



Research overview 2019

Artistic research

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1. Summary

From an academic perspective, artistic research is a young research area that is developing rapidly. Over the last few decades, artistic research has formulated and further developed methods, theories and research practices that have contributed to the establishment of an independent research field. Artistic research in itself is a faculty area that covers a large number of subjects, such as visual arts, film, photography, music, dance, theatre, literary composition/creative writing, design, craft, etc., and artistic research is research within this area.

We live in and through artistic creation: the houses we live in, the food we eat, the books we read, the music that follows us through life, films we see, images we are fascinated by and reflect on, objects we use daily, advanced technical functionality and planned living environments become practical reality only through concrete interpretation and manifestation. The scope, methodical pluralism and degree of urgency that distinguish art also characterise artistic research – its content, knowledge formation and results, as well as its presentation formats.

Within art, the reflective and investigative attitude of basic research has always formed a strong component. Today's institutionally-anchored artistic research continues to build on the practice-based traditions of the various artistic areas, which in themselves have experienced changes in time with societal development. Artistic research is carried out from inside the actual artistic doing, where the question of *how* something is done is placed in focus in parallel with *something being created*, and contributes actively to developing the artistic fields. At the same time, this increases the insight into art and creativity both within neighbouring research fields, and in society at large.

This is research that both studies in depth delimited forms of expression and also ranges across the genre and medium borders of the artistic field; something that is of great importance for the development of the field. In various ways, it has impacts on the development of both artistic practice and artistic education. It contributes to the introduction of more reflexive items, and by following the creative processes at close range, insight into the importance of the artistic methodologies to artistic work increases. Furthermore, artistic research increases the internationalisation of education courses and the academies. It also initiates and contributes to fruitful exchanges with research within humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medicine and engineering. Artistic research investigates areas that arise in all fields, such as migration, urbanisation, ecology, accessibility and LGBTQ cultures. The results of artistic research are published both in text and in other forms of artistic creation, and are included in a self-evident manner in an international context. Swedish research education and senior research have both initiated and are active within central international research networks, as well as in leading international forums

on the internet for publication of theses and dissertations, and for the dissemination of artistic research projects.

Like other research fields, artistic research is facing a number of challenges and opportunities. These include the need to strengthen the research environments, improving career opportunities for junior researchers and increasing the funding opportunities for the field, which includes major national infrastructure investments. It is also crucially important to create greater collaboration between research and the actors in the artistic field, and to strengthen the research links to artistic education.

A strategically central issue is how the field is assessed within the Swedish Research Council. As artistic research – like other overarching research disciplines, such as medicine, engineering, humanities and social sciences – covers several mutually different subjects, with varying traditions, problem areas and results expectations, it is both reasonable and necessary for art to have its own scientific council within the Swedish Research Council. This change would in a decisive way promote the development needs and opportunities of the area.

2. Recommendations for the area as a whole

2.1 Scientific initiatives, including subsidiary fields that should be the subject of specific investment

As previously mentioned, artistic research displays a considerable range when it comes to artistic disciplines. They have differing traditions, methods, questions and needs, which makes it difficult to point out specific subsidiary areas that should be the subject of specific investments, even though there are great needs for infrastructure investments, for example (see 2.2) “Structural reforms”). What also needs strengthening are the prerequisites for increased collaboration between the different artistic areas – not least in order to develop the field as a whole. Investments that promote exchanges with other research fields should also be promoted, and where funding for research can come from several sources. Collaboration with funding bodies such as Vinnova, Formas, Forte and the research institute Rise would help the field to realise its potential to collaborate within urban development, social policy, working life and growth. The Swedish Research Council’s Committee for Artistic Research has an artistic research competence that constitutes an important resource in cases where other research funding bodies wish to develop support for artistic research.

2.2 Structural reforms (conditions and prerequisites for research)

Since the 2014 subject overview, the field of artistic research in Sweden has consolidated its position – both inside and outside both the academic and artistic contexts. It is, however, clear that the funding opportunities need reinforcement. The shortage of research funding is currently a hindrance to development, in particular of senior research, but also for the career opportunities of junior researchers. To establish junior researchers, increased investment in postdoc positions would constitute an important contribution.

A necessity for the field to develop is that higher education institutions both have and prioritise resources for both research education and for senior research. Increased collaboration between higher education institutions is also important for the continued development of the field. This relates to features such as the size of the research education environments and the quality of education, but also to gathering together resources to run high-level seminars and joint research projects, for example, and together formulate major grant applications, both within the field and in collaboration with other research fields. The Swedish Research Council should

assume greater responsibility for such development, for example by targeting specific network support for collaboration between artistic research environments, both nationally and in a global perspective.

From a structural perspective, it is important that artistic research strengthens the links to professional artistic areas, which research often uses as the starting point and work for. This is necessary, not least because the art institutions have many of the infrastructures that artistic research depends on, both to conduct research and to make the results accessible. These consist of stages, workshops, studios, publication opportunities, distribution channels, exhibition spaces, etc. To strengthen this collaboration, it is important that both the processes and methods of research and also the research results are also disseminated in and become part of the various parts of the artistic field – art, design, architecture, circus, literary form, music, illustration, moving image, photography, theatre, crafts, dance, and so on. The importance of well-functioning publication opportunities and communication channels is central also for disseminating knowledge about the importance of artistic research into wider circles. This is an area that needs to be reinforced and developed.

As artistic research has become established as an academic field (Section 2, Clause 2 of the Higher Education Act (SFS 2013:119)), just like artistic education according to Section 2, 1-2 of the Higher Education Ordinance, it is reasonable and desirable that artistic competence, to a greater degree than currently, is considered when filling positions in various research funding bodies – in particular interdisciplinary ones. Such a reinforcement of the artistic perspective and competence would guarantee expert review of applications from researchers within the field of artistic research.

2.3 Proposal for special measures to stimulate innovation and originality in research

Important prerequisites for successful research are good research environments, with a simultaneously critical, dialogic and constructive spirit. For this reason, setting up and further developing resource-strong environments are key to innovation and originality. It is also important that the research meets and is tested in dialogue with the world around it, which can also contribute perspectives that promote new ways of thinking about and conducting research. Therefore, investment in both research environments and opportunities to public and communicate research is needed. It is not self-evident that creative research environments will be formed through specifically targeted research environment support; instead, they can also arise through funding of individual research projects that generate interaction, which reinforces the environments.

A central aspect of both innovation and creativity and the dissemination of research processes and research results are the requirements linked to open accessibility of research data. It is important that the issues surrounding open science and open access are illuminated based on the perspectives and needs of artistic research, not least from the point of view of copyright.

2.4 Proposed measures that may lead to improved gender equality

In terms of gender equality, artistic research and postdoctoral education fall within the 40/60 range. Irrespective of this, it is important to consider issues of gender equality, equality and gender power in the area. A review of the field from an equal opportunities' perspective over the next few years is desirable. It is important to investigate which of the artistic postdoctoral career paths that are open to different groups. One way of ensuring that these issues are considered based on current data and relevant knowledge is to maintain a continuous discussion about equal opportunities and norm-critical perspectives in the groups that review and decided on research applications. This may be done through regular seminars, where new research within the field is presented, and where the groups discuss the consequences of the results for the research field, for example in terms of the career opportunities for different groups.

3. The impact of research within the area, in international comparison

Artistic research is strongly international, which is noticeable not least in the recruitment of doctoral students to third-cycle education courses. There are, however, variations between the different artistic fields. As general recommendations therefore risk being misleading, it would be desirable to have a detailed mapping of the current situation, in order to formulate a more defined strategy for internationalisation. Artistic research in Sweden is active within a number of different international collaboration bodies, and there are international platforms for artistic research initiated and operated by Swedish research environments.

4. Future development areas in a 5–10 year perspective

Many of the development opportunities and challenges faced by artistic research are formulated under the headings above, but they can be summarised in the following items:

4.1 Develop stable and prominent research environments

Research is today driven forward through individual projects, and there is a great need to develop both subject-specific and thematically interdisciplinary research environments and research teams. The higher education institutions have a self-evident responsibility in these processes, but financial support is also needed. An important way of providing this is to start with the diversity of the field and the way in which the different artistic fields develop themselves, and by reinforcing support for individual projects, including projects that require a larger infrastructural basis or greater transdisciplinary input.

4.2 Strengthen the career paths for junior researchers

The field has an increasing number of newly awarded PhD holders and doctoral students in training. But career paths for junior researchers are still largely lacking. We need to invest in junior researchers with various forms of support, covering both shorter and longer time perspectives, from short-term development support, mobility support and postdoc positions for newly awarded PhDs to more long-term career support for junior researchers.

4.3 Develop internationalisation further

Swedish artistic research has a prominent position internationally, but the international position varies between subject areas and needs both to be mapped in greater detail and further strengthening. Contacts with the other Nordic countries are important. We would propose (a) increased contact at public authority level, (b) more in-depth mapping of networks and needs for internationalisation within HEIs and subject, (c) based on the mapping, possibly targeted investment in increased mobility, for example.

4.4 Increase opportunities for collaboration with other research areas

Artistic research often has a cross-disciplinary theme. Collaboration across scientific area borders already exists, but the support forms for them need reinforcing. There are mutual opportunities for developing collaborations, both between different artistic subjects, and also with research within humanities and social sciences, educational sciences, gender studies, natural sciences and engineering and with medicine and health. Thematic initiatives that involve artistic research in particular should be identified and supported, but for this, competence within artistic research also needs to be strengthened.

4.5 Deepen the discussion about quality development, subject classification and publication

The annual research conferences and the publications published by the Swedish Research Council should be subject to discussion about quality concepts and quality development to a greater extent than is currently done. This may contribute information for more externally targeted communication, aimed at increasing knowledge about artistic research. The Swedish Research Council needs to continuously develop its review of applications and its assessment criteria, which becomes particularly important in conjunction with a desired growth of the field.

4.6 Develop and articulate publication formats

The issue the area's classification and subject categorisations is topical and urgent to continue discussing within the framework for both the Swedish Research Council's application system and SwePub. More groundbreaking presentation and publication channels with open access for artistic research need to be developed, both in Sweden and internationally. At the same time, it is equally urgent that the relationship of research with the areas covered by the artistic research field is not simultaneously weakened. These already have well-established channels for presentations of artistic activities. Against this background, publication content must not just be defined based on functionality within the higher education institution system.

4.7 Map and support infrastructure needs for artistic research

Reporting the result of artistic working processes with the help of exhibitions, stagings, concert performances, etc. is often resource-intensive. Here, investment in infrastructure needs to be made. We therefore need specific mapping of infrastructure within artistic research, including institutional funding responsibilities, funding needs and co-funding opportunities.

The Swedish Research Council's research overview within artistic research describes the current position of research and makes a forecast of developments over the next five to ten years. The overview also includes scientific and research policy recommendations for inputs to promote research in Sweden within the area.

This is one of seven research overviews in total, produced during 2018. The other overviews cover the areas of humanities and social sciences, clinical therapy research, medicine and health, natural and engineering sciences, educational sciences and development research. The overviews form a central part of the Swedish Research Council's input into the upcoming Government Research Bill.

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