



MERIAN WORKSHOP ON ARTISTIC RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

Artistic research has emerged as an integral aspect of knowledge-generating infrastructures globally in recent decades. In the Netherlands alone, artistic research has been an established practice for over 20 years. Nonetheless, a key issue pertinent to the success of integrating artistic research into academia remains: How do we assess artistic research? On Friday, 17. March 2023, MERIAN hosted an interactive workshop as a next step to commence this discussion.



Photo by Peter Peters

Participants that had gathered at the Open Space in ZUYD University turned out to possess a varied background: There were practicing artists, artistic research instructors, and university



faculty directors. Participants were affiliated with all the relevant institutes that together make up MERIAN, the Jan van Eyk Academy (JVE), the Maastricht Institute of Arts at ZUYD University and from Maastricht University (ZUYD), the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) and the University College (UCM).

Participants were encouraged to share their expectations of the workshop. One participant asserted “I don’t expect any consensus, I don’t expect any conclusions”. Someone else offered an interesting metaphor: “When we hand out a driver’s license everyone knows what this means - a quality insurance of someone’s driving capabilities - so the question is, how do we have such quality insurance in artistic research?”

Artist and JVE alumni Nina Glockner invited us to participate in an interactive performance called the “Collective Voice Detector” (CVD). As part of this, participants were asked to begin by defining the task at hand together. Everyone wrote down what they believed to be the core issue in need of tackling. Participants then engaged in a discussion of what they’d like to focus on, and how to formulate this in one sentence. The task chosen by the first group was **to facilitate the ‘right’ space / form for displaying what the candidate is assessed upon**. The second group chose to focus on the task **to organize a consensus-building-activity amongst the involved parties regarding the assessment criteria**. Further results of the CVD can be viewed below. During the break the JVE Food lab coordinator Marente van der Valk presented some of her work and invited the participants to come and taste it.

The next activity split participants into groups of threes or fours to walk across the city and visit the different institutions represented at the workshop: JVE, FASoS, ZUYD and UCM. It was an ingenious way to clear everyone’s head after many hours already spent pondering the issue of assessment in artistic research and symbolically strengthen the collaboration of these institutes. It turned out that many participants had never actually visited the buildings that housed the other institutes. As the delegate from the respective institute would guide them through their halls, the physical structures would inspire renewed conversation on assessment of artistic research.

The interactive workshop hosted by MERIAN on assessment offered a catalytic discussion as the first step in the process to understanding how to best assess artistic research. In the closing round, participants were encouraged to share their wishes for how to examine this



issue next. One idea that stroke a chord with many was to see if it were possible to have a look at how individual supervisors had assessed artistic research previously. Could this perhaps offer us some guidance? Another suggestion met with enthusiasm was to have an event that involved those that had been assessed, such as past MERIAN PhD candidates or students of the semester-long artistic research project at University College Maastricht.



**Notes based on parts of Collective Voice Detector
by Nina Glockner**

17 March 2023, 13:00-17:30

MERIAN discussion points:

- What are the pleasures and problems with BA-MA-PhD artistic research supervision and assessment?
- How to deal with diversity and difference in expectations and practices when it comes to BA-MA-PhD artistic research supervision and assessment?
- How can we organize the ideal conversation about artistic research supervision and assessment material?
- What are necessary conditions to foster good artistic research supervision and assessment?





Collective Voice Detector, guided by Nina Glockner

Group A

Proposals for tasks by participants

- Develop assessment criteria allowing intended learning outcomes without restricting the artistic freedom.
- Ensure accessibility to the world of knowledge to benefit daily life.
- Finding ways to balance of research between value for community and personal value for artist
- Which space/form is 'right' for PhD candidate to display what he/she/they is assessed upon? (Stageing process vs. process)
- Develop 'tracking'/documentation tools regarding the supervision process
- What is the move in the game of giving and asking for reasons that is being made by students?
- Form of tracking how research changes dialogues
- Finding tools for dealing with interrelations of text & works in assessment of artistic research
- To what extend should artistic research be assessed/evaluated?
- To whom instead of when: How to share knowledge/ research process with all different involved partners, not only at the end of research?
- How to communicate assessment criteria?

Chosen task

TO FACILITATE THE 'RIGHT' SPACE / FORM FOR DISPLAYING WHAT THE CANDIDATE IS ASSESSED UPON

Relevant terms regarding the task, mentioned by participants

- **Visibility of process**



- **(Clarity on assessment) Criteria**
- **Process criteria**
- **Ensuring artistic freedom**
- **Time**
- **Commitment/ Help/ Support**
- **Trial & Error**
- **Communication**
- **Responsibility**
- **Financing**
- **Meaningfulness for candidate (Why this, rather than something else?)**
- **Fitting to research purpose**
- **Added value in knowledge production**
- **Relevance**
- **Reliability**
- **Comparability**
- **Research of right space**
- **Training the audience**
- **Proper experts/ expertise**
- **Flexibility on both sides**
- **Debate**
- **Space/Location**
- **Experience**
- **Openness to methodology**
- **Self-reflective, not self-referential**

'Filtered' 5

Rank	Term	Responsibility
1	MEANINGFULNESS	Candidate
2	SUPPORT (TIME, FINANCING, EXPERTISE)	Supervisors/Institutions
3	RESPONSIBILITY	Together
4	(PROCESS / ASSESSMENT) CRITERIA	Supervisors/Institutions
5	OPENNESS / FLEXIBILITY	Together



Group B

Proposals for tasks by participants

- Challenge implicit expectations (academics & artists)
- Facilitating the 'trying out' within artistic research (including the documentation of the process)
- Start the artistic research trajectory by reflecting upon the future path of assessment
- recognize academic content within artistic research



- engage people in discussions and create environment for clarifying assessment
- research/find the right dialogical format
- exchange best practice/ assessment criteria for different contexts (BA, MA, PhD)
- Attending/witnessing assessments of others
- Undiscipline oneself! Practicing un-disciplining (and what are its limits?)
- Tools and practices for tracking ongoing assessments
- Identifying possible routes of documenting artistic research process

Chosen task

TO ORGANIZE A CONSENSUS-BUILDING-ACTIVITY AMONGST THE INVOLVED PARTIES REGARDING THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Relevant terms regarding the task, mentioned by participants

- **Clarity**
- **(Mutual) Understanding**
- **Dialogue**
- **Respect**
- **Listening**
- **Generosity/ Willingness**
- **Expertise (vs interest)**
- **Structure**
- **Malleability**
- **Training**
- **Doing (format)**
- **Un-learning**
- **Un-disciplining**
- **Maturity**
- **Care**
- **Equal?**
- **Hierarchies**
- **Input-Gathering devices**
- **Documentation**
- **Time (Empty Time, Time Marker)**
- **Safe Discussionleader**
- **Atmosphere**
- **(Criteria for) Failure**



- Risk-taking
- Outsider/ External Observer
- Friction
- Enabling Constraints
- Diversity
- Inclusivity
- Identity
- Agreed Procedure
- Agreement
- Differentiation
- Quality
- Transparency
- Honesty
- Accountability
- Witnessing
- Language
- Delphi-Method
- Calibration
- Imagination

'Filtered' 5

Rank	Term	Responsibility
1	UNLEARNING	Together
2	AGREED PROCEDURE	Supervisors/Institutions
3	TIME	Supervisors/Institutions
4	GENEROSITY	Together
5	RISK-TAKING	Together

