

# Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)

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## ABSTRACT

This draft document describes how an international, peer-reviewed, academic journal for artistic research might be envisaged, which is able to cope with the difficulties that are particular to artistic research. It is a response to the desperate need of an ever-increasing number of artistic researchers to have their work published in a medium sensitive to their artistic concerns.

The proposed Open Access Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) would be the first journal worldwide to offer artistic researchers the opportunity to disseminate their research in a unique combination of a journal publication with research documentation and exposition in a Research Catalogue (RC). Providing a standard for the referencing of artistic research, the Research Catalogue offers a solution to the problem of accessibility that is an issue for the artistic researchers themselves, funding bodies, art academies, museums, collections and the wider academic world.

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## 1 Description

The Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) is initially published twice a year. It is an international, online, Open Access and double blind peer-reviewed, academic journal for the identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research and its methodology. The journal's most innovative feature is the Research Catalogue (RC), which is a searchable, documentary database of artistic research work and its exposition. The RC is an inclusive, open-ended, bottom-up research tool that stimulates and challenges the formation of artistic research as a discipline.

JAR is unique; it is the only journal worldwide that systematically features artistic research output in close proximity to academic articles and methodological discussions. Introducing a high-quality journal in the field allows an ever-increasing number of artistic researchers to partake in what in the sciences and humanities are standard academic publication procedures.

In the context of JAR, artistic research is double defined: in so far as it is research, it enhances knowledge and understanding; because it is artistic, however, the mode of presentation is essential. This definition excludes works of art, for which the mode of presentation is essential, but which do not enhance understanding. It also excludes research that is not dependant on its presentation. Given that artistic research is an emerging paradigm, contributing to the development of epistemological as well as artistic criteria for the exposure of artistic research is a key concern of the journal.

It is the goal of JAR that all notable artistic research contributions become part of the Research Catalogue (RC). The RC offers a standardized, advanced, multimedia documentation of the research, which allows artistic research to be easily referred to in the wider context even beyond academia. In addition, the RC comprises expositions describing how a particular contribution is counted as research making the RC relevant to the current development of artistic research as a form of investigation in its own right.

Due to the particular nature of artistic research, JAR aspires to take into account the most divers modes of presentation. Apart from texts and images, contributions may reference sound and moving images, especially issued artists' books and artifacts, exhibitions, performances and events. Although JAR only provides an Internet platform for the display of documentations, in collaboration with partner organisations, such as museums, collections or project spaces, the journal attempts to instigate the availability of the works themselves.

JAR offers a solution for the desire of artistic researchers to have their work displayed and documented in manner that cares about modes of presentation. By introducing with the RC a standard of documentation, the journal responds to the artistic and academic communities, which require high quality referencing and documentation. Moreover, the journal meets the demand of art institutions such as museums, galleries and collections to have artistic research made accessible. It is not

unlikely that in the future funding bodies will require research outcomes to be documented and made available through instruments such as the RC.

JAR will focus on research practices across disciplines thereby also emphasising the transdisciplinary character of much artistic research. Because artistic research is an emerging paradigm, JAR will not assume that contributions will have to be made in a specific context as long as a case can be made for these to count as artistic research. As a consequence, JAR includes research that was carried out (1) in the past and (2) as part of a different, non-artistic context. Part of JAR's mission is thus to make artistic practice more relevant to academic discourse and, conversely, to re-negotiate the function of research in artistic practice.

## 2 Field

Within academia, artistic research has been in existence since the early 1990s most notably in the UK, Scandinavia, Australia and the Benelux countries, but also countries such as Turkey and Georgia. Continental Europe and the United States of America have recently rapidly engaged in discussions that in Europe are chiefly due to the so-called 'Bologna Process', which streamlines higher education across Europe. Although the 'Bologna Process' does not explicitly require doctorates in the arts (PhD/DA), it appears that many countries in the European Union have taken the opportunity to not only move to an BA/MA system, but to also introduce research degrees in the arts. In the US, the move to artistic research is very recent, but Elkins (2009: viii), convinced from the idea of artistic research, estimates that by 2012 there will be 127 programs in the Americas (at present, as he says, there are less than 20). Despite its history and the increasing popularity of artistic research, its methodology, epistemology and academic status are still subject of much debate. (Cf. Borgdorff, 2006)

A more detailed analysis of artistic research across the world is missing. In the UK, over 70 universities are listed in the field of Art and Design in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. According to Mottram (2009: 16), together these employ 2523 researchers with a 'conservative' estimate of 200 research students per year. In Finland, the University of Art and Design Helsinki (TaiK 2009) reports that currently 202 research students (or 10% of its overall student number) are enrolled, with only 18% of Finish nationality indicating a high international demand. Switzerland recently founded more than 30 research institutes at its new art academies and developed a specific funding system for the arts (KFH/Camp, 2008: 24ff.) However, despite missing data, given that research degrees in art and design are rapidly developing across the world it is safe to say that within the next few years staff research and research student numbers across the world will develop exponentially.

Artistic research has also become a topic for non-artistic researchers. In philosophy and the humanities, for example, Dronsfield (2009) as well as Smith (2009) argue that artistic research has much to contribute to traditional, text-based research. Moreover, artistic research also overlaps with the sciences. Fields as diverse as

mathematics (cf. Emmer 1993) or neurophysiology (cf. Stafford 2007) have started to value contributions by artists, while the importance of practice is becoming increasingly emphasized in the history of science (cf. Schickore 2007).

Within the general art world, the notion of 'research' has also gained much credibility over the recent years. Artists have been pleading for new forms of art as research (e.g. Dombois, 2006). Grassroots initiatives, such as the 'Gesellschaft für künstlerische Forschung Berlin' (GkFB) are related to a recent critique on the notion of 'education' in art (cf. Rogoff 2008), and it can be argued that 'research' has become a new paradigm in art. Despite the fact that 'research' remains poorly defined in general artistic practice and as such open to a critique, Lesage (2009), for example, believes that 'one day we will be quite accustomed to the fact that a solo exhibition in a museum of contemporary arts can't be anything but the presentation of a . . . doctorate in the arts.' However, although artistic research may be credible, it should be applied only with caution to general artistic practice, since a definition of artistic research does not necessarily imply a definition of art. At the same time it should be noted that the majority of research in the arts, other than in the sciences, is not carried out in academies or universities making it necessary to bridge the gap between academic and non-academic modes of research.

### 3 Publishing Context

Although practice-based research degrees in Art and Design have been available in the UK since 1992 with a total number of 406 completed doctoral theses before 2006 (Mottram 2009: 20), the research and its outcomes that are produced is all but disappearing. This is particularly true for the practical components of a research project, which are more difficult to archive and where formats of publication and standards of documentation are lacking. For example, in the UK a practical presentation is part of the *viva voce*, which, however, is not documented. Once the degree is awarded, only the written, bound theses are available in the library of the awarding institution or via the British Library. These *may* contain examples of the work, but standards are not provided. Thus, it is no surprise that the outcomes of artistic research are hardly accessible and rarely feed into the work of successive researchers. The RC is conceived to remedy this state of affairs.

It is equally difficult to access work in the context of exhibitions or publications *as* research. So far, the public does not differentiate between art works in general and works of research in particular; initiatives such as the exhibition 'Art as Research' 2008 in Berlin as part of the biannual conference of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts (SLSA) are an exception. Given that it is undecided at the moment if practical contributions in the context of research differ from other practical presentations, it may be the case that research at present cannot only not be identified but that it is also mis-(re)presented in the context of a general art practice. Volume 4 of the *Working Papers in Art and Design* dedicated a complete issue on the question of 'context' in recognition of this problem (see in particular: Biggs 2006).

More often than not, conference publications and edited books on the notion of research include 'practice' chapters (e.g. MacLeod and Holdridge 2006, Mäkelä and Rotarinne 2006 or Elkins 2009). These chapters tend to be unstructured and loosely related to the question of artistic research often providing 'examples', without attempting to engage with the question of presentation. Contributions, such as Price (2006) appear to function better, because they anticipate the presentation of the work as text, while in other cases researchers write about the work without engaging in the question of presentation and writing and, as a consequence, provide little more than catalogue essays. All publications comprise a methodological section, which tends to fill the first part of the book. There is normally little reference to other methodological work and even less to other practice-based research.

Elkins (2009) lists – including his own publications – seven books dedicated to the subject, while not mentioning journals in the field at all (Elkins's list is very partial). There are four dedicated journals in the field, all of which are methodological in nature; none is dedicated to the documentation of artistic research.

1. *Working Papers of Art and Design*, biannually since 2000  
The *Working Papers* are closely linked to the Research into Practice conference organised by the University of Hertfordshire, UK.  
([http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes\\_research/papers/wpades/index.html](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/index.html))
2. *Art and Research*, since 2006, Glasgow School of Art and Design  
(<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/>)
3. *MaHKUzine*, since 2006, Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design.  
(<http://www.mahku.nl/research/mahkuzine7.html>)
4. *Art Monitor*, since 2007, University of Gothenborg  
([http://www.konst.gu.se/english/Publications/Art\\_Monitor\\_tidsskrift/](http://www.konst.gu.se/english/Publications/Art_Monitor_tidsskrift/))

All journals apart from *Art Monitor* are Open Access; the *MaHKUzine* is also available in printed form, while *Art Monitor* is only available in print. The *Working Papers* and *Art and Research* are peer-reviewed, *MaHKUzine* as the name suggests is more like a magazine and therefore has no peer reviewing.

Special issues of different journal have been dedicated to research in art and design. The *International Journal of Design, Sciences & Technology*, for example, published a special issue in 2002 (Vol. 10: 2) (<http://europia.org/IJDST/vol10.html>), so did the *Journal of Visual Art Practice* (Vol. 2: 1) (<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-issue,id=1379/>) The *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* published in 2007 (12/1) a special issue on 'Practice-based Research in Music' (<http://www.djmt.nl/>), while in 2008, the *Nordic Theatre Studies* dedicated its volume 20 on 'The Artist as Researcher' (<http://www.helsinki.fi/taitu/svenska/ntf/Pages/Frameset.html?Main=nordicthea.html>)

Occasional articles appear in journals that are more general. The *Journal of Visual Art Practice* (JVAP), for example, which operates in the context of 'critical practice' has shown a strong interest in practice-based research. (Cf. Schwab 2008; Francis 2008) Another interesting example is the 'discussion' in the new *e-flux journal*, which has followed the 'educational turn' in art – perhaps as a post-'relational aesthetics' phenomenon - which is thus closer to main stream discourses about art. (Rogoff 2008; Holert 2009; Lesage 2009.) The *e-flux journal* offers an interesting overlap between a more 'populist' discourse that is typical for art magazines and academic contributions, which are not. Perhaps because of the success of the journal, in 2009, *e-flux* together with *Artforum* launched *Art and Education Papers*, 'a new global platform for sharing and distributing research and knowledge in the field of contemporary art' (quote from the announcement email, website at: <http://www.artandeducation.net/papers>), which does not, however, mention *artistic* research.

## 4 Audience

JAR is primarily targeted at artists, artistic researchers, research students and post-graduate students within artistic disciplines across the world as both a research tool and as publication format. Given the transdisciplinary character of artistic research, it may also be of interest to researchers in music, theatre, design etc. as well as to researchers outside of the arts provided their work implies alternative, practical, visual or acoustic research methodologies and their histories.

JAR aims to become the model for the documentation and dissemination of artistic research. The journal will be of interest to curriculum developers and funding agencies and may play an important part in the evaluation of research output.

Particularly through the RC, JAR is also of interest to artists, curators and researchers who research specific artists or works of art. It can be of interest to the wider public in particular if referred to in exhibitions, articles and catalogues.

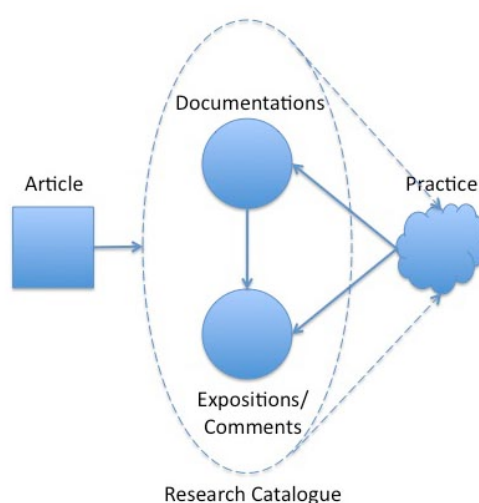
## 5 Language

JAR is multi-lingual. Every article is available in British English and its original language if translated; the translation has to be provided by the author. Being a multi-lingual journal, JAR not only demonstrates its international character while supporting the local or regional research cultures, it also emphasises that language, as a mode of presentations in its own right, is not neglected.

## 6 Content Organisation

1. Editorial  
The Editorial will highlight particular debates amongst the editors and the Editorial Board. It will attempt to re-formulate key questions and structure the debate. Themed issues or issues edited by a guest editor can be perceived.
2. Article section (AS)  
This section consists of contributions that discuss or utilize artistic research. By providing a forum, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the potential of artistic research and to distinguish it not only from other forms of research, but also from artistic practice in general. The Article Section is double blind peer reviewed. The format is assumed to be 'traditional' academic texts but can also use other modes of depiction as far as can be provided by the technical possibilities of JAR. Questions of format are negotiated with the Editorial Team.
3. Research Catalogue (RC)  
The Research Catalogue is an online, searchable database of artistic research work. Without peer-reviewing any work can be submitted (potentially directly by a registered user). Although an exposition of the work as research is desired as part of the submission, this is not mandatory. Comments can be left to each submission. (Peer-rating/commenting rather than peer-reviewing.)
4. Publication/Conference Reviews  
General overview of the field and discussions of what happens somewhere else.

## 7 The Research Catalogue (RC)



The RC is the most prominent and most original element of JAR. It functions as connective and transitional layer between academic discourse and artistic practice



constituting a discursive field for artistic research. The RC thus creates a link between (1) extensive documentations of the work and (2) expositions and comments that engage with the signification of the work as research.

It is assumed that 'practice' is an amorphous, un-identifiable entity, which nevertheless needs to be addressed as part of an academic journal. JAR proposes practice to enter the discourse not directly but mediated through the RC as documentation only. Adding work to the RC makes a *claim* that the work can be seen as research; through expositions, comments and articles the initial claim is transformed into an *argument*. Finding a suitable structure in which to develop the relationship between documentation and exposition plays a difficult but important part in artistic research.

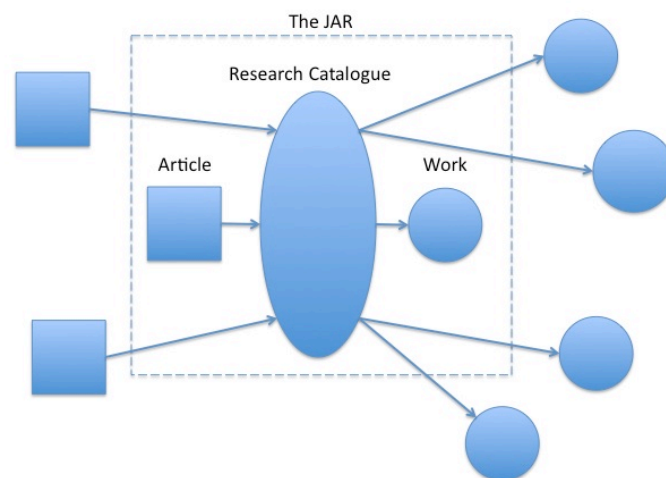
Both, the documentations and the expositions/comments are seen as layers of reflection (Schwab 2008) that translate (Elo 2007) or unfold (MacLeod and Holdridge 2006: 1 - 14) the work into discourse *and vice versa*. The RC thus occupies a particular space between work and discourse, in which both, work and discourse are, strictly speaking, absent (*mise en abyme*) or delayed allowing space for the appearance of meaning between knowledge and experience. Each contribution, thus, has to negotiate the relationship of documentation and reflection within the framework of the RC. The RC solicits responses to and the linking of catalogue entries.

An IT framework has to be developed for the RC that links a conventional digital repository (standardized metadata) with a presentation layer. All sorts of files (image, sound, video, text etc.) should be kept in the repository and put into a relationship in the presentation layer creating a mesh of signification across a number of pages. The RC can be perceived as an extension to digital repositories that are currently developed for the art and design context. (Cf. KULTUR <http://kultur.eprints.org/> and an implementation at the University of the Arts <http://kultur.arts.ac.uk/> or DILPS 2.0 <http://www.dilps.net/> and <http://www.prometheus-bildarchiv.de/>)

In the simplest case, an RC entry would comprise of an image and a text. More complex entries, for example, can use multiple images of works from within a group and juxtapose these with works from other artists, or show extensive documentations of making processes, and use text to expose the relationships between the works. An exposition is deemed important, because practical work is not necessarily accessible *as research*. (Cf. MacLeod and Holdridge 2006: 1 - 14) The exposition has no particular form, but engages with or unfolds the work's research potential. Often a context has to be created, be it the history of art, philosophy or science, or relations have to be created to others works including but not limited to works by the same artist.

Using the RC, a contribution can be quoted as, for example: *Moholy-Nagy, L., 1922. Light-Space Modulator. JAR-RC 23*. The reference points to the work, which is identified through its documentation and exposition.

## 8 Research Presentation



The presentation of research work is strictly speaking not part of the RC, although a catalogue entry will profit greatly if it can refer to the original work.

JAR supports and promotes artistic research presentations in an attempt to increase the availability of original works or practices. Within JAR *some* works can be made available; this will most likely be work where the artist has chosen to artistically engage with the format of the RC. In general, however, work will be 'out there', sometimes but not always accessible. Despite the location and the possible absence of a work, the RC should reference all works.

Similarly, JAR publishes *some* articles that use the RC for reference. Other articles, however, may be published in other journals or in books and use the RC. (If an article is artistic research itself, it may become a 'work' in the sense of the RC and receive a catalogue entry.)

## 9 Refereeing

Refereeing arrangements will have to be carefully evaluated and may be different for the AS and the RC.

JAR is academic and always double blind refereed, i.e. anonymity is accorded to both referees and authors. There are normally two referees, chosen for their expertise within the subject area. They are asked to comment on comprehensibility, originality, scholarly worth and relevance in the field of artistic research of the article submitted. The referees' comments and any additional comments the editor/editorial team may wish to add that require amendments will then need to be

acted on for the article to receive further consideration by the editor before it may be published in the journal.

If reference to a work is made, the referees will have to reflect on and make explicit if they have formed their opinion on the basis of a documentation of the work alone or if the work has been experienced in situ.

Such a traditional reviewing process may be more difficult for contributions to the RC, where anonymity can not be guaranteed to the contributors, whose may often be well know. An open reviewing process may be a possibility.

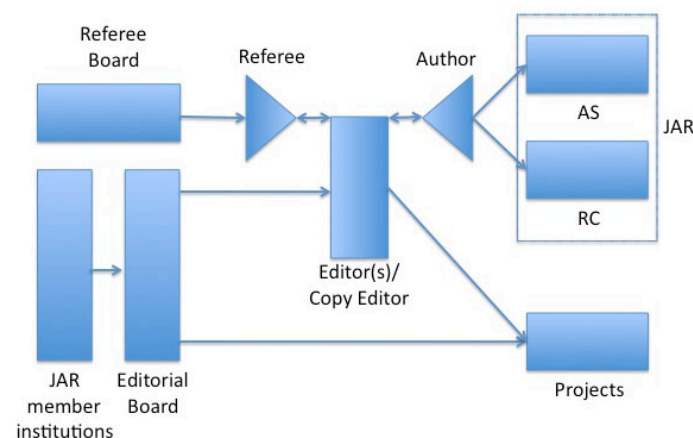
Although artistic researchers may be desired as referees, JAR explicitly includes practicing artists in its reviewer base in order to sharpen the attention that has to be paid to the presentational aspect of the research.

## 10 Guest Editor/Special Issues/Exhibitions/Author acquisition

JAR can appoint guest editors to produce special issues. Special issues are a good way to 'probe' particular areas and to get specialists in these areas to relate to artistic research that would otherwise be hesitant. Using the RC, it would also be possible to submit an 'article' that is a curated exhibition (or, in fact, a journal issue could be guest edited by a curator and consist of an online 'path' through RC material perhaps guided by the curator.)

Additionally and despite the expected continuing growth of the field, authors will have to be won through the publication of calls and through events such as exhibitions, symposia of conference. The support base for JAR is sought to be as wide as possible.

## 11 Organisational Structure



JAR members are recruited from academic and non-academic art institutions and support the journal financially. They may send representatives to the Editorial Board, which deals with the width of subject disciplines that may become relevant and gives the journal its direction. The Editorial Board appoints the Editor/Editorial Team and the Referee Board. Independence of both Editor and Referee from the Editorial Board as well as JAR Members is guaranteed.

The Editor/the Editorial Team is responsible for the quality of the content, relays peer-review communication and makes the final decision as to what is published and how it is published. The Editor liaises with the Referees and Authors, the Copy Editor and potential Project Partners to ensure that the form of publication and presentation matches the high quality content of the journal.

The Editor asks Referees to blindly review contributions that have passed his initial, formal assessment. Referees are selected from the Referee Board and have to have expertise in the specific field of the contribution; additional referees may be used to judge the quality of the research aspect, which may not be the same as the quality of the content of a particular contribution.

The Copy Editor is responsible for all formal concerns including spelling and layout. Once a presentation is accepted the Copy Editor liaises with the author and negotiates who particular textual or practical issues can be resolved so that a standard across JAR is achieved. The Copy Editor works within guidelines and a basic design agreed with by the Editor and the Editorial Board.

## **12 Project Partners**

Since the experience of art is an important aspect of artistic research, JAR needs strong, international project partners together with which work can be made accessible/displayed. Project partners can be institutions and collections; they can also be individual curators, off-spaces or artists even, who are prepared to contextualise their presentations as research. It would be of particular interest to find partners in museums or collections that could collect works featured in the RC and make the work accessible in the context of a 'library' (such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, for example, does for historical photographs) or exhibitions.

JAR can critically support project partner's activities, but funding has to be obtained and the presentation has to be managed by the project partners themselves. A documentation of a presentation should feed back into the RC.

## **13 Funding**

JAR has to be funded by institutional members and additional public and/or private funding. Their support will be indicated online in JAR.

## 14 Piloting

JAR is initially piloted for three years/6 issues. Controlling instruments have to be developed from the beginning that allow for the monitoring of progress, in particular when new features are trialed. Such instruments should include:

- network traffic (hits and geographic distribution)
- quoting of papers or RC entries in other publications
- financial support and support in kind
- paper submissions (and submission to publication ratio)

During the pilot phase and in regular intervals reports should be delivered to the Editorial Board and to JAR Members.

For the development of the RC, depending on funding, a small number of artistic and scientific researchers could be asked to create content for the RC. Through this, the concept of the RC can be tested in practice and refined before it is made accessible. This research can be used as examples for the first call.

## 15 Project Timeline

Key dates are 18/01/2010 by which a meeting is to be held with all supporters and 15/10/2010 by which issue 0 should be launched.

18/01/2010	Initial technical design for JAR/RC
18/01/2010	Meeting to establish the JAR supporting organisation
01/06/2010	Symposium
01/06/2010	Form Reviewer Board
15/10/2010	First issue

## 16 Questions

*1. Does the RC need to be 'academic' or peer-reviewed, even? (Is it not enough when the AS is?)*

The relationship between art that utilizes research as part of its practice and an academically institutionalized form of artistic research is crucial. JAR needs to open up academic debates to the art world while developing the highest possible standards for the definition of artistic research, a task often associated with the academy. A more 'populist' and perhaps more direct point of entry to the debate may be helpful, in particular given that the notion of 'research' is also well established in the art world. How can a balance be achieved that makes the RC easy to use for artists while achieving a high level of quality (i.e. not creating another blogging space)?

*2. Does the emphasis on 'presentation' in the description of artistic research include the presentation of research in JAR?*

In most cases, AS (or the RC) will offer documentation and NOT a presentation of the work. If presentation matters, will the presentation of the work in the RC matter? Will work that is submitted have to propose its own form of presentation? Is it enough to document a presentation? This, however, is a new form of presentation (perhaps a third, next to exhibition and thesis). Furthermore, it is not sufficient to discuss only when a work counts as research; the notion of 'work' itself might need to be challenged. In particular, a work's relationship to its documentation needs to be discussed.

*3. Is there a substantial difference between AS and RC in JAR?*

It may not be possible to draw a clear line between research documented in the RC and contributions in the AS. If to this end, contributions in the AS may be visual/artistic what would be the separating criteria be? From a radical perspective neither plain artistic practice nor plain academic writing would suffice as artistic research contributions, so having a traditional 'theoretical' or 'methodological' article section may betray the idea. It is not that traditional texts are discounted; it is only that they represent a choice just as any other format does and need to be looked at and argued for in this light.

*4. What are the expected consequences for artistic practice? Will a notion of 'artistic research' that JAR promotes have 'political' relevance?*

In other words, will certain forms of art fit better into such a concept than others and will they therefore be positively sanctioned? The risk is that works that are attracted may produce better expositions while the work is worse. In general, a radical openness to all things different must be kept so that the notion of 'artistic research' does not function as a barrier and rather as an invitation to respond.

*5. How can sustainability be achieved? Who owns the data?*

There may be quite complicated legal decisions necessary in particular in relation to the ownership of the data in the RC (can it be used in a different context, or a changed context, even?) and the responsibility towards the data (can a user expect the data to be online for a certain amount of time or can all their work be taken offline at any time?)

*6. Can JAR become a new space for art?*

Although JAR is set up to provide a site for research that is different to general artistic practice, potentially JAR can also become a space for art if such art embraces a research paradigm. That is, given that some works today and in the future express a research concern, while being firmly rooted in art (i.e. not making a difference) it is feasible for JAR to become a medium for artistic or curatorial practice (journal-based

group exhibitions/journal-based art). The relation of practice to theory is seen to be essentially and necessarily opaque; the one will not become transparent to the other. In general, JAR does not seek simple, one-directional reflection, but a 'narration of research'.

## 17 References

These are the publication used in this proposal. For an extensive list of references see: [http://www.zotero.org/groups/artistic\\_research/items](http://www.zotero.org/groups/artistic_research/items)

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