, and although I have improvised dance and created choreography both in landscapes, cityscapes, and old buildings, I find the exploration of movement in relation to nature particularly exciting and inspiring.

Through environmental dance, dancers have the possibility of disclosing the values of nature within nature itself, by exploring human kinaesthetic consciousness of a non-human nature (Stewart, 2010, p. 33). Outdoor improvisations provide the performer with a completely different kinaesthetic experience, because the gravitational forces, and how dancers perceive their bodies, work differently when there is no levelled floor and four walls to contain them. There is a sense of an extended *liminality* where the boundary between environment and skin is blurred and one is swayed by the kinetic rhythms of the environment (Stewart, 2010, pp. 34-37). Another way of articulating this extended liminality could be that when improvising in nature, one is attempting to project the body toward *nothingness* or nature — to become one with the natural processes of decay and regeneration as they do in the Butoh dance (Fraleigh, 2005, p. 333).

There are several ways of approaching outdoor dance improvisations in terms of what rules the dancer sets for herself as an improviser. As evident in the third log-excerpt below, I attempted to use sound as a point of resonance in my body. '[S]ound can caress, grip, or violate the body [...]' (Bresler, 2006a, p. 30). Through this, I sought to achieve an embodied empathic understanding (Bresler, 2006a, p. 25) with the other-than-human environment and attempted to embody the abstract concepts that I had read about in the course literature. In other words, I attempted to artistically inhabit the theoretical concepts through translation into movement.

Below, I will present three log-excerpts that were written during the arts-based research seminar in 2018. Each log-excerpt is completed by a short analysis of how I interpreted the process I was undergoing in relation to the concepts presented through my research questions. The three excerpts are followed by a discussion regarding how my experiences can or cannot serve as a model for answering the formulated research questions: How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? and How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?

**The Esso Run**

*The old Esso logo throning on top, gazing diagonally towards the bay that is [the town] and towards the open sea.*

*In the fjord, several tank ships that have been looming there for a while, looking as if they are waiting for something. Adjacent to the tank at the tip of the peninsula there is a small harbour, and one of the ships is docked.*

*[...]I am reflecting on my gaze on the tank and myself as a moving body in the world.*

*The two of us are going to approach each other. I am thriving, trotting away along the winding road.*

> *[...]I let my mind wander — enveloped by the meditative state of running — or I am falling out of my head and into the environment. When I run, I always have a feeling of being inside a bubble where my thoughts are floating around me in a cocoon or like an aura.*
>
> *I am falling in and out of focus — keeping one thought intensely and repetitive for a while and letting it go just as quickly as it arrived.*
>
> *Thoughts that are recurring are concerning me and my relation to the Esso tank. From earlier that day, Robert Stake´s wise words about himself and his ever-changing perspective as a researcher and human being is reverberating and I am reflecting on how I constantly, at this exact moment, am shifting my physical perspective (Stake, 2018).*
>
> *My body is moving forward in space and I am changing where I am geographically.*
>
> *In addition, there is a constant change happening inside my body — when I run I all the time feel something different.*
>
> *[...]I am in constant change — a reflexive, corporeal, and cognitive process that is filling all of me — I cannot think without my body or outside of my body.*
>
> *The tanker at dock is continuously buzzing away and the sound is being amplified, diminished, or changing in color and texture as my perspective is being altered. Even though the Esso tank in itself might be a constant form, my perspective and experience of the tank will never be the same, as I am in constant change both physically, mentally and geographically.*
>
> (excerpt log: Tuesday, 10 April 2018

# Analysis: Impressions

The log-excerpt clearly shows that even though I wished to have a fully embodied approach to cognition and meaning-making, I still see the mind and the body as two

separate entities. Statements such as 'myself as a moving body', 'let my mind wander', and 'my body is moving forward' (not me?) are evidence of remnants of a dualistic mind/body concept. According to Johnson (2007), it is rather common for a dualistic view to creep into the methods that even proponents of non-dualistic views theorize (p. 112). There is the idea of the body as material, while the thoughts are metaphysically 'floating around'. However, I use metaphors for cognition that are related to embodiment ('...let my mind wander') and cognitive concepts that appear to echo the running activity ('keeping one thought intensely and repetitive'). As described by Galetzka (2017, p. 3) and Lakoff & Johnson ( 2003 [1980]), metaphors provide a means to describe how abstract concepts are linked to sensorimotor experience and activation and how human beings understand the world through interaction with it (ibid, p. 183). I also relate my experience to emotion: 'I am thriving'. The statement of being in constant change indicates a phenomenological epistemic stance that I ascribe to both corporeal and cognitive processes. Still, a dualistic view is evident in the reflections, despite the efforts to oppose such an approach. It is possible that I feel the need to make a division in order to explain the embodied concept. That I, from my education and background, lack the vocabulary for describing an embodied cognition. The stream-of-consciousness of the log reveals which concepts of embodiment and mind are internalized, and which concepts need further integration, such as embodied cognition.

This first log-excerpt represents a first attempt at applying a research method to my work. Without any other particular goal than maintaining a log of thoughts related to arts-based research. Meaning, the writing was not based in a research question or an artistic idea. It simply felt good to write, so I continued writing throughout the week.

### An Ecological Approach to Choreographing Wallpaper

*On Wednesday we are visiting [a renown artist´s] house in the centre of [the town].*

*The thoughts from the run along the shore have stuck with me and developed during the night.*

*My experience with the Esso-tank still seems to have some importance regarding my negotiation of meaning in this new landscape that is arts-based research and the application of theory in the context of making art, making meaning through art, and communicating research through and with art.*

*Entering the house, my attention focuses on all the interesting small details of the house.*

*The space is quite crammed with all of us centering around the bed. I withdraw into the small kitchen and begin my exploration.*

*Drawing on my new perspective, I start to explore the room through the lens of my mobile-phone camera.*

*The macro function allows me to go really close to details, such as the peeling wallpaper and the different textures in the cleaning appliances lying on the floor.*

*My lens searches for small differences in perspective and subtle changes in lines and how the various textures interact with each other.*

*I am dwelling with and in the textures (Andrews, 2018, p. 10).*

*Being enlarged through the lens, the objects gain new qualities as something different — just by looking at them from a different perspective and maybe from a perspective closer to themselves.*

*Later, on a walk through [the town], I find myself engaged with the rust and texture of an old fire hydrant situated in a small crossing nearer to the hotel.*

*Upon returning to my room, I make small collages of the textures I have experienced.*

*By assembling more photographies, I start to choreograph the really focused space.*

*I am transforming the wallpaper to a more clear form and a movement in space — maybe still as a two dimensional space, but nevertheless a movement in space.*

*By removing the colour, I can give the textures new meaning as they become something further away from what we normally perceive them to be, or maybe something closer to what really is their possibility or quality as a basis for a choreographic expression.*

(Wednesday, 11 April 2018)

Fig.1 Fire Hydrant with rust

Fig.2 Door Molding

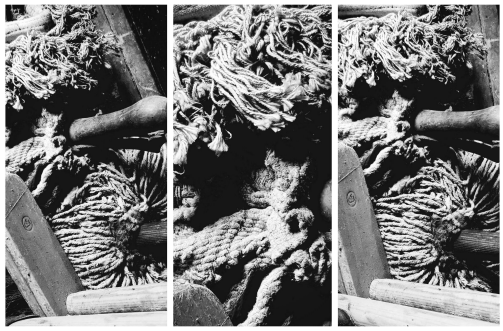

Fig.3 Mop and Cleaning Equipment

## Analysis: Impressions

In this log-excerpt, there is less evidence of the problem of embodiment. I seem more interested in translating the ideas to materials outside of myself; thus, there is no mention of embodiment, as described earlier. Instead, the concepts of attention and focus are of interest — bodily concepts, but translated to materiality.

Here is my first articulation of a perceived difficulty in the bridging of theory and practice and the challenge of communicating research on and in art, through and with art, as well as through writing. The fact that I use the term 'negotiation of meaning' already provides evidence of the new concepts starting to make meaning to me. Through the lens of my camera, I step outside of my own meaning-making and take on varied perspectives, maybe as metaphors for research.

The discussion at the end of the log-excerpt — where I first state that 'I start to choreograph the really focused space' and later 'their possibility or quality as a basis for a choreographic expression' — implies a conflict of concepts with regard to what choreography is. The first statement could very well be theoretically founded in the so-called 'new choreography' (Cvejić, 2015, p. 13) and the choreography of the non-anthropocene (Ingvartsen, 2016, p. 9). The photographies could be considered to be choreography, while the other considers photography and materiality to be inspiration for movement or the making of a dance, more than posing as choreography in itself. Referring to how I earlier in this essay have described my notion of choreography, as something that has to involve the human body, I am noticing a theoretical conflict within myself, where I, on a written, philosophical and intellectual level have no problem with the notion of a non-anthropocene choreography. However, on an emotional level, and as a dancing body in the world, I struggle with letting go of the domains of dance and choreography to, somehow, give it away to the non-anthropocene. I ascribe this to the before mentioned conflict of modernity and postmodernity in my dance education (Østern, 2017b, p. 5). Therefore, in an attempt to bridge the theory back to the human body in movement, I started dancing.

**An ecological approach to dance improvisation**

*I went for a walk along the shoreline.*

*Dusk was just about to set in and the light started to become blue. Very few people were out.*

*I wanted to translate my new knowledge into dance – through improvisation.*

*While walking, I was searching for ways of documenting the improvisations that I wanted to do, so I chose the space based partly on where I could put my mobile-phone camera.*

*I was aware of the camera lens as an audience and composed my improvisations spatially based on this — as far as what was possible with the means that were at hand.*

*With the very close focused photographs from earlier that day at the back of my mind, I was searching for a perspective where the camera would have focus on a close up of the foreground, and with me as a part of the environment in the background.*

*I chose three different perspectives and also three very different ground textures: sand, stone/pebbles, and a concrete pier.*

*All the different underlays had their own haptic and auditive qualities.*

*Before starting the improvisation, I decided to try to make my movement become one with the environmental sound.*

*'Sound [...] puts us in the world as no other sense does. It is a distinctly bodily sense that asserts itself with immediacy and urgency.' (Bresler, 2006a, p. 30)*

*So I would use the rhythm of the waves, the cries of the seagulls and other sounds as a basis both for the form and texture of my movements.*

*I wanted to challenge my preconception of how to move in that environment, to adopt a different perspective, maybe a more ecological approach.*

*How can I become one with the surroundings?*

*Or go into dialogue with the surroundings on their premise?*

*What would that be?*

*So I started my first improvisation in the sand.*

*Maybe more focused on the softness of the ground than the sound of it, and suddenly noticing that I was being watched by a couple walking their dog.*

*I said hi to them, trying to normalize what might not be an everyday situation for them, not wanting them to think of me as this weird artist or hippie jumping around on the shoreline.*

*My experience from earlier site-specific work tells me that going into dialogue, or being open to dialogue —with the people who feel that they have ownership to the place that is being used as a performance space — is a nice way of helping people opening up to an aesthetic experience, that they often appreciate.*

*But at this moment, I suddenly I become very self-conscious as a person, artist and researcher, I was not prepared for this.*

*After a short while, I stopped the improvisation in order to change places so that I could reset my mind.*

*In the next improvisations I felt that I could go into dialogue with the environment to a greater extent and I somewhat managed to incorporate the rhythm and auditivity of the space to my movement and also to research some new movements*[11].

(Wednesday, 11 April 2018)

11 Link to shared album with the improvisations: https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPGmHmk-fDPAd_fw9N3aeH7umdls3h8cI4G2S3lCXBTsO3csLiERLZLUuir-QlQmQ?key=NGtUQzNFV183TXRzUzhiLW1wYlJET04xMkNHUkJ3

# Analysis: Impressions

This log-excerpt shows a development from the first log-excerpt. In this one, I have begun to make meaning of the new theoretical concepts, such as the use of perspective in research, and the possibility of an ecological ontology, and I am already translating them back into my art form — a translation of written and spoken concepts back into physicality and dance movement.

Østern (2017a), connecting the field of arts-based research to more traditional qualitative research, shows how different parts of an arts-based research process can gain momentum through propellers such as form, meaning, body, and diversity (p. 13). These propellers can provide methodological challenges and destabilisation, but also accelerate the project and give direction (ibid). Here, I observe that my translation of concepts into another art form, the photographs from earlier that day, propelled the translation back into dance. Simultaneously, I began acting more methodically; I chose three different perspectives and three different underlays and, inspired by ecology, set specific rules for my exploration through improvisation in and with the environment. Although the intermission with the 'audience' stops the process for a while, or makes me pause for a moment, I manage to reset and use the experience in my continued exploration. When looking at the videos that I made, I realize that my anxiety of losing my artistic identity through going into dialogue with theory (as described in the introduction) was pointless. I still move within my aesthetic frame of reference, at least it looks like me moving. The only difference was the reason for going into the movement in the first place — why, and in relation to what I moved — and that I could have given an audience a theoretical framework for the performance through either verbal or written interaction. I do not have to lose myself by going into a dialogue with academia.

# Discussion

The three log-excerpts are poetic and only semi-structured representations of my process that, even if they are naïve, reveal a part of my journey as a budding researcher. The going back and forth between concepts, negotiation and renegotiation of modalities that are eventually presented both as linguistic poetic text, articulated through movement (see video), and discussed academically here in this essay, indicate an arts-based research process that was enjoyable. However, the intermission at the arts-based research seminar was short. How could I continue the momentum that was gained in that situation, away from home, going back to everyday life, and juggling all the demands of professional and private life without going crazy?

I will begin by attempting to articulate the process that I followed during the week of the arts-based research seminar. Then, I will show how I attempted to apply this process to the work of writing and rewriting this essay, and discuss from a phenomenological standing what felt expedient and what did not. Ultimately, I will provide how this process has affected the understanding of my artistic work.

From the three log-excerpts, I read the following process or algorithm — going into academic writing in an embodied and ecological manner that also relates to my artistic practice:

1. Encountering theory through literature and in the classroom.
2. Physical exercise — running.
3. Arts-based encounter of theory through different media and translation of theories to photography.
4. Inspiration and meaning-making through the environment and the site.

5. Connection to earlier experience in artistic practice of site-specific dance work in nature.
6. Reconnection to theory through artistic practice: the back-translation and embodiment of theory through improvisation.

The inspiration and connection to earlier work that I experienced came as a result of the process described in points 1-3. Through the negotiation of meaning across the different fields of knowledge described in literature, encountered as art in the artist´s house that we visited, and in the embodied experience of running, I saw a connection to my work as a choreographer and found a way into the theory through something that was known to me. However, the sequence described above (points 1-6) was utterly dependant on the exact events that occurred at the arts-based research seminar. Could I apply it as a universal process? Back home, when I was writing the first draft of this essay, I fell into old ways of being, where I forgot to include movement and physical exploration to my process of reading and writing. Assessing the written result, I see an echo of this — the writing was unclear and stumbling.

While rewriting in October 2018, I wanted to revisit the process from the arts-based research seminar. This time I became stranded in theories on ecologies and went deep into readings concerning this as well as phenomenology. I wanted to know everything about everything and failed to keep focus on one thing. However, this is a part of the process where the research questions emerged from the writing.

Using camping outdoors as a mode of 'getting out of the head' and into the environment, I brought the literature outside in order to read in nature (connecting point 2 and 5). I also attempted to do eco-improvisations as I did at the site of the arts-based research seminar (point 6); in order to embody the theoretical concepts, such as theories of eco-phenomenology (Brown & Toadvine, 2003). I entered into the dance improvisations expecting an epiphany, a sudden theoretical insight, without any results, perhaps due to the reason that I did not give it enough time, that I gave

up too early. The dance felt fake and did not come from a place of inspiration within me. I just went through the procedure. I felt disembodied in my reading and relation to theory. In the writing process, I had a feeling of being a brain with two hands and a behind (that I was sitting on) that was being physically drawn into the computer screen. This feeling made me question my entire hypothesis that there was a way for me to make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice. The research process was laborious and exhausting (Østern, 2017a, p.18), and I lost myself and my feeling of embodied connection to the theory and, thus, inspiration from theory.

Currently, I am re-writing this essay for the second time and I might have found a middle ground. I looked at what had been productive in the week at the arts-based research seminar, and attempted to formulate the points that are described above, and to follow them.

This time it was easier to read and go into new literature (perhaps because I am more used to the academic language of different fields of knowledge), and because the reading was easier, there was more time for structuring thoughts on paper. Relating to points 4-6, I employed an embodied approach to the paper itself. As a dancer, that was one, essential, way of connecting to the writing. I need to physically be part of the writing process. This implies that I have to use real paper to structure my thoughts by drawing and coding through colouring and lying on the floor, using my whole body, instead of sitting on a chair in front of a computer. For me, this created a bridge to my physical being and embodiment as a dancer.

Looking back at the different theories of embodiment presented earlier in this essay, my experiences connect to both the more scientific explanations of embodied learning of abstract concepts and meaning-making (such as Clement et al., 2018, or Kornpetpanee and Job, 2017) as well as the inclusive, more phenomenological

explanations provided by, amongst others, Johnson (2015), Shusterman, (2000) and Varela et al. (1991).

I find that physical exercise (point 2) and being in nature with no particular goal is imperative to have time to understand abstract concepts and to let the mind float. In a busy life, the physical exercise part of the process could just be walking around the block a couple of times. My experience was that walking to work (a thirteen-minute walk) in the morning gave me valuable time to formulate questions or see connections regarding the literature that I had read the night before. This, in a way, became an embodied form of writing, seeing that I sometimes had to stop every ten meters because I needed to write something down.

Perhaps, being a novice in the field of academic writing, this process and feeling of failure in and alienation from the art form is something that is necessary. However, I believe that it would have been possible, with early and continued mentoring, to have had a more constructive process where one could experience a form of artistic connection throughout. In order for this to happen, I believe that artists or artist educators coming from a practice-based background need more tools to translate the knowledge and work processes more easily into the field of research. In a first attempt at translating arts-based research into writing, one needs time for the reflexive process to happen as a circular abductive process over time. Also, some sort of catalyst, such as a seminar, could be productive. I believe that this could lead to more assertiveness when 'coming out' as an arts-based researcher who conveys results through writing.

I have not yet managed to make my writing an integrated part of my artistic practice; temporarily this process serves more as an inspiration to the practice than a part of the practice itself. The research, however, provided me with theories that were highly relevant to my artistic practice — particularly within the field of eco-phenomenology which gave me the words to contextualize previous artistic practice, and effectively, future practices.

Through writing and reading academic literature, I experience performances (as an audience) in a different way, and I enter into my own artistic process in a more critical, but also more open, way. The anxiety that I experienced concerning losing the immediate and embodied impact of a performance or work of art, through applying theoretical concepts or philosophy to the work, is completely gone. I realise that the processes or discourses can be simultaneous and feed off of each other. The work of art can still remain the work of art even if I now have the tools to discuss the work academically. There is a choice of simply entering the phenomenological experience of the work. The value of the art in itself is still there, even if it is discussed critically in another forum or through another medium. Therefore, I can say that I gained a better understanding of my artistic practice through the attempt at writing academically.

# Conclusion

Is there a way to make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? Can the artistic practice be better understood through academic writing?

In this essay, I have provided insight into the process of a novice arts-based researcher and the struggles with making meaning of going into the process of academic writing. I showed how embodiment of thought through movement and dance can be important for the bridging of artistic practice to a theoretical field. In addition the result shows how a '[p]rolonged engagement and immersion in both fieldwork and analysis, allows us [the researchers] to 'move closer'[...]' (Bresler, 2006b, p. 56) to the object being researched and thus to take the ideas to the next level (Bresler, 2006b, p. 56).

Through dance improvisation, I have made sense of myself as related to a broader world (Fraleigh, 2017, p. 249) and have experienced an understanding of how eco-phenomenology (Brown & Toadvine, 2003) can connect to the manner in which I

relate to knowledge and how it is possible to communicate that knowledge through academic writing and through an artistic practice. Tsouvala & Magos (2016), working with movement improvisations with students who came from other fields than dance, found that:

> [Working with movement] as a reflective and critical practice [...] provided them with new ideas about the body-self and the world that is the basis of our entire intellectual understanding and knowing. (p. 38)

This can perhaps show how the going back and forth between the domains of embodiment (any movement practice) with literature (theory), and writing, can be fruitful going both ways, not only for dancers going into academia.

Can my process be relevant to other artist-researchers? Do others encounter similar challenges? In her paper entitled *Embodied Making, Creative Cognition and Memory,* Gulliksen (2016) included pictures of woodwork, her artistic medium, that she created while writing the paper. Although she does not explicitly discuss the importance of her creation process while writing, her selected texts and photographs appear to indicate that it is important for her to maintain the connection to her art form while academically discussing parts of the embodied making process in writing. This relates to my experience, as a dancer, attempting to keep contact with the art form while writing.

In the doctorate thesis *EXPANDED CHOREOGRAPHY: Shifting the Agency of Movement in the Artificial Nature Project and 69 Positions* by Ingvartsen (2016), the written theorization is even more closely related to the artistic practice and research, and it seems to have been a simultaneous process, at least in parts of the project. Fiksdal (2019) articulates this process more explicitly in her doctoral thesis *Affective Choreographies*. Inspired by political theorist Jane Bennett she (Fiksdal) describes how all aspects of her life — such as hours of sleep, cups of coffee, books read, or the nature of the work space — participate in the creation of *thought-*

*movement* and *movement-thought* (Fiksdal, 2019, p.25). However, she does not go into detail regarding exactly how this interrelation of the *thought-movement* and *movement-thought* works as a method for connecting academic writing to artistic research and practices, only that there is a connection. Her main concern is describing her artistic findings and the concept of affective choreography, not the process of theorizing in itself.

Similarly, Vist (2016), in her article Arts-based research processes in ECEC: examples from preparing and conducting a data collection, discusses how her research and writing process interacts with the practice of her art and creates a '[...]rhizomatic in-between, a type of back and forth process between the art medium and the verbal language' (p. 6). Nevertheless, there is no explicit method or algorithm for how one could cater to this back-and-forth between the practice of the art, research and writing that I can find in any of my sources. The abductive approach described by, amongst others, Østern (2017a, p. 19) merely refers to a non-linear research process. In this essay I have reflected on my own research and writing process in terms of connection to my art form, and through the process a need for a more explicit method has manifested itself.

Academic writing, as all art forms, needs the practicing of certain analytical and reflective skills, that can only be acquired through repetition and intensive exchange of ideas. Or, as Manning and Massumi (2014) put it, finding '[...] a technique [that] involves activating a passage between creative forces' (p. 94). In the discussion above, I propose one technique or algorithm for this that connects with the artistic practice. Below I have attempted generalize the algorithm to fit other artist researchers:

1. Encountering theory through literature or a mentor or peer.
2. Physical exercise—any preferred exercise, such as, running, yoga, hiking or skiing.

3. Arts-based encounter of theory through different artistic expressions or media, and translation of theories to an artistic expression, close to, or in opposition to the artists own expression.
4. Inspiration and meaning-making through the environment and the site or consulting an alternative site.
5. Connection of theory to earlier experience in artistic practice.
6. Reconnection to theory through artistic practice: a back-translation and embodiment of theory through the artistic practice.

Depending on what practice the researcher comes from this can be applied as a process where different modes of inspiration are added, connecting the practicing of the art form to the written material, and vice versa. I see this as a circular and repetitive process (an abductive approach), where it could be equally fruitful to jump back and forth between the different points as to apply the points as a set sequence. The writing process can be a continuous practice that happens simultaneously with the six points. The process needs refinement, further research and testing in various settings in order to investigate its relevance for other artist-researchers. Nevertheless, I believe it could be a viable starting point for artists or researchers who need the inspiration to embark on a academic journey or approach a project from a different angle.

In addition, I find that time is an important factor in finding a way to make academic writing an embodied, ecological, and artistic practice and in making academic writing important in understanding an artistic practice. I propose that A/r/tographer (or artist-researcher) residencies could be developed with this in mind, drawing from experiences with artist residencies. As Lehman (2017) puts it, an artist residency provides the artist '[...]a time where the artist can reflect, conduct research, and investigate new works or means of production' (p. 9). As I experienced at the arts-based research seminar it can be fruitful to spend time away from home in a

different environment (Lehman, 2017, p.9). Possibly being particularly important when entering into a new practice, such as an artist initiating an academic writing practice or process.

For novice artist researchers, it would be valuable to be able to enter into curated encounters with researchers, and artists from their own, or other, fields in in order to facilitate an exchange of practices, to teach artists how to practice research that is viable (Østern, 2017a, p. 12). Also, to inspire the use of alternative methods both in the research, and in the written account of the research, and the artistic practice. These encounters would have to include writing academically as a subject of exchange in order to emancipate the artists in academia. This might be particularly important for artists coming from silent art forms, such as dance, where the academisation has happened recently (Cvejic, 2015, p.7).

As mentioned in the introduction, projects that promote dialogue and inspiration among artists and researchers, artists and academics, or artists and scientists are fairly common (See for example Bentsman et al. 2016; Manning and Massumi, 2014; Lehman, 2017). However, it seems that everyone involved in those projects participate on their own terms, which implies that if I were to participate as a dancer, I would bring movement as my main mode of communication. The discussions between the different groups might involve verbalization of concepts, maybe even in some form of written material, but, the way I interpret it in the mentioned papers, the artists are not encouraged to engage in academic writing or dissemination of research that shows methodological reflexivity, theory, transparence and critique (Østern, 2017a, p. 12).

In order to inspire more artists (and especially dancers and choreographers) to present their research in written form (academic writing) I propose that future artist, researcher collaborations should also include mentoring on academic writing for the artists. Despite the enlightenment in philosophy of dance over the last 20 or 30 years

(Cvejić, 2015) and, therefore, an increase in research about and through dance, artist practitioners are not equipped with sufficient knowledge when going into research (Roar, 2016, pp. 314-15), particularly when writing academically or otherwise conveying research to a broader field of knowledge. Borgdorff (2012), states:

> 'Research' is 'owned' by science; it is performed by people who have mastered 'the scientific method', in institutions dedicated to the systematic accumulation of knowledge [...] (p. 159).

As a practitioner, I want to master the scientific method but I lack the confidence, knowledge, and practice to do so. Through the writing of this essay, I have gained more confidence, but it has been a strenuous and all-encompassing process (Østern, 2017a, p. 18) with a substantial amount of perceived failure on the way. Although, perhaps an all-encompassing, and challenging process is necessary in order to profoundly understand any new field of practice? However, in order to be able to complete the task, and not give up on the way, it is invaluable with mentoring and being part of an artistic, and a research community that provides constructive feedback at various stages of the writing, and research process.

I believe that there is room for more research in the field of bridging the gap for artists going into research and academic writing. Artists, researchers, and facilitators (such as institutions) need to find methods of translation from existing academic and artistic theory, terminology, and practice in order to emancipate the artists who embark on a research process with the goal of dissemination in written form. Possibly, this also aid the creation of new methods that relate to the way individual artists interact with their work.

Finally, I propose research on how one can include an academic style of thinking and writing into the lower levels of higher art education (Bachelor programmes or even vocational training) to a greater extent than it is done today (in Norway) (Roar, 2016, p.310). Throughout the writing of this essay, I have taught my regular classes at

MTHS in jazz dance and composition. I have contemplated how theory and an academic mindset can be included in the dance pedagogy — in the manner in which exercises are articulated, how discussions in class are initiated, or how written material or academic literature is included in movement classes. Going further with this could be a possible future research project.

I have emerged from this writing process inspired (for further research and artistic projects), more knowledgeable, and with more questions that need answering regarding my field of practice and how I relate to research in general. Moreover, I have come to enjoy writing as a form of reflection and I am on my way to understand the academic style of writing as well. As Eisner (1991) eloquently expresses,

> As almost all academics know, writing forces you to reflect in an organized and focused way on what it is you want to say. Words written confront you and give you the opportunity to think again. Thinking on its own, without the commitment that writing extracts, makes tolerable — even pleasurable — the flashing thought, the elusive image. (p. 11)

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# How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex

## An episode of the radio show Music and Equality

Cecilia Ferm Almqvist

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# Abstract

The article will shed light on both the challenges to and possibilities for growth as an ensemble guitarist within upper secondary popular music ensemble courses in Sweden. The paper is a critique of an un-reflected view of popular music as a preferred situation for musical learning in schools. It is intended both as a thought-provoking speech directed to ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education, and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education. The article is based on an existential–philosophical way of thinking, mainly in line with the thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir, both when it comes to the view of human beings independent of sex[1] and as a base for how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way. Hence, the format of the article, drawing on Arts-based research philosophy, is constituted as an imagined radio show episode, including a programme leader (PL), two young female guitarists – Anna and Lucy – and one prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir (SdB). The article consists of text as well as a sounding dialogue and drawings. The dialogue is based on interview material combined with studies of primary and secondary Beauvoir literature. Issues that will be explored in the conversation have emerged in an earlier study of the story of one female guitarist: an upper secondary student at a specialist music programme. Issues chosen for the current article shown to be crucial from an equality perspective are; *Transcending boys and immersing girls, the male gaze, relations to patriarchal repertoire, possible projects and the role of the teacher.*


Keywords: Arts-based, radio-show, Guitar playing women, becoming, de Beauvoir

1 Sex is in line with de Beauvoir defined as the physical difference between males and females. Gender is something human beings become, and in this article the ambition is to start where humans are seen as equal beings, independent of physical prerequisites.

# How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex

Cecilia Ferm Almqvist[2]

## Introduction

The article examines the challenges to and possibilities for equality in opportunities to grow as an ensemble guitarist within upper secondary popular music ensemble courses. These courses constitute a central part of music specialist programs, open for anyone to apply for, at upper secondary level in Sweden. The contribution is a critique of an un-reflected view of popular music as a preferred informal situation for musical learning in schools, which has been accentuated by for example Folkestad[i]. "However, teachers might be able to create learning situations in which informal learning processes can appear / . . . / [but] I strongly question the sometimes implicitly normative value judgements underlying some of the literature and discussions, where informal is equal to good, true or authentic, while formal is equal to artificial, boring and bad".[ii] Among other things, Folkestad's critical point has made me pay attention to the risk of conservation of

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traditional gender roles in in-formal and non-formal situations in music education.[iii] Hence, the contribution is intended both as a thought-provoking speech directed to ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education, and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education.

The study is based on an existential–philosophical way of thinking, mainly in line with the thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir, both when it comes to the view of human beings independent of sex,[iv] and as a base for how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way.[v] The aim was to create a situation where the reader-listener comes close to the experiences of the female guitarists, and how these experiences can be understood from an existential philosophical perspective. An important prerequisite in such a communication of results is that several senses are engaged, and that situation is possible to live. de Beauvoir underlines the importance of letting the reader to be thrown into the factual, through creating melodramatic texts. She meant that artistic forms of expressions had to be used to mediate complexity in human relational situations. Dialogic (imaginative) narratives have been used in several qualitative studies aiming to create a living situation within the field of music education.[vi] The wider ambition with this arts-based contribution, is to offer sounding verbal expressions, in a dialogic form, that hopefully even more increases the possibility to take the perspective of the other, and live the melodramatic situation. Hence, the format of the article is a radio show episode, drawing on Arts based research philosophy[vii] that encourage alternative forms of expressions is to widen possibilities for communication and meaning making, which also opens new possibilities for interpretation. In addition, that was mentioned earlier is that several human senses can be used, and that tools for understanding are influencing what is possible to understand.

The episode includes a programme leader (PL), two young female guitarists – Anna and Lucy, who have never met before – and one prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir (SdB). The dialogue is a result of a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis of interviews with two former students at a specialist music upper secondary program, where ensemble playing was a central course.[viii] The analysis resulted in five themes, that together describes the phenomenon of becoming a guitar playing woman, namely *Transcending boys and immersing girls, the male gaze, relations to patriarchal repertoire, possible projects and the role of the teacher.* In the created dialogue the words of the interviewees themselves have been adjusted only to suit the dialogical form. The themes are developed in relation to philosophical concepts, defined and investigated in primary and secondary de Beauvoir literature.[ix]

## The radio show[3]

PL: Welcome to this episode of Music and Equality, where we invite people from the areas theory, philosophy and practice to discuss current themes and engaging questions. Today we will have a conversation about female experiences of participating in ensemble education in upper secondary school specialist programmes, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's theories about sexual difference and the concept of situation. Earlier research shows that Mme de Beauvoir's theories can help to explain – and provide means of change for – situations where there is a risk that traditional gender roles will be conserved. Her phenomenological philosophy offers help in understanding the paradoxicality of the human condition – the condition of having to exist as both singular and universal, as concrete and spiritual,

3 To listen to the show click the blue heading "The radio show" while connected to the internet

as finite and infinite and as separate from and bound to other human beings at the same time. According to Mme de Beauvoir's 'poetics of subjectivity', the expressive possibilities of a situated autobiography can make it possible to reveal such fundamental ambiguities of human existence.[x] A majority of gender studies in the field of music education are based on the performative theory of Judith Butler,[xi] another non-essentialist, but constructionist, philosopher. Butler's view of the body in relation to sex differs from that of Mme de Beauvoir.[xii] Mme de Beauvoir, states that repetitions and habits are stratified in the body as experiences, and that human beings are able to make choices in a situation. Butler on the other hand, sees the body as an effect of a discursive process of materialization,[xiii] and this is why it is interesting to have Simone de Beauvoir here today. In this episode we will touch upon themes as transcendence and immanence, to understand expected behaviour among girls vs. boys, the male gaze that also can explain why girls feel evaluated and judged, we will talk about girls relations to patriarchal genres, and how girls can be encouraged to run their own musical projects. Finally we will come into the role of the teacher in ensemble education. We now welcome Anna, and Lucy, and last but not least Simone de Beauvoir.

SdB, Anna, Lucy: Thank you!

PL: Lucy is twenty years old, she finished upper secondary school one year ago, and her main instruments were electric guitar and trumpet. Before she started her upper secondary studies, she was enrolled in a music programme, including ensemble playing, at a lower secondary school. During the last year, she has studied gender theory, worked with different temporary jobs, played in different bands, and released her first EP with her

own band. Anna is twenty-five. She too has studied at a music specialist programme in both lower and upper secondary education. Her main instrument is electric guitar, her second is classical guitar, and she also plays violin and electric bass. After secondary school, Anna studied for two years at a folk high school, specializing in rock music; she also completed four years of a five-year music teacher programme. She had one semester of sick leave, caused by high pressure and stress. Anna has played in several band projects connected to her education. And; Simone de Beauvoir, we are so glad that you are able to join us, and we invite you to introduce yourself and, briefly, those aspects of your theories that you think are relevant to our subject today.

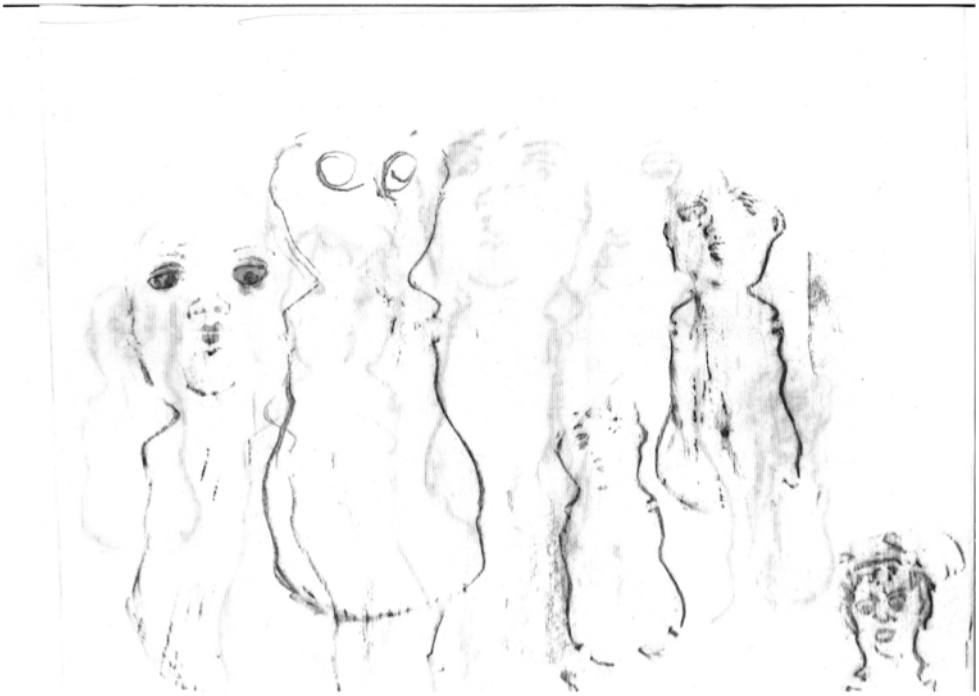
SdB My view of the difference between men and women is not radical, instead I see men and women as variations of human embodiment. So, otherness is not, as I see it, something essential, but merely different starting points.[xiv] Both men and women are able to cope and be active, but in each situation some behaviours are expected, and conserved, or reacted upon related to sex – actions that have been symbolized and then layered, and are still preserved today.[xv] Women are expected to behave immanently, and men transcendentally. I encourage all human beings to use their agency, to be active 'doers', and not passive sufferers or adaptive beings. Instead they should help each other to become equal through action.[xvi] I think it is really important for all human beings to be directed towards projects, to extend their bodies, and to be transcendental. There are historical explanations of traditional behaviours and expectations, which can't be compared to those of other historically oppressed groups. The subordination of female human beings comes from the need for them to be 'at home' for continual child bearing and breast feeding, while men had to risk their lives in hunt and

war. The latter functioned as transcendental activities that gradually accrued symbolic values – values that have been (and still are) conserved and layered, by both men and women, and other genders. To give birth was, of course, also a way of risking one's life, but rather than an active choice, it strengthened the realm of immanence, as it was seen as a consequence of a 'natural' life.[xvii]

PL: I guess playing electric guitar can be seen as a transcendental symbolic activity that has been layered and conserved as traditionally male, based on your theories Madame de Beauvoir!?

SdB: That is possible. But it is also important to keep in mind the concept of situation.[xviii] My aim was to shed light on patriarchal structures, and how they limited female actions. I view female biology as an obstacle to be surmounted rather than a fixed destiny, and I underline possibilities. I stress the body as a 'situation' rather than a 'thing', by which I mean that biology cannot be understood outside of its social, economic and psychological context. Hence, biology alone is insufficient to explain why women are constituted as the Other; situation can be defined as a constant process of becoming.[xix]

PL: Thanks so far. One aspect that became obvious in the earlier study I mentioned, when we began, is that different roles appear in the ensemble situation. Would you like to say something about that Lucy or Anna?



*Transcending boys and immersing girls*

Lucy: When I started upper secondary I had really high expectations about ensemble playing, which is a course with a responsible teacher, and I looked forward to playing with other skilled people. But I was disappointed, as some people just took for granted that they could sit in and play their instrument, that they were the best and should have all the solos. I don't think they understood that we were all there to play together, and the teacher didn't underline that either. It was like the teacher took a step back, like the ensemble course was seen as an informal situation, where we played popular and jazz music in the way musicians do outside school.

Anna: Yeah, I recognize that, some people really wanted to be seen and heard; but I wanted to lift others, even if I also wanted to be seen as good and to play solos. I wanted everyone to have equal opportunities. But people thought more about themselves, as if only they themselves should be heard. And yes, the teacher was rather peripheral.

Lucy: One problem was that I was used to being rather good at music, and I wanted good grades. And as the teacher wasn't present when we practiced, many people didn't do anything. And I played 'third' guitar, and then it seemed like I didn't do anything. So, I arranged the song. I didn't want to enter the scene and play something that sounded bad. That's embarrassing. So, that arranging was not just to put it together, but, to create something good. Unfortunately that wasn't valued, nor noticed. The ones who only sat in and played in the end, they got good grades too, and more cred.

Anna: I took the role of leader as well, to make it all function, gathered the horde, helped others et cetera, even when there was a teacher present. And as we didn't have any bass-player, I often changed instrument to make the ensemble complete; one of the other guitarists refused to do that. I don't know, I adapted to the others, the guys, I wanted to be good, and have all the others as friends. I thought most things were fun, but anyway ...

PL: Simone de Beauvoir, can you see any reasons for why this is happening?

SdB: What I have seen, is that female actions always are related to male-determined norms, which may explain why you two take on tasks that the male participants do not. Also, according to my analyses, women are shaped by society to grow towards marriage, where they are expected to take care of the family and household. Hence, they are encouraged to learn many things superficially, which makes them abandon their personal

interests more easily than men. Even if societal attitudes toward couples and marriage have changed since my investigation was conducted, differences in how deeply young people engage in their interests remain relevant.

Lucy: Another aspect of that is that my mates and I struggled to get the teacher to understand what we actually did. Sometimes we told him: 'Just so you know, that was me who put it all together.' There were too many guitarists as well, and I was encouraged to play trumpet instead – not so suitable in Abba or hard rock. So, since I didn't dare ask for a solo, I played fourth guitar in that genre, and then I had no opportunity to show my skills.

Anna: I think we led the way in deciding what we played and who should play what to a rather high extent. Yeah, and that's why I played the bass a lot. But I felt that I claimed my space anyway,[xx] I had my guitar solos and all of that. I was rather firm when it came to that. I didn't want to be lousier than anyone else. I wanted to show what I was able to and so on. I had a little of both.

Lucy: I understand. But I think that a girl often gets a more responsible role, and you had that as well. For me it wasn't possible to just slide around, because I wasn't that skilled. And to be rather good at many things didn't count in the same way.

Anna: Yeah, it was actually a lot of pressure to have both roles ... And, the others also got used to having someone who fixed things; they could relax and trust the good result anyway.

Lucy: And know that they'd have good feedback as well

Anna: At the same time as I thought I showed my skills by contributing to the

group, I kind of liked the role of the leader as well. But why did I?

SdB: This is interesting. The taking care of 'the family' at the same time as the male human beings perform transcendental actions can be seen, as I mentioned, as old behaviours that have become symbolic. It seems like playing guitar solos is a symbolized male action. Adapting has been a way for women to relate to 'male' transcendental actions that have been layered and conserved for a very long time. To both run your project and think about 'the whole' at the same time is connected to ambiguity, the balance between freedom and responsibility.[xxi] To take care of both your own freedom and others' is an important goal, but that is something all students should learn in school, and such processes should be encouraged and le by the teacher.

Lucy: I'm impressed by you, Anna – that you had the courage and strength to claim that space. I thought that if a girl came in and rocked the floor of the guys, it would be seen as strange: 'Doesn't she have a life? Has she been sitting at home and practising every night?' We were expected to be with friends all the time, to hang out together in the weekends.

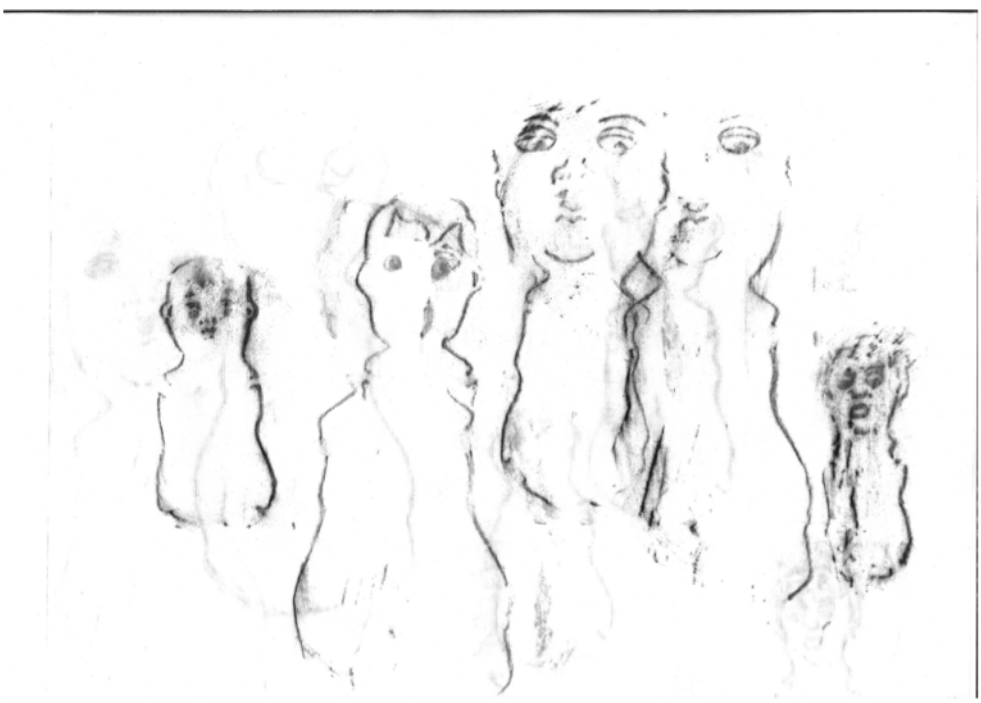
Anna: But I did that too. And I had practised four instruments, and had good grades in all subjects, and I never shirked.

PL: Do you have any comment upon this Mme de Beauvoir?

SdB: It seems that you behave immanently, and might avoid a transcendental way of being. To some extent, you claim your space, in the factual situation, not least you Anna, but to me it seems that you take much to responsibility for the whole, and forget your own project. But, as I have said many times, to transcend and run projects demands that all individual see each other as free human beings. It seems like in this ensemble situation, both male and

female students are hindered by being oppressors and oppressed in unreflected ways,[xxii] and that should be a huge challenge for the teacher to loosen up.

PL: This is really interesting. I suppose one aspect of that could be to create an environment there all students run their musical projects openly and become them selves in the social setting. But, I would like to talk a little bit more about practicing and being good at your instrument. What do you say Lucy?



*The male gaze*

Lucy: Where did you practise Anna?

Anna: At home. I didn't want anyone to hear.

Lucy: Neither did I. And the practise rooms at school even had windows, you were totally exposed. My mates and I wanted to handle our parts when we came to the ensemble. We only wanted to perform when we really knew the music.

PL: Could you please develop this a bit?

Anna: I would never have practised in public. It felt so embarrassing to make a mistake. Even in the ensemble lessons. I mean, some people sat in the spare time room and played for themselves, or with a group around them.

Lucy: I know, so nerdy, and unsocial, I would never have done that. But something is wrong when you go to a specialist music programme, and you don't want anyone to hear your practise. Boys didn't seem to care so much.

SdB: How come that still in the twenty-first century, women accept and confirm behaviours that diminish their bodies, and in this case musical bodies? What would happen if you were demanded to be viewers, not only the ones who are seen?[xxiii]

PL: What do you think Anna, did the boys feel that they were viewed by you in the same way?

Anna: No, I practised "far too much" to be the best from the beginning; the boys more like took it as it came. And they did not care so much about grades in the other subjects either. They could skip a History lesson and play the

guitar instead.

Lucy: Yeah. I also think that sitting in the spare time room and playing the guitar is about styling. I would never do that either. I think I am good at playing the guitar, but not in the right way. In a way that is worth styling. And it made me nervous to think that someone might hear me handling something badly.

Anna: At the same time, it was important to show that you could play hard and advanced things, like jazz solos over complicated chord progressions. To show your skills. In the lessons and concerts.

Lucy: Yes, that's why you practised. To get confirmation from the others – that they should think I could do something (without knowing how much I'd practised). It was important that the teacher gave me good cred in front of the boys, so they understood that I could do something, otherwise it was kind of meaningless.

SdB As I have said before, 'Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself'.[xxiv] I mean that whatever human beings perceive, including other people, is rendered as an 'object' of their gaze and is defined by them – the viewer. Applied to men's perception of women, the very concept of woman becomes a male concept: woman is always 'other' because the male is the 'viewer': he is the subject and she the object – the meaning of what it is to be a woman is defined by men. This could be useful when it comes to understand how you present yourself and what that may lead to. The risk that gender roles will be conserved in musical learning within these settings become obvious. As I said, the male gaze, among other things, creates the

difference between a female body and a woman, in the situation, in the continual process of becoming.[xxv]

PL: So, why is this so hard to change? And what are the specific conditions of the situation in upper secondary programs?

Anna: In secondary I started to think it was very hard to perform, I had high expectations of myself. And it was not about the teacher's reactions, but about what the other skilled instrumentalists thought. And, in the guitar world, this is very much about playing nice solos. Fastest, and most beautiful. That's the way of showing your skills.

Lucy: I recognize that so well. I didn't like their musical taste or expression, but the common view was that jazzy licks and scales were valuable. I am not interested in that, nor do I think it's beautiful or anything. But anyway, that's the group of people you want to impress. And their feedback makes you feel good or bad. I really wanted them to say that I was good.

SdB: This is worrying, and I recognize it. If you search for yourself in the eyes of the other, through the taken for granted male gaze, before you have given yourself a shape, you are nothing. You will achieve a form only if you look out at the world from yourself through love and actions.[xxvi] But as I said earlier, in an unequal society females are always forced to relate to predetermined patriarchal norms and structures.

PL: So, it seems that something is connected to the choice of content here, and also what is seen as valuable musical knowledge.

*Relations to patriarchal repertoire and agreements*

Anna: To be good at music in upper secondary was to be a very skilled instrumentalist in specific genres. To improvise over complicated harmonies was good. So, to care about the whole, and to handle many things was a minus. To do both was really exhausting.

Lucy: No, it wasn't cool to be caring, it was cool to be a nerd. And the nerds were expected to play solos. And to like the Beatles and aim to do something beautiful in a simple way, was not appreciated. It should be complicated; 'Wow, the metre is changing'.

Anna: It was also hard for me to really be a member of the group I played with at

that time. They all liked Toto, they were actually very much into Toto, and of course I could play that as well, I liked a lot of music, but it wasn't my favourite. That was that year, my bad luck. I could come with suggestions, but as there were four of them and one of me, they had many more accepted suggestions, so to speak. But, my interest was music from the seventies and blues, so that was to some extent approved, something rather close to jazz.

PL: Is there any comment upon the different choices appearing here?

SdB: This is complicated. If a female human being engages in and likes something that is accepted, as I can imagine a musical style might be, she can be seen as a masculine woman (and by that risk to be unaccepted as a woman). on the other hand, if a female human being goes into another area or style, she can be seen as a feminine, less valued musician. Both ways are, as I see it, influenced by relations to the agreed-upon male values.[xxvii]

Lucy: In my experience the teachers liked those kind of set musical styles as well. You were trained and measured in relation to that all the time. Not only in ensemble lessons.

Anna: I know. Prestige music. With male instrumentalists as role models. And all instrument pupils were boys, other than me.

Lucy: As I said, I always played third or fourth guitar, if I didn't play the trumpet. And it was also always decided beforehand, who should play the solo. There was no talk about taking turns, or that more than one could train the solo, and I didn't dare to say anything.

Anna: I think I was treated like the others, or maybe I claimed that place. Of course, the first comment was always; 'Oh, how fun that you are here and

that you play the electric guitar'. One strange thing though, was that because there were so many guitarists at the school at that time, I got a classical guitar teacher. Also, because I had only had my dad as a previous teacher. So the first years I just had classical guitar lessons. And that was a totally new instrument to me. Interesting and also a bit fun. But strange. One other guy had this teacher, but all the others got electric guitar lessons.

SdB: This is an example of the way intertwinedness of body and mind helps to explain women's oppression. Women do not choose to think about their bodies and bodily processes negatively; rather they are forced to do so as a result of being embedded in a hostile patriarchal society. Through my historical phenomenological investigation,[xxviii] I found that women have been deported from the common world to their immanence. I once expressed it as 'if you showed her the future, she wouldn't have to be established in the present'.[xxix] So, therefore, women must be encouraged to run their own projects.

## *Possible Projects*

Lucy: Strange, that you got a classical guitar teacher; what kind of future does that suggest? Again it's about adapting, and to accept, and even like, the situation. I felt that no-one was really interested in what I wanted to do, what music I liked, or what my goals were.

Anna: I didn't even think about that. I thought everything was fun. Almost.

Lucy: But there were things we didn't do. Like playing guitar in the spare time room, and things just we did do, like arranging the songs, or playing missing instruments. I'm not sure if that was what we really wanted.

Anna: No, and we weren't often able to play the music we liked, or even encouraged to state our musical taste. But we were young also.

SdB: I think the way forward for women is to pursue autonomy through self-affirming work, and be aware of their situation by connecting to other women. Women should not relinquish their moral freedom and passively accept the secondary status offered to them by patriarchal society, even if this is not the easiest route, because it enables women to avoid the struggle implicit in human encounters and forging an authentic existence.[xxx]

Lucy: But you dared to claim your space, Anna.

Anna: Yes, but it had its price, and I also adapted, unconsciously, to the agreed values and expectations. We didn't primarily used our secret practise time to improve the skills we ourselves appreciated. We used it to be able to impress the nerds.

Lucy: To do what you want demands that you know what you want and dare to make mistakes. In public maybe.

Anna: And to feel that it is meaningful and cool. I think that the fact that I was rather alone to continue with a 'male' instrument in upper secondary gave a good feeling; 'This is cool, and I want to be good at it'.

Lucy: Yes, and for me it must have some meaning. Scales and licks didn't have any meaning for me. Instead, if I needed something more complicated to express what I wanted, I learnt it. And lately I have been much more clear when it comes to what I want, and then I can tell people how I want it to sound, and look like, and so on. In school I didn't want to be the leader, I had to in order to succeed; but now I want to lead, and that's a completely different thing. It's on my own terms.

Anna: I know. And even if I knew that I wanted to play solos and so on, I was very pressed, by the reactions. But now I can say: 'Let's do it'.

Lucy: I think you have to believe in yourself, and play without the need of boys' confirmation. It took time for me to decide to have my own band, and decide to record an album. I didn't have that plan, I just wrote some music. But now, as it has started, it is so fun, to decide myself. To mix and produce the music. To decide about the image. Totally different from school. But it is really strange to be written about as a guitarist. I think I still don't define myself as that.

PL: This is fascinating and gives hope. How can this be encouraged earlier Mme de Beauvoir?

SdB: There is no place for waiting for any human being, you must create a place through transcendence, you must have your own projects, where you create your own place through actions. If you wait for other human beings to give you a place, there will be none.[xxxi]

Anna: Oh, I want to have a band as well. I know more what my music is now. I decided to go to a rock programme for two years, and played very much, and then five years of music teacher education. Also a lot of playing. And I've found that older students are more mature when it comes to giving space to others. I write a bit, but there my expectations become a hindrance again. We'll see if I have time when I start work. But something I will do at work is to be an active role model.

SdB: You have to go for what you are interested in and happy about. When I was active as an artist, women were not expected to do expensive art, you should live a bohemian life, and it was agreed upon that literature was a good choice for female artists. Women were also expected to set their own interests aside, to prepare for family life, as I mentioned earlier. So I agree, it is so important that you have your own musical projects.[xxxii] Female human beings should run their own projects, experience freedom. I wanted to open up a space for such freedom to flourish. All situations should be places in which young female human beings can be comfortable, joyous and proud, in their bodies. Where they no longer see themselves through others' eyes, and thus are free to define their bodies for themselves, in the space of freedom. Hence, freedom is not something that human beings have, but a continual movement in relation to others. Freedom widens itself through others' freedom, which implies that the freedom of others must be respected and encouraged.[xxxiii] For example the teacher must respect the students' freedom.

PL: The importance of role models appears clearly, and the question is how female guitar student can be offered contact and interaction with active guitar playing teachers and established musicians. I interpret this as you, Mme de Beouvoir, among other things, underline the role of the teacher, when it comes to encourage girls to actively and in aware ways use their freedom. So, Lucy and Anna do you have any more thoughts about the teacher?

## *The role of the teacher*

Lucy: Yes, I think the teacher is really important, in many ways. For example as a role model.

Anna: I agree, I think that one reason there are few female instrumentalist students, and many female singers, is the lack of role models. I had my dad, in a way, he wanted me or my brother to be a rock musician, but there were no female instrument ensemble teachers at my specialist programme; they worked with choir, and accompanied the singers on piano now and then. So, when they taught ensemble they couldn't give any instrumental or technical advice: 'I don't know how to handle the amplifier'. So, I think, just by being there, I can inspire girls to play ensemble instruments.

Lucy: Yes, the teachers at my programme used to play together each time a new genre was introduced. And even if singing wasn't the first instrument of the female teachers, they sang, and they sang well enough. Only once in three years did I see one of them play the bass. The skilled (male) instrumentalist teachers, though, were admired by the nerds.

Anna: I think, there was really a difference between the sexes when it came to approaches towards ensemble teaching.

PL: This is sad, even if its understandable how this is steered by gender structures, developed over long time. What could be done to change this?

Lucy: I think teachers, both male and female, really have to encourage girls to practise and be nerds. Not put more pressure, but show that it is accepted for girls to be a nerd. Because the 'will' to adapt, to be with friends, is strong. But if there were more female and male nerdy role models it would make a change. I think more girls would think; 'Wow, I also want to be as good as that'. So, I think you are really, really important, Anna.

Anna: I also have to show that I like to play guitar, when I work as a teacher. And that there are lots of possibilities. I also think that it is important that teachers create spaces in which it is okay to make mistakes, for everyone. So we can change the feeling that 'I have to handle everything before I perform'. So it becomes allowable to be heard practising.

SdB: This is really important. Role models have to be aware of the values they mediate through action, not just through existence. It is important that females use their bodies in varied ways, and not just repeat expected actions if conservation of traditional behaviours is to be avoided.[xxxiv]

Lucy: I also think it's important that a teacher is curious about what each student wants, to be open to various genres and different ways of showing skill. They have to be more interested in the students' musical styles than in their own.

PL: It seems like that demands openness and awareness[xxxv] and braveness.

Anna: Another thing is the need for the teacher to help the students give each other space. This seems like something that comes naturally when we get older, but I think ensemble students have to learn it earlier, and the teacher

is important in this.

Lucy: Yes, and also to be engaged when it comes to changing roles: that everyone should do everything. I mean, play solos, arrange the music, play fourth guitar, play the bass, etc. I know that is possible, as it functioned well in lower secondary. The teachers think that upper secondary students are adults, but they aren't.

Anna: I agree, but I also think, as we were younger then, and hadn't established instrumental identity, it was easier. So, independent of sex, all instruments were possible to try and play. Gender structures were not so explicit.

Lucy: Alright, then it's important to keep that feeling in upper secondary. Not everyone has been through lower secondary music programmes, where you learn to take turns. It is important that everyone dares to do anything. The teachers have to create space, and engage in group dynamics. Otherwise, it is up to the students to claim their own space; and at this stage they shouldn't need to do that.

Anna: Yes, they have to be more engaged when it comes to who plays what, and when, not only care about practical musical things. The goal should be that everyone can play together on the same grounds. Sometimes it would be useful to divide into single-sex groups. And to explore other role models in music history for example.

Lucy: Yes, so future female guitarists learn to play guitar and run their own projects, instead of learning how to climb back.

Anna: Or instead of learning how to be an adapting leader.

PL: Mme de Beauvoir, do you have any final comments on what Lucy and Anna have said about the teacher's role?

SdB: The female body is both positive and negative, and women are both oppressed and free.[xxxvi] A female body is the site of this ambiguity, for she can use it as a vehicle for her freedom, to transcend her situation, and feel oppressed because of it. There is no essential truth of the matter: it depends upon the extent to which a female human being sees herself as a free subject rather than as the object of society's, or the male, gaze. In female bodily development, each new stage is experienced as traumatic and demarcates her more and more sharply from the opposite sex. As the girl's body matures, society reacts in an increasingly hostile and threatening manner. The process of 'becoming flesh' is the process whereby one comes to experience oneself as a sexual body being exposed to another's gaze. I think this might influence the way female instrumentalists behave and experience themselves in such a situation, influenced by patriarchal norms, as ensemble playing education. And, to come back to the role of the teacher, it becomes incredibly important to be aware of how female students are seen and see themselves, and to offer alternative gazes or mirrors.

PL: In such settings it is interesting to view instruments and music as extensions of the body.[xxxvii] From a situational view it seems that the musical body is shaped by a plethora of perceptions: if we feel bad about it, it becomes a 'bad thing'; if we feel good about it, it becomes a 'good thing'. But the way we think about it is not a matter of free choice unless we live in a society that gives space for that kind of transcendence. So, I suppose there are several music educators listening to this show, and therefore I want to draw some implications for music education from what you have said. As I see it, the teacher is really important, and I suppose that one task for ensemble teachers is to encourage all guitarists' projects in ensemble education through activity, to encourage both transcendence and immanence among

all pupils, on equal grounds.

SdB: Human beings strive, by nature, to extend themselves. That kind of extension is an aware activity, related to immanence, which is a passive repetition. Basically, each human existence is at the same time transcendence and immanence. To be extended it has to be preserved, and to stretch towards the future it has to interact with the past, and when it interact with others, it has to confirm itself to itself. This is a real challenge, as development of equal possibilities for musical learning is not taking place in a vacuum. To transcend is to go beyond given circumstances, conditions, and the situation that a human being exists within. And whose responsibility is it that all students get the possibility to proclaim their individuality, and independence, on safe grounds, in the ensemble education, without loosing contact with the past? One prerequisite for possibilities to transcend is the body, one of the factualities of each situation. It is of great importance that music teachers see all students as musical bodies, and not as female and male bodies. The latter is connected with a risk, that hindrances, that are not factual, but created by gender structures, influence what is possible and encouraged in the situation.[xxxviii]

PL: Yes, that seems to be so important, that the students are seen as human beings, independent of sex. Hence, it should be important to create an atmosphere where students don't care about the gaze of others, but take responsibility for their own freedom, as well as for others'. As a basis for that, it is crucial that teachers encourage all pupils to think about their own visions of ensemble playing and ensemble music, to make learning and growth meaningful. It is important that both pupils and ensemble teachers learn to take responsibility for the parts and the whole in ensemble playing so a variety of new role models and equal instrumentalists dwell in the

world of ensemble music. This means that using popular and jazz genres and connected forms and values, in an unreflected way, and step back as a teacher, is not possible, if we are heading towards a more equal music education and society. Thank you so much for being here, Mme de Beauvoir, Lucy and Anna.

SdB, Lucy and Anna: Thank you. A pleasure.

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viii The interviews were performed as open conversations where the interviewees were encouraged to tell about their experiences of ensemble education, in secondary schools primarily, but also before and after that. The dialogue is built upon translated Swedish literal expressions from the two interviewees regarding similar topics. What they told me as an interviewer was used and adjusted towards dialogical expressions.

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