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PERIPHERIES

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Image: Screen capture from Vincent Roumagnac's exposition
There is Nothing Outside the Stage Any Longer

Peripheries in Artistic Research

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RUUKKU #12 considers the conceptual, methodical, concrete and practical peripheries in the arts. This thematic issue ponders questions concerning what kinds of roles margins, peripheries or fringes have in the arts and artistic research? Can artistic research itself be conceived as a peripheral zone on the edge of the rationalistic scientific world? In the context of artistic research and the periphery theme it is interesting to ruminate upon what consequences can be expected when established ontological and epistemic questions are challenged. Also central to the thematic issue is how can periphery or peripherality be understood in artistic research in the field of the discursive-material, sensible and experiential.

Peripheries and margins may be envisioned as concrete or immaterial fields, phenomena, states of mind, associations, practices and epistemologies that are defined as ‘marginal’. When thinking of marginality, for example, as an elemental part of an artwork or an artistic process, one reaches the literal edge of artistic exploration: different (physical, discursive, conceptual, mental, imaginary, narrative, virtual, material, affective) conceptual and practical boundaries that can be linked to methods and means – or similarly, to ways of combining theoretical discussions with art’s materiality. In artistic research, theory can also be structured as material, in which case we may ask: how do the actions and gestures of investigative art relate to the materiality of language?

Peripheries are always related to things and phenomena that are positioned as ‘mainstream’. When challenging the prevailing configurations – how do peripheries, in turn, become challenged themselves? Is it possible to reassess the current conceptions and borders stemming from the sphere of so-called normative thought, visualisation and spatiotemporal representation, through ideas and activities that manifest their status as ‘peripheral’? How do different areas in art and research get to be positioned as ‘peripheral’ or ‘central’ in relation to the conditions, structures, contexts and situations created by society and the surrounding communities? What is the role of marginalities in the ontological “turn” where dualisms are cast aside, as the focus has turned toward transformation, change and non-essentialistic perceptions of the world?

This thematic issue also considers the borders of peripheries themselves, or in other words the limits of borderlines, and the marginality of the marginal. In art, peripherality may be represented by the specificity of the material, the mode of

expression, the tone, or the location of the artwork or other artistic performance. The extensive experiential landscape of artistic research creates relationships and produces tensions where certain things and elements become central and some have influence at the margin. It is with good reason that artistic research can be thought of as operating within the shadows of established knowledge structures, through piercing and questioning different predominant categories. At its best, the forms, materialisations and questions that come under scrutiny are things and issues that are linked to different contexts in such ways that they create new relationships between conditions, things, ideas and experiences.

The expositions in #13 discuss how different non-mainstream or marginal ways of thinking and practice – such as experimental theory, multisensory knowledge, improvisatory methods, or other unconventional approaches in the academic world – can open up new avenues for existing discussions and conceptions. The theme number consists of eight expositions, two of which explore methods and means of articulating artistic research (Carlin, Murray, McKinnon & Lobb, and Roumagnac), two discuss philosophical and ontological questions (Solsteif-Pirker and Giudici). Additionally, this issue includes expositions discussing peripheral environments (Timonen), normative notions of existence (Macek), socio-political relations (Brind, Harold & Souto), and the relationship between marginality and institutions (Moreschi).

Carlin, Murray, McKinnon & Lobb’s “Mixed Doubles: Collaborative writing and peripheral strategies, and some Friendly Serve-Volley” explores collaborative and performative writing practices, through which it surveys a range of issues from family and gender relations to climate change. The playfully multi-voiced research consists of written, performative and visual parts by several authors, and uses lecture-performance, letters, essays and discussions as its material. The exposition presents an idea of the body as the space and site for art and artistic research, and provides a playful take on the vast potentiality of experimental methods in research through the arts.

Vincent Roumagnac’s “There is Nothing Outside the Stage Any Longer” re-thinks the stage from an agential, spatial, temporal and material viewpoint, and proposes a shift aside from the space and time of a human-centered stage towards a stage conceived in terms of “hyper-objects”, such as climate change. The exposition architecture is using (play-)fully the potential of the Research Catalogue’s technical architecture, and throws a titillating challenge to the reader. The author’s theoretical and scenic thinking is processed and illustrated as a series of scenes that are detached from the human scale. The exposition lacks any temporal or conceptual “beginning” or “ending”, or an all-encompassing code, and thus it deconstructs exactly the hierarchies that it has set as its very challenge.

In **“Icephery and the Icy Score – concepts for multisensory approach”** Eija Timonen answers the question about a peripheral place as a field of the sensory,

the sensual and the physical. Timonen has developed a series of ice pictures using a method of “multi-sensory close-up photography”, which she uses to describe the nature and sensory power of ice both through research literature and her own bodily, experiential experimentation. By concentrating on the multisensory close-reading the place is given new meanings, as a place that seems peripheral, remote and silence, is revealed as full of meanings and sounds. Timonen’s analysis and the new concepts she has developed, the “Icy score” and “Icephery”, open up new links to humanistic environmental research and environmental reading.

Barbara Macek’s “Lycanthropus Erythematosus I. Artistic Research on the Edge. Poetical Investigations on the Margins of Medicine and Mythology” examines the Lupus autoimmune disease in the context of medicine and anthropology. The auto-ethnographic poetry associated with the autoimmune disease and the images of the disease in transformation place themselves in an interesting dialogue with medical concepts. While medical discourse medicalises the disease, auto-ethnographic works locate the life-threatening illness within the vulnerability of the body and the porosity of the skin. The mental and physical changes associated with the disease are described in the exposition as metamorphoses, and as ways of coexisting and dealing with the disease, *Lycanthropus Erythematosus*.

Susan Brind, Jim Harold ja Ana Souto’s “Exploring liminality in Cyprus: spaces, voices, and means of expression” explores the concepts of liminality, access, and means of expression using the divided island of Cyprus as their main case study. The exposition is structured in three liminal means of expression (poetic dialogues, photographic essays, and self/other negotiations) that are interrupted by “normative” voices published by a voice of authority or agency. The main methodology is practice-led and phenomenological in nature, moving from visual, textual, and reflexive ethnography to autoethnographic scenarios. The collaboration between the authors sits under the umbrella of the *Creative Centre for Fluid Territories* (CCFT), an international research center which interrogates how interdisciplinary artistic research practices contribute to and share critical insights about place making, belonging and occupation.

Christoph Solstreif-Pirker’s “Just a mere Spring to take: Embedding in Capitalocenic Atmospheres” deals with the economic crisis in Iceland, the island-nation which is considered to be on the edge of the world or at least a marginal site on the world map. The study was conducted on-site, in Iceland, and it shows how the monetary system is present in all areas of the human and non-human life of the island. The case of Iceland’s economic crisis makes clear the odd constellations between real and fictitious, human and non-human, natural and artificial. The research proposes a peripheral methodology for investigation of the manifold field of the capitalocenic.

In **“The Yellow Folder: A Research on the Periphery of Life”**, Paolo Giudici examines the memoirs of his now deceased clarinet teacher, written during his

retirement. The memoirs are, at the same time, a collection of technical exercises, as well as compositions related to the detecting of the problems with clarinet mouthpieces. After more than thirty years, these extensive notes at first appear to be outdated and marginalized in relation to the current clarinet playing instructions and pedagogies. However, Giudici demonstrates how these guidelines are based on the practice-based study and the tacit knowledge carried out by of the old master, and continue to be in this sense a valuable addition to current artistic research.

Bruno Moreschi's "Ways of Visiting: non-traditional and peripheral approaches to museums" explores the marginal spaces built within established art institutions, and the classical masterpieces presented in them as collectively reproduced and reflected in a new light. The exhibition focuses on two national museums of classical art: the Paulista and the Hermitage. The exposition deconstructs the aura surrounding the museums and develops practices where masterpieces are brought to an engagement in dialogue with popular culture, art education, and collective artistic practices. The central theoretical concept of the exposition is Jacques Rancière's idea of the *emancipated spectator*, which is used, among other things, in relation to the selfie-image-catalogues taken by the museum visitors themselves.

We hope that this thematic issue will stimulate further debate on the social, spatiotemporal and political peripheries and peripheralities, and on the margins of the means of knowledge.

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