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Studies in Artistic Research
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EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIMENTALITY IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Editorial

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Bases of RUUKKU

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RUUKKU, a long-prepared, peer-reviewed online publication of artistic research, is now finally starting its publishing activities. RUUKKU's editorial board has worked behind the scenes for RUUKKU, for two years already. Our central motive has been to create a publication, which would further interdisciplinary discussions and cross connections in the Finnish artistic research context.

Like its international paragon, *Journal for Artistic Research*(JAR), RUUKKU is based on the online platform known as *Research Catalogue*(RC). The essential benefits of RC are multimediality, as well as long term stability and maintenance, which a broad international financing base guarantees. All research expositions published in RUUKKU are saved on RC's database, thus, they are interwoven into lively international discussions concerning artistic research. In addition to functioning as a base for peer-reviewed portals like JAR and RUUKKU, RC is also a self-publication platform with already about 1000 users from all over the world.

RUUKKU brings its own accent to international publication activities in artistic research by focusing on thematic issues and by enabling the publication of peer-reviewed research expositions, not only in English, but in our domestic languages as well.

The international field of artistic research is a multilingual context, which requires its users to have various translation skills. At the level of verbally communicated messages translation work is usually done in order to make artistic and research contents accessible to a wider audience. However, in artistic research translation skills beyond verbal languages are needed as well. Artist-researchers make their research in a context that is multilingual and saturated with representations, i.e. in a context where domains of human experience that are difficult verbalize (artistic research often deals with such experiences) are expected to conform to verbal formulations that have representational currency.

Because the field of arts has become very international in the past decades also in Finland, this means that artist-researchers have to operate at least in three languages: their mother tongue, the language most true to their artistic expression, and the dominant language of their professional context; English. Both the work titles and the key concepts in press releases, catalogues, and research publications, which tend to channel interpretations very strongly, have to be adapted into international art speech. One addition to this is new media environments. Codes and programmes operative behind their interfaces introduce new linguistic structures in our sense experience and social reality. These determinants of media

literacy shape in an essential way the artist-researcher's multilingual competence area.

In this situation, it is very important to create and maintain contexts, in which research residing in artworks and artistic work is not only sensible and desirable but also rich and conscious of the quality. For the present, Finland is undeniably one of the pioneers in artistic research. Finland has the benefit of a small country. Those players of our art world, who are research oriented, are familiar with the challenges of translating foreign languages because from early on in their studies, it is clear that in this context one cannot operate only in Finnish. An additional benefit is the peculiarity of the Finnish language in relation to Indo-European languages. Every key term in international art language, which almost invariably originates from Greek or Latin, has to be rethought in Finnish. Deep-rooted understanding of the significance of translation belongs to the mind-set of an artist-researcher who works in the Finnish context. This is manifested in the rich variety of artistic research done in Finland.

However, the dominance of English is escalating in artistic research, like in many other fields. Pressure to produce art speech in English is high, which can lead to a point where thinking in our native languages deteriorates. Defending the status of Finnish or Swedish does not help in this case, however. Translation challenges, which are related to both artistic work and research, are to be worked on systematically – both in verbal and artistic ways. In my opinion, this is one of RUUKKU's central functions.

According to an old phrase, all's fair in love and war. Using similar logic, we can say that in research everything new is desirable. When talking about research that takes place beyond established rules, the whole idea of it is to successfully bring forth something new into the world, something that can be shared with others. In different research areas, the criteria of success can differ significantly; they are in dispute – for epistemic, ethical, and political reasons. However, these contentious criteria have one thing in common; some sort of principle of publicity, and in this respect, we cannot consider hermetic private thinking as research. Research is activity that is based on discussion and it strives to open up new perspectives in relation to other already existing ways of conceiving things. A researcher's truth is always a partial truth, which is both divided and shareable.

This set-up has nothing new in itself, but when it comes to research, which goes around as artistic research, it opens up a perspective, which is worth thinking. In a situation where methodological innovativeness and interdisciplinarity, as well as cross-over projects, which combine the competences of arts and sciences, are desired and even explicitly looked for, artistic research does not have to justify itself in any other way than by showing a consistent and insistent impetus for developing a rich discussion culture. In the realm of partial truths of the academia,

artistic research is not a lonely bird; it is a natural part of the mixed flock. It is only a question of who catches which worm.

Unlike how the university framework on the surface level implies, the true touchstone of artistic research's identity is not its position in relation to other fields of research, but it is the attitude towards arts. Artistic research's relation to that particular art, upon which it stands on, is "extimate", it is distant yet near; it is parasite-like. Research is "artistic", when it lives off the truthfulness of art. Art, however, does not settle for partial truths, unlike research. With its relation to truth, art is always closer to philosophy, which, in its most intensive form, always wants the whole truth. Each worthy piece of art expresses in its own unique way the same kind of integrity. As for research, its starting point already is cultural activities, and in those circles there are always compromises. In other words, art and artistic research do not share the same relationship to truth. Sometimes it even happens so that other's wheat is other's chaff.

Despite all this, art and artistic research are intimate with one another. Like the in and outside of a glove, they are each other's reverse, even though they cannot occupy the same space. As figures of thought they are incongruous with one another, and, at the same time, they have the most intimate relationship of reversibility. RUUKKU strives for being a publication forum, which is appropriately unadjusted for the translation operations of art and research.

The theme of the first issue of RUUKKU "Experience and experimentality in artistic research" involves questions which relate to both art and research. If the concept of experience refers to past time, experimentality opens up to future. However, it is worth noticing that still during the Middle Ages, *experimentum* and *experientia*, experiment and experience, were used more or less synonymously and experiments were not arranged in order to gain new information in a systematic way, unlike in later years. In the modern time, novelty became part of the chronological concept of time and experimental settings became machines which can produce future. Perhaps artistic research can change this arrangement, where experiment is thought of as something that verifies new possibilities based on experience that has already been accomplished? Perhaps the experimentality in artistic research can detach itself from this kind of research avant-garde? Perhaps it is alert enough to experience (in Finnish "kokea") the virtual dimensions of reality by trying, in the same way as one says in Finnish that one tries and sees (in Finnish "kokea") if traps work? In this way, experiments could be seen as traps, and by using them, we could set free virtual events, which are effective in reality, at least as partial truths and bodies of knowledge.

In Goethe's footsteps, experiments can be compared to a lamp, which shines light to all directions – not unlike an artwork that shines its truth. Research can then be seen as shading, which helps to ease the way in the road of partial truths, step by step. Now, the first issue of RUUKKU can be seen as this kind of lamp or a bowl

of light, as the Finnish word *ruukku* (“pot”, “jar”) suggests. From someone’s point of view, it might seem as half empty, whereas someone else might consider it half full. If we go past this kind of perspective of value, we can say that we have a substantial starting point, a base, a pot with a bottom, which puts us into festive moods. Let’s touch base with RUUKKU, bottoms up!

Mika Elo

What can be found in RUUKKU?

In Ruukku one can find research expositions, peer review comments, short texts on artistic research (voices) and news. Our purpose is to function as a shared forum for everybody engaged in undertaking artistic research or interested in it.

The first Ruukku contains articles or research expositions in two languages. Now four of the seven articles are in Finnish, one is in English and two are bilingual. Abstracts are in English as well as Finnish and the short texts (voices) are only in Finnish. We hope to receive proposals in Swedish already to the next issue (the call is published here now as well), since our aim is a trilingual publication.

One special feature worth mentioning is the publication of peer review reports, either with or without the name of the writer, depending on their choice (of course there is the option not to publish as well). In this rather exceptional practice we have followed the example of JAR (Journal for Artistic Research) and trusted the positive feedback this practice has received. Since our aim is to generate discussion, what could be a better way than to begin with the concentrated comments of peer reviewers? Readers registered as users of the RC (research catalogue) can leave their own comments, too. Welcome to fill up Ruukku!

Another special feature of Ruukku is the inclusion of voices and news. Voices are statements or points of view related to artistic research, which are not created as research expositions on the publication platform. In this first Ruukku we have four voices of members of the editorial board (Teemu Mäki, Esa Kirkkopelto, Harri Laakso and Margit Rahkonen). Three members of the editorial board contribute with research expositions. In future issues other members of the editorial board will present themselves through research expositions or as voices.

In Ruukku each author has chosen the appearance of his or her exposition. A possibility to design the exposition in a way that supports its particular character and an opportunity for the artist to make his or her own choices is the strength and speciality of this publication platform. Each issue could in principle be different in terms of style and appearance. In this first issue of Ruukku we have not tried to streamline the visual design or referencing system of the expositions, in order to

avoid creating a model. In future issues we will probably see different solutions, since all issues have their own theme and chief editor.

A few words about the seven research presentations: In her Finnish language exposition *Naisellista sukupuuta rakentamassa (Female genealogy)* ceramic artist, doctor of art Maarit Mäkelä builds her female genealogy based on her doctoral research, using photos from her family album as well as the memories of her relatives. PhD Taina Riikonen, a Helsinki based sound art explorer, presents in her English language exposition *Those Lips Were Made to Suck that Button* a text/sound stream at the borders of machinic liminality, recording and embodied listening. Annette Arlander returns in her bilingual exposition *Wind Rail – Sort of a Beginning / Tuulikaide – Eräänlainen alku* to the experience of a simple experiment on Mount Randa in the year 2000 and asks, whether some parts of the process of creating the video work would be worth re-examining. Performance artist and doctoral student Tero Nauha's presentation focuses on the second artistic part of his research, *Life in Bytom*. Nauha's English language exposition *Life in Bytom: Plasticity and schizoanalytic performance practice / Plastisiteetti ja skitsoanalyttinen esityöskentely* contains an introduction and a summary in Finnish. In his Finnish language article *Kokemuksen symbolit – pohdintoja nuotinnoksen ja soivan välisestä suhteesta (Symbols of the Experience – relationship between notation and sound)* composer and doctoral student Pasi Lyytikäinen discusses the relationship between notation and sound from the point of view of composing. Artist-researcher Elina Lifländer, who is preparing her doctoral thesis, approaches in her Finnish language exposition *Tilakokemuksia esitysinstallaatiossa (Experiences of Space in a Performance Installation)* the topic from three points of view: her own experiences, observations made by the audience and views of installation art. Jaakko Nousiainen is interested in using new media technologies in the field of contemporary opera. In his Finnish language exposition *Mediatisoitunut ooppera – johdanto tutkimukseen (Mediatized Opera – an introduction to the research)* he presents the topic of his research and the artistic productions related to it.

As the titles of the research expositions show, Ruukku offers, already in its first issue, a rather multidisciplinary view of artistic research in Finland. The selection reflects the emphasis on doctoral education in the field; more than half of the authors are doing their doctoral work. In the future, hopefully, more and more post-doctoral as well as senior researchers will find Ruukku and the possibilities it offers.

At this stage we have the pleasure to give thanks to all the writers of the first Ruukku and especially the peer reviewers, who have generously shared their expertise and bravely participated in this new publishing practice. And of course the first thank you is due to Michael Schwab, the inventor of the Research catalogue and the chief editor of JAR, whose ideas we are now developing in Ruukku, and who has patiently guided us in many problematic situations. We would also like to

acknowledge the work of all the members of the editorial board who have participated in the creation of Ruukku, who have discussed the portal design by Matti Berg, or the formulations in the translation of the peer review form by Hanna Järvinen, or possible peer reviewers and so on. The work goes on. Special thanks go to subeditor Katja Kiviharju, who has met all challenges bravely and functioned as the contact person in all directions. Many thanks go also to Petteri Karttunen, who is responsible for the technical realisation of the Ruukku portal. We are very grateful to University of the Arts for the commitment to maintain Ruukku, which is a joint endeavour of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Aalto Arts and the University of Lapland. The creation of the portal for Ruukku was supported by a special grant from the Finnish Association for Scholarly Publishing, many thanks.

And many thanks, already in advance, to all critical, supportive and avidly commenting readers and users!

Annette Arlander

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