

Preamble

Arts-based Research

"Art is a mediator of the inexpressible. Therefore it seems foolish to wish to convey the arts through words. But through our efforts to do so, we gain understanding, which in turn improves our performative capacity." (Goethe, Maximen und Reflexionen)

The arts have reflected on their own activities and traditions from time immemorial. Such questions as "What is art?", "Is this still art?" or "What should art be able to do?" accompany this process and refer to a concept of the arts that is principally open. And, just as the arts are potentially open, research on the arts should be so as well. Vital here is not only interpretation, but also courage to reflected subjectivity. Using the humanities, cultural and social sciences for orientation, traditional natural-scientific methods are broadened, and their synthesis leads to something like "experiment-supported hermeneutics."

One's own artistic activity is central to the search for knowledge in arts-based research, either as the object of observation or as a process of understanding. Three possible approaches are conceivable:

1. The objectivization of the "work," with an objectivistic view towards analysis.
2. The subjectivization of the "work," in which case the researcher becomes a part of the process and considers the work empathetically from within.
3. The associated reflection as an expansion of the actual "work."

At least in the case of points 2 and 3, the relationship between the observer and the research object is central, and existent expectations, preferences, pre-judices and theorems must be taken into consideration. Arts-based research also means: knowledge of the world through knowledge of one's self and self-knowledge through knowledge of the world. It is exactly this synthesis of research results, arising from such reflected-subjective approaches, that brings about something new and innovative. Of course, this synthesis must be viewed in the respective context of the current state of relevant research.

Thus, arts-based research may not be completely systematized, but rather remains deliberately fragmentary. Empiricism in the sense of "generalized experience" cannot be the sole criterion here. On the contrary, arts-based research makes "knowledge of the special" possible and goes beyond normal rules of cognition. Each research object requires its own methodology, presentation, communication and justification. Depending on the artistic perspective, each new topic requires a diversification of the methods of investigation and presentation and perhaps even the use of different levels of language (which must of course be justified in respect to content and methodology) in order to gain knowledge.

The specific benefit of this kind of artistic research lies in the fact that the research, which arises from performative activity, questions this very activity and links it with other e.g. sociological, psychological, political, historical, theological, and philosophical components, the results of which influence the performative activity itself. A motto for this spiral of knowledge could be "whoever understands what they do, does it differently". The particular nature of artistic training is also reflected herein. This too aims at allowing and encouraging special and sometimes unique abilities and notions, whereby it is important to explain to what extent this uniqueness diverges from former research discourses.

Artistic Research is a discipline that is constantly evolving and thus has no fixed criteria, which is an advantage. Consequently, the possibility of gaining new and different kinds of knowledge through performative activity emerges, along with the development of creative and original insights, which can in turn result in a dynamic relationship with other disciplines. The aim of such arts-based research thus tends towards opening and extending the methods of approach, rather than limiting and excluding them. Multiplicity of methods and theories fertilizes the different academic disciplines; uniformity, on the other hand, paralyzes its critical powers and the free unfolding of the mind. The risk of this openness should not be denied; rather, it should be grasped as a challenge. This process must be constantly accompanied by quality assurance and the guarantee of research at the highest level.

Some of the possible poles, between which this kind of research may move are:

Universality *and* Specialization

Interdisciplinarity *and* Disciplinarity

Education *and* Training

Research *and* Teaching

Local Roots *and* cosmopolitan Open-mindedness

Subjective questioning does not primarily lead to universally-valid answers, yet reflected, subjective knowledge enriches general knowledge. Insight into the necessity of recognizing many forms of knowledge makes possible a pluralistic, polyphonic and tolerant approach to the world, as well as self-education in freedom and responsibility. Alongside existing academic disciplines, arts-based research offers further perspectives for the acquisition of knowledge.

The conception of the Doctor of Arts program (Dr. artium) is based on the view that artistic activity generates knowledge. Arts-based research arises from the interaction between artistic interpretation and scholarly reflection. The expected results are more than the sum of their parts.