

DISCIPLINARY

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manifesto for a shared space
manifesto for interdisciplinarity
manifesto for collaborative work
manifesto for exchange



wandering and dwelling
circulating dreams
our home is a shell
our bodies are its mussels
we float with(in)
imaginary vessels

the body needs a house

*artistic research is a collective body constituted by a multitude of disciplines
which our practices fall in and out of*

a body should be nourished by theory and practice,
while being protected in its dwelling to do so

a body moves and so do the spaces it operates in,
the institutions it inhabits

our practices constitute collective bodies that breathe and flow in solidarity,
in spite of patriarchal systems of separation and meritocracy

in this house we firmly and strongly believe in
collaboration and cooperation which directly stand
against competition

there is room for everybody no matter their practices or background,
all being 'worthy' of being heard - sensed - seen - experienced

the collective body grows and interlinks with
other bodies as it learns how to interact

the collective body is fluid and wants to dance
making space - space making

Introduction

We are the Art and Performance Research Studies (APRS) students at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) 2021-2023. We are a group of 26 students, who follow either the artistic or the academic track provided by the research master. This document addresses our need for a laboratory space. Given the collaborative, interdisciplinary, process-oriented nature of our programme, and based on the experience of previous years¹, we believe such an environment is an essential part of our educational process and would be beneficial to a broader spectrum of studies within the Arts and Culture department of the UvA.

Art and Performance Research Studies²: what is it for us?

To understand the urgent need for an Artistic Research Laboratory, it is important to dissect “Artistic Research” (AR) as understood from our point of view and context. AR identifies an academic landscape within which our specific APRS rMA programme is situated.

AR is an interdisciplinary mode of practising, handling, and creating knowledge *with* artistic thinking/making at the centre. Its process values new means of boundary-crossing. AR links academic and practice-based knowledge through artistic thinking/making, thereby providing ways of learning that defy the art-academia binary. Labour and thought are situated in *both* practical methods *and* theoretical frameworks, constantly merging and feeding off of one another, while critical of the context in which they develop.

For us students, enrolling in a pedagogical Artistic Research environment such as the one offered by our university³ leaves us longing for collective, collaborative, cross-disciplinary processes that go in line with our diverse backgrounds and approaches to knowledge. Importantly, APRS is an international degree programme and approximately half of the students are international. International students do not have the same access to collaborative practice spaces as students who have been living in Amsterdam or the Netherlands for a longer time. For this reason, it is crucial the programme *not only* encourages students to encounter a diversity of practices and backgrounds via its catalogue, lectures, and class exercises, *but also* provides access to such practice spaces permanently. We envision this space as an Artistic Research Laboratory where students are able to bridge ideas, ground information, and socialise without the restrictions of a traditional class tight schedule, overall institutional fast pace, and physical format that prioritises academic research over practicebased research.

¹ There have been previous attempts for obtaining a space within the programme brought to our attention, but the support for this space came externally, from the Sandberg Institute (out of pure generosity), rather than internally. After the Sandberg Institute moved to the new building at the Rietveld campus, the space was no longer available for AR to inhabit anymore. Alternatively, the University Theatre cellar became a dirt space for the programme for a short-lived time, until the pandemic hit and subsequently this space was returned to Theatre Studies. This once again left our programme no space for our essential needs and for what the programme itself advocates, later proposals being rejected or not considered *necessary*.

² Art and Performance Research Studies inherits the legacies of past rMA programs which have been subsumed by it. At this moment, we want to highlight the history of the Artistic Research rMA programme. As a leading Artistic Research programme, founded by Artistic Research pathfinders Jeroen Boomgaard and Henk Borgdorff, the UvA connected to an influential movement within Northern European art worlding. Internationally, the term Artistic Research finds resonance in the anglophone term “Practice-Based Research,” the francophone term “Recherche-Création,” and others. In all these research conglomerates, lab spaces are centred. It is unreasonable that our programme has no such space made available. For further information on above mentioned research practices, see reference list.

³ Three essential aspects of the programme are offered on the information website: bridging art and academia, an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and cross-media environment, and a practice-based process in fine arts, dance, music, performance, and film, among other art disciplines. <https://www.uva.nl/en/programmes/research-masters/art-and-performance-research-studies/art-and-performance-research-studies.html>

Research-Based: Learning by Doing

Within our APRS cohort, we have a bountiful amalgamation of artistic and academic backgrounds. Students arrive at this research master with knowledges gathered from fine arts, dance, circus, religious studies, performance, curatorial practice, art history, theatre, audiovisual practices, language studies, philosophy, cultural studies, and so on. It would be a shame not to exchange the many knowledges already present in our collective being/entity.

We are aware this *is not* a studio-based programme, but APRS *is* a programme that is open to research methods different from reading, writing and thinking. It especially stimulates an intertwinement of theory and practice. The demanded research lab is not necessarily a space to produce artworks, but primarily a space that provides the option to bridge our varying knowledges and ground our collective being. We need a communal space to build our body of practices.

The Creator Doctus Constellation – a document which envisions third cycle research in European Higher Art Education – states that for Artistic Research, it is the research part of an art project that shows:

... potential other than the empty clichés of ‘offering another, alternative perspective’, ‘creating curiosity/surprise/amazement’, or ‘asking questions instead of giving answers’. Reframing these practices as research may help them be recognised as potentially long-lasting contributions to societal change.⁴

The other way around, research infused by practice and embodied knowledges can encourage students to express concepts more fully because they are not bound to a single medium (i.e. writing). Through interdisciplinarity, we can experience (and offer others) a way of learning by doing. In a research lab, we could connect *with* our collective practices, *with* teachings of the university, *and with* teachings existent outside of these academic boundaries. Within a physical space there are possibilities for workshops, roundtables, and meetings (i.e. coming together). In this space of exchange, we – as a collective being – can add to a durable and critical way of approaching knowledge. This is, both *now* and *in the future*, a necessary approach to the state of the world. By combining deep time, care and collectivity, we can approach future knowledges in a substantial way.

⁴ Boomgaard, J., Butler J. (Ed.). *The Creator Doctus Constellation; Exploring a new model for a doctorate in the arts*. Amsterdam: Gerrit Rietveld Academie, 2021.

Future Knowledges and Research Development⁵

Regarding future knowledges, we believe that interdisciplinary approaches to creating knowledge are crucial for the development of research in the broadest sense. This conviction finds resonance in the UvA's institutional plan: "To stay ahead of the curve, scientific renewal is essential. Renewal comes from the disciplines themselves, but we can also make use of the variety of disciplines within the UvA. We want to work more intensively across disciplines, because this will add to each individual discipline."⁶ The execution of this vision will allow students to learn skills that transcend, and thereby become integral to, their university degree.

Artistic Research enriches the UvA *not only* from within the APRS programme *but also* through its connection with other programmes. We have seen that Artistic Research entered the government's agenda as an emerging trend in the accreditation of UvA's Arts and Culture Department.⁷ Consequently, both Cultural Analysis and Literary Studies embraced Artistic Research as a study into their programmes. In terms of future research development for the UvA, we hope that the Artistic Research Lab becomes a breeding ground for interdisciplinary innovation.

The innovative potential of Artistic Research is perceived by various practitioners and academics working within the expanded field who try to push to the foreground new methodologies concerning its study. For example, researchers active in the Canadian academic context advocate for "research-creation" as a tool to disrupt normative academic frameworks and elaborate new academic paradigms of knowledge production and dissemination:

Research-creation can be read as a form of intervention into the 'regime of truth' of university-based research. (...) As a form of cultural analysis, research-creation partakes of the spectacle of the work of art and its demonstration of alternative frameworks for understanding, communicating, and disseminating knowledge. This is also what defines research-creation as an epistemological intervention on the level of academic methodology.⁸

In the proposed lab space, we aim to devise such epistemological interventions from within/-out the UvA's rigorous framing.

⁵ as specific to the intra-institutional context of UvA;

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own: UvA. "Inspiring Generations; Instellingsplan 2021 – 2026". Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam. <https://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/beleid-en-regelingen/beleid/instellingsplan/instellingsplan.html>

⁷ "The Research Master's programme Art and Performance Research Studies forms part of the broad label Arts and Culture. The quality of this programme has been positively accredited by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). This means that upon successful completion of the programme students will receive an accredited Master's degree in Arts and Culture and the title Master of Arts (MA)." <https://www.uva.nl/en/programmes/research-masters/art-and-performance-research-studies/studyprogramme/study-programme.html>

⁸ Chapman, Owen, Kim Sawchuck, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and "Family Resemblances," *Canadian Journal of Communication* (vol. 31, no.1), 23.

An Artistic Research Lab⁹: what does it need and what do we want from it?

We desire the Artistic Research Lab to be educational, process-driven, collaborative, archival and connective.

Education As students, we are enrolled in this program to learn. A laboratory would greatly add to the educational value of the degree. We understand our Artistic Research practice not only as moments of “production and presentation” but also as spaces in between: an open space for reading, writing, thinking, staring, trying, making (either individually or collectively), and other modes of experimentation. The lab would encourage students to discover this inbetweenness together, by giving, borrowing, generating, and processing. In short, it would be a space for practice to take place.

Collaboration A collaborative space is essential to the APRS rMA programme’s structure. Given that the programme is split into two tracks, the lab would be a place for academics and artistic researchers to come together, co-exist and converse with one another. This will not only enable understanding and collaboration, but also allows academics and artistic researchers to gather and create. The laboratory would be a place to discuss projects and research and a space to challenge ourselves, others and disciplinary boundaries.

Archiving The Artistic Research Laboratory could supplement the UvA’s wonderful libraries and collection by providing a home-grown archive. Together, we share a vast amount of knowledge, tools, books, and other resources. Having a place to share, find and leave them would benefit people in the degree, but also beyond it, as our space would be open to visits from other studies such as Cultural Analysis, Literary and Media Studies. The archive of collectively produced materials could be a footprint for future generations of the Arts and Culture department students to access. The produced materials would vary from personal projects (in any shape or form) to zines, objects, writings and books written by the members of our department.

Connectivity Lastly, the Artistic Research Lab could offer us networking opportunities. The space would have the ability to showcase and introduce the programme. The location would be used to organise events such as roundtables, panel discussions, performances, and exhibitions. As such, it would be open to students from other degrees, guest tutors, researchers from different backgrounds, and alumni. Finally, the space could help attract new students. For international students, the laboratory would offer a space for grounding and safety, and especially equal opportunities to develop practices by fulfilling these material needs.

⁹ We propose a space which complies with basic requirements (such as running water, toilet, electricity, (natural) light, heating and wifi); the space also needs to include both a study and a dirt space, so that we are able to experiment with writing, making and performance; we will take care of additional needs, such as furniture, books and art supplies.

Artistic Research Laboratory (ARL)

The Artistic Research Laboratory would *both* nourish our collective body *and* benefit the UvA Arts and Culture department.

The Lab has the potential to host our interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and connect both academic-led and practice-led research. Thus, creating an environment for both entryways into research to intertwine and reinforce each other.

The Lab would allow approximately fifty rMA students, alumni, professors, artists and scholars to maintain connections and contribute to ongoing research across and beyond the Art and Performance Research Studies rMA programme.

The Lab would host long-term initiatives already included in the programme's curriculum, such as mid-term exhibitions and round table discussions. In addition, it would sprout ideas for further research and projects beyond the academic space.

We believe this is *necessary* and *possible* as there are already several other initiatives and labs developed under the supervision of the institution.¹⁰

¹⁰ LAB 42, Behavioural Science Lab, SustainaLab, DREAMS Lab are a few examples.

Currently, UvA's Bushuis at Kloveniersburgwal 48 is being renovated to house a "4D Research Lab, Speechlab, Music Lab, Reconstructionlab, Digital Methods Lab, Create- and Reconstructionlab" (mentioned in an email from the Humanities Faculty at the UvA on 28-02-2022), which will open up for use this summer (2022).

the house needs care

artistic research is a collective body which needs residency to flourish

a body should be nourished by theory and practice,
while being protected in its dwelling to do so

a body is nourished by intimacy with other bodies
our practices intersecting in the process(es) of learning
from one another

in this house we firmly and strongly believe
in the pluriversality of knowledges,
in non-hierarchical decision-making
in utopian futures and
in the agency of more-than-human beings and objects

there is room for experiments, connection and love
all being cherished and celebrated under the same roof

the collective body is unapologetically vocal and present
as strongly united as a choir

the collective body is fluid and wants to sing
space keeping - keeping space

*understanding without imagination is doctrine without growth.
and without growth what chance is there to engage the complexity that bounds us?
culture gives us our collective dreams - on stage, on screen, online
- but daydreams grant us each the collective possibility of oneself.*

Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard

here is our dream
we demand the space to imagine together
to understand and make the world around us

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