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ACADEMIA GOES TO THE ARTS: ENTANGLEMENTS OF RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, AND INFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ART

Abstract

The use of arts-based research has recently gained attention among scholars in diverse fields of social sciences for its capacity to communicate research beyond the authority of the written text as well as to engage with non-academic audiences. This article focuses on the dynamics of art as knowledge work from the perspective of contemporary art and its institutions: if academic research 'goes' to the arts then how does this 'going' interact with the already established politics, economics and ethics of the art field? I will be arguing that research emerges as a generalized category, if not a systemic imperative, of doing contemporary visual art, and that within this territory arts-based research encounters similar issues with those surrounding academic production and consumption. I summarize challenges pertaining to issues around deprofessionalization, new forms of distinction and art's increasing resemblance to the information apparatus.

Keywords

Contemporary art; visual art; arts-based research; post-conceptual art; materiality; transdisciplinarity; deskilling/reskilling; intellectualization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The growing tendency to employ arts-based forms of knowledge across the humanities and social sciences aims at complementing, substituting, or surpassing the more standardized ways of communicating academic research¹. While traditional academic research relies on privileging the 'written academic text' in its production, circulation and dissemination², arts-based research prioritizes the cultivation of more inclusive formats, extra-academic audiences, and increased cross-pollination between creative and scholarly fields of practice. The use of art in research has been occupying scholarly debates

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¹ J. Greenwood, "Arts-Based Research" *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, February, 1-22 (2019). Accessed August 27, 2020. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.29.

² N. Carpentier, "Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text: An Auto-Ethnographic Analysis of the Mirror Palace of Democracy Installation Experiment", *International Journal of Communication*, 14 (2020): 2119-2140.

in diverse fields of social sciences, including anthropology³ media and communication⁴, pedagogy and education⁵, health⁶, social justice⁷ and psychology⁸. Whether involved as part of the research process or as a means to communicate research results, arts-based endeavours have taken the shape of multiple formats beyond the textual involving, for instance, the format of the exhibition, the music performance or the art installation⁹. Further so, the potential of art and aesthetics to be vehicles of counter-hegemonic interventions has received a renewed interest in left-leaning political theory in the last decades. In the articulations of her ‘agonistic model’, Chantal Mouffe regularly highlights the role of art, aesthetics and affect in building counter-hegemonic projects¹⁰, opening the path for art professionals to claim an agonistic role for contemporary art institutions¹¹. Or, in his aesthetic philosophy, Jacques Rancière reserves a prominent place for art in reshuffling the given ‘distribution of the sensible’¹², that is the positioning of bodies, discourses and affective dispositions within a certain social ordering, enabling in turn scholars and activists to highlight the role of ‘sensible politics’ in instigating change¹³. The general premise of the shift to arts-based approaches in social science and left-leaning theory is to renegotiate and mobilize the dividing line between scholarly production, which is thought to principally addresses the intellect, rational reasoning and analytical thinking, and artistic production, which favours sensible responses and a non-verbal understanding of the social world.

The aim of this article is to consider the implications of this shift from the perspective of the field of contemporary art and its institutions, thus focusing on the reverse trajectory to the one described above: if academic research ‘goes’ to the arts then how does this ‘going’ interact with the already established politics, economies and ethics of the art field?¹⁴ If the main impetus for scholars to go to the arts is to reach new audiences and experiment with media for disseminating research, how does this trajectory encounter art’s social and economic logics, which are shaped by neoliberal relations of production, precarious and flexible working conditions, de-professionalization, demands for PR and visibility, affective economies and an exclusive, ‘high art’ ethos?

I will be arguing that within art’s territory, arts-based research encounters qualitatively different yet similar issues with those surrounding the problems of the written text, related to disciplinary dynamics both at the production as well as the consumption

³ N. Ssorin-Chaikov, “Ethnographic Conceptualism”, *Laboratorium. Журнал социальных исследований*, 5, 2 (2013): 5-18; Id., “Rethinking Performativity: Ethnographic Conceptualism”, *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 13, 6 (2020): 672-689.

⁴ Carpentier, “Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text” .

⁵ M. Cahnmann-Taylor, R. Siegesmund, *Arts-Based Research in Education: Foundations for Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2017.

⁶ K.D. Fraser, F. al Sayah, “Arts-Based Methods in Health Research: A Systematic Review of the Literature”, *Arts & Health*, 3, 2 (2011): 110-145.

⁷ V. Foster, *Collaborative Arts-Based Research for Social Justice*, New York: Routledge, 2015.

⁸ K. Chamberlain, K. McGuigan, D. Anstiss, K. Marshall, “A Change of View: Arts-Based Research and Psychology”, *Journal Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 15, 2-3 (2018): 131-139.

⁹ Carpentier, “Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text”; Ssorin-Chaikov, “Ethnographic Conceptualism”; A. Ledger, J. Edwards, “Arts-Based Research Practices in Music Therapy Research: Existing and Potential Developments”, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 38, 5 (2011): 312-317.

¹⁰ C. Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, London: Verso Books, 2013.

¹¹ C. Esche, *Modest Proposals*, Istanbul: Baglam, 2005.

¹² J. Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, London: Verso Books, 2013.

¹³ M. McLagan, Y. McKee, *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*, New York: Zone Books, 2012.

¹⁴ I will be discussing artistic research in relation to the field of contemporary art as there are different stories to be told about this relation in other fields of practice such as documentary, film, music or poetry.

side. On the production side, through the ongoing process of what the Marxist art historian John Roberts calls artistic ‘reskilling’ – involving a shift from hand-based technique to the intellect – artists encounter theorists as privileged knowledge workers in performances of value-creation, which involve drafting funding applications, interpreting and talking about works and communicating exhibitions to informed audiences¹⁵. This not only blurs professional roles, but reshuffles field-specific hierarchies since the intellectualization of contemporary art with its mandate to describe innovation pushes art workers to depend even more on the university as the knowledge apparatus par excellence (i.e. to pursue MFA’s or seek out collaborations with theorists for instance). In turn, art institutions themselves are intimately entangled with – if not spearheading – an intimate interweaving between cultural production and commodity culture as they compete for attention amidst information oversaturation. On the consumption side, arts-based research becomes indeed packaged as information in narratives of singularized works for publics with increased educational and cultural capital. Art, in its conceptual capacity, differs little from the slices of information we daily consume, online and offline, triggering in turn ‘minor’ aesthetic responses, summarized by what Sianne Ngai describes as ‘merely interesting’, a response ‘[a]ways connected to the relatively small surprise of information or variation of an existing norm’¹⁶. The ubiquity of ‘interesting’ as an aesthetic response towards projects in contemporary art, for Ngai, indexes how its conceptual origins are replayed in the context of growing social automatization: ‘interesting’ is an aesthetic category that keeps the circulation of information, projects and relations going by offering the simple promise to “foster and prolong dialogue”¹⁷.

In the first part of the paper, I sketch the general outlines of contemporary art as an expanded and expanding field of practice that heavily relies on the knowledge apparatus for its social legitimization. In the second part, I look at the ways that this expansion relates with the acceleration of art’s growing epistemization in the last decades¹⁸. I will be arguing that instead of being a specific sub-genre of art, research emerges as a generalized category, if not a systemic imperative, of doing contemporary art. This turns visual art into “an essentially *epistemic* activity”, as the theorist Tom Holert puts it¹⁹. In the last part, extrapolating from the above, I summarize the challenges that this ‘going to the arts’ faces, namely deprofessionalization, new forms of distinction and art’s increasing resemblance with the information apparatus. For the discussion I draw on my previous ethnographic research on the interpretative community of contemporary art and art biennials, in which artists, curators and other participants are largely expected to display informed positions regarding the latest developments in theory, world politics and art trends²⁰.

2. THE EXPANDED FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Contemporary art refers to a contested yet evolving ‘global form’, performed by institutional arrangements, discourses and practices, blossoming in (mainly Western) met-

¹⁵ J. Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade*, London: Verso Books, 2007.

¹⁶ S. Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁸ T. Holert, *Knowledge beside Itself: Contemporary Art’s Epistemic Politics*, Sternberg Press: Berlin, 2020.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ P. Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacles of Critique, Theory and Art*, London-New York: Routledge, 2017.

ropolitan centers and underpinned by a value system with concepts like authorship, innovation and genius at its core²¹. As it evolves and circulates, this form diffuses trans-local communities of practice, which translate and territorialize its specificities within disparate contexts of showcasing and increased informational and cultural mobility²². Such processes of translation and territorialization are already part of the shift from handcraft technique to the intellect upon which the paradigm of artistic research builds its *modus operandi*: conceptualizing and contextualizing a work, an exhibition and an idea requires the correct ‘reading’ of places, audiences and infrastructures. For the art philosopher Peter Osborne then, all contemporary art is ‘post-conceptual art’²³, in the sense that it builds and expands on the legacies of conceptual art, according to which the idea or the concept behind a work are more relevant than the hand-craft technique used for its creation.

The emphasis on the concept and context turns contemporary art into a non-medium specific art, in the sense that it welcomes any media, object or material within its premises. The art theorist Martha Buskirk argues that this all-inclusive welcoming can be thought through what she calls the ‘contingent object of contemporary art’, for any materiality, irrespectively of the qualities of labour it incorporates or the form it assumes is candidate for aesthetic consideration²⁴. Similarly, for Rancière any materiality, however ‘vulgar’ it is, can enter realm of ‘perception, sensation and interpretation of art’²⁵. What is socially mediated is not the materiality per se but the way this materiality is performed in institutional settings – socially authorized to define the category of art – as part of larger narratives, meaning and knowledge. These settings involve, among others, galleries, modern and contemporary art museums, the large scale thematic exhibitions or art biennials that have enormously proliferated over the past 15 years, higher education institutions, such as art colleges and universities offering specialized curating and art theory programs with curricula drawing heavily on cultural and social theory, and interdisciplinary residency programs aiming to foster ties between artists and theorists. In these settings, art is valorized through communication and knowledge rituals, including guided tours, curatorial statements, accompanying labels, descriptions or artist talks, which work to explain to the public why and how some merely contingent objects merit social and aesthetic appreciation²⁶. The works around which these rituals take place are customarily expected to convey metaphorical or allegorical extra-visual engagements

²¹ Speaking about geographical expansion, the field spreads in institutions appearing in geographical regions all around the world in a process resembling the extremes of both cultural imperialism, i.e. Western-driven globalization, as well local empowerment by putting localities in the global cultural agenda. The term ‘global form’ is borrowed from S. Collier, A. Ong, “Global Assemblages, Anthropological Problems”, in S. Collier, A. Ong, eds., *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005, 3-21.

²² A. Philimonos, P. Kompatsiaris, “The Politics of Themes in Biennial Cultures: Immortality from Conception to Display in the 5th Ural Industrial Biennale of Contemporary Art”, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, Spring 2021 forthcoming.

²³ P. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London: Verso Books, 2013. There are numerous trajectories that speak about the post conceptual condition at the level of the art object. A usual early reference is Lucy Lippard’s idea of the gradual dematerialization of the art object during the 1960s with the rise of minimalism and conceptual art: with the art object disappearing from the forefront its place is taken by the statement about the work. L. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, California: University of California Press, 1997.

²⁴ M. Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.

²⁵ Rancière, *Aisthesis*, X.

²⁶ P. Kompatsiaris, “Biennial Art and Its Rituals: Value, Political Economy and Artfulness”, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 11, 1 (2019). DOI: 10.1080/20004214.2019.1627847.

related to issues around social justice, awareness, and change, rather than simply display beauty or the formal properties of a work.

Instead of an emphasis on the particularities of the object then, it is the extra-artistic, or what Gernot Böhme calls the ‘stage’, that demarcates a work’s mode of presentation and being²⁷. In other words, the art object as a specific affective and agential modality is subservient to the ‘discursive energy’ produced around it, which in turn mediates processes of generating artistic value²⁸. The outputs of this discursive energy consist of linguistic performances that can be inserted in artists CV’s, statements, or funding applications, and consequently publicly define the qualities of an artist’s ‘oeuvre’. In this process of artistic reskilling then what we can call informed and inventive framing becomes a fundamental professional asset. To effectively construct framing devices that can convince peers and the public within high art environments that artworks are indeed innovative, authentic and unique requires specific intellectual, stylistic and linguistic skills, that is skills having to do with one’s *habitus*, including class, cultural and educational background²⁹. To bring in and invert the classic Bourdieu analogy, the cultured gaze, through which the bourgeoisie and experts defined good taste, gives way to the informed and inventive framing that in contemporary art’s knowledge work becomes a sought-after skill. Rather than disappearing with contemporary art’s presumed democratization then, Bourdieu’s schema is realized through the manifestation of informed acts of conceptualizing and contextualizing works, exhibitions and places.

3. ART AND EPISTEMIC OPENNESS

The constitutive contingency of the art object gives rise to what Holert calls visual art’s ‘systemic transdisciplinarity’³⁰, according to which the constant dissolution of boundaries is not only an imperative of openness but a cultural logic permeating the field. For Holert, the ‘systemic privileging of the epistemic’ over the aesthetic developed in an ‘unprecedented’ way around the turn of the millennium³¹. Far from merely celebrating this development as a triumph against formalism’s non-political aesthetics, Holert stresses how the employment of knowledge as a counter-hegemonic tool is itself embedded in art’s ‘deep involvement’ with a ‘global political economy of knowledge’³². In this ‘pedagogical shift’³³, for instance, art students are regularly taught in MFA’s how to produce and frame activist, interventionist and participatory works as part of their vocational training. This, apart from being a ‘misconception’, it can be seen as ‘as one of the many beginnings of a reconfiguration, recomposition, or even dismantling of traditional oppositions between the protocols, hierarchies, and standards of academic institutions and the extra-academic, non governmental, infor-

²⁷ G. Böhme, “The Art of the Stage Set as a Paradigm for an Aesthetics of Atmospheres”, *Ambiances: Environnement Sensible, Architecture et Espace Urbain*, last accessed August 25, 2020, 2013.

²⁸ Holert, *Knowledge beside Itself*, 48.

²⁹ P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³² *Ibid.*, 8, 18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 183.

mal and organic character of activist practices³⁴. While this incorporation of activism into official institutions has the welcoming effect of giving visibility to broader social justice causes, it performs the new capitalism's self-legitimizing quest to appear self-reflective, inclusive and participatory³⁵. The array of movements related to the idea of art as participatory knowledge production that took over the vocabularies of artistic discourse in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, including site-specific art, relational aesthetics, dialogical art, activist art, Occupy art and community art, thus embark in a contradictory movement according to which grassroots practices are gaining visibility while being recoded within spectacular displays: 'what does it mean to occupy an art institution by invitation?', was a question regularly asked during my fieldwork in the 7th Berlin Biennale at which Occupy activists were invited to camp for several months in the main venue of the show and organize counter-hegemonic actions in the city. The Occupy movement gets a platform yet at the same time this very platforming obscures the political division between anarchist politics and the state by forwarding the idea that both an official art institution and the street protesters inhabit the same political space. Art's systemic transdisciplinarity, generally thought to be a positive development, often unfolds in the plane of neoliberal flatness that sidelines political antagonism in favour of presumed openness and collaboration.

The gradual intersection between creative industries and city development brings projects such as biennials and periodic events into the core of global art production³⁶. These shows, regularly run by curators and art professionals trained in cultural and critical theory, have been positioning the above movements into the mainstream of the visual arts scene already from the 1990s. Simultaneously, this allows the retrospective appropriation of practitioners not originally working *within* and works not destined *for* the gallery space as knowledge products that can be inserted within curatorial narratives. Indicatively, one can mention Jean Rouch and his ethnographic films or Harun Farocki and his visual essays, who are by now established figures in contemporary art shows, having been retrospectively branded as early practitioners of arts-based research³⁷. Amidst this expansion of the art apparatus to literally anything previously not considered to be within the realm of visual arts, even someone like Karl Marx could be listed as an artist in the Venice Biennale catalogue – as the art anthropologist Manuela Ciotti shows³⁸. Beyond the preoccupation with openness and transdisciplinarity then, one needs to ask from a political and broader anthropological perspective, what does it mean to bring the 'streets' or Karl Marx in the exhibition spaces of some the most high-profile art spaces in the world?

The field most definitely showcasing the above extra-artistic collaboration between visual arts and academic research is indeed anthropology and ethnography as its methodological brainchild. The by now established cultural trope of the 'artist as ethnographer' that Hal Foster identified in the mid-1990s is to a large extent defining

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁵ L. Boltanski, E. Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso Books, 2005.

³⁶ EU funding programs can be seen here as good example.

³⁷ This is consistent with the 'documentary turn' in contemporary art, where documents of a practice – whether these refer to photographs, material fragments or indeed film documentaries – can be reassessed and repositioned according to an exhibition's theme.

³⁸ M. Ciotti, "The Artist Karl Marx and the Auctioned God 'Post-Practice' Ethnographies of the Art World, Impossible Collaborations, and Renewable Anthropologies", *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 13, 6 (2020): 725-742.

the paradigm of political contemporary art³⁹: it is unimaginable to perform any sort of art as social practice today without possessing some ethnographic skills. However, the alliance between art and ethnography is two sided. While artists would research territories in the fashion of an ethnographer, usually having the role of a mediator between a (disenfranchised) community and the educated urban publics, ethnographers, reversely, would ‘go to the arts’ as potential collaborators⁴⁰. The privileged exchange between art and anthropology has a lot to do with the fact that anthropologists are rather more accustomed to produce descriptive knowledge about objects⁴¹ – something that sits well with the structural demand in the art field to generate narratives around art works – in contrast to, say, cultural sociology’s suspicion and deconstructive attitude towards the art work and questions around aesthetics⁴². The recent groundbreaking popularity of someone like Bruno Latour within the visual arts field, as a theorist or recently a high-profile curator, indexes how art’s discursive turn of the mid-1990s and 2000s⁴³, incorporated not only the ethnographic gaze but also the new materialist agenda that highlights objects, agencies and networks. Yet the embracing of collaboration as a win-win scenario for both parts can also entail dangers. As Ciotti shows, the collaborative turn in the anthropology of art, that implies that anthropologists should be working *with* artists instead of carrying research on the art worlds can lead to sidestepping issues around the operational hierarchies of the field and eventually in delimiting critique. By studying the trajectories of how non-art actors, such as Marx, enters the art system, Ciotti demonstrates how the privileging of ethnographer-artist collaboration risks overlooking the processes and conventions around and through which artistic valuation and the power relations it performs are taking shape.

4. CODA: POLITICS OF ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

While then from a sociological perspective the turn to knowledge production can be seen as a means for expanding art’s own scope, applicability and social relevance, the ongoing collapse of the boundary between the artistic image and the non-artistic one forges a concrete condition in which research is carried and valorized in the art field. I here discuss some of the aspects of this condition as they are especially expressed in and through large scales exhibitions, or ‘biennials’, which has been the focus of my previous research. The first of these is the specter of deprofessionalization, which can be read through Roberts’ dialectic of deskilling-reskilling. For Roberts, the mainstreaming of conceptual art does not merely deskilling the artists from their previous hands-based technique but forces them to acquire new skills that correspond to new, cognitive modes of labouring. This drive towards intellectualization, resulting from the image explosion that information technologies make possible, reshuffles the conditions of labour in the visual arts and creates forms of class antagonism between,

³⁹ H. Foster, “The Artist as Ethnographer”, in G. Marcus, F. Myers, eds., *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

⁴⁰ R. Sansi, *Art, Anthropology and the Gift*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

⁴¹ The union between the two fields and the modalities it inhabits is exemplified in the work of Alfred Gell.

⁴² This deconstructive approach to aesthetics is obvious in the leading figures of sociology of culture such as Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker.

⁴³ More on art and discursivity at B. Ferguson Bruce, M. Hoegsberg, “Talking and Thinking about Biennials: The Potential of Discursivity”, in *The Biennial Reader*, edited by E. Filipovich, M. Van Hal and S. Ovstebo, Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 2010, 360-375.

say, the humanities or social sciences scholar – as the professional knowledge worker – and the artist – who is in need of the latter’s knowledge work. This is intensified in conditions of increased competition for professional success, which involve the need to narrate oneself as a product, with knowledge and research being subsumed to the exigencies of the artist-entrepreneur model. Echoing Foucault’s insight of how modern apparatuses regulate social life, Angela McRobbie calls ‘creative dispositif’ the neoliberal disciplinary device that propels artists and professionals of culture to valorize themselves and work⁴⁴. In practical terms, in order to receive visibility and funding they need to showcase originality and uniqueness and thus package research and knowledge within marketable narratives.

From this follows that the idea of ‘high art’ and the forms of cultural distinction it harbours persist despite the supposed art’s opening to the broader public. Bourdieu’s trope of the good eye or the pure gaze of the expert and out-of-touch critic regulating the acceptable and correct taste, is replaced with the mandate for free-style, virtuosic communication, in which the stylistic performance of informed viewpoints becomes key in shaping artistic and individual worth in the field⁴⁵. That way, the deconstruction of the visual in favour of the more politicized “discursive”, carried out by critical post-modernism and by the newly born biennials of the 1990s as a strongly political if not activist move, itself articulates new found hierarchies and hegemonies⁴⁶. To correctly “read” post-conceptual art, an art which, again, does not give away its purpose, aim and orientation through a mere visual introspection, demands a new anthropological type as the ideal observer: the educated, liberal, informed, cosmopolitan and culturally omnivorous figure with the analytical capacity to read images as broader cultural and political texts instead of self-enclosed, autonomous works⁴⁷.

Finally, the politics of art display in large-scale curated shows render works as bits of information that together makeup the puzzle of an overarching exhibition concept attributed to the curator as a kind of meta-artist. As these shows often display works by hundreds and in a limited timeframe, it is virtually impossible for visitors to attentively experience biennial art unless one has several days to spend in each exhibition. In this supermarketization of display, it is natural that, on the one hand, the most instagrammable works will gain the most visibility for the broader public and, on the other hand, this overwhelming abundance tends to elicit minor aesthetic responses. Ngai argues that the dominance of ‘interesting’ as the aesthetic response par excellence in contemporary art results mostly from art’s conceptual turn that fails to arouse any substantial feelings to the viewer, yet I would add that it is also an effect of the mere overwhelming quantity of art in display. This coincides with the general ‘anthropological mutation’⁴⁸ of a world structured through platforms and the infrastructure of ICTs that render bits of information and narratives about everything readily available and accessible. This very availability and accessibility to all kinds of

⁴⁴ A. McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*, Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2016, 7.

⁴⁵ P. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2003.

⁴⁶ The visual aspect of contemporary works appearing in biennials, for instance, would rarely strike as ‘unique’ or the result of some artistic genius as, instead, these exhibitions and the artworks they showcase are primarily conceived as knowledge products.

⁴⁷ Usefully for this argument, Prieur and Savage link the earlier cultural omnivore thesis with the idea of ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital’. A. Prieur, M. Savage, “Emerging Forms of Cultural Capital”, *European Societies*, 15, 2 (2013): 246-267.

⁴⁸ Holert, *Knowledge beside Itself*, 22.

information, ranging from “serious” knowledge to simply fake or manipulated news, desensitizes the receiver by simply offering too much to consume within a limited time span. The desensitized receiver is a specter that contemporary not only needs to encounter but, in many ways, actively propagates through an apparatus that feeds off spectacular projects, quantity, networking and permanent online remediation. In this sense, a contribution of media and communication researchers could be to (re)sensitize the art field precisely by demediatizing and despectacularizing its display model. Research collaborations privileging the trust-based, institutional entanglements that foreground the long-term and the invention of formats beyond art’s constant mediatisation can be thought through as challenging the quick and spectacle-like engagement of hyper commodified contemporary art.