

Artistic Research as Collaborative Knowledge Production – Discussion Round 2

Text by Jonas Kellermeyer, [Till Bödeker](#), [Peter Tepe](#). Category: General on “Art and Science” | Series: Artistic Research

Abstract: Jonas Kellermeyer responds in Round 2 to the various critiques of the Artistic Research working group, see Round 1. Subsequently, Till Bödeker/Peter Tepe reply to Kellermeyer’s response.

1. Jonas Kellermeyer’s Response

First, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Till Bödeker and Peter Tepe, who initiated this format and considered my text worthy of being presented to a distinguished selection of researchers, enabling a discourse around Artistic Research.

In my forthcoming response to the individual statements, I primarily aim to address the points of criticism raised.

1.1 Response to Lutz Hengst

Lutz Hengst begins by highlighting that the question of what qualifies as Artistic Research preempts the general question of its existence. He further emphasizes the relevance of “what knowledge is produced for whom.” I completely agree that Artistic Research is not a canonical, monolithic affair! Perhaps this point was somewhat understated in the initial text, but it is evident that various actors present different ideas, all of which share one thing: they are potential parts of an artistic research strategy! The existence of “distinct forms of knowledge and research” is acknowledged precisely by emphasizing the emphatic discipline-less approach. The assertion that financial recognition requires the support of a specific professional or public audience is also valid but should not distract from the impact that Artistic Research can have on these audiences. It is not a one-way street in either direction, but rather another building block in a broader academic discourse, offering a sometimes disconcerting perspective that resonates with others.

1.2 Response to Christin Lübke

Alexander Damianisch questions the difference between induction and deduction, discussing the significance of both modes for developing meaningful discourse. His diagnosis: “It’s tempting to generalize something special.” The implicit accusation of opportunism does not apply, as my paper’s explanations result from two intensive years of research. It may seem as if the title was simply grafted onto the method, but in fact, the opposite is true: The initial idea was to engage with techno-social hybrids. The intensive focus on Artistic Research came later, once the importance of speculative approaches became evident and the need to establish new visual habits was recognized. And this is what makes Artistic Research so substantial for my personal endeavor: the ability to “crack the ice,” as poetically put by Alexander Damianisch.

1.3 Response to Alexander Damianisch

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1.4 On Till Bödeker/Peter Tepe’s Statement

Finally, the statement by Till Bödeker and Peter Tepe is mentioned, formulated in resonance with me. They identify four central points regarding a differentiated view of Artistic Research: 1. the need for a heterogeneous group of researchers with various (biographical) backgrounds; 2. the necessity of a critical discourse; 3. the need for critical reflection through artistic interventions; and 4. a (partial) autonomy of Artistic Research, allowing researchers to confidently and fundamentally equally contribute relevant knowledge to the broader discourse.

Bödeker’s and Tepe’s main critique of my text pertains only to the (partial) autonomy of Artistic Research mentioned in point 4: they “recommend [...] to define the respective ‘artistic intervention’ more precisely as one in which critical opinions are articulated on a topic, but knowledge is not expanded.” However, this would mean relegating Artistic Research to a mere adjunct to the serious sciences, depriving it of the opportunity to set its own substantial impulses. It would thus always be fundamentally reactive. Although this view corresponds in many ways to the status quo, it would be desirable to fully recognize and seriously consider the epistemological content of Artistic Research and to grant it corresponding (heuristic) autonomy.

Thank you to all participants and those who have engaged with my text. Every objection is welcome and can help identify my own blind spots.

2. On Kellermeyer’s Response

Christin Lübke, Lutz Hengst, and Alexander Damianisch opt not to respond again to Kellermeyer’s reply. However, Till Bödeker/Peter Tepe choose to do so, believing their critique was not fully understood.

2.1 Till Bödeker/Peter Tepe Clarify Their Criticism

Together with Kellermeyer, we have clarified his understanding of AR as collaborative knowledge production and summarized the result in four points. Then follows our assessment:

“The points (1)-(3) pose no problems for us: We have no objections to the formation of

groups of the described kind, which engage intensively – also critically – with certain topics, articulate the results of their reflections in artistic form, and reflect on their work process in texts. Moreover, since the activities of such a group can also be classified as relevant cooperation between science and art for w/k, we welcome them and offer publication in our online journal.

Since we follow the principle of terminological freedom, we also respect that these activities are referred to as artistic research; we strive to avoid a dispute over names.

Our criticism refers only to point (4). To put it in a thesis-like manner: Within the respective group, critical, evaluative opinion formation takes place regarding the chosen topic. The critical opinions and evaluations vary, depending on the value premises of the participants. Such opinion formation is fundamentally different from the expansion of empirical knowledge of a descriptive and theoretical-explanatory nature. Therefore, we recommend defining the respective ‘artistic intervention’ more precisely as one in which critical opinion formation on a topic is articulated, but knowledge is not expanded. Thus, this type of artistic research is classified differently than Kellermeyer does.”

[See Round 1](#)

In our published AR texts, we have repeatedly dealt with the claims made by representatives of artistic research for the expansion of knowledge or understanding, which can be *justified* but also *unjustified*. It is unjustified when a closer analysis shows that *something other* than the expansion of descriptive or theoretical-explanatory knowledge takes place in a AR concept. This is the case here, according to our assessment: In the group, a *critical opinion formation* on a particular topic takes place, which should be distinguished from the expansion of knowledge.

“Conclusion: What the respective group does is unproblematic, while the claim to knowledge made for the results of their own actions is unjustified.”

Now to Kellermeyer’s reaction:

(1) He does not present any argument to refute our criticism and to show that a *justified* claim to knowledge exists after all.

(2) Kellermeyer points out *consequences* of our criticism that he considers unacceptable. “This would mean, however, granting AR only a place alongside the ‘serious’ sciences, depriving it of the opportunity to set its own substantial impulses. It would thus always be fundamentally reactive.” The mention of unwanted consequences of criticism must be examined separately.

(3) Our appreciation of points (1)–(3) shows that Kellermeyer’s AR concept is not deprived of the opportunity to set “its own substantial impulses” by the criticism. The substantial impulses are just interpreted differently, namely as those of critical opinion formation about ...

(4) According to Kellermeyer, “it would be desirable to fully acknowledge the epistemological content of AR and to grant it corresponding (heuristic) autonomy.” Since [many different AR concepts](#) are represented, each concept should be examined individually, in our opinion. Therefore, we do not make

any statements about AR in general in our statement, but only refer to the concept of collaborative knowledge production, against which we object that something other than collaborative knowledge production in a commonly understood sense of the term takes place in the specialist literature. This does not exclude “a (heuristic) autonomy” of this project. Or does the autonomy of AR, in your view, necessarily depend on the possibility of knowledge generation? However, the criticism implies that this AR concept does not have the claimed “epistemological content.” Of course, a further development of this AR concept is conceivable, leading to a version that is not affected by our criticism.

(5) Using the example of the w/k interview with Oliver Thie, we point out a AR concept that raises a justified claim to knowledge. Thie sees himself as a researching draftsman who explores the structures of the cicada surface with drawing techniques. He classifies himself as part of artistic research. What understanding of AR is present here? Under AR, the endeavor is understood to expand descriptive knowledge with artistic means: The nature of the cicada is to be captured more precisely than before.

Thie arrives at a conjecture about a certain structure of the cicada surface during his work process, and he articulates this conjecture not like a scientist in written form in a scholarly text, but in a drawing. If this conjecture is confirmed in the further process, an expansion of descriptive knowledge using artistic means occurs. This can be seen as a case-specific precision of “I see myself as an artistic researcher.”

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