

# PERCEPTION AND ACTION

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# PERCEPTION AND (RE)ACTION

**Szabolcs KissPál**  
**Tünde Varga**

The Doctoral School of HUFA initiated a collaboration with the doctoral schools of HDK-Valand Academy of Art and Design, University of Gothenburg Sweden, Szkoły Doktorskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych im. Jana Matejki w Krakowie, and organized a special credit-bearing workshop in Budapest with the title of *Perception and Action*.

The event was part of an Erasmus+ BIP (Blended Intensive Program) scheme initiated by HUFA that offers an opportunity to international collaborations between European universities, facilitating thus the exchange of various teaching and research methodologies, and further on building networks within the European higher education system. Even though the program supports collaboration on any study level, we considered involving doctoral schools only, since artistic research it is the very field, where an international perspective and knowledge network is the most indispensable, given our belief that knowledge production is a collective, rather than individual activity. Further on, since each individual doctoral school has a somewhat unique institutional structure and curricula and they apply their own teaching and research methodology, the young researchers themselves develop extremely diverse research positions both in terms of their topic and methodology.

Therefore we designed the workshop along three main focus points: the relationship of research topics and the wider socio-cultural, political contexts (both local and global), the shareability of research particularities within a research community, and the text/image dichotomy persisting within

the artistic research conducted in academic environment. In accordance with the above, in the organizing phase we departed from several questions, such as: what are the possible methodological connections between the artistic background research and their impact on the socio-political imaginary, in what ways major topics of contemporary concern such as the Anthropocene, ecological balance, the global rise of authoritarian political systems, and so on, can be addressed from the shifting positions of artistic perspectives and strategies?

In methodological terms we raised the questions of how certain formats could bridge the individual and social, the global and local contexts, and what would be the way for the knowledge potentially generated by artistic research to be democratized through participatory practices?

Throughout the unfolding work of the intensive week these questions were transformed and reformulated by both the participants' individual interpretations and the group dynamics of the collective work as well, leading to various levels of self-awareness on practice based research as such, and the process opened up a diverse range of discursive spaces, in which different further aspects and artistic perspectives were developed.

The workshop was attended altogether by 28 students, five teacher-researchers<sup>1</sup> and one assistant<sup>2</sup>. Students were selected for the study week based on a brief essay addressing various artistic research questions. The purpose

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2 **Lili Agg** (doctoral student, HUFA — Hungarian University of Fine Arts Budapest, Hungary)

of the program was to bring together international doctoral students to enable them to share their research findings, with a focus on methodologies and the dissemination of artistic research. The project provided doctoral students with a unique opportunity to participate in an international network of knowledge sharing and collaboration.

The goal was to create an exhibition by the end of the workshop week to provide students with a shared sense of accomplishment as they engaged in intense discussions and exchanges of ideas regarding research and the question of textual versus visual representation of research outcomes.

Therefore, on the first day of the workshop week, the doctoral students provided a five-minute presentation on an artwork they considered significant from the perspective of art and research, as well as a five-minute presentation on their own artwork to demonstrate their research positions. This mode of introduction provided a glimpse into one another's working method and interests, as well as their perspectives on artistic research with a broader scope.

The students were divided into institutionally mixed groups at the end of the first day in order to keep the conversations and exchanges also personal.

On day two, the seven working groups began their discussions. Their assignment for the exhibition was to design a poster that examined the relationship between text and image. It provided the framework for discussing artistic research experience and gaining an understanding of each individual's working method. The teachers participated in the discussions and facilitated the process when necessary. The groups began to formulate a plan for the exhibition-related work they would produce.

After the first round of group work, there was a second general discussion so that the groups could observe which directions their peers took, how they viewed the creative processes, receive feedback from one another,

and gain an understanding of the exhibition as a whole. Then, each group worked intensively with the assistance of their tutors. Students selected a variety of creative spaces and media for their posters. Even though the groups worked more closely and intensively, students always had the opportunity to interact and exchange ideas.

During the week, the international group also attended a lecture by Hajnalka Somogyi, the founder of OFF-Biennale, about their independent organization and their participation Documenta 15 in Kassel 2022, and visited an exhibition by Balázs Kicsiny, the head of the HUFA's doctoral school at the FÉSZEK club.

The installation took place on the final day: the groups utilized the exhibition space in an inventive manner. Some chose to deviate from the original poster form and create a complex installation, while others placed posters on the floor in an irregular shape, or began to engage in a visual dialogue through the poster images.

The installation provided the opportunity for the entire group to meet and exchange ideas in depth, while the exhibition evening was an opportunity to present newly acquired ideas to the public. ECTS credits were granted for participation.

Since we consider the workshop a starting point of a longer process, the participating institutions intend to continue the cooperation by organizing two subsequent events in Krakow (May 2024) and Gothenburg (October 2024) and to document the collaboration process, while disseminating the artistic-intellectual outcome in an exhibition and a final book.

The present booklet-object summarizes the outcome of the Budapest study week; it stands as mid-term snap-shot of a long-term project, consisting of the documentation of young researchers' individual and group work in the form of cards containing the textual and visual feedback of the

participants on this intense study week, and the written contribution of the teacher researchers. Some contributions are more poetical, others rather conceptual, nonetheless all of them wear the traces of real life artistic, intellectual and emotional interaction with a wider community of young researchers, that was made possible by this cooperation.



# FUTURE METHODOLOGIES

**Henk Slager**

Thinking about art and method is a complex issue, especially as art does not proceed according to a strict method along a predetermined trajectory, but rather operates in the form of leaps, digressions, and detours which continually generate new and unexpected counter-expressions. This entails that methods, procedures, and techniques of artistic research have to be developed during the non-linear research process itself within an experimental setting. Such an exploratory process is characterized by precarious, unstable, inadequate, and emergent conditions. It is because of those conditions more or less impossible to formulate in advance a too strict, predefined framework ('a methodology') that makes statements about what the expected actions and outcomes will be.

Inspired by philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, Erin Manning characterizes this as an "Against Method"<sup>1</sup> situation. Method, she states, stops the potential on its way, cutting into the process before it has a chance to fully engage with the complex relational fields the research process itself calls forth. Manning understands the call for methods as a process of (academic) normalization, which refashions knowledge to disciplinary knowledge and subjects aesthetic practices to a static organization of preformed categories. Artistic research should therefore begin with a mode of inquiry that refutes initial categorization models that operate largely by exclusion and reduction, tightly circumscribing their applications and contacts with heterogeneity. But what does this actually mean for the methodological

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<sup>1</sup> Erin Manning. *Against Method*, in: Phillip Vannini (ed.), *Non-Representational Methodologies*, 2015, pp. 52-71.

perspective of artistic research?

Currently we see that artistic research, because of the rejection of disciplinary boundaries, emphasizes inter-, trans-, multi-, and post-disciplinary practices. After all, the artistic researcher starts from methodological diversity: he/she/they may choose any methods appropriate for the research question. And thus, this form of research does not position itself in an existing research tradition, such as Dilthey's distinction between quantitative methods (explaining the world) and qualitative methods (understanding the world). Artistic research can rather be described as a transversal engagement with urgent topics such as the Anthropocene, ecological concerns, sustainability, cultures of care, and the global rise of authoritarian political systems. Moreover, it is a process-based form of research that goes beyond observational speech (describing or modeling the world), by actually relating to the world and bringing about processes of change.

Barbara Bolt characterizes this specific, methodic way of working as performative: artistic research does things in the world. In her groundbreaking article *Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm*<sup>2</sup> Bolt presents this paradigm as a methodological alternative for qualitative and quantitative research. This paradigm does not start from a methodological protocol, but works from the perspective of becoming methodology. This methodological difference is especially clear in the presentation (and dissemination) of the research results, not only expressed through discursive text, but rather through richer, or material forms of practice, still and moving images, live action (performance), intervention, etc. In short, this third research paradigm prioritizes not only research itself, but also its — fragmentary and emergent — processes, its modes of subjectivity, and its strategies of dissemination.

2 Barbara Bolt, *Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm* Parse Journal 3, 2016, pp. 129-142

This description of artistic research's way of working can be compared with the tradition and ontology of the essay, which goes back to Montaigne. From these early beginnings, the essay represented a hybrid, experimental practice that combined art and science, and focused not only on explaining but also on making public. The essay as method was described by Adorno in the same vein as a process of thought: an anti-systematic approach, an over-interpretation, and a juxtaposition of elements and equivocation. It is a method of investigation, and at the same time it abandons the idea of a fixed method.<sup>3</sup>

It was this essayistic perspective that essentially underpinned an international methodology seminar that took place in Budapest. Starting point was an expanded understanding of the poster as medium: a medium that offers an experimental space for artistic probing, establishing connections, associating, producing assemblages, and bringing together, including that which cannot be joined, in order to ultimately — and here lies the medium-specific condition of the poster — make the methodological process public.

The final presentation of the seminar — a pop-up exhibition of the posters produced — consisted of immersive forms in which new methods are forged out of combining the contextual and the performed with imagined future states. And perhaps the specificity of the methodology of artistic research can be aptly described here: artistic research as an ellipse in which the focal points “future” and “methodologies” determine the contours of the field. On the one hand, generating future methodological models (such as the third way of the performative paradigm); on the other hand, developing methodological practices that relate to planetary urgencies that require a future-oriented approach.

3 T.W. Adorno, *The Essay as Form*, New German Critique, No 32, 1984, pp.151-171.





# MEETING IN REAL LIFE

**Mick Wilson**

International exchange and mobility within higher arts education have radically expanded within the last three or so decades. The interaction between students, staff, programmes and institutions has multiplied many times over in this period. A key enabler and driver of this change is the hugely influential Erasmus framework of the EU, operative since the late 1980s and now a standard and pervasive feature of the higher education landscape.

Bringing together doctoral students within the framework of a blended course that mixes online encounters with real world interactions is an activity that allows us to explore continuities and differences across different research education traditions. Fundamentally, it provides a space of personal encounter and interaction that interrupts the business-as-usual of local institutional cultures, bringing participants into new constellations of relation. This is often a highly charged process of encounter, with significant spikes of affect, especially as multiple cultures and traditions of educational practice, artmaking and rhetorical play encounter each other and work side-by-side.

International encounters are, among other things, an operation within the space of imaginaries, the different geopolitical imaginaries that underpin projections of the “national” and the “international”. Arguably, the geopolitical imaginary is now saturated not only with the figures of nation, state, race, colony and territory, or of friend and enemy, as fully elaborated in previous centuries, but also by the figures of forever-war; security and threat; refugee, asylum seeker, migrant, and denizen; citizen and non-person; the border-wall and the multiple



boundaries demarcating the zones of being and non-being. While policy and funding frameworks such as Erasmus propose an international imaginary of the so-called European project, they also inscribe particular models of social relation and paradigms of futurity. Since the 1990s we have seen various forms of internationalization that have operated primarily as Westernization, as the imposition of cultural and economic dominance through deeply asymmetric encounter. Anemic projections as the digital and the green transitions, also accompany particular ideas of education that individuate students and that can de-nature group and cooperation dynamics from encounters-in-common to intersubjective transactions of acquisition. However, there are other imaginaries in play: Another world is possible.

It seems very important to underline that the question of geopolitical imaginaries, or other internationalisms, is not a matter that is external to the practices of contemporary art. This arena of seeing, thinking, believing, feeling variously placed, positioned, in transit through or within different worlds is both a domain of artistic operation and artistic concern. If we consider the national pavilions of the Venice Biennale or the cartographic imaginaries at work within an exhibition such as M HKA's 'EURASIA – A Landscape of Mutability' (2021-2022)<sup>1</sup> it becomes immediately clear that the imagination of worlds, of overarching spatiotemporal relations, is both a condition of the operational field and an object of operational address in its own right within contemporary art practice.

However, it is not simply a reductive matter of mappings but expanded, speculative and prefigurative imaginaries of world, of geopolitics elsewhere. Research projects such as BAK's 'Former West' (2008-2014)<sup>2</sup>; the Museum of

1 <https://www.muhka.be/programme/detail/1452-eurasia-a-landscape-of-mutability>

2 <https://formerwest.org/>

Contemporary Art Metelkova's 'Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned' (2019)<sup>3</sup>; and the Van Abbemuseum's 'Rewinding Internationalism: Scenes from the 90s, today' (2022-2023)<sup>4</sup> manifest different international imaginaries. They also work within practices of relationship that cannot be reduced to the terms of a singular 'globalized' condition, or an unproblematic rehearsal of asymmetries of power. The wide currency of, for example, decolonial and posthuman concerns and discourses within the contemporary art field also indicate something of the fever of imagining and operating different modes of relation, affiliation, solidarity, co-belonging and worlding.

Of course, this fever of speculation, imagination and worlding is not to be simply valorized. We may take pause and great caution at overinvestment in the speculative instruments of financialization, in the fabulations of Q-Anon; the wicked fairy tales of stolen elections; the murderous animalisation of "our" enemies; the weaponization of imagined communities in service of kleptocracies; and the mendacious disavowal of ecological collapse and climate change. The imaginary is not the promise of the good. The imaginary is just a condition of making out the real.

The imaginaries of internationalism, of the possibility of being otherwise proximate and distant, are conditions of making out the real. The imaginary — as the fundament out of which a sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what might be hoped for, is constructed — is not an apparatus serving any one political tendency or tradition, it is a necessary condition of all political desire.

3 <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/exhibitions/2439/southern-constellations-the-poetics-of-the-non-aligned/>

4 <https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/see-and-do/exhibitions-activities/rewinding-internationalism>

The imaginary is not simply a space of elective vision. It is one of the conditions of sensing, the sensing that entangles desire. It is not a matter of abstraction, but it is working in the lived densities of the world. The imaginary is not the antithesis of the real, but rather it is the condition of possibility of encountering the real.

So a few people for a few days meet each other in real life. The clattering uneasy encounter of institutional personae that this sets in play on the stage of education, in the drama of group formation, is a moment in which the imaginary is at work but also worked upon in a subtle way. The institution has a geographical locus, it is in Budapest, it is in Gothenburg, it is in Krakow. The speakers and makers have a geographical locus: it is in leaving Syria; it is in arriving in the rain; it is in being homesick for Tbilisi; it is in isolation on an island in the cold Northern ocean; it is in the heat of an equatorial day; it is sleeping high in the mountains of an unlikely desert; it is obscured in the dust on the road back into town; it is in the guilty neglect of the people left behind under constant fire. These geographies do not overlap, are not contiguous, are not fantastic. They re-constellate themselves beyond any old provincial Europe growing tired of its well-reasoning murdering chores, even as there is a new shouting and a fresh flow of blood in the wheat field.



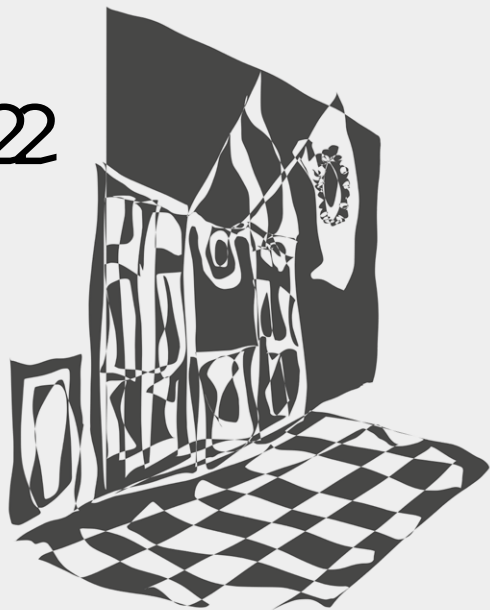




# NO IDEAS BUT IN THINGS

Bogdan Achimescu

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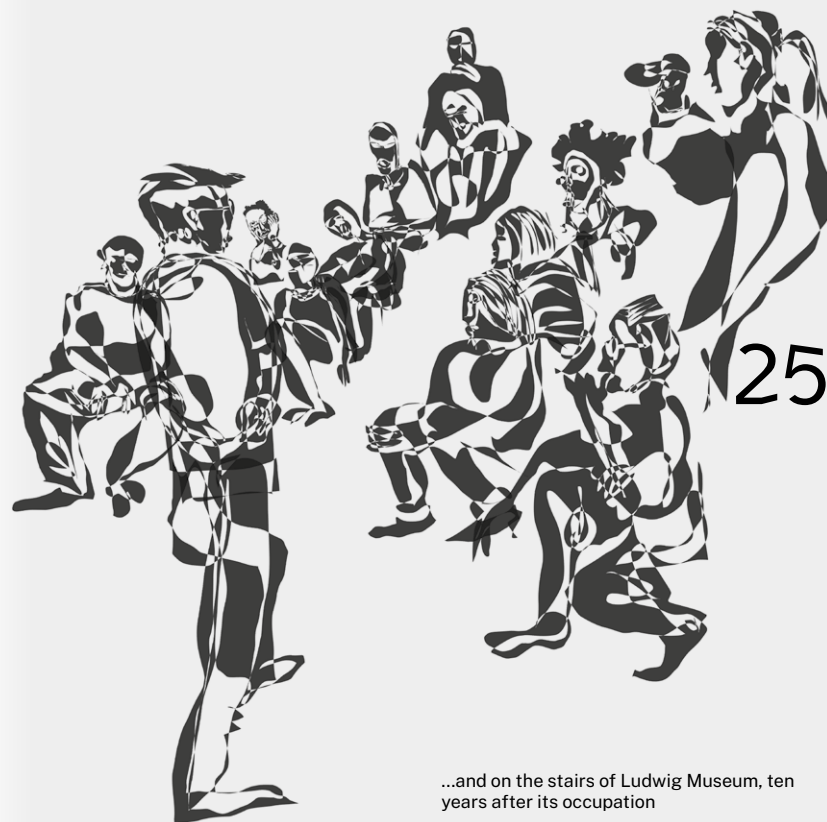




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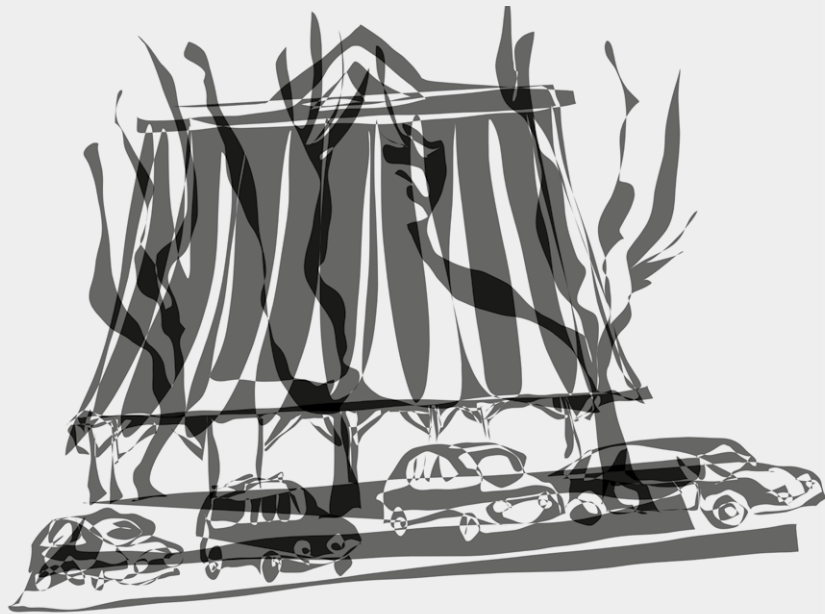


talking at Nyolcséfé...



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...and on the stairs of Ludwig Museum, ten  
years after its occupation



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Who even wears such clothes today? Those ideograms should perhaps change. By the way, this building on Benczur ut. 4 is wrapped and closed. OK, darling, let's go.



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No ideas but in things, they say. But we just sit on the ground and work with our hands.



# TEN before YEARS



**An Erasmus+ BIP (Blended Intensive Program)  
project between the doctoral schools of**

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