

Aalborg Universitet



## Bisociation of artistic and academic methodologies

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## **Panel Proposal** for Art In Context (Kunst i Kontekst), Conference, Agder University

The proposed panel consists of three presentations (papers), all dealing with the differences between and especially integration of academic and artistic methodologies. In recent years, artistic methodologies have become prominent in certain academic disciplines (research and teaching) with the aim to enhance creativity and generally to find new approaches to and perspectives on knowledge. Likewise, some art educational institutions have opened up towards (and against) academia constituting and formulating the field of artistic research.

The panel's three presentations investigate this cross field, practically and theoretically. Their common starting point is the teaching practices and designs development as part of the BA programme Art and Technology of Aalborg University.

Panel responsible is Falk Heinrich.

The panel consists of the following presentation:

### **Title: Inverse thinking as a unifying artistic and academic methodology**

Ståle Stenslie, PhD, Obel Professor of Art & Technology Aalborg University

#### **Abstract:**

#### **Project description and objectives**

The proposal presents Inverse Methodology as a method equally relevant for teaching in Art Academies and Universities. Differences in academic, artistic and educational approaches are commonly found in the pedagogical methods used respectively in art academies and universities. Despite the abundance of methods applied both in artistic research and teaching (Hannula et al. 2005) there is a need for best practice examples relevant across fields and institutions. Inverse thinking is one method that has proven itself useful in bridging this gap.

#### **Contextualization**

The proposal addresses the strict and controlled differences in teaching profiles that divide art academies and universities. In Denmark— like many other countries - there is still a required and intentional division between these two educational traditions. This is a reoccurring issue for the BA programme in Art and Technology (ArT) taught at Aalborg University. One of the concerns facing such programmes is falling in-between practices. As a university based programme ArT teaches a dedicated academic and theoretical practice associated with a university education. At the same time the teaching includes a strong practice led component commonly found in art academies. A main issue is therefore how to facilitate for this unique combination of theory and practice led, artistic output.

#### **Problem for discussion**

In many ways we have an art education in crisis in Europe. There is still a wide gap between the theory led educations at Universities and the practice based education at the traditional art academies. How can we develop methods and practices that bridge this gap? The presentation proposes the Inverse Methodology as one possible solution to this problem. Inverse methodology is a methodology of oppositions, promoting the development of seemingly opposite ideas and

solutions. Examples of artists working within this sort of thinking are Yes Men, Joey Skaggs and Morten Traavik.

### **Outcome**

One outcome will be a systematic presentation of the Inverse Methodology. This seemingly anarchic method promises to be applicable across art educational fields as it on the one hand promotes action through theory, and on the other instigates reflection through action.

## **Bisociation of artistic and academic methodologies**

Falk Heinrich, PhD, Associate Professor, Head of Studies, Aalborg University

### **Abstract**

This paper elaborates on the integration of academic and artistic methodologies within the field of art and technology. Art and technology is recognized research field also offering higher education programmes, such as the BA program Art and Technology at Aalborg University. Art and technology works ranges from dynamic art installations or applicable technologies (also outside of the art field).

The launch pad of this paper's reflections is Koestler's idea of *bisociation* (blending) of different thinking and action matrices as the foundational and unconscious mechanism of creation and discovery. Koestler proposes the concept of bisociation for academic discoveries and artistic creations alike by looking at the resulting artefacts (work of art, scientific discovery). However, my question is, whether the blending of academic and artistic discourses and methodologies—being a second order bisociation—can be used as a conceptual model for art and technology as a methodological field with its own type of artefacts?

On the basis of own experiences with higher education pedagogy (exemplified by a concrete pedagogical design), the article investigates the bisociation of matrices and codes by extrapolating from existing descriptions of relevant academic and artistic methodologies and their key assumptions such as artistic genius and knowledgeable scientist and tacit and explicit knowledge.

The interplay between existing theories and between theories and the author's own experience with and design of teaching designs aims at the description of a methodology and a heuristic for drafting concrete teaching designs.

## **The Space Between: Merging Theory and Practice through Intermedia Performance**

Elizabeth Ann Jochum, PhD, Assistant Professor, Aalborg University

Palle Dahlstedt, PhD, Obel Professor of Art & Technology, Aalborg University

This paper describes an interdisciplinary collaboration with a contemporary dance company called *BirdsINTERaction*. The Art and Technology (ArT) bachelor program at Aalborg

University provides a unique pedagogical model for combining artistic practice with academic methodologies through research, theory and development. ArT students participated in the creative and practical development of a live, intermedia performance together with professional theatre artists and choreographers. Through this collaboration, both students and artists experienced first-hand the affordances and challenges of combining artistic practice with academic methodologies. Here we present our approach, implementation and research outcomes.

For *BirdsINTERaction*, students were tasked with designing interactive performance spaces and narrative frames, working with live performers in ways that might restructure traditional dance performance and create an interactive experience for the audience. The project lies at the intersection of digital media, dramaturgy, dance, performance and film. ArT students collaborated with Dansefytårn Nord (DK) and Theatre Nordkraft (DK), and followed courses in narratives, dramaturgy and media, manuscript, filmmaking and mixed-reality technologies. In these courses, students considered theories of performance (Fischer-Lichte's *Transformative Power of Performance*; Benford and Giannachi's *Performing Mixed Reality*, and Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, and Lavender's *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*) as well as software tools such as PureData, Resolume, and Avid Media Composer. Students participated in improvisation and choreography workshops that provided them with embodied experiences that influenced their design practice. In addition to their creative contributions, students were tasked with coordinating a production team to manage production details and technical rehearsals leading up to the performance. The comprehensive approach to combining academic methodology with artistic practice enabled the students to apply aesthetic theories and methodologies in relation to dance and live performance, and to analyze the artistic outcomes from a rigorous theoretical perspective. The collaborations also challenged dance choreographers to work with new approaches and technologies.

Evaluation of the pedagogic and artistic outcomes of the project trigger a number of important questions, such as how do we balance pedagogical goals with artistic quality of the presented result? What are the best practices for combining hands-on learning with theoretical and analytical approaches? And how can we meaningfully evaluate such a project with respect to both short- and long-term learning outcomes?