# *Polemics*
# Short Statements on Research-Creation

Natalie S. Loveless, University of Alberta, Guest editor / rédactrice invitée

**Abstract**

In this issue, *RACAR*'s editorial team is pleased to present *Polemics*, a new section which, like the curated *Practices* section introduced last year, will bring up-to-the-minute and sometimes controversial issues into the journal, while featuring art and ideas of any place and time. Each spring issue of *RACAR* will include a *Polemics* or a *Practices* section.

*Polemics* focuses on matters of pressing interest to the broad visual arts community in Canada. Each *Polemics* will be developed and introduced by a guest editor and will include brief, provocative essays that speak to a single contemporary topic from different perspectives. For the current issue, the guest editor, Natalie Loveless of the University of Alberta, brings together four voices from our community who reflect on research-creation as "an important contemporary queering of the academy" and a vigorous challenge to traditional disciplinary lines.

**Résumé**

Dans ce numéro, l'équipe éditoriale de *RACAR* est heureuse de présenter *Polémiques*, une nouvelle section qui, comme la section *Pratiques* introduite l'année dernière sous l'égide d'une commissaire invitée, proposera des débats sur des sujets d'actualité et parfois controversés, à propos d'art et d'idées de toute époque et de tous pays. Chaque printemps, *RACAR* publiera une *Polémiques* ou une *Pratiques*.

*Polémiques* examine des sujets d'intérêt pressant pour la communauté des arts visuels. Chaque *Polémiques* sera développée et introduite par un rédacteur invité ou une rédactrice invitée et comprendra de brefs essais provocateurs qui se pencheront sur un sujet actuel abordé de différents points de vue. Dans ce numéro, Natalie Loveless de l'University of Alberta a réuni quatre voix de notre communauté réfléchissant à la recherche-création, qu'elles qualifient comme étant un « queering » important de l'académie et un défi de taille aux frontières disciplinaires traditionnelles.

## Introduction

Natalie S. Loveless, University of Alberta

I am grateful to the editors of *RACAR* and to Risa Horowitz—guest-editor of *RACAR*'s inaugural *Practices* section (Spring 2014)[1]—for their foresight in championing a space for research-creation in the Universities Art Association of Canada and its journal. This inaugural *Polemics* section could not have come about without their efforts. It has two aims: first, to advocate for the importance of research-creation for those of us teaching in art, art history, curatorial and museum studies, and design programs in Canada today; second, to cultivate a space not only for research-creation practice and pedagogy, but also for its critical discourse.

What follows is a polemic. Not only because the contributors disagree with each other on certain points, but more importantly because of the differences between their perspectives and those introduced in the Spring 2014 *Practices*. In it, Horowitz articulated a concern that has been the basis of numerous collegiate conversations between us, namely that the research-creation guidelines published by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) force artists to develop discourses alien to their practices. My response to this concern is twofold: regardless of discipline, any SSHRC applicant knows—or discovers—that the process involves "pretzelling" themselves for legibility outside their own field; furthermore, applicants looking to receive a "social sciences and humanities"

grant should engage with one or both of these literacies in their research. In other words, it is my contention that SSHRC research-creation grants should not be for *any and all* artists working in the university, but specifically for artists whose work reaches into the social sciences and humanities.[2]

Developing research-creation literacy means embracing an interdisciplinarity with regard to practice/theory lines, that is, working *practicetheoretically*.[3] Indeed, research-creation not only hybridizes artistic and scholarly methodologies, it also legitimizes hybrid outputs. The earlier *Practices* brought to our attention a familiar binary—echoed by Glen Lowry below—according to which research-creation uses "art to create knowledge rather than…knowledge to create art."[4] While this constitutes a common framing that is worth examining and debating, I feel that it misses the point of research-creation as I understand it.

To use "art to create knowledge" is not uncommon in, say, art history. But the product is generally a text recognizable as art historical research and best funded by a standard research grant. To use "knowledge to create art" is a longstanding studio (and post-studio) practice. If the final product takes artistic form alone, and is meant to circulate in galleries, museums, art journals, etc., it is "art" and best funded by the Canada Council for the Arts. This, at least, is my (potentially provocative) contention.

Debating methods and research is the practice that produces fields, disciplines, and departments, and I engage in this polemic to honour research-creation as a changing, hybrid set of practices. From my point of view, the risk in specifying research-creational approaches is not "entrenchment" (a commonly

debated fear that Horowitz highlights in her introduction) because the disciplining of disciplinary frames, methods, and questions is a process always in flux; always "undisciplining" at the same time as it disciplines. Rather than reaffirm the need for "artists to define our own terms of reference,"[5] this *Polemics* focuses instead on a proliferation of artistic methodologies and outputs. Viewed through the lenses offered below, I would like to propose research-creation as an important contemporary queering of the academy: hearkening back to Judith Butler's invocation of Michel Foucault in *Gender Trouble*,[6] we might look to artistic "acts" rather than to artistic "identity."

Together, the following contributions speak to current debates in research-creation methodology and assessment in the Canadian university. They are motivated by the belief that it is important to accommodate various kinds of research-creation. Indeed, to train in research-creation at Concordia University is a far cry from doing so at the University of Alberta. These are conversations that—as with the impact of feminist and critical race studies on the academy—can only happen once a certain degree of recognition has been established, recognition granted

by UAAC and *RACAR*, that I consider crucial at this key moment in the critical discourse of research-creation in Canada.

## Notes

1   Risa Horowitz, ed., "*Practices / Pratiques*," *RACAR* 39.1 (Spring 2014): 25–39.

2   I hasten to add that I do think that this is an important issue. My point is that limiting research-creation to the project of securing research funding for studio artists working in universities, while itself an important political and practical issue, limits the scope of what the critical discourse of research-creation can and should become. We need a "both/and" conversation here.

3   Natalie Loveless, "Practice in the Flesh of Theory," *The Canadian Journal of Communication Studies* 37, 1 (2012): 93–108.

4   Risa Horowitz, "Introduction: As if from nowhere… artists' thoughts about research-creation," *RACAR* 39.1 (Spring 2014), 25.

5   Horowitz, "Introduction," 25.

6   Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990).

# Props to Bad Artists: On Research-Creation and a Cultural Politics of University-Based Art

Glen Lowry, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

## Good Research? Bad Art?

This value-laden binary elicits groans. Yet it takes us to the heart of a trenchant critique of new forms of academic, research-based art and institutional culture change. The duality also highlights ethical questions about the efficacy of creative-practice research and the pitfalls of university-supported creative projects. SSHRC established its research-creation program to target creative practitioners, yet word on the street is that it is rigged against *real* artists who make *good art*. Among professionals, there is a sense that despite the generous budgets and timelines, academic support comes with strings attached. Or so I hear in the "art school," the specialized art and design university.

Old enough to remember Michael Jackson's re-appropriation of *bad*, his ability to popularize its idiomatic use to mean *good*, I am skeptical of judgments hidden beneath the guise of aesthetic discernment: *good* (work *we* appreciate because it affirms

ideals we are educated into) vs. *bad* (work that fails to respect established mores, particularly those underwritten by academic study). I am also old enough to have read the *sick* work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, bell hooks, among other feminist, queer, and racialized academics, and appreciate their interrogation of the Manichean values valorizing literature over potboilers, classical concertos over Hip Hop, and art over television. I offer this provocation as a spirited word-up to artists who trouble disciplinary differences to reach across a creative practice (art) and scholarly investigation (research) divide. I am inspired by colleagues at Emily Carr University and beyond who recognize the need to cross this divide, and I seek to reframe discussion of creative practice research in relation to ethical concerns about the function of contemporary culture: academic and creative practice.

Before discussing research-creation, I need to acknowledge the tenuous position of creative-practice research within Canadian universities. Not only are the specialized art and design

universities newcomers to degree granting, they are also the smallest players in the arena of external research funding, a space dominated by elite universities. Given the emergent nature of Canada's art and design universities and the heated competition for government support, discussions of transforming creative practice to fit research agendas can be impassioned. Without wading into a definitional quagmire, I will say there is considerable debate about the epistemological and methodological status of creative practice in relation to other forms of academic research. How the work of visual artists, writers, musicians, dancers, other performing artists, designers, and architects is evaluated alongside other types of academic endeavour provides an important point of focus for those overseeing the use and distribution of research funding: national and provincial funding agents, university administrators, research ethics boards, and the faculty eligible for support.

Defining creative practice as research is controversial. Coming to terms with "Research Involving Creative Practices," the SSHRC Ethics Special Working Committee wrote a chapter on creative practice for the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2).[1] To date, however, this document has not been taken up: TCPS 2 provides only a cursory definition of creative-practice research. This is confusing and begs questions of ethical standards and institutional roles and responsibilities regarding creative-practice research. TCPS 2 and Research Ethics Boards (REB) compliance has been a requirement for smaller institutions coming on stream with Tri-Council funding. Unsurprisingly this has produced pushback from creative practitioners who would rather not submit REB applications and prefer instead to function within the conventions of professional practice. Without clarity at Tri-Council, creative-practice researchers continue to work at the margins of the social sciences and humanities, further confusing the relationship between art and design universities and comprehensive universities.

The ethical imperative of creative practice research generally and research-creation specifically remains important, whether artist-researchers function under the gaze of REBs or not. Unlike *bad* art, which hinges on aesthetic concerns, *bad* research in the humanities and sciences tends to be easier to assess on methodological grounds. First, *bad* research cannot be reproduced or verified, and its findings fail to account for statistical im/probability. Improbable or unwanted results can produce scientific breakthroughs, which lead *good* researchers to generally seek to explain or replicate unexpected findings. Second, *bad* research obfuscates or falsifies claims about data: refusing to maintain transparency vis-à-vis methods, analysis, and conclusions, it withholds and alters results. Third, *bad* research priori-

tizes the motives of researchers or funders over those of society: drug trials that avoid double-blind review in fear of displeasing industry partners, despite obvious risks, for instance, or politically-motivated studies that seek devious ways to generate and interpret data that discredit global warming.

*Bad* research is categorically different from *bad* art. The conditions producing *bad* research can and have been instrumental in the production of great works of art. A masterpiece by definition cannot be reproduced, or if it can, say in the form of a photograph or a repurposed urinal, there are tight controls on where this is permitted. Great art is grounded in the imagination of the artist capable of re-describing facts in magical ways. Great art can make patrons happy, even when it pushes norms of acceptability. These examples may overstate the case, but I point to the good research / bad art dichotomy because it foregrounds a relational imperative that needs to be considered as we think about new practices of and institutional spaces for creative practitioners *qua* university researchers. This change impacts how art and design are taught and learned. In response to funding opportunities and a proliferation of studio-based graduate degrees, we see growing discussions about practice-led research in art and design, arts-based research, artistic inquiry,[2] and critical-creative collaboration.[3] It is incumbent upon us—theorists and practitioners, as well as theorist practitioners and practicing theorists—to carefully consider how we situate our work.

Not wanting to proffer too strident a definition of *good* research or *good* research-creation, I will say that it might be qualitatively different from *good* art and may, in fact, circulate outside professional art circuits of peer-reviewed, curated exhibitions. *Good* research-creation pulls professional academics —artist-researchers along with others humanists and social scientists—outside zones of comfort and away from monitored disciplinary divisions or divisions of labour. It challenges us to think about what constitutes knowledge, how new ideas, ways of knowing, and forms of innovation draw on deep-seated cultural traditions.

## Knowledge—Production, Translation, Mobilization

Art and design knowledge is rooted in experimentation and research. Creative practice draws on highly developed forms of knowledge production, translation, and mobilization. This knowledge might be described in terms of technique or the mastery of materials (artifacts and spaces), conceptual rigour, or complex concatenations of social and interpersonal engagement. Like their university colleagues, professional artists and designers are highly disciplined. Grounded in a traditional

scholasticism, the training of visual artists, for example, tends to involve negotiations with long-standing academic divisions. As with other forms of academic endeavour, the objects of art or design require epistemological apprehension, in part because they have been crucial to the socio-political developments of Western culture since (at least) the Enlightenment. Maintaining an a priori link between art and science, this line of thinking asserts the centrality of art in the expansion of Western systems of knowledge. The relationship between culture and science remains crucial to our understanding of the role of government and education in contemporary culture and social development. Nevertheless, when we talk about research-creation, research tends to trump creation. Positioned as latecomers to the game, artists are *nouveaux arrivants* who must learn a new language to explain studio practices in ways that fit SSHRC requirements.

Applying to SSHRC, creative practitioners are encouraged to frame interests in terms borrowed from humanities and social scientific methodologies. Recognizing the need to balance a "connection to contemporary literary/artistic practices" with a "scholarly apparatus" (SSHRC guidelines), creative practitioners are asked about "research question," "methodology," and discourse. SSHRC's research-creation committee guidelines are clear:

> The research-creation proposal *must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within the relevant field(s) of artistic inquiry, present a well-considered methodological approach and creative process, and produce an artwork.* Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing.[4]

The expectation that funded research will produce an artwork is significant, yet it also requires successful applicants to marshal administrative skills to manage added workload.[5]

Linking *research* and *creation* hinges on coming to terms with "peer standards." Who is qualified to assess research-creation projects? Colleagues inside the university system or professional artists, curators, and critics outside it? This divide between experts in academic research and those knowledgeable about contemporary art and design practices might lead to increased specialization in art and design research. It suggests a need for new practitioners who are comfortable with the language of research and conversant with art and design professions.

There is a gap between the expressed intentions of supporting contemporary art practice and the funding available to artists. While there are artists who have been very successful at winning grants from SSHRC, the jury tends to support teams of researchers with clearly expressed interests in new digital technologies,[6] as opposed to those from conventional disciplines such as painting, sculpture, or creative short fiction. Emphasis on student training (HQPs) and publication, together with increased administrative demands, may interfere with successful applicants' ability to produce professional-quality work. Arguably SSHRC, unlike Canada Council, is outside the business of contemporary art and upholding professional standards. Student training, public accountability, technological innovation, knowledge translation, and new economic development are all laudable goals; my point is that these are not always consistent with those of professional artists and designers.

If research-creation does produce *bad* art, why? Perhaps, despite rhetoric to the contrary, SSHRC's research-creation program is not geared to allow professional artists and designers to bring their best work forward. Coming to terms with this heretical statement might, I hope, allow us to shift discussions of SSHRC funding toward more openness in relation to intention and expectation. We need better awareness of the vital knowledge practices that underwrite creative practices—the deep cultural knowledge represented by the production of artworks, films, music, design, and architecture. Visual methods, participatory action, social engagement—these are bread-and-butter concerns for contemporary artists and designers. The skills creative practitioners bring to bear on them deserve as much attention as those reified in conventional academic methodologies and discourse. It is crucial to affirm the epistemological (not to mention sociological, methodological, ontological, and political) place of artistic practice alongside other forms of academic research. Creative practice is a valuable means of exploring and sharing new and not-so-new knowledge about the world. Remembering this, theorists and practitioners might maintain a social imperative for cultural production that allows us to focus discussions of research-creation around certain foundational concerns. This in turn might be integral to rebooting government involvement in the production, understanding, and sharing of twenty-first century knowledge.

## An Institutional Reboot: Toward another Massey-Levesque Commission

Research-creation teeters on the edge of institutional absorption. Viewed in terms of a loosely orchestrated movement of university-affiliated artists, researchers, theorists, graduate students, and administrators, all of whom are working to realize, anticipate, and refine government funding opportunities, research-creation provides a strong vantage point from which

to consider twenty-first century creative practices and practitioners: new disciplinary subjects and objects. As the other contributions in this Polemics suggest, the concept of research-creation adopted and mobilized by SSHRC owes a debt to contemporary art (including but not limited to relational practices, community-based art, institutional critique, and new media collaborations). But how do we see this debt being taken up? How do researchers respond to the exigencies of new funding opportunities or new forms of accounting? How does this work fit with contemporary art practice? Given the broad spectrum of social practices from which they draw, what strategies do research-creation projects bring to questions of cultural difference, healing, or social justice?

SSHRC and Canada Council for the Arts have partnered in the selection of the research-creation committee. This is vital in understanding the role of professional artists in assessing "artistic merit" together with a "scholarly apparatus" (research questions, field of inquiry, methodology, dissemination plan). But is this partnership enough to ensure that funding remains relevant to contemporary art practice? In light of SSHRC's generous budgets and timelines, is this partnership sufficient to resist the drive to instrumentalize culture production, to make creative practices known and knowable?

Thinking about the cultural politics of this transformation, we might look to the Massey-Levesque Commission and the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts, Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), National Film Board (NFB), and investments in post-secondary research.[7] For the past six decades, Canadian arts and culture along with post-secondary education and research have been integral to social development. Resisting a desire to invite Richard Florida to a town hall or to put faith in the saving graces of a hipster class, we might remember that artists, designers, media makers, musicians, curators, architects, writers, and other intellectuals have long invested in research and knowledge mobilization to further social development and to critique its impact on stakeholders.

Locating social justice at the heart of this discussion, rather than addressing it as an addendum to mainstream debates, we might ask how new forms of creative practice and innovation will help citizens and governments respond to important cultural challenges. In particular, I want to encourage readers to consider the way artists have engaged with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Recognizing that Canada's TRC is a first among the developed nations and that we have the infrastructure and juridical will to address its findings, Canadians are challenged to think about the relationship between knowledge (research) and innovative expression (creation). The truth and truth telling that are integral to the TRC take us back to constitutional treaties and difficult questions about our colonial past. The significance and scale of the TRC invite us to ask how artists, researchers, and educators might mobilize knowledge, skills, and resources. The cultural programming around TRC events has been promising; we can all look forward to seeing how galleries, municipalities, social systems, and the many other institutional bodies that mounted exhibitions and programs fulfill pledges to keep the work going after the completion of the TRC. There are few moments in Canada's cultural and political histories that are as imbricated with transformational potential.

Bookended by the 1951 Massey-Levesque Commission Report and the TRC Final Report (2015), we stand poised for a dramatic change in how we Canadians understand ourselves, the knowledge we create, and how it is mobilized to further social good. Thinking about reworking a sixty-year-old separation of Canada Council and SSHRC mandates, we might look at the ways in which Aboriginal knowledge and culture were relegated to craft and dismissed from the concerns of nation formation, and at the orchestrated developments of professional art and post-secondary education. As we consider how jurors from SSHRC and Canada Council sit together around a research-creation table, we need to ask who gets to decide what constitutes *good* research and *good* art, but also what or who is left out.

I say let's keep talking about who or what makes *bad* art and *bad* research.

## Notes

1   Mary Blackstone et al., "Research Involving Creative Practices: A Chapter for Inclusion in the TCPS," *The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee (SSHWC): A Working Committee of The Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE)*, (2008), http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/archives/policy-politique/reports-rapports/ricp-ripc/.

2   See Henk Borgdorff, "The Debate on Research in the Arts," Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen, (2006), http://www.ips.gu.se/digitalAssets/1322/1322713_the_debate_on_research_in_the_arts.pdf; Henk Borgdorff, "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research," 2011, http://www.artun.ee/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Borgdorff-2011.pdf; Henk Borgdorff et al., "The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia" (Amsterdam, 2012), https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/18704; and Rachel Nash and W. F. Garrett-Petts, "Artists' Statements & the Nature of Artistic Inquiry," *Open Letter* 4 (Fall 2007).

3   Glen Lowry, M. Simon Levin, and Henry Tsang, "Maraya as Visual Research: Mapping Urban Displacement and Narrating Artistic Inquiry," *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry*, ed. Will Garrett-Petts, Nancy Duxbury, and David MacLennan (New York, 2015).

4   Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, "Guidelines for Applying to Research-Creation" (2014), http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/fine_arts-arts_lettres-eng.aspx. Emphasis added.

5   Glen Lowry and Ashok Mathur, "A Qualitative Study of Research Creation," 2008, unpublished.

6   Michelle Picard-Aitken and Frédéric Bertrand, "Review and Conceptualization of Impacts of Research/Creation in the Fine Arts: Final Report," *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, 29 September 2008, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/RC_fine_artsFinalE.pdf.

7   Massey Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, 1949–1951 ("The Massey Report")*, (Ottawa, 1951).

# Mentoring Research-Creation:
# Secrets, Strategies, and Beautiful Failures

Caitlin Fisher, York University

Many things about how research-creation is understood in the university context provoke, challenge, and engage me. But here I will focus my thoughts on graduate education in the context of research-creation: its demands and pitfalls, as well as the terrifying unmapped spaces and potential it opens up, and the epistemological challenges it clearly poses to the work of the university.

I'll cut to the chase: if we really want innovation in the academy, tenured faculty need to say yes more bravely and more fully to supervising students' research-creation work. We also need to champion the value of research-creation faculty in examinations and hiring committees. Finally, by using our resources—including infrastructure, seniority, personal and professional networks—we must work to create spaces where students can risk failure.

Because… shh… surely I am not alone in feeling that a lot of this work fails in lots of ways. I will even say it: some of it is actually terrible. But even the failures often challenge me in compelling ways.

## A Story about Failure

This seems like the appropriate moment to tell you that my own work as a graduate student was a pretty spectacular failure. But it was also successful in ways that I think need to be valued.

In 2000, I completed a native hypermedia work, probably the first Canadian-born digital dissertation with no print companion. This was happening just as my university was circulating a discussion paper claiming that the future of writing was PDF and proposing that all electronic dissertations be submitted using 12 point Times New Roman font and one-and-a-half inch margins. Then, as now, I saw the future of writing differently. I was particularly interested in the epistemological status of interface, especially the capacity of interfaces to make connections and arguments intelligible to readers.[1]

My dissertation, *Building Feminist Theory: Hypertextual Heuristics*—burned onto CD-Roms that have recently erased themselves and were tellingly never filed with UMI by my institution—was an exploration, in hypertext, of the resonances and productive couplings between digital writing technologies and feminist theories. Institutional discussions around research-creation were then still in their infancy. So in order to justify this type of project, somewhere in the introduction I included that great Isadora Duncan quotation, "If I could write it, I *wouldn't have to dance it*." Implicit in my title was the claim that the process of shaping hypertext was itself a form of feminist theory production. Rather than simply identifying feminist hypertexts and explaining them in terms of a feminist hermeneutic, the dissertation used theory to build a new kind of text, a text that sought a form resonant with the disciplinary-crossing knowledges it explored. Understanding the interface and the text to be co-constitutive of meaning, then, I struggled at all stages with the choice of interface and with the limitations of code available to me at the time of writing. The machine worked on my thoughts in a way Nietzsche had always told me it would if I could only let it… and I learned.

In the end*, Building Feminist Theory: Hypertextual Heuristic*s consisted of over 1,400 lexias. But the intellectual core of the project, and the most interesting aspect of hypertextual writing to my mind both then and now, was the constellation of ideas held aloft by the technology. In the case of my dissertation, the web of original lexias, quotations, imagery, and sound put into conversation was held together by more than 17,000 links. In this way the linking structure was the intellectual core of the project.

As I look back on the production of that dissertation—and the way I hoped it would communicate—I still see the promise of hypertextual writing. I still believe it allowed me to deliver encounters with, at once, my library, theoretical orientation, visual practice, and the way I made (sometimes contradictory) sense of texts. It documented how I came to encounter and generate new knowledge and contribute to digital poetics by actually building the work.

And so you can imagine my surprise, disappointment, and horror when I realized that this was not how the dissertation functioned when it began to circulate beyond my committee. No one got what I had hoped to communicate: I had failed to reach them. For some months I understood the work as a catalogue of losses. But in the years since, I've taken stock of my failure and built on the thrill of working mindfully at the interface and with new tools to build knowledge. In many ways this dissertation became the foundation of all my future work. That said, I'm glad I'm not trying this now because it would never be allowed.

## A Story about Risk with a Conservative Back-Up

I'm an external examiner for a doctoral research-creation project being undertaken at a major Canadian university with a progressive reputation. It is a thoughtful project that challenges my thinking and took the better part of six years to complete. I am also holding 200 pages of writing. Has the writing been presented in case the "creative part" of the project is unintelligible? Or is it in case I want to skip that part entirely? The relation between the two is not made clear.

This doesn't happen just once.

When supervising research-creation projects, we worry for our students and students worry for themselves: "what if my best ideas are lost?" (I hear that); "what if we can't agree on standards?" (really?). And so we make sure that there is a written document to back up any creative component of the dissertation, regardless of the needs of the research itself. I'm sympathetic, of course, to the reality that everyone is focused on graduation. We owe our students an examination day without horrible surprises. We feel we can't risk failure at the doctoral

level. We can't even risk a B+. And so we nudge students to safety: try everything, but in the end please also produce a traditional dissertation. But at what cost?

In my own university "All theses and dissertations must contain a written component; however, theses and dissertations may include other components as well," and I think that's generally a very good idea. But not always. The assumption that the written component of a research-creation project must perform the same work as a stand-alone textual dissertation and that longer is always better (because it's safer?) is part of a habit of thinking that we need to challenge.

Increasingly work created by continuing faculty in art/science areas or in the digital humanities produces deliverables that are not twinned with written articles or books. And, at the same time, we make persuasive arguments to tenure and promotion committees at our universities that these constitute research and concretize our thinking. However, we do not champion this possibility for the students we mentor.

## The Story about the Canoe

I direct a research lab (the Augmented Reality Lab at York University) funded *through* research-creation initiatives. We encourage students in the lab to be both theorists and practical experimenters. We work iteratively and across disciplinary boundaries, particularly among film, computer science, creative writing, communication and culture, and history. We emphasize rapid prototyping and learning from failure. I supervise many research-creation theses and dissertations. Currently, none of my research-creation students are from the fine arts, and so most are working on research-creation doctorates from departments that have no tradition of practice-based work.

Students in my lab make spatial hyperfictions, database documentaries, interactive storyworlds, interfaces, experience design, knowledge domain visualizations, custom code, augmented reality installations, mobile cinema, and alternate reality gaming. Theses and dissertations have taken the form of iPad apps, augmented reality books and environments, locative media, and immersive visualizations. Their subjects include postcolonial theory, memory, digital identities, new media theory, magic and early cinema, digital aesthetics, and the theorizing of making and tinkering as a powerful practice in itself. As one of my lovely and brilliant doctoral students, Geoffrey Alan Rhodes, writes,

> I have special respect for the impetus of creation, that is, without the artist's desire, need, or obligation to produce art, there is no media, regardless of reception. I find "expression

studies" as important as reception studies and seek to take into consideration what I and other makers find expressive, engaging, or what is productively encouraged economically, socially, or technologically.²

I love my doctoral students. And the ones undertaking research-creation dissertations really are amazing. I know you think I'm just saying that. But here is the truth: I carefully select them. We do this all the time, of course… we say yes to one student and no to another for all sorts of reasons. The students I accept are, as you might expect, those who make a compelling case to engage in research *through* creation not research *and* creation. Indeed, why would they bother going through the trouble of making things, embarking upon a long journey, and assuming the expenses related to equipment, if they could achieve their goals better and faster by another route?

Here is what I sometimes think when a graduate student comes to my office: I love that you're brave enough to risk unchartered waters, but if I don't think you're ridiculously well-equipped and a bit of a genius, it's mostly irresponsible for me to encourage you. Even if I feel in my heart you could do an amazing job. The conditions in the university are such that I really only want to let my most brilliant students attempt a research-creation project at the doctoral level. Honestly, given the shifting guidelines and expectations, I worry about becoming, myself, that professor who asks for two hundred pages to be on the safe side. So when research-creation students come to my door, it's both like and utterly unlike the way I select graduate students generally. Come back when we've sorted this out.

Sometimes I sit on examination committees and I marvel, as we go over procedures for creative dissertations or research-creation, that everybody assumes students are going to hand in a canoe or something: an object impossible to assess. We don't assume this in the context of our own research of course: being the gatekeepers we can, presumably, experiment with rigour. But students? Canoe.

## We Don't Talk about the Extra Work

Shh… I know what sometimes happens. A student undertakes a brilliant and complicated installation that will be seen by only four people. Two committee members watch only a few moments of it on video. The internal examiner never even accesses the WeTransfer file. Good thing we had a safeguard.

I'm convinced one of the reasons we don't actually want to encourage research-creation may have less to do with intellectual standards and fears and existing competencies and a great deal more to do with effort, time, and workload, as well as the

fact we generally can't skim through research-creation projects. In fact, research-creation in the context of doctoral work often requires from its examiners new forms of attention and expertise, and an incredibly open mind and heart, especially if the work is not outstanding and the way it works not obvious. I think we sometimes say we're afraid of the canoe so we stand on the side of rigour. But, really, we are too busy.

## A Story about What's behind the Curtain

One of the ironies of defining research-creation and putting guidelines for graduate theses into place at our institutions is that the act itself reduces the horizon of possibility. Perhaps it's a productive constraint. But I do know this: at a time when my own experience tells me we are tending to be more conservative in our guidelines and our advice to students, those of us with faculty positions stand on excellent ground to experiment and receive funding, sometimes major funding. In fact, I review many research proposals relating to research-creation, tinkquiry, critical-making… There is a lot of money available for infrastructure, cross-disciplinary building, and turning STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) into STEAM (add Art). It's becoming a better time for faculty in all disciplines to be makers. And when we engage in this work it looks like this: collaborative, sometimes crowd-sourced, partial prototypes, documentation of process, multiple authors, failure. These are not the qualities we value in a dissertation. We know why. But are all those reasons equally persuasive?

I always tell my students that if they are truly inventing something, I cannot provide them with an utterly reliable roadmap. None of us ever wants to direct a student's project with too firm a hand. But even though it can feel riskier, I'd venture it is more important to let a research-creation student experiment and see what happens. But then we need to seek better ways of capturing, honouring, and evaluating those experiments and practices. At this point I try hard to create the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for success, as I see them now. I try to acknowledge both the beauty of risk and the necessity of graduation; I take advantage of expertise within the fine arts, including a long history of refining tenure and promotion procedures to capture the contribution of creative practice. I protect my students' time and energies, mostly working behind the scenes to ensure they are not required to do twice the work. I work alongside students in making claims for the necessity and relevance of their chosen forms/practices. I keep track of places that peer-review new forms of scholarship (pioneering efforts like the journal *Vectors*) and I make it clear that, yes, there are audiences hungry for this work and a professional community

of practice and employment prospects. I assist students in identifying where making things connects meaningfully with their intellectual practices as projects progress and change. I work with colleagues and the administration to identify what we value most about the way the dissertation is structured now, even as we reimagine how dissertation practices will evolve in the future. I remind people both that the dissertation is a living form and that our own guidelines are only a few years old and, yes, can probably change. I use my networks and connect my students and find interlocutors for their work. I try to create a space where a student can be bold.

And, above all, I encourage sharing stories about failure: it is beautiful, generative, and the starting point of most good things in my life.

## Notes

1   These thoughts on my own dissertation were first shared at the 2007 HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory) conference in a presentation entitled "Interface Epistemology: Hypermedia Work in the Academy."

2   From Geoffrey Alan Rhodes's 2012 dissertation proposal.

# Creation-as-Research: Critical Making in Complex Environments

Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, Concordia University

As university-based creative makers, we argue for a more expansive category of research-creation that does not foreclose new possibilities for making and learning and does not unwittingly bolster disciplinary thinking and divides.

From 2010 to 2012, we collaborated on writing a text that aimed to clarify the idea of research-creation for our students. "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and Family Resemblances"[1] outlined four different modalities in which research and creation are linked within current academic practices. In brief, these categories were:

1.   "Research-for-creation," the gathering of materials, practices, technologies, collaborators, narratives, and theoretical frames that characterizes initial stages of creative work and occurs iteratively throughout a project.

2.   "Research-from-creation," the extrapolation of theoretical, methodological, ethnographic, or other insights from creative processes, which are then looped back into the project that generated them.

3.   "Creative presentations of research," a reference to alternative forms of research dissemination and knowledge mobilization linked to such projects.

4.   "Creation-as-research," which draws from all aforementioned categories, an engagement with the ontological question of what constitutes research in order to make space for creative material and process-focused research-outcomes.

Out of the four modalities we identified, "creation-as-research" received the least attention. Yet our own experience as creative makers and as professors increasingly incorporating creative practices into our courses tells us that this vexing category deserves further reflection. In this short contribution we therefore seek to draw out some of its productive ironies and tensions.

In our 2012 essay, we used Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances"[2] to compare projects with inconsistently shared features, without insisting on certain defining characteristics for each of the four categories we developed, and therefore for research-creation as a whole. Considered from a queer studies perspective "family" is, of course, a contested term with normative connotations. Family resemblances, in their Wittgensteinian variation, are typically generational and implicitly chronological. Features are recognized as things we inherit. They can be shared across different members of a family, but it is rare that one would say, "Grandma has four-year-old Becky's hazel eyes." In the same way, since terms are ultimately granted meaning through their relationships to pre-existing ones, it becomes difficult to even imagine how neologisms such as "research-creation" could be the objects of radical reconfiguration. What can be done through the articulation of entirely novel situations, lexicons, or discursive priorities? As last year's *Practices* underscored, understanding research-creation a certain way often comes down to what sorts of examples one is willing to consider alongside the moniker. It therefore remains a contested terrain that has consequences in terms of funding and support, for both student and professional researchers.

The family resemblances approach also tends to over-emphasize similarity. Yet the methods, practices, and outcomes generated from research-creation projects, stemming as they increasingly do from multiple disciplines across the university, are far from uniform and involve the incorporation of new *and* old methods, technologies, practices, and tools. They are never entirely new.[3] Ideas come to life through "webs of impactful social influences and material traces…and vestiges of shelved projects that precede and inform the more cohesive works that happen to emerge."[4] At issue are creative making processes that are linked to the often circuitous, "looping" character of theoretical reflection and writing, the ebb and flow of concepts, and their accumulated significance to the work of a researcher over time.[5] Indeed, the four modes we originally outlined for research-creation occurred to us while we were in the midst of working together on geo-locative media projects. Thinking out loud about different ways that the term "research-creation" was being used, we concluded that this lexical ambiguity resulted in perennial confusion and the occasional application of inappropriate systems of assessment. Our paper was intended to rectify this.

That conversation was one of many spontaneous discussions generated from our work together co-directing the Mobile Media Lab at Concordia. As the name suggests, the MML is a place for experimentation with cell phones, tablets, and other mobile media. It can be thought of as an "incubator" with multiple locations. We are not entirely sure what we are. No matter. The MML has become a creative playground and shared space not only for our collaborations with each other, but also with different communities. Here, creation is approached as a form of research in its own right: research is understood as both a noun and a verb, and creation is not perceived strictly as a stand-in for art making. This is indeed what we sought to express when we developed the "creation-as-research" category. For us, aesthetics is a part of everyday life; the MML has roots in the audio-visual experiments of Fluxus; it incorporates some of the irreverence of the Dadaists; it pays homage to the ready-made, to DIY, and to pop culture; and it draws from a definite commitment to feminist perspectives and community-based art practices that challenge the elitism of patriarchal art worlds.[6]

As Loveless suggests below, "research-creation marshals new methods that allow us to tell new stories." Or to tell old stories in new/old ways. These stories flow from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. The outcomes are increasingly multimodal, no matter the discipline. Some have longer histories of making as a means of generating and transmitting insights. To assert that making is a form of research practice in academia is to recognize the ever-increasing role of digital media production for schol-ars, whether this is through participation in social media, websites, online forms of publication, digital archives, databases, etc., or through a plethora of personal computer-based tools for more specific types of manipulation of digital content. It is not all the same, and cannot be described with a single term. But we can recognize the gist, what lies in between these creative ways of knowing and of expressing what we think we know, and what links them in different ways. This requires recognizing the benefits of a network of terms and references linked to research-creation (critical making, creation-as-research, practice-led research, digital humanities), each of which carries its own nuances in terms of explaining the different ways one can learn through doing.[7]

We have a long history of collaboration, making, reading, discussion, and dialogue as co-producers and friends. Our conversations always and rapidly extend beyond the borders of our institutional walls. Deep collaborations, like a really good stew, take time. Simmering is key. These conversations, in which others have often participated, continually coalesce into new ways of explaining to students and colleagues what we are doing, and how we see it as linked to previous works. In that initial 2012 paper, the messiness of the back-and-forth process that marked the development of our four categories is belied by the neatness of the framework that emerged in written form. Indeed, it was always meant to be heuristic and not a set of dictums to be followed uncritically.

In order to preserve the messiness of dialogue and the spirit of experimentation, we use the notion of "critical making" to reference the reflexive, critical potential of scholarly work that results in self-consciously "made" outcomes. As Garnet Hertz puts it, critical making addresses "how hands-on productive work—making—can supplement and extend critical reflection on technology and society."[8] While Hertz explicitly references the open-source hardware "maker" movement in his conceptualization, we are drawn to the broader implications of the term. Critical making hearkens back to what anthropologist Tim Ingold, in *Making*, describes as an important aspect of the cultivation of knowledge and insight through doing: it "pay[s] attention to what the world has to tell us."[9] Furthermore, as Brian Massumi and Erin Manning propose in their reflections on research-creation, a focus on the act of making, whether material, digital, or other, places value on the relational qualities instigated through making and highlights how unexpected and even unknowable its outcomes can be.[10] In the case of new forms of digital scholarship, for example, there are many decisions around platforms and communities that involve creative choices. Here, creation and research are part and parcel of each other.

We have recently felt this generative connection between research and creation most powerfully in collaborations with researchers and students working from a critical disability studies perspective. Over the past three years, at the MML, we have explored the ubiquitous prejudices faced by disabled bodies in contemporary culture—utilizing research-creation/performance art techniques to develop new forms of affectively and politically charged knowledge dissemination. This process began with community-building efforts that used geo-locative media and software. One example of this is *Megafone*, a multimedia mapping project invented by Catalan artist Antoni Abad that invites "groups of people marginalized within society to express their experiences and opinions" visually and verbally via their mobile phones, and subsequently on the Internet.[11] The MML employed the *Megafone* platform to map non-accessible spaces in Montreal. These efforts quickly exceeded the boundaries of the original project and led to the collaborative production of video capsules about mobility discrimination, which is endemic to Montreal. The participants wanted to tell their stories using narrative forms that would allow for a situated explication of the problems they encountered on the various journeys they undertook.[12] The results, we believe, have social and political value *and* a transformative effect for Montreal's artistic and cultural field.

For instance, at the Hemispheric Institute's 2014 *Encuentro* conference and performance art festival hosted by Concordia University in June 2014,[13] members of the MML's Critical Disability Studies and Performance Working Group noticed the lack of attention to accessibility at one of the venues. The Working Group decided to stage a protest at a cabaret organized for one of the *Encuentro* evenings. While the only decision taken in advance was for all protesters to arrive at the door of the inaccessible venue at a specific time, what transpired was a powerful "stair bombing" performance instigated by critical disabilities scholar, dancer, artist, choreographer, and athlete Danielle Peers. Peers crawled up the stairs with her wheelchair, slowly, deliberately, and in concert with her partner Lindsay Eales (both of Cripsie Dance Company). Other disabled artists soon followed, delivering a moving, impromptu performance-intervention.[14] Performers and spectators from the original cabaret gathered on the streets of Montreal into the early hours of the morning for more conversations and spontaneous performances. As one artist who participated in the event proclaimed, "things will never be the same." There have been reverberations, including more performance-protests staged in Montreal metro stations, designed to bring public and media attention to the inaccessibility of our "public" transit system. The performance has also inspired the making of beautiful and poetic theory-videos

by artist-theorists, such as Arseli Dokumaci, whose writing and video-making draws attention to invisible disability and to the impact of the built environment on bodies. These are examples of intervention practices, critical making and doing, and sense-based scholarship. It is by *making* performances, *staging* events, *holding* workshops, *crafting* inclusive conferences, etc., that we have come to learn, profoundly, about the systemic pervasiveness of ableism throughout our society and culture. This is creation-as-research as a collective long-term project shared by the artists-activists-academics involved in the collaborative crucible of the MML.

We are learning all the time about innovation from engaging *with* this perspective collectively. As critical disability comedian and activist Stella Young put it in her compelling 2014 Ted Talk presentation,

> I learn from other disabled people all the time. I'm learning not that I am luckier than them, though. I am learning that it's a genius idea to use a pair of barbecue tongs to pick up things that you dropped. (Laughter) I'm learning that nifty trick where you can charge your mobile phone battery from your chair battery. Genius. We are learning from each others' strength and endurance, not against our bodies and our diagnoses, but against a world that exceptionalizes and objectifies us.[15]

So is research-creation connected to the art of living.

## Notes

[1] Owen B. Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances'," *Canadian Journal Of Communication* 37, 1 (2012): 5–26.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Massachussetts, 2010).

[3] Media archaeology, for instance, can benefit dramatically from a hands-on approach, as one finds in Alison Reiko Loader's work with analog, mechanical forms of stereoscopic imaging technology (see https://alisonreikoloader.wordpress.com).

[4] Tara Rodgers, "How Art and Research Inform One Another, or Choose Your Own Adventure," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, 1 (2012): 159.

[5] See Samuel Thulin's discussion of looping in such a context, building on the work of David Bissell. Samuel Thulin, "Composing Places: Practices and Potentials of Sound Mapping and Locative Audio," PhD dissertation, Concordia University, 2015, 110–12.

[6] With this assertion we are thinking, for instance, of Griselda Pollock's work. See Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* (London, 2007), and

*After-effects/After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (Manchester, 2013).

7   See Laurence De Garis, "Experiments in Pro-Wrestling: Toward a Performative and Sensuous Sport Ethnography," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 16, 1 (1999): 65–77.

8   Garnet Hertz, "Critical Making," 2012, http://www.conceptlab.com/criticalmaking. See also Matt Ratto, "Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life," *The Information Society* 27 (2011): 252–60.

9   Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (New York, 2013), 2.

10  Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (Minneapolis, 2014).

11  See megafone.net.

12  Another project currently underway at the MML is titled "Audio Toy Box." It involves making and sharing open-source circuits and physical interface schemes for interactive, sound-centred children's toys. Following Barthes, we have noticed that "toys always mean something" (Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* [1957], trans. Annette Lavers [New York, 1972], 53), often in ways that mirror societal norms and expectations. Society's ableist tendencies are reflected in the toys that are usually given to children. The MML toys, on the other hand, are designed to be cross-ability, but with adaptations that make them stimulating for children with developmental delays who need extra help with their communication skills. Our propositions encourage parents and specialized educators to customize the toys/games and develop their own physical interfaces for children to explore. While not expressly "art" on the level of the objects created, these new toys, in their relationships among discovery, repetition, and play, are performative, improvisational, and musical.

13  An *Encuentro*, "part academic conference, part performance festival," is organized every two years by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. For *Encuentro* 2014, see http://www.concordia.ca/events/conferences/encuentro-en.html.

14  For more information on the Performing Disability/Enabling Performance working group at *Encuentro 2014*, see The Disability Performance Working Group, "Work Group Statement," 12 September 2014, http://mia.mobilities.ca/encuentro/work-group-statement/. Participants, in no particular order, included Tamar Tembeck, Yvonne Schmidt, Carola Garcia, Janet Gibson, Margaret Ames, Ashley McAskill, Danielle Peers, Faye Ginsberg, Lindsay Eales, Kelsie Acton, Koby Rogers Hall, Maria Schirmer, Heather Vrana, Véro Leduc, Laurence Parent, Jennifer Jimenez, Stephen Sillett, Baraka de Soleil, and Eduardo Farajado.

15  Stella Young, "I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much," *TedxSydney*, April 2014, Transcript available at http://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much/transcript.

# Towards a Manifesto on Research-Creation

Natalie S. Loveless, University of Alberta

As the above contributions show, over the past ten years research-creation has slowly shifted the landscape of artistic practice, pedagogy, and funding in Canada. Alongside the progressive turning of art schools into universities, debate over whether art can—or should—count as research, whether research-status is antithetical to good art, and whether research-creation constitutes a specific genre of artistic practice has led to a proliferation of panels and conferences, articles and books. The issues raised are many, but most interesting to me has been tracking how "inter-theory" debates, characteristic of the critical discourse of interdisciplinarity, shift when pushed to cross so-called "practice/theory" lines.

Based on this research, in the winter of 2014 I developed the first seminar taught at the University of Alberta explicitly on the topic of research-creation in Art and Design. The course, *Debates in Art and/as Research*, began with the reading of two books:

Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories* and Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*.[1] Neither made obvious sense to my students given the topic; neither refers explicitly to the nebulous and contested territory of research-creation. What they allowed us to do, however, was to begin by considering the way that research-creation practices work to tell new stories within the academy.

As most readers will know, research-creation is the main term used in Canada to speak about arts-based research. Terminological precursors to research-creation (such as practice-based research, practice-led research, and artistic research) find their origin in over thirty years of international discussion focused mostly in Western and Northern Europe and Australia.[2] While structurally tied to its status as a national funding category designed to increase available research funding for artists working in universities in Canada, research-creation

has, more interestingly, emerged hand-in-glove with recent shifts in artistic production and discourse such as "art-as-social-practice"[3] and "the pedagogical turn."[4] These shifts have had profound effects on the art work/events/projects that animate contemporary biennial, triennial, and exhibition circuits. They have also impacted the art history, theory, and criticism surrounding such work. On my reading, this shifts the ways in which we are called upon to teach contemporary art and art history. That said, research-creation not only challenges dominant hierarchies within departments of art and art history but, as the contributions above highlight, has impact beyond these.[5] Taking research-creation seriously, as a relatively new term on the academic stage, gives those of us operating across the university as artist-researchers/researcher-artists the opportunity to re-envision and re-craft—to re-story—our disciplinary practices. Rather than uncritically adding one disciplinary apparatus to another, research-creation marshals new methods that allow us to tell new stories, stories that demand new research literacies and outputs.

It is with this approach in mind that I assigned students in my Debates in Art and Research seminar *The Truth About Stories* and *The Companion Species Manifesto*. I invited them to read The *Truth About Stories* for the way that it asks us to be attentive to the "[s]tories we make up to try to set the world straight,"[6] those out of which we are crafted, and those we participate in crafting. Following this, I suggested reading *The Companion Species Manifesto* for the way it models an approach to research rooted in process and context specificity; for the way it is attentive to relational making practices in which entities (humans, races, dogs, disciplines) do not precede their relating and in which "the relating is never done once and for all."[7] Mobilizing different idioms and with different audiences in mind, these books distinguish between stories that hurt and stories that heal; stories of hierarchy and of cooperation; stories of autonomy and of responsivity.

In a room of students who self-identified as art historians and artists (along with a few sociologists and performance studies scholars), I suggested that these texts model an approach that is relevant to research-creation. I proposed research-creation as a methodology that sidesteps disciplinary allegiance and thereby reconfigures artistic cultures and practices across the university. Rather than letting one's research questions be conditioned by structures of legibility and value given by, say, one's self-identification as painter, early modern art historian, or feminist theorist, I suggested we might instead begin from our own version of the questions that Haraway asks herself: "Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?" and "How is 'becoming with' a practice of becoming worldly?"[8]

To take these questions seriously is to suggest something about the way that research-creation re(con)figures our approach to disciplinarity.

In saying this I am not arguing against the value of disciplinary competence and rigour. Attention to disciplinary inheritance is crucial. However, in asking us to unhook ourselves from a primary alliance to disciplinary identity, the critical discourse of research-creation wedges open inherited forms of legibility and value that configure our daily activities as academic practitioners. Research-creation thereby becomes important to the investigation of well-trod, but still necessary, territory in the arts and humanities—territory that is crucial to the future of a university that seems to be increasingly emerging as the enduringly neoliberal "university of business" or the "all-administrative university."[9]

It may be important at this point to be clear on the following: mine is *not* an argument for the validity of artistic practice as, de facto, a legitimate form of research, though I agree with the contention that certain artistic practices may be considered forms of research or publication according to academic standards. Indeed, it seems to me that simply giving art the status of research echoes early feminist interventions into the canon that took the form of "add women and stir"—a tokenistic inclusion that did little to change the logics that structured the exclusions in the first place (this, of course, is an argument that was made forcefully in 1971 by Linda Nochlin in her germinal essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"[10]). Rather than focusing on artistic labour *as* research, I am interested in the epistemological and ontological structures that deny it research status in the first place;[11] I am interested in institutional attempts to account for and support research-creation, and in how these might shift how we teach contemporary art history.

The specificity of research-creation that is at stake here is not only conceptual. As part and parcel of questioning the stranglehold of disciplinary legibility on our practices in the university, as teachers, as researchers, as colleagues, today, we must attend to the ways that the disciplined university, with its merit boards and granting agencies, are structured to assess faculty outputs on the basis of contribution not to "new knowledge" *in general* but to new knowledge within *a discipline*. This often renders those who would work *practicetheoretically* both illegible and, in the most hostile of assessments, suspect. In this context, I argue for research-creation as crucial to the development of new academic literacies that challenge traditional modes of knowledge in the university. Research-creation is a particularly potent way of speaking across and *with* disciplinary, political, ideological, methodological, and affective (diffractive) differences in the academy today.

To return to the context of the seminar and texts with which I started: to do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions, it is to tell stories-that-matter. It is in recognizing this, I proposed, that a truly ethical research practice emerges.[12] In the first few pages of *The Truth About Stories*, Thomas King (through Jeanette Winterson, though we cannot ignore the echoes of Lacan here) asserts that language is not something that we speak; *it* speaks *us*.[13] Research methods and disciplines, too, precede us. Speak us. We enter into them and they work to craft the possible forms of our questions. It is in this context that it becomes crucial to ask, when examining our research practices: which stories animate us, and why?

Alternate research stories create alternate research worlds. Conversely, different story-telling strategies (methods) emerge from different world-views. If, in Haraway's words, the world is "a knot in motion,"[14] research-creation demands that we re-assess which knots we are tying with our research stories. At its most compelling, as many of the contributors to this *Polemics* suggest, research-creation invites us to reassess our inherited modes of publication and pedagogy in ways more attuned to the modes of creativity needed to face ecological and economic crises that are actively remaking how we might conceive of the work of the university today.

## Notes

1  Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis, 2003); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, 2003).

2  Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Context, Method, Knowledge* (London, 2007); Brad Haseman, "Tightrope Writing: Creative Writing Programs in the RQF Environment" (Queensland, Australia, 2006); Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (New York, 2009); Michael Biggs, *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (London, 2012).

3  Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York, 2011).

4  Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *e-flux journal* 0 (November 2008) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning/; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London, 2012).

5  For example, Concordia's *Hexagram* and *SenseLab* and York's *Future Cinema Lab*—among many others—develop research-creational collaboration not only across the arts, humanities, and social sciences, but with the "hard" sciences as well.

6  King, *Truth About Stories*, 60.

7  Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 12.

8  Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, 2008), 3.

9  Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (Oxford, 2011).

10  Reprinted in Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York, 1988).

11  While it is true that such inclusions *can*, at times, work to change these exclusionary logics by performing an implicit critique, such implicit critiques are, more often than not, over-determined by an assimilative logic that maintains the values that structured the exclusion in the first place.

12  This is the subject of my monograph on Art and/as Research, in process. In it I specify a difference between the kind of research ethics modeled by research-creation methodologies and those managed by university ethics boards.

13  King, *The Truth About Stories*, 2.

14  Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 4.