

The ideas we bet on

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A particular problem arises when, instead of being a discourse on other discourses, as is usually the case, theory has to advance over an area where there are no longer any discourses. There is a sudden unevenness of terrain: the ground on which verbal language rests begins to fail. The theorizing operation finds itself at the limits of the terrain where it normally functions, like an automobile at the edge of a cliff. Beyond and below lies the ocean. (Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 1984, p.61)

Within the current constructs of Art and Art Education words and standardized documents of written explanations—of how to do things—have paved specific roads where the vehicles of inquiry cannot carry nonverbal visual elements, which are prevalent, and dominant, in an artistic practice. The creative flow and its visual communication lie ignored beyond and below the written language of most academic arguments. The dominant standards of knowledge mainly produce narratives of interpretation for understanding art and visibility as an event of signification. This reaffirms a modernist tradition of understanding and practicing art as abstract thought which is subsequently conceived in mostly linguistic forms. In my view, this attitude ignores intrinsic elements characteristic of artistic creation. In a natural stand to preserve an artwork's qualities and dynamics as the dominant features of research methodology, the artist searches for continuous difference and alterity of forms, which often does not sit well within homogenized academic structures.

For the committed artist, the academia of art education is a new location where the experienced teaching artists trade and exchange, at speculative rates, practice and art objects for written explanations. This invariably provokes a strong intuitive opposition and a sense of misunderstanding of artistic creation and its research. There is a discrepancy that arises between the artist and the institution about how artistic practices might be seen as new areas of inquiry that generate content and structures different to those of conventional academic standards. When

art is viewed and implemented, not as a concept, but as a multi-dimensional contextualized dynamic process of decision-making, media manipulation, and visual negotiation, the privileged position of the formally referenced written document is threatened. Under these circumstances, scholarly activity may be seen to be more like artistic practice if it can shift to become self-referential media assemblages that are loyal in language and structure to the event or phenomena under investigation.

The current institutional process though looks at art as a set of meaningful, interpretive materials, and does not acknowledge the dynamic, iterative, non-linear actions involved in artistic practice. The culture of educational research substitutes exploration and experimentation with a replication of general models that harvest techniques of pre-existing knowledge based on one-dimensional strategies of discourse and plans of action. These paradigms implicate art as a sequential pedagogical process with clear objectives, meaningful materials and interpretative forms. In contrast, some artists reflect on education as a byproduct of art making, a matter of habits and dynamics that transcends the studio into educational practice. The moment of education may happen in the presence of art but cannot be extracted from every artistic process, at least in explicit terms. For the artist in academia the implication of art in education does not acknowledge the divergent qualities of artistic processes and resulting forms, which include certain iterative dynamics of non-linear actions. In the case of an artist involved in education, it is a matter of a creative process finding new locations for digging, building new machinery to extract alternative academic materials. This generates new forms of knowledge that also include the singularities of creative tactics in the demonstration of art practice research's attitudes and aptitudes. As the artist/researcher/educator enters the academic tradition of art education, with heavy investments in art practice, there is a bifurcation of visions and stakes for the future dynamic between art and art education,

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Considering the hidden costs and benefits of learning and teaching, the anxiety of negotiating adequate knowledge with the institution is better explained conceptually through the economic perspective of the *stakeholder*. According to Henry J. Scholl (2001), to understand the elements of *stakeholder* theory—viewed as an open challenge to the prevailing neoclassical economic theory of the firm—two terms need to be assimilated, *stakes* and *stakeholders*. Scholl defines

stakes as the normative obligations that rest on legal, moral, or presumed claims. These premises—*stakes*—have the capacity to affect behaviors, processes, directions or outcomes in organizations. Freeman (1984) defines the other element of the theory, the stakeholder, as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objective. Due to the vested interests defined by their own risks, the stakeholder mainly focuses on the parts of a firm and on the relationships among these parts and the participants within and around the firm.

If we use the theory of the stakeholder to explain the participation of the artist-researcher in the process of decision-making within the academic landscape, he or she is not perceived as “stock,” nor has the status of “shareholder” within the current paradigm of art education. Instead, the artist/researcher is perceived as a “stakeholder” in an individual’s education, where artistic practices and tacit knowledge are parts of an educational experience that can be implemented in educational settings.

After more than a decade of personal art practice and implementation, the use of diagrammatic methods of causal inquiry has proved useful to me. The manipulation of inquiry and content through artistic processes is shown in Figure 1. In it, the institutional and artistic practices are polarized as extremes to establish clear differences in the way they process information. On the one side, the institution addresses the investigation of an art event—what surrounds the artwork when it happens—through pre-existing, explicit knowledge, and in reference to other relevant events out there. The final form is predictable as everything is codified and analyzed through conventional linguistic means. On the other hand, analysis through visual strategies is intended to identify all the parts involved in the event that cannot be translated or codified, and how the new forms that emanate from the same materials and references reiterate the characteristics of a community of practice.

Two research paradigms of inquiry.

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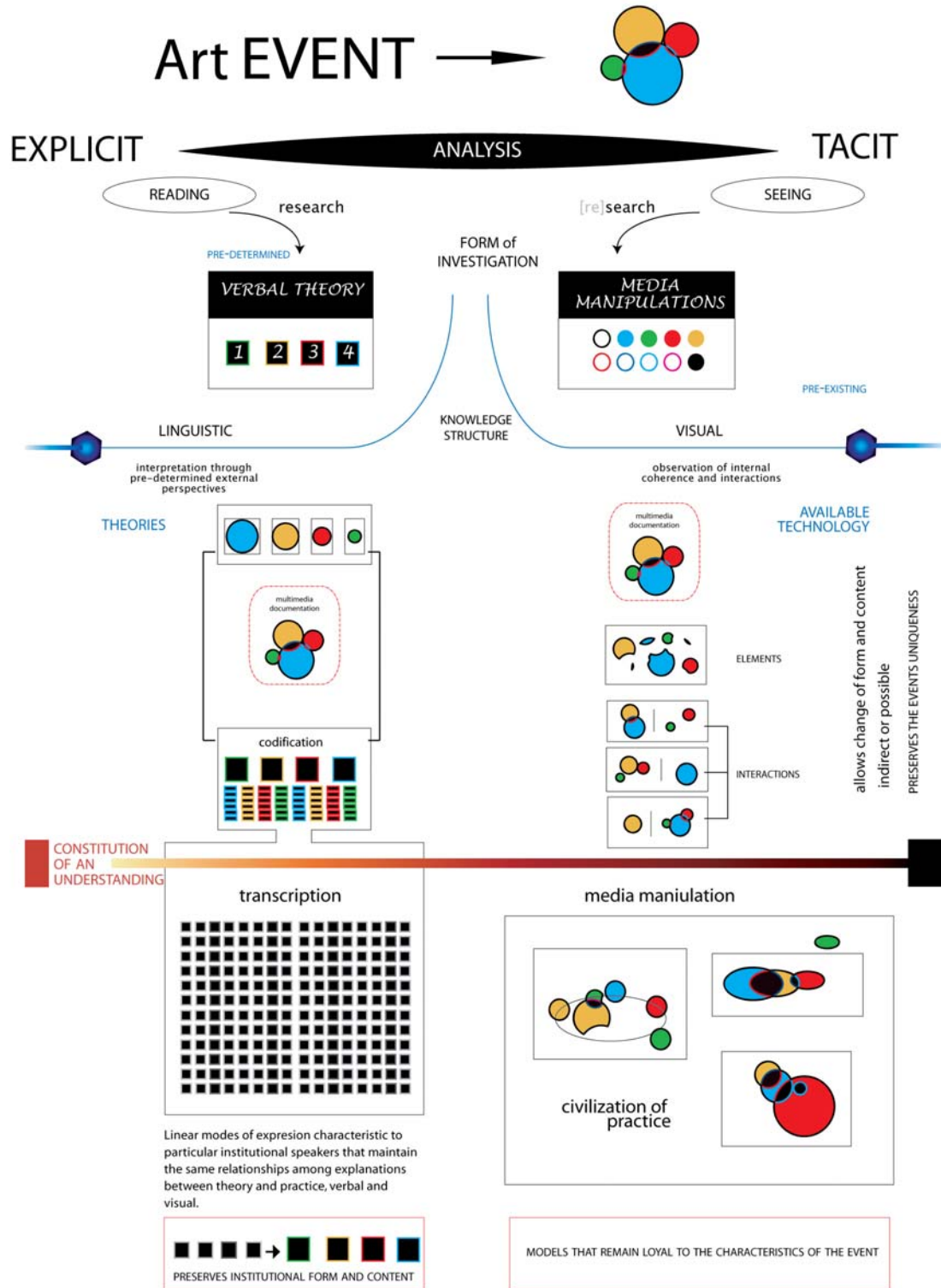


Figure 1. Academic and Artistic Methodologies

Artistic inquiry processes therefore help to identify clashing points, cross-contextualize understandings in different educational settings, and elaborate of contents and strategies through media manipulation. I found the conceptualization of stakeholder theory clearly addressed my concerns, but it also helped frame the various forms of inquiry, art objects, media models, teaching practices, student work, curatorial projects and theoretical influences, in relation to three overarching elements.

1) The focus: This refers to the relationship among the parts of any phenomena being explored and seeks to establish a new relationship within the pedagogical dynamics of studio art and the broad educational landscape.

2) The stakeholder: An individual with subjective, vested interests who is defined by a specific trajectory of learning, practice, and professional capacities suitable for intervention and implementation.



3) The stakes: The evolution of a discipline, its research, and communication paradigms, with reference to the technologies of communication and knowledge distribution of the time, and the abilities of the individual to contribute.


Taking the stakeholder's stance in undertaking doctoral inquiry demands a pragmatic organization of structure and content. The sources that provide content should be reduced in scale; a shift from the macro landscapes of literature reviews, to the micro-elements of concrete ideas that have conceptual autonomy. The collection of smaller units—*stocks*—fit individual capacities, interests, forms for learning and teaching, and create systems that can be adapted, or traded, depending on the contingencies of educational environments. A new structure of non-hierarchical fragments allows for an evolution of knowledge and practice with a high revenue value due to its possibilities for rapid implementation. Consequently, investigations of a single concept are substituted by an exploration of a network of ideas that have a clear influence on other ideas and actions. Figure 2 describes such an intervention. This broader horizon of research not only allows for inventive artistic insights to emerge, but also filters understanding about learning and teaching in ways that better address the multi-faceted complexities of art and education. Structuring a dissertation, or any other academic document, as a “stock portfolio” acknowledges inquiry as a network of ideas with multiple dynamic processes of a smaller scale.


This is an option worth betting on as we leave the automobile behind and jump into the ocean of art practice research.

What are the characteristics of an artistic inquiry with in academia ?

Therefore,

 *individual* 

 What you want is a philosophy that will not only exercise your powers of intellectual abstraction, but that will make some positive connexion with this actual world of finite lives.

You want a system that will combine ~~both~~ *visual & material* things, the scientific loyalty to facts and willingness to take account of them, the spirit of adaptation and accomodation, in short, but also the ~~old~~ *artistic procedural* confidence in ~~human~~ *human* values and the resultant spontaneity, whether of ~~the~~ *the* ~~romantic~~ *romantic* type. And this is your dilemma: **you find the **

parts of your quaesitum hopelessly separated.

--William James
The Present Dilema in Philosophy
1907

Figure 2: Artistic Inquiry in Academia–Making an Individual Mark

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