

Book Review

Gartmann, Thomas und Schäuble, Michaela (Hrsg.): *Studies in the Arts: Neue Perspektiven auf Forschung über, in und durch Kunst und Design* (2021), Bielefeld: transcript.

Anthony Gritten, Royal Academy of Music, London¹

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Thomas Gartmann and Michaela Schäuble have drawn together a diverse group of authors who, had they not been connected through their common engagement with the University of Bern and the Bern University of the Arts doctoral programme for artists and designers (SINTA), might have otherwise looked very diverse indeed. Their expertise is spread across several disciplines, several media, and, from a theoretical perspective, across several intellectual and artistic contexts. Topics include the 11th century, remix culture, Wagner, and the title sequences of Hitchcock's films. The thirteen texts reflect upon issues that have characterized the proliferation of what in some places is named Artistic Research, in other places Practice as Research, and, in Bern and in this volume, is named *Studies in the Arts*. All authors share a stimulus in the far-reaching consequences of the 1999 Bologna Process, and this volume shows how distant that event now is, and yet also how close its concerns remain, many of which are still live issues, still being worked through experimentally.

The volume's subtitle gives the game away: these are *New Perspectives on Research about, in and through Art and Design* – though music is amply represented, too. The key moments of leverage by which readers can navigate the choppy waters between research and artistic practice are the subtitle's prepositions about, in and through. These simultaneously fix and unfix not only the multiplicity of the contributors' individual approaches to their material (topics, methods, evaluative stances on outputs), but the disciplinary multiplicity of the subjects discussed.

It is assumed that artists do research explicitly and self-reflectively, and that they are often eligible for support (including funding) within the frameworks managed – sometimes policed – by Higher Education. The newer questions are: what type of research is this? How does this research function? What does this research produce? This volume showcases answers to these questions, and – perhaps most important – reveals the “serious commitment” (15) of those involved. Some answers come from direct reflection upon the relationship between artists and institutions, as with Cristina Urchueguía's article text, which reads the history of artistic research as bound up with “misjudgements” (15, 19). She identifies two types of misjudgements: those that have arisen between musicians and musicologists about the complex relationships between mind and feeling within artistic research, and those concerning the very “thing” of artistic activity. Regarding the first type, it could be said that misjudgements have had a long – we might even say esteemed – role within the history of artistic practice (transformations of grit inside oysters into pearls), and that misjudgements are sometimes required for a certain type of artistic research to be set in motion. The friction of misjudgement has multiple registers: institutional, disciplinary, artistic, ethical. Misjudgements do, of course, figure quite differently in (empirical) research and in artistic practice; in the latter, notably, the distinction between judgements and misjudgements can

¹ Author's email address: a.gritten@ram.ac.uk.

itself have creative force – failure can be successful (13). This, hopefully, might be one of the morals of Urchueguía's "memorial" narrative (15).

This sense of friction navigates its way fluidly through Irit Rogoff's charming text, "The Disenchanted". Building on her work elsewhere on the drift from 'criticism' to 'critique' and from critique to what she names 'criticality', she sets out to explore how we might understand "the mechanisms by which we might catapult ourselves from one knowledge paradigm to another, one belief system to another" (47). Another text in the volume advocates for a balance between "commitment" and "skepticism" (30); Rogoff's own sense is that practice based research "is based not on linearity and centrality but on dispersal, on encounter and on consistent efforts as re-singularization." (56) Noting that Rogoff's own text itself performs the very "leap" that she theorizes, we might read this as a manifesto as well as an argument, as working politically as well as epistemologically.

Most texts in this volume represent the results of political re-singularization, and their authors have navigated expeditions from case study to theoretical speculation and back, generating a friction that is creative in both artistic and research senses, where "strange, distancing or overwhelming impressions" (32) are celebrated and enhanced, where the "vagueness" (30) of intuition is useful rather than the obstacle it seems to be in conventional research. Rachel Mader, exploring "Undisciplined Discipline", quotes Uriel Orlow's description of such expeditions as a "shuttling back and forth between the work and the discursive contexts it is engaged in" (81), which is a usefully dynamic way of phrasing the "relationship" of artistic research (81) without slipping back into older notions like "intersection" (43). Good examples of shuttling can be found in the texts by Manuel Bärtsch on early Wagner recordings on the Welte-Mignon system, which achieves an excellent balance between deep analytical insight and broader speculation about stylistic and historical trends, and by Martha Brech, whose text exploring issues of sound-space in Nono and Xenakis shuttles between wider theoretical and historical contexts and the aesthetic issues occupying these composers.

I sign off with a regret: there is no index. It would have helped readers to navigate the archipelago of multiple topics, disciplines, discourses, registers, and artistic nuances lodged within this interesting volume, and it would have both drawn everything together and shown how widely dispersed everything is – the interpenetration of everything – across the vast ocean of artistic research. Indeed, that things remain dispersed, despite decades of activity seeking to create disciplinary structures and protocols for individuals and institutions to jointly negotiate, is good; that debates about Artistic Research "can in no way be described as consolidated, clear or secure" (65) is a sign of a healthy future.