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What is it possible to know?

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In his 1978 movie *Manhattan*, Woody Allen's character, lying on a couch in his apartment after a break up of a relationship, records his thoughts on life:

“An idea for a short story about people in Manhattan who are constantly creating these neurotic problems for themselves to keep them from dealing with more terrifying unsolvable problems about the universe ...

...to be optimistic

Why is life worth living? That's a very good question. Well, there are certain things I guess that make it worthwhile. Like what? Okay, for me, I would say, Groucho Marx, to name one thing and Willie Mays, and the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony, and Louie Armstrong's recording of "Potato Head Blues," Swedish movies, naturally, "Sentimental Education" by Flaubert, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra, those incredible apples and pears by Cézanne, the crabs at Sam Wo's, Tracy's face ..."
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxLUWUhmBAM>

By exploring what he really cares about, Allen comes to a personal insight about whom he *really* loves. (an aside – he really *really* does not deserve Tracy whom he treats abominably...)

But lets return to the point and explore the possible resonance of this clip with artistic research and the core questions of this keynote:

What can be known through art/ artistic research?

How do we set about posing good questions?

It goes without saying perhaps that artistic research *should* focus on what we really care about. At least I think we can agree that artistic research should not be concerned with concocting neurotic problems that keep us from dealing with what is important. In fact I will argue that our way of knowing as artists is increasingly being called upon to address “the more terrifying unsolvable problems of the universe” though we may use different words to describe precisely what these are.

What is it possible to know through art/artistic research?

Returning to our film clip Woody Allen reveals a very particular quality of approach to knowing, in this case to self-knowledge. He *intuits* what is important, adopting a creative tactic, an imaginary scenario in which he momentarily suspends the reality

of his own situation by sketching an idea for a short story. He documents this, speaking into a tape recorder. It brings him to the heart of what he *senses* is real, true in his situation. The idea for a short story touches him, slows him down, helps him to think, to question and through this, to come to an important decision.

This small moment in the film reveals something important about artistic ways of knowing. A short story can take us outside of the life world of our own experience. It can touch us, opening up a new horizon or possibility and in so doing, we undergo a process of renewal. In this way art and artistic research maps onto fundamental values of education, as outlined by Jan Masschelein and Maartin Simons (2015). In their recent work on *Reclaiming the School and the University*, they argue that education at all levels is a process of renewal that depends upon leaving a known environment, creating free time that has no other function than to explore, experience, challenge and think i.e. it serves no instrumental purpose other than to transform knowledge and skills into “common goods” opening up the possibility of changing the world in unpredictable ways.

They make reference to Hannah Arendt ‘s 1953 essay on the crisis in education. In the following passage we might usefully substitute Arendt’s word ‘education’ with ‘artistic research’ and arrive at similar insights.

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel...from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world” (Arendt 2006/1953: 193)

Our current times and research context is marked by a failing attempt to run academic research and education as a business as opposed to a public service. It is useful to reflect on the relevance of these (Arendt and Masschelein/Simons’) insights in education to artistic research. ‘Leaving a known environment’ may mean leaving the familiarity of a known way of working in artistic practice, the comfort of skill or an established context for the work and its reception, a familiar aesthetic or a known community of support. Creating ‘free time’ may mean not taking up the next opportunity that comes along, the next exhibition or funded project. It may mean stepping aside and questioning cherished interests and habits. It will almost certainly mean developing new habits such as balancing artistic production with critical reading/writing. The rewards of ‘free time’ in these terms are high, but not necessarily material or individual. The function of research after all in all disciplines is the creation of common goods in the form of shared discourse creating the conditions for *the next generation* of in our case artists and researchers to create something new and unforeseen. In the context of a PhD there are moments of critical judgment that secure or not, the development of a different horizon, a meta discourse that moves personal interests, choices and preferences into care of ‘a common world’.

An example: Suzanne Lacy Imperfect Art: Working in Public, A Case Study of the Oakland Projects (1991–2001)

Thanks to an introduction from the artist, academic and ecologist Dr David Haley who is here at this lecture, Suzanne Lacy approached *On the Edge* to support her PhD by practice. A recognised practitioner of international standing, Lacy was

interested in reflecting upon a ten year body of work in Oakland, California that involved issues of youth, race and media education through a series of large scale performance works.

Between 1991-2000, Suzanne Lacy worked with youth and adult collaborators under the acronym **TEAM (Teens + Educators + Artists + Media Makers)** to produce lengthy and large-scale projects that included workshops and classes for youth, media intervention, and institutional program and policy development. **(It is) one of the most developed explorations of community, youth leadership, and public policy in current visual arts practice.**

TEAM produced socially oriented public performance and multimedia installation art that engaged inner-city youth with public policy and institutions that effect their well-being, had a direct impact on regional media images of urban young people, and promoted theory and practice on how art affects social change in the justice, health, and education systems. This work is distributed on television, through lectures, in galleries, on documentary videos, and in articles and books.

<https://theoaklandprojects.wordpress.com>

It was more than a decade ago at the outset of Lacy's doctoral study in 2005 that Dr Stuart Hannabuss, an historian in Aberdeen Business School, responded to Lacy 's keynote presentation at Robert Gordon University. Stuart grasped Suzanne's work as simultaneously art and research. He applauded the willingness of artists to dare to raise questions for which there are no known or available methodologies. In making this observation, he revealed an important quality of approach in artistic research that contrasted with his own experience in business studies. The latter was and continues to be predominantly driven by the social sciences with an overwhelming concern with methodology. In artistic research, he suggested, outcomes cannot be determined through method. Instead artistic research involves skills in creating the conditions (performances, workshops etc) through which 'truth' may be *revealed, found* through the participation of multiple players, in this case young people, educationalists, health workers and policy makers. We might contrast this with a different research approach prevalent within positivism. The latter constructs limited parameters within which a certain kind of truth might be *designed and tested* by the inquirer. If an hypothesis stands up to rigorous testing and its outcomes verified and accepted by the whole scientific community, it moves forward as thesis. The one form of research is an opening up to possibility. The other is a closing down of possibility to reach a degree of certainty through control. These are quite different and equally valid ways of creating new knowledge.

Hence knowledge, Hegel says, is often likened to an instrument by which we grasp the truth, if our instrument is faulty we may end up holding nothing but error.

Singer 1983, p 64

Artistic research begins with the perspective and subjectivity of an individual acting in the world, positioning this action in relation to existing theories, histories of ideas and of artistic practices. Lacy's performance works, like the proposal for a short story in *Manhattan*, not only create the conditions for seeing things differently but also the possibility of acting differently. Lacy does not determine a particular outcome but shows that "everything that is, can be different" (Gielen & Lijster 2015)

Lacy's PhD both acknowledges her artistic practice and takes its way of knowing a great deal further.

Framing the ontological question – What can be known by this research? (Guba et al., p. 108)

Lacy's research aim was to find a way of opening up her artistic process to other artists, curators and leaders of public institutions and organisations. She had been encountering all kinds of weak versions of her own aesthetic and in moving increasingly into public institutions of art, she was uncovering a new demand, the need for institutions and organisations to understand best how to support this area of work appropriately. This gap in knowledge was vividly exposed towards the end of the PhD process in *Silver Action*, 2013 at Tate Modern. Lacy felt that she had needed to educate the institution of art into social art practice.

Framing the epistemological question: What is the nature of relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?" (Guba et al., p. 108)

Through her PhD, Lacy set out to address a community of practitioners involved in this area of practice. A clue to an approach that chimed with the artist's aesthetic lay in performativity and public space, in particular Lacy's emphasis on public dialogue. With the support of her significant experience and working with Creative Scotland, *On the Edge* took the process of critical reflection into a public setting, inviting other key practitioners interested in the issues to learn together over a twelve month period (2006-7). It took the form of a structured programme of invited lectures, discussions and studio sessions ending in the most public of contexts, the Scottish Parliament (September 2007). Thus Suzanne Lacy's personal research became *Working in Public*, a seminar series across the four major cities of Scotland with the intention of reaching artists, funders, policy makers and community partners who could benefit from the specific experience of a high level practice. In this sense, Lacy's Oakland projects acted as a case study of important experience to the whole community of public art practice. The research generated an analytical framework situating the different tensions at work in this kind of artistic endeavour. It drew on Lacy's specific experience and extrapolated the consequences. The framework sought to acknowledge the very real tensions between aesthetics and ethics (Seminar 1), representation and power (Seminar 2) and quality of art and quality of social process (Seminar 3) (Douglas 2007, 2016).

This aspect of the work is exhaustively documented at an interim point in the thesis in www.workinginpublicseminars.org.



Figure 1: Suzanne Lacy, Grant Kester and participants , Seminar 1 *Working in Public* 2007 courtesy of On the Edge research.



Figure 2: Seminar 4 *Working in Public* Scottish Parliament 2007 courtesy of On the Edge research

How can the inquirer (would - be knower) go about finding out? Not any methodology will do ..., (Guba et al., p. 108)

Lacy finalised her thesis in 2013, *Imperfect Art: Working in Public, a Case Study of the Oakland Project 1991-2001*, situating her Oakland work in art historical, philosophical, and cultural contexts to assess its aesthetic merits. One of the major themes underpinning the thesis is to examine how the social claims in work of its kind could be evidenced. To this end she engaged with five sites: institutions within health, education, criminal justice, civic policy, and youth experience. She aligned her work with forms of pedagogy—from the expanded notion of public pedagogy to the intimate level of a mentoring relationship. Pedagogy underpins the work's claim to hold a relevant place within both the public and professional art spheres.

We might keep an eye on this word 'pedagogy' to the ideas of education in Arendt and Masschelein and classical notions of education – the pedagogue according to Masschelein was the slave who brought the child to school, not the educator. Lacy's role in creating conditions is that of bringing individuals to a situation in which education in a deep sense becomes possible, not as a process of instilling knowledge in others, but as a process of drawing insight through immersion and dialogue in a shared exploration of the issues.

Through the doctoral process, Lacy therefore needed to go beyond just developing more work. It involved a commitment to analysing what was involved in practising *well* i.e. not just what worked but why it worked. She used her knowledge of art production to develop ways of knowing that emerged out of art and were distinctive in this way. Lacy's research lifts the horizon on an established practice, opening this practice up for the purposes of renewal to the next generation of artists, curators and communities. This process- of opening up action to scrutiny so that it may be altered- is not only a core value of education particularly at a higher level. It is also a core value of research.

I have proposed in *The Artistic Turn* co-authored with Kathleen Coessens and Darla Crispin, that practice led research in the arts is part of a deep knowledge tradition. It *does not* co-incide with the creation of post 90s universities in which Art Schools became part of universities and therefore the need for research. In some sense research in the form of critical thinking has always been an aspect of art's way of challenging and renewing itself. This may be most vividly exemplified in 20th century through the reflective work of Paul Klee, John Cage, Eisenstein, all of whom critically analysed new aesthetic approaches through texts that exist in a slightly different space from the work itself, 'leaving their known environment' (Masschelein and Simons 2015).

More recent examples of this kind of critical, analytical thought include the Harvard lecture series (William Kentridge's 6 Drawing Lessons and Italo Calvino's Six Memos for the Next Millenium, destined for this platform). *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* edited by Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz 1996 is also a Sourcebook of Artists' Writings.

On the Edge Research (2001-) www.ontheedgeresearch.org

Always talk in first person, from your own experience. Bring back to yourself whatever you want to communicate. Talk from your experience and bring yourself "inside" what you want to say. Don't step out with theories. Discourse and life are not separated. Communicate yourself.

Romano Madera, *La carta del senso. Psicologia del profondo e vita filosofica*, Milano: Cortina Raffaello (page 227-233)
<http://www.scuolaphilo.it/philo.html>

The growth of the doctorate as a qualification leading to (potentially at least) access to a research career, research funding, interdisciplinary collaboration does probably co-incide with early 90s.

In terms of our **institutional** context – and this will be very familiar - Robert Gordon University is a post 90s university within until recently, a thriving industrial economy of oil and gas in the UK. Deeply engrained in its research culture is the assumption that research means technological and therefore economic development, a type of problem solving that is funded by industry. In this context there has been little grasp

of the value of arts and humanities research let alone artistic research. We have had to negotiate in a disciplined and persuasive way, a respected and viable position.

In terms of our **cultural** context in NE Scotland, OTE research began with the question - What might the role of the contemporary artist be in remote rural contexts?. We had no idea how to address this question. It had arisen over some years of trying to practice as artists in remote rural areas. At the time, the turn of the millennium, the dominant context of contemporary visual art was urban and metropolitan. Posing the question led us to considerable playful experimentation and an open mind as to the possibilities of what art *could* be.

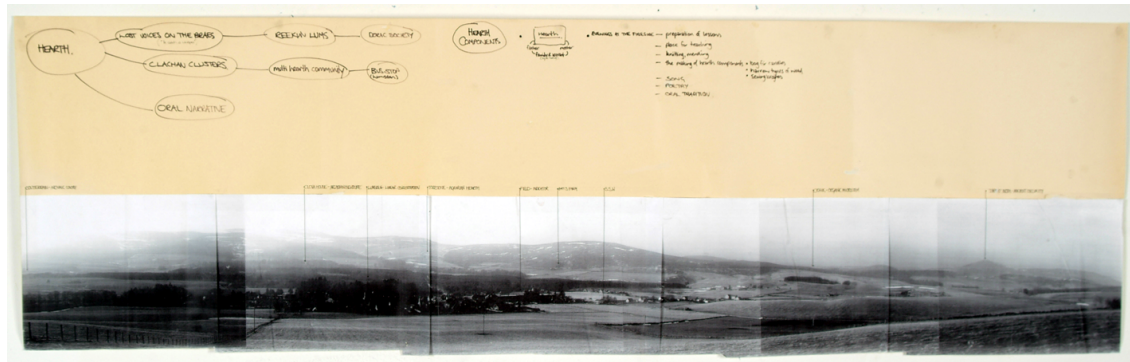


Fig 3 *Inthrow* Project Partner Scottish Sculpture Workshop 2004

It is perhaps important to note that all the PhDs that I have supported contribute to a shared and well-defined research focus: the relationship of art (and sometimes design) to public life, hence our capacity to support Suzanne Lacy. It is a programme of some 20 years in the making in which individual PhDs contribute in distinctive ways to understanding the changing relationship of art to public life. Established and emergent thematics include cultural leadership, social art practice in organizational development, feminist manifestos, critical design practice, ecology and art, sound and place. More recently this has included some postdoctoral level development.

Completed PhDs 2012 onwards

Price, Jonathan. 2016. *The Discourse Of Cultural Leadership*

Buwert, Peter. 2016. *Ethical Design Practice: Investigating A Theoretical Framework For Dialogical Visual Communication*

Smith, Helen. 2015. *Understanding Organizational Change Through Art: A Methodology for Art as a Social Practice (AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award with Woodend Barn Banchory).*

Gulari, Melehat Nil. 2014. *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Design Support for SMEs in Scotland*

Lacy, Suzanne. 2013. *Imperfect Art: Working in Public, A Case Study of the Oakland Projects (1991–2001)*

Chu-Yuan Chu. 2013. *Negotiation-As-Active-Knowing in Relational Art Practice*

Goto-Collins, Reiko. 2012. *Ecology and Environmental Art in Public Places*

In progress

Gausden, Caroline. 2016. *Feminist Manifestos And Socially Engaged*

Practice

Baxter, Jonathan. 2017. *Performing The Broken Middle: Socially Engaged Art And Its Shadow*

Chambury, Nicola. 2018 *Reimagining Landscape Crathes By Crathes*

Zeco, Maja 2018 *Placing Sound the role of Aurality and Visuality in Locating Identities* (Applied Research Studentship Scottish Graduate School in Arts and Humanities with sound festival of contemporary music and Aberdeen University)

What *could* art be *in relation to.....?*: Facing the crisis of education and postmodernism

By practice-led research I mean research that involves the practice of art as a significant contributor to both content and approach. As intimated earlier, it is experimental, concerned with opening up possibility of art's relation to a changing world - What *could* art be *in relation to.....?* It is important to ask this question now as we are currently at something of a watershed in education and research across Europe and beyond (Ingold 2015, Masschelein and Simons 2015, Biesta 2013 among others). We may be at a cross roads in which the values of neoliberalism have come into collision with the hopes and values of liberal education. This is profoundly influencing Art School education and its research in a negative way.

As a research community the shared question has moved from

- **In what sense is artistic practice, research/researchable?**
(RAE 1996, 2008, REF 2014)
to a more pressing and urgent question
- **How does artistic research help us understand culture and society more critically? How does such research open up new possibilities within other non-art fields- environment, economics, society and culture?**

The first may be a self referential, self reflexive question that has been crucial at the outset of a formal research culture, a means of understanding the ground we stand on, but is more readily aligned with modernism in art. The second, I believe, is the demand of post modernism and its impact on art.

Let me try to explain how I am seeing this difference...

The trend within modernism had been towards differentiating art forms from each other aligned with sensory domains particularly of seeing (visual arts) and hearing (music), resulting in a degree of autonomy, a search for pure form, an escape from appearances in the real world towards the immaterial and spiritual in art. Central to this autonomy has been a focus on product as the locus of the 'work' of art. Herbert Read poignantly remarked upon the absence of a connection between art and life in his introduction to the published version of a lecture Klee gave in Jena in 1924 *On Modern Art*.

"Klee, with the clarity and humility not characteristic of many of his contemporaries, realised that the individual effort is not sufficient. The final source of power in the artist is given by society, and that is precisely what is lacking in the modern artist- 'Uns trägt kein Volk'. We have no sense of community, of a people for whom and with whom we work. That is the tragedy of the modern artist, and only those who are blind to their own social disunity and spiritual separateness blame the modern artist for his obscurity"
(Read in Klee, p 6 1948/1989)

However, in recent years particularly in the visual arts and spearheaded perhaps

through Allan Kaprow's metaphor of the blurring of art and life (Kaprow 2003), there has been something of a reversal of Herbert Read's pessimism, a seismic shift in the form of a deep engagement through art with the materiality of real social, political and ecological issues and experiences. It is in this turn that our artistic research and its sub themes are situated. The turn does not imply that all the arts need to be activist in the sense demonstrated by Lacy. The implications go well beyond style or genre.

Let me try to evoke this shift through a quite different context: music. According to the free jazz improviser and philosopher, Gary Peters, free improvisation is an aesthetic space in which we enact the paradox of two different qualities of freedom that are founded in society in general: 'freedom to' is driven by the desire to be one's own master whereas 'freedom from' consists in being prevented from harm done by others. In the context of free jazz improvisation, Peters argues, the positive freedom to be one's own master within modernism frequently led to a cacophonous overkill in the context of a performance

...the brash and virtuosic exhibitionism that excited performers and audiences alike before the 1960s, the competitiveness and one-upmanship that was everywhere in evidence, the arrogance, callousness, and cruelty that gave so much performance its edge.(Peters 2009, p 24)

This, he argues, may now have been displaced, or at least challenged, in post modernism as part of a wider trajectory in culture and society, a "gentler activism" marked by "the concern for the ecosystem, the concern for the downtrodden and silenced" (Peters 2009, 23-24).

How has this shift impacted on what and how we research?

To explore this impact, I would like to draw on another example of doctoral research that of Helen Smith

Smith, Helen. 2015. Artist as navigator: Understanding organizational change through art: a methodology for art as a social practice (AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award with Woodend Barn Banchory)

Framing the ontological question – What can be known by this research? (Guba et al., p. 108)

Like Lacy, Smith's research is situated in the relationship between the artist and organisation. However it is differently inflected. Less concerned with how organisations learn to support artists, Smith sets about understanding in what way an artist might reveal aspects of change within an organisation through their in depth involvement, active engagement and particular way of knowing.

The context for the research was a particular multi arts organisation in rural Aberdeenshire, Woodend Barn (now known as the Barn), Banchory over a period of intense involvement over three years. The research was significantly supported by the organisation in the context of an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award, in particular through the supervision of its co-founder, Mark Hope.

Framing the epistemological question: What is the nature of relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?" (Guba et al., p. 108)

Smith's experience prior to the research was that of director, artist and curator of a significant artist led organisation in Newcastle upon Tyne– Waygood Gallery and Studios (2007- 11). In this new research at the Barn, she was interested in the organisation's relationship with communities of interest and how the artist might develop these. Organisations, she argues, are microcosms of society at large. As such they offer artists situations in which to experience how different communities form relationships around power through their processes of decision making. In this sense the artist becomes a kind of navigator, making sense of moves that are multi perspectival, embodied and collaborative.

How can the inquirer (would - be knower) go about finding out? Not any methodology will do ..., (Guba et al., p. 108)

Smith gathered together key critical literature (Kester, Jackson, Finkelppearl, Latham) with well researched narratives of exemplary practices of APG, Lacy, Kaprow situating her research within an existing and important field of practice and theory.

She thoroughly documented her involvement with the Barn across a number of different kinds of activities – meetings, by curating exhibitions, through collaborative projects including two solo exhibitions in the first two years of the research – *Fold* 2012 and *Lavender* 2012-14.

Her analysis followed the form of her practice in being multi perspectival and collaborative.

She concluded that any contract between an artist and host organization did not traditionally include a critical understanding of its institutional structure. In other words artists might work with organisations through contracted projects but these rarely involved any critical understanding of the nature of the organization, its processes and their impact on people. However, such understanding is crucial to the changing relationship between artists and communities as one of a number of sites in which the underpinning processes of society's political, economic and social infrastructures play out.

Smith goes further in observing that

It no longer seems acceptable or even interesting for the unique contribution artists make to society to be purely symbolic. This research is testing a hunch that for artists to be more affective in society, the situations in which they intervene must allow them the freedom to move from the symbolic to the pragmatic. If artists are able to act autonomously, collaboratively and critically, from within the infrastructures of society and not separate to it (Dewey 1935), a development of trust in the shared responsibility artists have for society is required.

Smith 2015: 10

Whether one aligns her practice as socially engaged or not, as social art practice opposed to another genre of work, is not the point. Smith's research through art practice seems to get to the heart of artistic freedom in a particular sense - the recovery of a sense common to all, a quality within life not restricted to art but one that art might help us to find.

I would like to explore this through a particular example of a work

Fold 2012 was originally inspired by the over abundance of rotary and conventional

washing lines around Banchory and the metaphor of folding. Helen first of all carefully researched this in the context of paper, industrial and fine art print-making processes through a printmaker in North Shields, Rob Gibbons. I would like to quote this in full as it manifests such quality of writing.

Gibbons described in detail the process of folding. This involved knowing the qualities of the paper, for example the direction of the fibres and the type of coating it may have on its surface. He told me that before making a fold a crease had to be made on the outer surface and along the line of the fold. This stretched the fibres of the paper and prevented the outer surface from becoming stressed and then cracking. This created a creasing bulge on the inner side of the fold. The care that this process involves is like getting to know how an organization works by first making a precise impression into its surface. This is how I viewed this artwork. It was a way of preparing the underlying fibres or structures of the organization for a future permanent fold. What I also found interesting was how a new 'hinge' or creasing bulge is created that allows the fold to be made without damaging the paper. This, I thought could be seen as the social interactions that make the folding of art into the organization possible, immersive and durable. (Smith 2015: 72-3)

Gibbons and Smith collaborated on making a book of folds. This contained a score as an invitation building on an extract from the book *England England* by Julian Barnes 1998.

Let's dance! If not, dance, then let's fold cotton sheets together.

Participants responded by doing exactly that...

A final element of *Fold* was the screening of a documentary film 'A Pool of Information: The Search for Positive Health' about The Pioneer Health Centre, Peckham 1935 – 1950. What at the time was considered an 'experiment' in health offered a useful model for discussing the organizational future of The Barn, in particular the belief that

'Society has changed, but there is still a need for the development of an active, responsible populace, which is capable of cultivating its own health in collaboration with doctors and others working in health-care and leisure'
(PHC Ltd 1993)
(Smith 2015: 78)

There are many more layers to this project than is captured here- participants gradually inhabited the exhibition and its minimal aesthetic through their participation, playing with the ideas and connecting these to quite personal experiences, making comment, leaving artefacts such as A 19th century painting of a family folding sheets on a cliff top. This in turn triggered sheet folding outdoors. Many struggled with their expectations of what an art exhibition should be but took part, nonetheless.



Fig 4 *Fold* book exploring the materiality of fold in paper Helen Smith 2012



Fig 5 *Fold* participants folding sheets 2012

It is easy to see the many resonances that this project has with Masschelein and Maertins 's idea of education – the space apart, here a metaphorical imaginary space constructed around the idea of fold and its gerund 'folding' that becomes a refinding or uncovering of a social space, the idea of discomfort necessary to any deep learning experience, of mutual support, of 'unlearning' what one had become

accustomed to think. These qualities began with the artist's experience herself, pursuing the idea of fold in one context – the fine art book- transferring this to another, sharing the folding of sheets that like dancing requires a partner. *Fold* was indeed an experience of “transforming knowledge and skills into ‘common goods’”

Summary and Conclusions

I started with the framing of questions as a key priority in artistic research beginning with - What can be known through art/artistic research?

Woody Allen's *Manhattan* shows through art we construct the conditions of encounter, suspending disbelief, slowing down, giving our selves the chance for insight to come forward, to reveal itself. My point through this example is that if we are to make any progress in this field of research, it is from the arts that we need to learn, while taking on board as much as we need from other knowledge domains and ways of knowing.

I then take us through two actual examples of doctoral theses that we have supported through the *On the Edge* research programme: that of the artist and activist, Suzanne Lacy and the artist and curator, Helen Smith. Hopefully these serve to demonstrate an approach in which each doctoral project, while unique and original, develops incrementally a field and way of knowing about the role/place of the arts in public life. The latter just happens to be our area of interest and by no means the only way to develop research.

I have offered a critique of the trajectory of development within universities and their research cultures in which knowledge is becoming increasingly and narrowly instrumentalised into contributing to economic growth. Artistic research is above all a critical practice that demands a different quality of engagement, one that is close to the values of a liberal education – the freedom to slow down and take stock, to set aside a known environment, to play, experiment, challenge, to embrace difficulty, the freedom to rise above and renew the world through the possibility of changing it in unpredictable ways.

However, the examples of Lacy and Smith also show us something very important about the quality of relationship between research, practice and life. In both cases they set aside a known environment of ongoing practice but their research has taken them deeper into life itself.

I want to end with a quote from Anoeck Nuyens, in her essay 2018: *The End of Europe* (p 89-93) in Gielen 2015. Speaking about theatre, Nuyens says

The most devastating effect of the urge to produce is that it makes one inclined to stay indoors, inside the rehearsal space where one can quickly and effectively sketch what is going on outside. But the kind of theatre I am speaking of, the kind of theatre that is desperately needed now, demands that theatre-makers go out, mingle in the stream, searching, taking stock. You can't do that from behind a desk or from a rehearsal space. You need to go outside, through the doors of the building. Check out the streets, the neighbourhood, the city, the country; cross the border to the rest of Europe; cross an ocean, explore the world and everything surrounding it...Infiltrate like a Trojan horse, make a note of what you see, cross it out on a second thought and when you are done, come back. Bring the world with you, through the doors, through the hallway, to the theatre, imagine it. Then together we can reflect about where we come from, how we got there and

which path we would like to take.”
Nuyens 2015: 93

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Figure 1: Suzanne Lacy, Grant Kester and participants , Seminar 1 *Working in Public* 2007 courtesy of On the Edge research.

Figure 2: Seminar 4 *Working in Public* Scottish Parliament 2007 courtesy of On the Edge research

Fig 3 *Inthrow* Project Partner Scottish Sculpture Workshop 2004

Fig 4 *Fold* book exploring the materiality of fold in paper Helen Smith 2012

Fig 5 *Fold* participants folding sheets 2012
