

“Artistic Research as a Challenge for Art Criticism”

Abstract

In the last decade, artistic research arose as a new avant-garde practice in the arts. Regarding the dissolution of artistic limits, research-oriented practices increasingly challenged the once inflexible boundaries between art and science. Not only did artistic research challenge well-established notions of scientific knowledge production, but it also confronted art criticism with a number of problems. Considering contemporary theories of aesthetic experience, one can reasonably criticize the claims of artistic research as being contradictory to one another. While they tend to lean on the production of knowledge through artistic forms, the inherent “aestheticity” of the materialized objects of this production leads to the undermining of all conceptualization. A Czech translation of this essay has appeared in the paper edition of the journal.

Keywords

Artistic Research – Art Criticism – Art Critical Judgement – Aesthetic Experience – Conceptual Art

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1 The following publications offer a good introduction to the debates on *artistic research* in the German-speaking countries. Jens BADURA et al., *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, Zürich: diaphanes 2015; Sibylle PETERS (ed.), *Das Forschen aller. Artistic Research als Wissensproduktion zwischen Kunst, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*, Bielefeld: transcript 2013; *Texte zur Kunst*, 2011, No. 82, *Artistic Research*. One of the most comprehensive publications concerning the debates in the US and UK is: Michael BIGGS – Henrik KARLSSON (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, New York: Routledge 2011; Critical debates on artistic research were conducted by James Elkins and Irit Rogoff. See James ELKINS, *Artists with PhD 's: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, Washington, DC: New Academia 2009.

2 For recent debates on Art Criticism and the problem of art critical judgement see: James ELKINS – Michael NEWMAN (eds.), *The State of Art Criticism*, New York: Routledge 2008.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS A CHALLENGE FOR ART CRITICISM SEBASTIAN MÜHL

Artistic research is at its peak. One of the most important artistic developments in recent years, *artistic research* and research-oriented practices have been considered key strategies in the field of contemporary arts. In this paper, I will discuss challenges that are imposed by research-based practices upon art criticism. Even if an account on the theoretical assumptions of *artistic research* might be, at first glance, marginal in relation to a discussion of art criticism, the artistic formats that include research-oriented practices constitute an ongoing issue in many theoretical debates today. In fact, they constitute a controversial subject matter in the arts and in its theory. However, *artistic research* has been an object for critical inquiry by art criticism, thereby implicitly challenging the assumptions this criticism is based on. This paper intends to address this challenge.

Regarding the debates concerning practice-based research in the arts, especially over the past 5–10 years, I will focus on a specific perspective, namely how its practices have theoretically imposed shifts in terms of the status of some of the categories art critical judgements rely on.¹ I am interested here in two points: First, I want to figure out the dilemma that *artistic research* has generated for art critical judgements. Second, I want to argue for a systematic critique of *artistic research* on its theoretical basis by using that very dilemma as a starting point.² The methodological focus of this paper therefore embraces a perspective that relates to the theoretical implications of the critical judgement of art, more precisely, to the *aesthetic* dimension of

3 The experiential turn in contemporary aesthetics primarily reconsiders a Kantian notion of aesthetics. It is proposed by philosophers such as Rüdiger Bubner, Martin Seel, Christoph Menke, or Juliane Rebentisch.

4 Although there is no "official definition" of artistic research, most proponents emphasise the discursive character of artistic methods which connects to its knowledge generating dimension. The idea that artistic research generates *alternative* scientific approaches is proposed e.g. by Florian Dombois. See: Florian DOMBOIS – Philip URSPRUNG, "Kunst und Forschung: Ein Kriterienkatalog und eine Replik", *Kunstbulletin* 2006, No. 4, pp. 30–35, <http://www.kunstbulletin.ch> (accessed 31 May 2016).

5 By now, various programs in practice-based research exist worldwide. In Europe the following institutions (among others) offer a PhD in Practice: Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna; Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg; Universität der Künste, Berlin; Slade School of Arts, London; Royal Academy of Art, The Hague; Malmö Art Academy; Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design; Hogeschool Sint-Lukas, Brussels University College of Art and Design; Academy of Fine Arts at the University of the Arts Helsinki.

artistic research. It suggests a strong account of aestheticity in art as proposed in the so-called *experiential turn* in contemporary continental aesthetics. This accounts for a notion of autonomous art that keeps track of its demands for aesthetic experience.**3**

What Is Artistic Research?

What does *artistic research* signify on a theoretical as well as epistemological and aesthetic level? What are its promises, what are its snares? What forms of art production do *artistic research* practices include? Since the mid-noughties, the idea of *artistic research* has circulated within the ongoing debates concerning the relationship between art and science. As a theoretical concept, *artistic research* asserts a research character to artistic production. That is, it predicates that art would somehow be close to research, and therefore be close to science. *Artistic research* claims that art practices would share a similarity with scientific research practices, and that there would be a possibility for convergence between them both. Following this idea, *artistic research* is being compared to an epistemological project that would be an alternative or a supplement to science. It seems to be an alternative to established scientific practices.**4** In addition to this, political and institutional arguments appear that are linked to debates on the institutionalisation of practice-based research. This happens for instance within the institutional contexts of art education which requires repeatable research terminologies within their administrative evaluation language. *Artistic research* has been a promising keyword for many of the currently existing PhD programs that were implemented in art schools especially in Europe and the US during the last decade.**5** These are mainly hosted not by universities but by art schools and art academies. They follow the idea that art production based on research would need an adequate institutional form

under which it could be carried out in the future. The institutional programs thus especially foreground the figure of the artist as a non-academic researcher. They were inspired by the idea that artistic production would not only imply a specific form of research but even further produce knowledge that is comparable to scientific knowledge and therefore is a possible and adequate object of scientific evaluation and academic standards.

However, it may seem common to talk about practice-based research as a totally new phenomenon. Yet taken in a broader sense, we must consider that it is actually not as new as it seems. *Artistic research* is instead a contemporary name for a well-known but now highly fashionable approach towards the problem of what artistic production actually consists of. Assuming a broad idea of “research”, we can say that artists have always conducted research; they have always reflected, researched and investigated various kinds of techniques, media, or different forms of matter. From this general point of view, it seems adequate to say that artists have always incorporated research into their works. It is adequate to say that there is a specific technical, material or conceptual knowledge in art. This knowledge consists of skills that artists obtained through their practice and that is excluded from their production. Even more: one could say that there is no existence of art in itself without any primary research underlying the production art and its conditions. This, of course, does not mean that the activities of artists can be seen as an equivalent to common scientific research methods. Also, the artist’s research activities are not as “scientific” as the research activities and methods in the laboratories of conventional science. They instead seem to be the opposite of traditional scientific research methodologies. *Artistic research* practices are often perceived as “non-professional” practices, in contrast to the “professional” practices of scientists and science. Of course, this non-professionalism should not be understood as an incapability of the artist. In this regard, *artistic research* would instead be the name of a practice that is explicitly *not* committed to the strict criteria of scientific evidence, dealing with hypotheses, rationally based arguments or repeatable methods. Those rigorous criteria are fundamental for the operations of science, but they seem to be opposed by art’s more informal approach to what research could actually be. This approach can – but does

6 Indeed, subjectivity and intuition seem not to be key features for contemporary art practices in general, especially those who relate to the anti-subjectivising tendencies in the arts since the late 1960s. Still, in the debates on *artistic research*, it is precisely the idea of subjectivity that is foregrounded here in a positive sense.

7 Tom HOLERT, "Artistic Research: Anatomy of an Ascent", *Texte zur Kunst*, 2011, No. 82, *Artistic Research*, p. 46.

8 *Ibid.*

not necessarily have to be influenced by the artist's subjectivity and intuition rather than by analysis and evidence.⁶

However, examples of modern and contemporary art provide evidence about how art could actually approach science. These strategies were realized using playful or mimetic methods. Artists have used strategies of imitation, adaptation and fictionalization to adopt scientific research protocols and their specific modes of visualization. An example, among others, may be the work of Marcel Broodthaers, who used strategies of pseudo-scientific research, archiving and visualizing of objects already in the 1960s and 1970s. This is the case especially in his work *Musée d'Art Moderne – Département des Aigles* from 1968. In this complex installation, Broodthaers adopted the methods of science – in this case: the research methods of museology – quite consistently. At the same time, he subjected them to processes of complex aesthetic fictionalization.

As art theorist Tom Holert suggested, Broodthaers and other artists from the 1970s who are connected to the movement of so-called *Institutional Critique* are still a point of reference for conceptual artists today who work with poetized or fictionalized versions of science.⁷ It is crucial to understand that these artists – for example, Walid Raad and The Atlas Group, Mark Dion, Fareed Armaly or Andrea Fraser – carry out a "mimetic approach towards strategies of scientific study, education, and communication", as Holert puts it. At the same time they follow the ambition to constantly subject these methods to processes of aesthetic transformation and fictional reconfiguration.⁸ Thus, science, one could say, is *not* brought into play here in order to adopt scientific methods or to observe and uncover the "things of reality" as they would appear in a precise way to the "more objective" eye of a scientist. Instead, science and scientific protocols themselves become a matter of reflection, transformation, and critique. They become a matter to the manyfold artistic processes of fictionalization and therefore alienate scientific knowledge from what it actually was supposed to signify – from its clear readability and objective understanding. Still, the implicit claims about the relationship between art and science can be traced back to works such as *Musée d'Art Moderne – Département des Aigles*, by

Marcel Broodthaers. They are even more obvious in the works of a later generation of conceptual artists in the 1990s. Here, scientific protocols are basically subjected to artistic processes of fictionalization, they constantly poeticize and transform them, do not pay attention to the very ambitions of *artistic research* as a denominator for many of the contemporary practice-based research strategies in the arts. Moreover, it seems to be the case that the ambition of *artistic research* in the strict sense of the word is to convey a scientific status to artistic production and to blur any fundamental differences between art and science rather than distinguishing between the methods of art and science. It therefore puts science in the place of an object of artistic investigation and as a poetic marker. The focus seems to be not so much on the differences, but rather on a striving for analogies between art and science. *Artistic research*, in this case, seems to mean another, yet more intimate relation between them both than the one I suggested in referencing forms of art production linked to artists of the conceptual movements from the 1990s.

In approaching this account, I would like to recall the concept of *artistic research* as it was defined by one of its main protagonists in the field of contemporary arts today. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the artistic director and chief curator of dOCUMENTA (13), vividly calls for an overall idea of *artistic research* and situated practice-based research as a key concept for the curatorial programme of the 2012 exhibition in Kassel. According to Christov-Bakargiev, dOCUMENTA (13) was "dedicated to artistic research and forms of imagination that explore commitment, matter, things, embodiment, and active living in connection with, yet not subordinated to, theory."⁹ Indeed, she claimed an "alliance between current research in various scientific and artistic fields."¹⁰ She imposed that exhibitions like *documenta* would present new forms of knowledge by the means of art including research as well as other experiments in the fields of art as well as science. Following her account, within the context of the Kassel exhibition, artistic practices were best understood not only as specific aesthetic formats but rather as epistemological instruments that in themselves would represent a specific kind of knowledge. *Artistic research* would then be understood as an alternative form of knowledge which is situated in a close relationship to conventional scientific knowledge but also as an avant-garde artistic project which *sui generis* dissolves the boundaries between art and science. *Artistic research*, in Christov-Bakargiev's understanding, would imply a critical project, notably a form of scientific critique. Practice-based

11 HOLERT, "Artistic Research", p. 39.

12 See Emanuel MATHIAS, "Grenzen der Objektivität", in: Anna Sophie JÜRGENS – Tassilo TESCHE (eds.), *LaborARTorium: Forschung im Denkraum zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst*, Bielefeld: transcript 2015, pp. 229–242; exhibition *Till Gathmann: Some Formal Aspects of the Letterform B*, Wien: Kunsthalle 2015; exhibition *Florian Dombois: Struck Modernism*, Zürich: Haus Konstruktiv 2014. Further information on the artistic projects can be found online: Emanuel Mathias, <http://www.emmanuelmathias.com>; Till Gathmann, <http://www.tillgathmann.org>; Florian Dombois, <http://www.floriandombois.net> (all websites accessed 31 May 2016).

13 Kathrin BUSCH, "Generating Knowledge in the Arts – A Philosophical Daydream", *Texte zur Kunst*, 2011, No. 82, *Artistic Research*, pp. 72–73.

research in the arts would produce critical knowledge and act as an advocate for a "critical reorganization of knowledge and practice fields", as Holert describes it.**11** This notion of practice-based research emphasizes the fact that art production could critically examine the material, instrumental and also institutional conditions of scientific knowledge production. Further, it could possibly transform them. The artistic projects, works and artifacts that derive from research-oriented practices could be identified as matters which present or represent specific knowledge derived from research processes initiated by artists. Indeed, this knowledge would be specific insofar as it is as much contextual and situated as it addresses the highly individual methodologies of the artists who are conducting this research. Emanuel Mathias and his reflexive experiments on the self-perception of scientists at the Bauhaus Dessau, Till Gathmann and his historiographic research into the self-taught letterform historian Alfred Kallir, Florian Dombois and his artistic installations about seismological phenomena and their manifold possibilities of representation are examples of artistic production which claim to generate critical knowledge.**12** Their practices open up a critical perspective on the conventional scientific practices of scientists and science. They scrutinize the conventions and methodologies of science and imply a moment of subversion, of infringement of borders towards academic knowledge. Kathrin Busch emphasizes this idea as she states:

[T]he promise artistic research may have held in a philosophical perspective concerns not so much its scientific validation but in fact precisely the transgressive aspect of a knowledge that would be different from academic knowledge. It is not the orderly application of theoretical knowledge or the methodological safeguarding of its cognitive output that constitutes the particular appeal of the artistic production of knowledge, but rather the vision of a different culture of knowledge associated with it.**13**

In its most optimistic reading, *artistic research* would therefore be an indication of a new form of research practice that incorporates the vision for another, possibly more democratic form of knowledge production.

Practice-Based Research as a Challenge for Art Criticism

I will not go deeper here into the epistemological and methodological dimensions of the debates concerning *artistic research* practices. Instead, I will focus on a less common perspective on *artistic research*. I will ask how artistic productions that are based on research could better be understood considering their implicit aesthetic condition. More precisely, I want to discuss how these products could be understood along the conditions of their inherent aestheticity which qualifies these works – as I will further argue – as works of *art*. I will demonstrate how this problem relates directly to the art-critical perspective and to the dilemma art criticism is confronted with today. To understand the implications of the question for a specific *aesthetic* dimension of *artistic research*, I will make a methodological shift and focus on the perspective of the beholder for a moment. This will draw a connection to art criticism, since the beholder's perspective is basically analogous to an art critical one. As Tom Holert emphasizes, a beholder's perspective is fundamentally connected with a contemplative perception of the corresponding works of art, be they research-based or not. The beholder's perspective is in fact irreducibly linked to any consideration of art in itself. Regarding *artistic research*, Holert writes: "The beholder is invited to engage the artist's frequently idiosyncratic research endeavors in all their aspects and details, but is also free to limit herself to contemplating the aesthetic form in which the objects of research are presented."¹⁴ However, what is stressed here by Holert is not as trivial as it seems. In fact, the beholder is deliberately put into a position where she has a double choice regarding her contemplation of art. Either she could engage with an artwork on a theoretical level, that is, she would engage with the scientific protocols or research contents inscribed in artworks theoretically and thereby relate them to epistemological purposes, or, quite differently, she could engage

15 It would be a misunderstanding to consider the anti-aesthetic movements in conceptual art beginning in the 1960s to have challenged the idea of aestheticity *as such*. Even if the most important artistic developments in conceptual art rejected the idea of aestheticity as a principle for the definition of the autonomous and self-contained work of modern art, this critique does not address the idea of an aesthetic experiencability of the artwork. The experience of artworks as aesthetic phenomena remains a defining quality even if the respective artistic movements claim to be explicitly anti-aesthetic. See Juliane REBENTISCH, *Ästhetik der Installation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2003.

with the artwork in a mode of aesthetic contemplation, that is, she would be invited to experience the overall form of the artwork and the forms of its presentation in an aesthetic context. She would then perceive the artwork as an object of aesthetic qualities and of possible aesthetic experiences.**15** Together, both perspectives imply that the beholder will be confronted with different and even opposite modes of perception of artistic objects. Either she will opt for a theoretical cognition of the knowledge that refers to the research dimension of these works, or she will opt for an aesthetic contemplation that refers to specific forms of aesthetic experiences. These in themselves are based upon the fundamental aestheticity of these works. The ambiguity which is played out here in reference to its different modes of contemplation points towards a more fundamental problem. It has consequences for an understanding of the adequate status of knowledge inscribed in *artistic research* but also for the problematic question of the adequate form of art's consumption in general. The problem of *artistic research* can now be reformulated in relation to art criticism. Hence, the question is on what criteria art criticism should rely when determining critical judgements on works of practice-based research. In regard to the products of *artistic research*, this is not a trivial question. It rather becomes precarious because the possible forms of art critical judgements that could be determined here are twofold. First, a critical judgement could be contoured as a theoretical judgement and therefore rely on a theoretical experience. Second, it could be ruled out as an aesthetic judgement relying on its adequate form of perception, namely the *aesthetic experience*. Art criticism should therefore criticise different points. There are different aspects which its critical judgement should refer to. A first answer would be that art critical judgements are theoretical judgements. Art criticism would then rely on the theoretical cognition of research implicit to works of art. It would then draw theoretical or epistemological claims. Art criticism would therefore refer to any knowledge that might be visible in these works. In a second answer, the judgement of art criticism would rely on the aesthetic qualities of these works.

16 Christoph MENKE, *Die Kraft der Kunst*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2013; Juliane REBENTISCH, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius 2013.

17 David ROESNER, "Practice-as-Research – Paradox mit Potential", in: JÜRGENS–TESCHE, *LaborARTorium*, p. 27.

This would mean that art criticism would draw aesthetic claims and ultimately rely on a critical judgement of taste. This would correspond to an aesthetic experience based on whichever aesthetic dimension of the artwork. In the second case the artwork's theoretical, knowledge producing dimension would not be perceived as fully transparent but as layered by an aesthetic indeterminacy. This indeterminacy is what qualifies aesthetic experience.

My claim in respect to this splitting into two opposite forms of perception and their subsequent forms of judgement would be as follows: Both are in mutual tension, if not contradictory, they are at least undermining each other systematically. I want to clarify this assumption in the last section of this paper. Following theoretical accounts in contemporary aesthetics, for example in the works of Christoph Menke and Juliane Rebentisch, the determination of art is necessarily constituted through an aesthetic logic that differentiates artworks from phenomena of non-art. This aesthetic logic induces a specific form of experience, namely aesthetic experience.**16** Aesthetic experience is different from theoretical or practical experience as it displaces an aesthetic logic which differentiates it from all non-aesthetic phenomena. Artworks can therefore be experienced aesthetically. To be able to grasp a normative concept of art at all, the idea of aesthetic experience based on aestheticity is a key concept for any theoretical thinking about art and aesthetics. *Artistic research* hence has to be understood from a perspective that renders visible its inherent aesthetic logic. That is, an aesthetic logic that pays attention to the possibility of experiencing its objects as aesthetic. Aestheticity is not secondary to artistic products but rather constitutes their very status as works of art. Indeed, the proponents of *artistic research* claim that research-oriented practices would be a form of theoretical knowledge production. But this idea must therefore be linked with the idea that the works in which these practices *materialise* will simultaneously be objects of aesthetic experience, notably to be experienced ultimately *as art*. It is not a coincidence here that some proponents of *artistic research*, e.g.. David Roesner, do not speak of *art* anymore, but of *practices* which are then defined as artistic insofar as being authored by artists: "It is probably no coincidence that one speaks always of *practices* rather than of *art*. Research practices here means an artistic production which wraps up in an end [...]."**17** However, if we stick to an idea of art which complies with its fundamental aestheticity, this overlapping of claims is ultimately contradictory. Both demands, first

to present a theoretical knowledge and second to simultaneously give rise to aesthetic experience imply a fundamentally opposite relationship towards the concepts of art and knowledge. Art, in its aestheticity, does not relate to a propositional understanding of knowledge at all. It rather makes all knowledge inscribed in art indeterminate and leaves its cognition open to ever new determinations. As Juliane Rebentisch emphasizes:

Consequently, art not only holds an openness towards thinking, insofar as it causes an infinite process of ever new determinations, it also holds thinking itself open, insofar as it never lets thinking arrive to an end. In the light of art, we are never coming to make a determining judgement.**18**

The logic of the aesthetic experience initiated by artworks ultimately undermines all claims for a transparent, propositional understanding. It also undermines all attempts for a cognition of knowledge which would be identical with itself. Aesthetic experience undermines all propositional, transparent knowledge because it generates forms of indeterminacy regarding the specific knowledge matters that are presented in art. The knowledge that is presented in *artistic research* is never simply “given” to a theoretical understanding, it is never made completely transparent or accessible to a beholder’s perception. Thus, it is never simply accessible to the determining judgements of a beholder. If art is experienced aesthetically, its research matter is ultimately experienced in a mode of indeterminacy, or, in a mode of non-identity. This is the case even when research consists of scientific study – as it is the case with all art, be it conceptual or not. Research does not appear transparent to a beholder’s perception but rather opaque for his attempts for clear propositional understanding. This obviously does not mean that there would be nothing to be grasped conceptually in artworks or that artistic production based on research would contain no interesting concepts at all. The argument does not endorse an understanding of art that would be purely formalistic and emptied from all content, be it research-based or not. On the contrary, I insist that any research encoded in art is simply not a given object for theoretical understanding. It

cannot be an object for any propositional and transparent understanding. It cannot be an object of such attempts simply because it will always appear in a mode of indeterminacy which is based on its inherent aestheticity. In the process of aesthetic experience all identifiable meaning becomes potentially indeterminate and opaque. The aestheticity of art ultimately undermines all attempts to identify a specific propositional knowledge that could be clearly identified and on which a determining judgement could clearly be ruled out. *Artistic research* would therefore be trapped in a misunderstanding of its own capacity to actually make perceivable and identifiable knowledge at all. And this dilemma is not contingent but rather central to the very concept of *artistic research* as a way to produce art. The aesthetic logic that guarantees art's character of indeterminacy proves to be the fissure where it is separated from science and where it proves to be the contradictory to its demands for a supposed scientific character.

Keeping this in mind, I would like to draw on the work of Emanuel Mathias and his reflexive experiment *Grenzen der Objektivität (Limits of Objectivity)* at the Bauhaus Dessau, realized in 2013.¹⁹ Here, Mathias used scientific protocols such as documentation and research. These protocols were obviously used to investigate the linguistic and processual discrepancies between art and science. The work itself can therefore be read as an artistic reflection on the limits of objectivity in art and science. But at the same time – and this makes Mathias's work decipherable as a contemporary example of *artistic research* and as a complex aesthetic work of art – it does not aim primarily to represent whatever knowledge about the research processes and linguistic games of different disciplines. Instead, Mathias offers a presentation of research in all its varied details, but at the same time he subjects this research to an overall form of aesthetic formalisation. "Grenzen der Objektivität" was presented as a complex split-screen video installation which did not merely intend to represent a fixed knowledge. Instead, Mathias's research was again aestheticized, it was interwoven with the aesthetic forms of the overall presentation. By doing so, it was withdrawn from any clearly identifiable meaning. But how can the relation-

ship between this research and its overall aesthetic form be understood? As I would like to suggest, the latter directs our attention apart from any processes of theoretical identification and sets in motion the process of indeterminacy I have described. It renders opaque and quite ambiguous what actually is an important detail in the overall context of the work and what is not. But then, finally, what does this mean for the judgement of art criticism which – as I suggested – was challenged by forms of *artistic research* today? One conclusion would stress that art criticism should still retain its awareness of the fundamental aesthetic character of art, and it should still retain an awareness of art's aestheticity and its inherent aesthetic logic. But this is just as true for *artistic research* practices as it is for other practices of art. That said, the question of knowledge production which is primarily an epistemological one cannot be the first and foremost criteria anymore for any critical evaluation of these works. Instead, *artistic research* should be the object of a more differentiated form of critique. Art criticism should refer to judgements of determination that do not merely refer to questions of how knowledge production is effective here or how these works could be justified epistemologically. Art criticism should rather be concerned with the multiple aesthetic operations in these works and conciliate and mediate the multiple formal aspects within their research and their study. Criticism would then have to focus on a variety of aesthetic operations that are neither reducible to simple formal problems nor to surplus functions of their research. Instead, they contribute to the aesthetic complexity of these works and strengthen their capacity for mediation in the various aspects and dimensions of their readability. Art criticism would then evaluate the aesthetic operations that are effective in the works of practice-based research. It would evaluate how they enable aesthetic experiences for the beholder. Thus, art criticism would finally rely on the idea that there is no *final* determining judgement of art, as these judgements are never ruled out on a solely theoretical basis but rely on a critical judgement of taste. Thus, they remain contestable to anyone. Considering this would finally imply an abandonment of the idea of *artistic research* as an ultimate alternative to science, because neither is it a better alternative nor just a different one.