

METHODOLOGIES FOR RESEARCH-CREATION

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Received: 20 May 2014

Revised: 27 May 2014

Event co-organized by Louise Poissant, Gisèle Trudel, Jean Dubois, Pierre Gosselin and Monique Régimbald-Zeiber, and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Hexagram UQAM, Hexagram | CIAM, the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture, and the Canada Foundation for Innovation

Conference LA RECHERCHE-CREATION: Territoire d'innovation méthodologique.
19-21 March 2014, UQAM, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

The opening session of the conference organized by the University of Québec in Montréal is dedicated to the preliminary definition of the term *research-creation*, whether it has to be considered as a new and independent field of study or as a mixture of two existing territories. The methodological side of the question soon becomes evident, dealing with the comprehension of the circular movement that goes from the artwork to the meta-reflection on it, both in the figurative arts and in the audio-visual and performative ones. Following the indication of the *Fonds de recherche société et culture* of Québec: "a path of research-creation is based on the reflection intrinsic to the elaboration and realization of an artwork"¹.

Although it is undeniable that reflexivity and auto-poiesis are inherent to creation, the methodology of the transformation from creation to research and vice versa stays still undefined. According to Serge Cardinal² the indications quoted above should be interpreted in a phenomenological sense: research-creation is, therefore, the space in which a theme is clarified and developed in a way that is possible only thanks to an artistic *practice* understood as a phenomenological singularity and *ekphrasis*³.

On a similar basis, the art historian Emanuelle Quinz⁴ starts her reflection from Giulio Carlo Argan's assumptions on Kinetic and Programmed Art and the capacity of art of posing and solving a problem finding new experimental positions rather than presenting itself as a closed system. This is one of the foundational guidelines of the conference that implies a shift from the *object* to the *process*, and the research of methodological models able to set up new practices. The artwork, therefore, is not to be considered as a completed and perfected object but as a *device* able to verify an experimental hypothesis. Even the spectator is not only an

1. <http://www.frqsc.gouv.qc.ca/fr/accueil.php>

2. Professor of History of Art and Cinema at the University of Montreal and Director of the laboratory of research-creation of the Interdisciplinary Observatory for research and creation in Music www.creationsonore.ca

3. A descriptive discourse oriented at putting an object under the listener's eyes, exploiting its force of visual representation (Hermogenes, *Progymn*, 10).

4. Researcher in Esthetics at the University Paris 8 and the EnsadLab of the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs

external observer but a technician who execute an experience that is part of an objective process. On a different position, the English critical design, a movement born around 2000, has analyzed, on the basis of the XX Century Vanguards, the concept of *dysfunction*, getting to the definition of creation as critical experimentation.

The relation between research-creation and cognitive sciences is analyzed in the congress' second section, through the description of selected artists' practices and the simulation of a creative process by a calculator (Edmond Couchot)⁵. For what concerns literary and linguistic creation, the young Canadian writer Jean-Simon Des Rochers moves from the reflection of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bachtin on empathy (*Einführung*) in Theodor Lipps interpretation, and tries to define the relationship between the writer and the creation of a text. This relation is, in fact, currently understood by the critics as a connection with an otherness, suggesting the idea of a dialogical nature of writing in itself, based on empathy and similar to the *embodied simulation* studied in mirror neurons research.

The third section is also noteworthy and is dedicated to the connection between theory and practice, and to the idea of performance as a form of research. Papers of this part of the conference focus on experiences of collaboration between scientists and artists, but also between academics and practitioners, such as the PhD SACRe (Sciences, Arts, Création, Recherche) at Paris Sciences et Lettres (PSL), founded in 2012, and the doctoral thesis in "creation", built on Graham Wallas heuristic method⁶, reworked in 1990 by Clark Moustakas⁷. Such methodology is based on a set of heuristic cycles, each starting with a question and developing in the exploration of the topic, creation in atelier, public presentation or performance, conceptual understanding, synthesis in written form, and eventually culminates in the formulation of a new question that is the starting point of another heuristic cycle.

A crucial theme inherent the research-creation as academic discipline is synthesized by the expression "demo or die" – coined by Nicholas Negroponte in the Nineties and title of the fourth part of the conference - that has replaced the academic "publish or perish". The concept of Demo does not only conceive the idea of making the research results' public, but also that of visualizing the process of a creative research. For this matter, the presentation of the internationally renowned musician Sandeep Bhagwati introduces an iterative methodology based on the Cycle Theory of Collective

5. Artist and researcher, Professor Emeritus at the University Paris 8, member of the Research Centre on *Images Numériques et Réalité Virtuelle*

6. Graham Wallas (1926), *The Art of Thought*, New York, USA, Harcourt Brace

7. Clark Moustakas (1990), *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*, Newbury Park, CA, USA, Sage Publications

Creativity, developed by the architect Lawrence Halprin in the Sixties to integrate the perceptions of the creator and the viewer of a public artwork, that has been adapted to put into relation the perspectives of an artist and a researcher.

The publication of research results in the digital era, even if as a Demo, has to face the problem posed by the continue obsolescence of technological tools on one side, and by the free licenses typical of the net, on the other. Moreover, art and technology currently appear interconnected to the point that any advancement on one side affects the other, and makes the reflection on the role of the artists still crucial, as evidenced by the intervention of the architects Aaron Sprecher and Francois Leblanc on the “voxel”, a volumetric pixel, symbolizing the burst of the third dimension in art.

From this point, the interventions unfold widely in the fifth section, with the presentation of various case studies, including the non-academic project Promiscuous infrastructures, which connects art and political activism, bringing the discussion to the socio-political role of art; the Research Design Lab⁸ at the University of Colorado-Boulder; the SLIDERS_Lab, an interdisciplinary research laboratory specialized in performing arts founded in 2005, that makes circular research from artworks to concepts; and the research group in Visual and Interactive Arts of the Research Center in Arts Science and Technology at the Catholic University of Porto.

The theoretical and practical overview of the emerging methodologies in research-creation concludes, in the sixth and final session of the conference, with the presentation of some methodologies based on *chance* and *hazard*. Since art inspiration comes in many cases from unpredictable, unexpected and accidental reactions - synthesized by the expression *serendipity* - many artists voluntarily integrate elements of gambling and risk in their creative process. From fortune telling and oracular methods to practices based on the material's tendency to follow its nature contrasting the artist's will and therefore producing an overabundance of sense, up to the cross-border odysseys of Cathy and Daniel Patrick Beaulieu⁹, in this part of the conference the focus shifts once again from the object of art to the process, and the path originating from a creative problem rather than its point of arrival.

The research-creation is so described as constitutively problematic, and open to cyclical and iterative methodologies that tend to blur the differences between process and outcome, without completely overcoming it.

8. archinodes.com

9. www.venturyodyssey.com
and vegasodyssey.com

