

# Inhabitation

*A New Artistic Paradigm at the Intersection  
of Aesthetics and Ecology*

By

Gry Worre Hallberg

# **Inhabitation: A New Artistic Paradigm at the Intersection of Aesthetics and Ecology**

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I dedicate this to everyone who strives toward a more sensuous world, which teaches in humans a profound understanding of connectedness and, thus, carves out a more sustainable future beyond economic rationality, paralyzing critique and not least a border of separation that fosters a disrespect for life that is devastating in the face of the overarching ecological crisis and to any other form of life.

Adapted from PhD dissertation:

*Sensuous Society – Carving the path towards a sustainable future through aesthetic inhabitation stimulating ecologic connectedness*, University of Copenhagen, 2021.

### **Note on orthography**

Unless otherwise stated the translations from Danish to English is by me except when a published translation exists. I have furthermore translated one German publication title and one Swedish quote in the ‘data’ material.

I use the gender pronouns she/her/hers, he/him/his/ and they/them/theirs or the preferred gender pronoun when known. When unknown the pronoun I use is they/them/theirs.

All material which is not normal body text and/or quotes from the in situ material will be treated as figures and given a number in brackets. When a figure reappears, the reference will be to the number already given. All figures are listed in the “Table of Figures”.

The captions will be placed beside the main text except the captions for the pre-reflective visions in the analysis which will be placed underneath.

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# Sensuous Society Manifesto

**Sensuous Society – Beyond economic  
rationality**

**A L L \* T O M O R R O W ' S \* D R E A M S**



**The End is a New Beginning:** In 2008 the financial world cracked, leaving a gap for the new - for the new paradigm to emerge. We regard the crack as a major opportunity.

**The new paradigm:** We wish to take this opportunity and support the transition into the new, by living and breeding in the cracks. From here we move.

**The Sensuous Society:** We will draw from the aesthetic dimension as a source of inspiration to inform the dawning world - we will call it: The Sensuous Society.

### **Why?**

The Sensuous Society? As critical theory has pointed out, the economic system has largely governed and dominated Western society since Industrialization, and rational thought has been roaming the tops of unnaturally constructed hierarchies of perception since the Enlightenment. Rational thought has been our dominating validating principle and economic premises such as efficiency, duty, and discipline have largely dominated everyday life in Western society. They have defined our institutions and offered themselves as primary modes of being and being together. However, the governance is not sustainable as the current ecological and economic crisis indicates and it has led to a fundamental disenchantment of the lifeworld of modern-day humans.

**Aesthetic Interventions:** But its time has come. In opposition to the economic milestone stands the artistic or rather aesthetic. This mode is based on premises such as: poetic encounters, imagination, inspired creation, desire, fantasy and not least the sensuous experience of, and engagement in the world. Artistic output is the quintessence of an ultimate aesthetic mode of being in the world. The notion of a Sensuous Society reshapes the role of art and artistic practice. The exclusive autonomous art system is also a result of the dominance of the economic dimension.

Within this autonomous zone the art genius is a celebrated figure, conceived as someone with a very special (transcending) intelligence. In a Sensuous Society, however, we believe that this will be a more common intelligence - simply, because we all have this creative potential within us, and if our beginnings and mode of being in the world are the sensuous, this potential will be released. The aesthetic mode of being and being together in the world is something we as humans always have and will always dive into. However, the current exclusiveness of this mode has created a collective longing in the Western world. Like an arm cut off we move forward in the ever-turning efficient wheels of society without noticing the blood flowing from our armpits. We need to democratize the aesthetic mode of being to overcome the longing and suffering that its general absence outside the art system creates. The aesthetic dimension will serve as a key source of inspiration in the Sensuous Society. Step by step those engaged in the movement towards the Sensuous Society will make interventions into the societal institutions. They will move from the crack and engage. Ultimately these actions will, however, not be encapsulated spaces allowing a sensuous mode of being in the world but will constitute the primary mode itself.

**No utopia:** Sensuous Society is no utopia. Sensuous society is a framework to explore the radical idea of the aesthetic dimension, the sensuous and the poetic as the highest values of society. What kind of society would that create?

### How?

**Performance Experiments:** We have no way of answering that question because we have not lived it. What we do have is the possibility to explore it through experiments. By donating our flesh to the idea. Embodying future visions to explore what it could be. While we explore, we carve the path.

**Living in a Sensuous Society:** One such experiment is *Dome of Visions* - how would we build and live in a Sensuous Society? Think about this as you sense the room. The space surrounding your immersed body. Living creature. Cities are full of unexploited spaces - construction sites, abandoned places and other sites between buildings that are not yet vibrating with life. We realize that the spaces-in-between are opportunities waiting to unfold and this space is for you, the citizen, to unfold this potential. We can house you. We can house anything you bring that resonates with your sensuous and poetic potential and your visions for the future. What your city lacks. What you miss. Your longing. What is not possible elsewhere. Allowing cultural experiments, and sensuous and poetic unfolding - across silos. A third space. A third space interested in the way the human species and beyond are present and interconnect. Interconnectivity. Not a room. Not open space. In-between. Diversity. Paths will cross in *Dome of Visions*. Fertilization of soil for sustainable futures. We celebrate experiments. Come one. Come two. Come many. Deep intimacy or richness of responses. In a building that evokes the senses. Free from the constraints of silos. The climate, the scent of wood and the transparent nature of the Dome's curved architecture in which you can linger. Organically. Body and form. Flesh and material. Intertwine. Become one. Become two. Become many.

**Learning in a Sensuous society:** Another such experiment is *Sisters Academy*. In *Sisters Academy* we embody the school of a Sensuous Society. Through immersive strategies we transform space as we take over the leadership of a series of Nordic upper secondary schools. Everything from classrooms, hallways and bathrooms is transformed physically through set, light, and sound design. Your toilets will be pink, radiant or dark and filled with a low sound of humming or screams, the classrooms will have turned into a forest, a ritual room, an ancient

library, underneath the water, a fox cave and when you approach the leader of the school you will meet us embodying the *unheimliche* Sisters as head mistresses. Gazes exchanged. We will greet you in an office of untamed animals, sweet, heavy deep drinks, stamps, typewriters, fluid chocolate and gold, chains, unwritten letters, fur on top of fur, fur in piles, red carpets, dimmed light, an unseen boarder that you sense, that you penetrate. That you transcend because you are invited to do so. We become one. But two. But three. But many. A scent of times beyond time that will transcend your skin and tactilely touch you. Inspire you. Intervene you. Mirror you. Be you. Breath. The paradox of control and lush. The method is interactive. When you are at our school you are a student or a teacher or a guest of *Sisters Academy* and we will engage with you only from this simple premise. The logic of our world. Our poetic and sensuous world. Our school of a Sensuous Society. Our school where we explore new modes of sensuous knowledge creation, teaching, learning. When we change our educational system, we change the lives of many. We reach out. Such are we as we reach. As we reach with kindred in our movement. You leave your everyday persona to explore your potential Poetic Self while investigating how we can evoke and activate the senses to deepen the learning experience. We are interventionists in our work as we intervene in everyday life contexts using art to argue the necessity for the aesthetic dimension to be an integrated part of everyday life - not as something exclusive and autonomous. We transcend. With you.

**Space changing:** We transform space. We immerse. We become one. But two. But three. But many. A scent of times beyond time that will transcend your skin and tactilely touch you. Inspire you. Intervene in you. Mirror you. Be you. Breathe. Like bodies swallowed by the sea they will move dissimilarly from upright legs walking the ground beneath our feet. Instinctively this body will adjust to the fluidity of the water.



Try to survive. Take in breath. When we change space, we liberate new potential. Instinctual.

**No utopia revisited:** Sensuous Society is no utopia. There will most probably be winners and losers here as well. Who is going to lead - the most beautiful? The ones in touch with their senses? What will the trading system be? Something that allows you to be even more sensuous? Maybe when we are in a Sensuous Society, we can begin to approach a more balanced state of being, that draws wisdom from all the previous states of society, that draws and creates sustainable trading systems between all members of society. Maybe we can go there already? We can ask these questions through immersive and intervening performance art practices in everyday life contexts, as sites of experiments where we explore how to create a stage for the release of creative, expressive, poetic and sensuous energy as first steps toward a more balanced and engaging world. Everyone becomes co-makers toward the new.

### **We will do this**

**Movement:** When you have a cause and create a vibration centered in a universe and manifested in events that inspire others, the world will move in an assured and desired direction.



## Introduction

The *Sensuous Society Manifesto* was written as part of my art-activist response to the ongoing ecological and financial crisis of 2008. It envisions a potential future world governed by aesthetic premises instead of the dominating economic rationality in order to carve out a path towards a more sustainable future.

The artistic practice underlying this artistic research unfolds through the projects *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy*, which I have deeply engaged in over the last decade. Both projects respond to and actualize the *Sensuous Society Manifesto*, as they share the intention to ‘democratize the aesthetic’<sup>1</sup>, by giving access to the sensuous and poetic mode of being and being together in the world. Through different practice approaches the two projects tease out ways to accomplish that. Very roughly put, the dome-shaped temporary construction *Dome of Visions* provides a sensuous and poetic space to the general public for aesthetic contribution and creation due to its open curatorial framework, and *Sisters Academy* works through a performance method evoking the sensuous and poetic aspects of our being, being together, and learning within a highly immersive performance-installationary space of an educational setting.

In this book I will explore the impact of their evocation of the aesthetic dimension, and thus of the sensuous and poetic, as I am interested in how the sensuous might support the path towards a more sustainable future. Hence the unfolded research question is:

*What is the impact of Dome of Visions’ and Sisters Academy’s evocation of the aesthetic on the participants? And what does that tell us about how the*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Democratize the aesthetic’ is marked by single quotation marks because democratize in this context is primarily understood as access. I will further clarify how I understand and apply the term in the chapter “Theory” after which I will also remove the single quotation marks.

*aesthetic, and thus the sensuous, might support the transition towards a more sustainable future?*

To answer the question, I have created a theoretically substantiated focus at the intersection of aesthetics and ecology. In continuity with the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten ([1735] 1954; [1750–1758] 1961) and the subsequent aesthetic philosophy, I understand the aesthetic to be experience, perception and cognition through the senses, and thus, the sensuous<sup>2</sup>. In continuity with biologist, anthropologist and cyberneticist<sup>3</sup> Gregory Bateson ([1972] 2000; [1979] 1984) and related ecological theory (Guattari [1989] 2008; [1992] 1995; Latour [2015] 2017; [2017] 2018; Stengers 2005; 2010; Braidotti 2013; 2019; Haraway 2015; 2016; Neimanis 2016), I understand ecology to be the realization of the interconnectedness of all things. The ecological theories I present rarely mention the word sustainability or refer to the concept, but instead refer to ecology, which can be perceived as a study investigating the necessary processes to attain sustainability; this resonates with my focus on the *transition* towards a sustainable future. Furthermore, I integrate participatory performance theory since participation is central to

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<sup>2</sup> Within aesthetic philosophy there is not complete agreement on how to translate Baumgarten's original German *sinnlich* to English. Thus, prominent Baumgarten researcher and philosopher Dorthe Jørgensen argues that it must be translated as *sensitive*, since the aesthetic is also a form of cognition and not only the sensory experience of the world in itself (D. Jørgensen 2003; 2014; 2018). I also subscribe to this understanding. Likewise, another prominent Baumgarten researcher and philosopher Søren Kjølrup who has, however, translated it as *sensuous* instead of *sensitive* since 2006, when he was affiliated at Bergen Academy of Art and Design focusing on artistic research. His reason being that "[...] research through artistic practice yields a more 'sensible' form of knowledge than traditional academic research. A kind of 'insight' that can be more concrete than theoretical, which made sensuous more adequate and actually closer to Baumgarten's original intent" – Kjølrup in a private email correspondence with me in August 2019 (see also Kjølrup 2006). This resonates well with my methodological basis in artistic research. Furthermore, *sensuous* is a very central conceptual term in my practice, cf. the *Sensuous Society Manifesto*, which is why I will continue to use it in this book.

<sup>3</sup> Cybernetics is a transdisciplinary approach for exploring the interrelated patterns behind systems. Developed among others at the Macy conference on Cybernetics in 1949 that Bateson participated in. See Nora Bateson (2015).

both my practice and my research question, and the three-phased ritual process in an acknowledgement of the importance I place on transition. During the analysis and in conclusion what I have conceptualized as ‘Inhabitation’ will be introduced as a new artistic paradigm at the intersection of aesthetics and ecology.

To answer my research question I have, moreover, subtracted empirical material from a large amount of what I term *in situ*<sup>4</sup> material, which predominantly consists of visitor- and logbooks from *Dome of Visions* and of notebooks from *Sisters Academy*, which I process analytically. In the analysis the three-phased ritual process of the preliminal, the liminal and the postliminal (van Gennep [1909] 2013; Turner [1967] 2014; 1974) and the three ecologies of the mental, the social and the environmental (Guattari [1989] 2008) are applied as operational analytical frameworks in my investigation of how the potentially transformative processes of the participants in the sensuous and poetic practices of *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy* stimulate ecological awareness (Guattari [1989] 2008). The theoretically substantiated focus is unpacked in the chapter “Theory”.

Below, I provide short descriptions of the projects. These will be elaborated further in the chapter “Practice descriptions – Actualizing the manifesto”.

*Dome of Visions* is a temporary construction based on ideas conceived in the 1940s by the architect and visionary Buckminster Fuller. The dome is intended to be a forum for discussing, brainstorming and inspiring sustainable solutions for the future. It is also a

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<sup>4</sup> I use *in situ* to describe material generated while the sensuous and poetic experience is happening rather than before or after. I will clarify this further in the subheading “Generation of reflective material *in situ*” in the “Artistic research”.

contemporary performance space that explores new curatorial approaches, activates new modes of engagement and inspires new performative ways to evoke future visions and social and cultural change. My area of responsibility is the curatorial strategy, which has evolved to constitute one of the key practices of the project. As it is this area of the project that aims at ‘democratizing the aesthetic’ in a response to the *Sensuous Society Manifesto* and the area of the project through which I have primarily unfolded my practice, it is also this area which will be included in the analyses of this book.

*Sisters Academy* is a performance-experiment and art educational laboratory exploring new sensuous modes of being, being together and learning initiated by the performance group and movement Sisters Hope of which I am the co-founding artistic director. *Sisters Academy* manifests itself in two different large-scale formats: The Takeover format where Sisters Hope take over the leadership of an actual youth school<sup>5</sup>, and The Boarding School format where an art institution is transformed into a sensuous boarding school. Central to the work of Sisters Hope, and therefore also *Sisters Academy*, is *Sisters Performance Method*, to which *The Poetic Self*<sup>6</sup> is central. By way of Sisters Hope, *Sisters Academy* also unfolds from the explorative intersection of performance art, activism, research and education. The point of departure is activism, because the whole project in itself is rooted in the activist intention to ‘democratize the aesthetic’, by

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term youth school rather than upper secondary school, because the schools where we take over the leadership are very different. For example, we have been in a school of particularly sensitive students, where the teaching is organized in completely different ways and the curriculum is lower primary school level. But the age group has always been between approx. 15–25, which is why youth school can be applied as an umbrella term for all the schools we have been in.

<sup>6</sup> Both *Sisters Performance Method* and *The Poetic Self* will be unfolded further in the practice descriptions and the analysis of this book.

exploring what the school of a Sensuous Society would potentially be and thus activate what I term *Sensuous Learning*<sup>7</sup>.

These projects have constituted my primary practice over the last decade, and I undertook my PhD<sup>8</sup> to explore the impact of their evocation of the aesthetic dimension, and thus, the sensuous and poetic. I am, furthermore, interested in whether and how the sensuous might support the path towards a more sustainable future, which is why the theoretical foundation of my PhD studies departed from both aesthetics and ecology. Even though the projects' evocation of the aesthetic impacts on more levels, such as on an institutional level, my main focus is on investigating the impact on the individual participants in the projects. Partly, because I have understood both projects to be research-based since their beginning, the generation of reflective material by their participants has been ensured and facilitated. Doing a PhD allowed me time to study this

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<sup>7</sup> This terminological unit has inspired the title of two volumes on Art-Based Methods (ABM) and Art-Based Interventions (ABI) (Antonacopoulou and Taylor 2019a; 2019b) in which educational researcher Lotte Darsø and I contribute with the article "Using Performance to Foster Inherent 'Poetic Potential' in Nordic Schools" (Hallberg and Darsø 2019). Here, *Sensuous Learning* is presented as a method and a conceptual frame to explore the lived learning experiences that has been developed and recorded in *Sisters Academy*.

<sup>8</sup> Prior to my final dissertation presented here I was fortunate enough to engage in a pre-defense as a preparation for the defense proper, providing an opportunity for discussing key topics with esteemed scholars; these being theater and performance scholar Doris Kolesch as opponent and artistic researcher Christoph Solstreif-Pirker as peer. As part of her feedback Kolesch encouraged me to write myself more into my study. And leading on from this feedback, she introduced me to five questions that she believed would provide me with the opportunity to do just that. The questions are: *Why are you writing this PhD study? What kind or form or dimension of knowledge can you only address and achieve in that highly restricted academic format? What is the precise relation/connection/entanglement between your artistic practices and your scholarly work and writing? What are the challenges and the potential of writing about your own artistic work, where do you see any problems, any blind spots or any difficulties for you scholarly writing about your performance art? In your work as a performance artist, are you dealing with the participants' notes and comments in a different way than as a scholar reflecting on the possible impact of performances – how could you describe the similarities and differences when dealing with this material?* The following section of the "Introduction" is partly a result of my answers to these questions.

expansive material, and subtractions of it will be included as empirical ‘data’<sup>9</sup> and applied in my analysis.

I am also doing this study to explore and expand the methodological and theoretical framework of the projects. The theoretical background of the projects can be traced in the first section of the theory chapter called “Democratizing the aesthetic”, because a core motivation in my practice over the last decade has been to give access to the sensuous and poetic mode of being and being together in the world, and many of the theoretical thoughts presented in this section have informed this practice and thus the projects. The expansion of the theoretical framework can be traced in the concluding parts of the first section of the theory chapter, in which I situate myself in the theoretical field presented, and furthermore, in the second section called “Stimulating ecological awareness”, in which I, for the first time, apply ecological theory to my practice.

I am also writing this book to thoroughly describe, and thus document the projects *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy* from my own thinking and in my own words. By doing so I also create proposals on how to engage in aesthetically founded ecological practices for sustainable futures.

To me, writing this book has been like diving. It has provided me with extended time and space that is not accessible to me in the same way as when the artistic projects are produced. This might be particularly true for an artistic researcher like me involved in artistic projects that require my artistic directorship and collaboration in larger groups. Thus, my artistic processes are also very much processes of production with immediate and continuously arising

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Data’ is marked by single quotation marks because data in this context does not entail a subscription to empirical evidence as a solitary legitimate mode of knowledge production. I will clarify how I understand and apply the term in the chapter “Documentation” after which I will remove the single quotation marks.

questions that demand immediate reactions; these occupy a considerable amount of time and space. Hence, even though I argue that my reflections when performing my artistic practice are often deeper than outside the artistic space, since my entire body, my whole being co-reflects with my mind in these particular situations<sup>10</sup>, there is still no time and space for a continued process of elaboration of these reflections when in production mode. The academic research format offers that time and space, just as it offers me time and space to connect these reflections to theoretical and empirical findings. In this elaborate reflection process of diving deeper into what I would also understand as an immersive landscape of thought, new realizations continuously appear, which then ultimately feed back into the practice and refine and strengthen it. I have experienced this previously as the findings of my master's thesis (Hallberg 2009) has very much informed the subsequent practice, and I am sure that the findings in this research will inform my future practice. I very much enjoy the oscillation between the embedded in situ experiences of deep embodied reflections in the practice and the extended elaborative reflection processes offered by academia. When immersed in one of these modes of experiencing and thinking the other is with me and vice versa, and when I take focused time and space within one of them they considerably bloom; as the fragrance of blossoms expands beyond the entity of their physical bodies, the newly bloomed realizations harvested in one mode of experience and thinking deeply impact and inform the other. To me they are deeply intertwined and cannot be separated.

The restrictive format of academic research, furthermore, provides me with a framework for thinking that I have come to appreciate as a creative constraint. As when educational theorist Thomas Ziehe

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<sup>10</sup> See also the subheading "Transcending art and academia" in the "Artistic research" chapter.



describes his experience of teaching dance: if children are allowed to dance what they want, then they reproduce their own bodily stereotypes. It is the same mechanism seen in children's drawings, where the stereotype (often a house with a flagpole and a tree) is reproduced if the child is asked to draw something out of their own free choice. Paradoxically, creativity is often achieved by imposing constraints. Thus, Ziehe further describes that if you let children draw a circle on the floor and impose the restriction that one foot must remain in the circle at all times, the result is often that the stereotypes are broken and new dance steps are invented (Ziehe [1999] 2010, 210)<sup>11</sup>. In the same way new realizations and findings can be released by engaging in the constraints of academic endeavor. Additionally, the oscillation referred to above challenges the danger of repetitive patterns of experiencing and thinking produced in singular realms, which relates to my argument that artistic research expands the field of maneuverability<sup>12</sup>, and thus experiencing and thinking, within both art and academia. Furthermore, academic restrictions are there to ensure validation, not least in the process of translating ideas and thoughts as scientific results to a wider audience. I am very interested in the impact of my practice and thus on a larger scale, in the potential of the sensuous to carve the path towards a more sustainable future – so this validation process of thought is of importance to me. However, part of this book, and of artistic research in broader terms, also challenges the current academic restrictions in a plea that embedded, tactile and affective reflections, among others present in art making, be taken as seriously as knowledge production. In the current process of artistic research, exploring the forms expressions of knowledge can take beyond present-day academia, or the prevailing humanistic academia, as

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<sup>11</sup> Also referenced in the report *Dance in the school* (original Danish title *Dans i skolen*) (Jensen 2011, 31).

<sup>12</sup> See also the subheading "Transcending art and academia" in the "Artistic research" chapter.

argued by curator and art historian Jacob Lillemose, artistic research's new research methodologies and perspectives will ultimately expand the concept of research itself (Lillemose 2019). This potentiality of expansion is, however, still a process in the making to which this book also contributes.

In regard to my empirical basis in and engagement with the in situ 'data' is the focus on experiences and perspectives of the individual participants. This research focus relates to my understanding of societal transformation as co-dependent on human transformation. Likewise, the artistic methods that I apply in *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy* work with institutional interventions, but at the same time, very much operate at the level of the individual, and can also be perceived as a method of change-creation through the individual. This resonates with Bateson's focus on the development of a new epistemology, *an ecology of mind*, leading to changed behavior, practices and in continuation, also to changed institutions. However, my practice reaches people through the institutional interventions who would not otherwise necessarily access the sensuous and poetic. It is a new sensuous and poetic infrastructure intervening in another one governed by the prevailing societal economic rationality. As this is so central for understanding the importance I place on the intention to 'democratize the aesthetic' it also provides an important backdrop to the analysis, and thus the conclusion, presented in this book.

The book is organized into five main chapters in the following order: "Artistic research" (methodology), "Theory", "Practice descriptions – Actualizing the manifesto", "Documentation" and "Analysis – Immersed in the data (an experiential reflection)". The first four sections will each be summarized under the subheading "Outro", where each of the three main sections of the analysis will be

summarized under the subheading “Partial conclusion” because these respond directly to the research question.

In contrast to the more traditional academic approach of the first part of the book, the analysis can be perceived as a mosaic of impressions from the projects, which takes its leap in what I term the *experiential reflections* of the participants presented in the in situ material. Both experiential reflection and in situ will be presented further in the “Artistic research” chapter. In my reading *with* the material, the analysis displays a more sensuous and poetic approach, hence the book contains two overall parts – a traditional academic one and a more sensuous and poetic one. The book includes photographic and in situ material from *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy*. The in situ material is partly photographed, partly scanned and inserted into the analysis, and is the material around which the analysis primarily evolves.

With that I will now turn to the methodological basis of the book – Artistic research.

## Artistic research

This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section is a cursory outline of the multilayered and multifaceted understandings of artistic research currently accessible within the field<sup>13</sup>: artistic research as an umbrella concept for a series of submethodologies and approaches. The second lengthier section is a clarification of my artistic research approach. This second section includes four practice-specific parts, where the first focus on the transdisciplinary intersection of art and academia, which carves out the way for terming my specific submethodologic approach within the artistic research field *experiential reflection*. The next section on the documentation of my practice, focuses on the expansive in situ material it has generated. This second part will be elaborated further in the chapter “Documentation”, in which I will also clarify what material will be subtracted as ‘data’. In resonance with the above, the third part is on a conceptual framework responding to different participatory positions observed in my practice that I have come to term *The Critical Gaze* and *The Devoted Body*. The fourth and final part is on the relationship between theory and practice including the activism of what I term ‘living the theories’<sup>14</sup> and ‘inspiring theories’<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See elaborations on artistic research as a field (Arlander 2016).

<sup>14</sup> To put them into embodied ‘fleshy’ (Haraway 2016, 12) life in order to potentially perform a transformative impact on the participants through framed experimental spaces. A further explanation will appear later in this chapter. Biologist and scholar of feminist studies and environmentalist consciousness Donna Haraway (ibid.) with reference to philosopher on science and ecology Isabelle Stengers’ cosmopolitics as above (Stengers 2010), uses ‘fleshy’ to describe that which is ‘organically manifest’ (as opposed to digital, which is also very much manifest but not ‘fleshy’ as humans are). Educational action researcher Jack Whitehead uses the term ‘Living theories’ to describe an action research approach to contributions through lived educational experiences and responses (see also Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Thoughts generated as part of my PhD studies was also presented in my article contribution in the journal *Periskop*’s issue on artistic research (Hallberg 2020).

### Artistic research – An umbrella concept

In the Artistic Research Working Group of PSi<sup>16</sup> #25 in Calgary, 2019, the call for proposals from the working group conveners included a state-of-the-art reflection on artistic research as: “an elastic umbrella concept that includes a range of approaches that use art, creative practice or performance as a primary means and method of inquiry. These include the distinct approaches ‘performance as research’ (PAR), ‘practice as research’ (PaR), ‘practice-based research’ (PBR), ‘practice-led research’, ‘creative arts research’, ‘research-creation’, ‘arts-based research’, and numerous other associated practices” (Arlander, Barton, and Householder 2019, 1). It went on to describe how one of the objectives of the call was to invite in as broad a spectrum of approaches as possible “to reflect the diverse and vital abundance of interrelated orientations” aiming at exploring “the elasticity of artistic research as a methodology, and to expand our collective horizons” (Arlander, Barton, and Householder 2019, 1). Thus, artistic research is not at all a concept carved in stone, but rather, it is still an emerging field expanding opportunities for practitioners operating at the transcending intersection of art and academia while becoming and still very much in development.

*Apropos field* – In *Artistic Research and/as Interdisciplinarity* (2016) artistic researcher Annette Arlander, who was also one of the conveners mentioned above and who plays a central role in the contemporary dialogue on and within artistic research, discusses how artistic research can be understood as both a methodology and as a field (Arlander 2016, 7). When understood as a methodology, it refers to either an extension of qualitative methodology or it is equated with practice-based research in general (Arlander 2016, 7ff). When understood as a field, it can be seen as an arena for knowledge creation – a new discipline, which allows the researching artist to adopt any relevant methodological approach. At the same time,

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<sup>16</sup> Performance Studies international: <http://www.psi-web.org/>

artistic research is an ‘elastic methodology’ as the quote above states. Thus, one can understand it as a field and a main methodology for a wide range of practice-specific submethodologies developing within it, including the one presented in this book.

The multiplicity also makes it difficult to trace the historical origin of the term and concept as it originates in many different practices and approaches. However, there seems to be a shared agreement that in a European context it is related to the Bologna Process and the increased focus on knowledge production in development work within the arts<sup>17</sup>. Nina Malterud who is an artist and senior advisor at Bergen University in Norway, which has been one of the leading institutions and countries in a Northern European context to embrace the coalition between art and research<sup>18</sup>, shares this notion

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<sup>17</sup> For deeper insight into this relationship between the European reforms in higher education and artistic research see scholar of theory of research in the arts Henk Borgdorff's elaboration (Borgdorff 2006). Also considered by artistic researcher and performer Sofie Volquartz Lebech (Lebech 2019, 7, 10) with, among other references to Borgdorff, artistic research theorist Sidsel Nelund (Nelund 2015). Artist and researcher Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt has problematized this relationship due to the economization of life it evokes in students of higher artistic education (Schmidt 2019). Philosopher and artistic researcher Erin Manning describes how artistic research started as a funding category that would enable artists without PhDs to apply for large academic grants in a North American context (Manning 2015, 52).

<sup>18</sup> Even though the Norwegian approach differs from the Anglo-Saxon one, which again differs from the approach in many other countries. Since the development and understanding of artistic research are also linked to political processes (cf. the Bologna Process), it seems to also very much depend on the political stance and actions within each country. Cf. in Denmark The Danish National School for Performing Arts have just recently fully been able to embrace this development with their artistic research focus (in Danish titled *kunstnerisk udviklingsvirksomhed* (KUV)) led by Ralf Richard Strøbech, and Signe Allerup and the establishment of the master's program and the appointment of Solveig Gade as professor and head of education; and with the establishment of The International Center for Knowledge in the Arts as a shared artistic research platform for the following Danish national art schools: The Royal Academy of Music, The Danish National School of Performing Art, National Film School of Denmark, Danish National Academy of Music, Rhythmic Music Conservatory, The Royal Academy of Music, The Royal Danish Academy of Music. The center was inaugurated with a symposium on artistic research, with pioneer in transdisciplinary thinking and practice Irit Rogoff giving the opening lecture titled *Becoming Research*. See also <https://kunstakademiet.dk/da/aktiviteter-og-nyheder/aktuelt/symposium-international-center-knowledge-arts>

(Malterud 2014). The development of, and one of the earliest references to the phenomenon, are attributed to Christopher Frayling; while heading The Royal College of Art (UK) in 1994, he introduced a distinction between research ‘into’ art and research ‘through’ art (Frayling 1994, 1ff). ‘Into’ is understood as the historical and theoretical research into the arts. ‘Through’ is the material and embodied development work that the artist always inevitably does, thus making those tacit knowledge processes visible as knowledge. It is in the research ‘through’ art that the distinctive experiential and reflective processes of the artist are communicated, by which both the surroundings and the artist become aware of this process as research. ‘Through’ art thus also suggests a complex process of thinking that is not easily contained within conventional art academic methods<sup>19</sup>. This notion corresponds to feminist artistic researcher Karen Roulstone’s comparison between ‘into’ and ‘through’ in artistic research and participatory – what she terms ‘interlocutor’, cf. Rogoff (2002) – artwork respectively as contexts that invite a movement away from critical analyses, where one stands outside, to participation where the participant transforms that in which they take part (Roulstone 2009, 86; Rogoff 2002, 47). At the symposium *Experience as a Source of Knowledge in Aesthetic Research* by the Research Node of Aesthetic Studies at Lund University organized by art historian Max Liljefors (Liljefors 2019b) the relationship between aesthetic research and artistic research was also discussed; a distinction was made between aesthetic research resembling research ‘into’ art and artistic research resembling research ‘through’ art, which corresponds with the arguments presented here.

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<sup>19</sup> See also Macleod and Holdridge’s *Thinking through Art*, with a foreword by Frayling suggesting that the editors have “stolen his title” and furthermore explaining that he took it from Herbert Read.

As witnessed in the quote from the Artistic Working Group conveners of PSi#25, multiple approaches are included in the umbrella concept of artistic research. Malterud (2014) also explains how the terminology differed and was not summoned under the unifying artistic research term before the 2010s, where the establishment of JAR – the web-based *Journal for Artistic Research*<sup>20</sup> in 2010 helped consolidate artistic research as *the* uniting umbrella term, methodology, concept, and field for the multiple different practice-specific methodologies within it, cf. the above definition of field and methodology used by Arlander, who is also on the editorial board of JAR.

So, what is my specific submethodological approach within this field? To respond to this question, I will now turn to an elaboration on my approach to and position within the artistic research field.

### Artistic research approach

In a Danish context, the Danish National School for Performing Arts has formulated The Quality Assessment Model for Artistic Research (cf. The Strategy for Artistic Research, 2019-2022, DASPA, Strøbech, and Allerup), which argues that without practical experimentation, there can be no artistic research<sup>21</sup>, however, the artistic research process starts at various times, depending on, respectively, the time of the focused reflection process<sup>22</sup> on the work and its contribution to a

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.jar-online.net/>

<sup>21</sup> This perspective on artistic research is in line with Borgdorff (2006) and is challenged by artistic researcher Christoph Solstreif-Pirker with reference to renowned artistic researcher Julian Klein. In his artistic research dissertation Solstreif-Pirker writes: “The dissertation does not see artistic research as the investigation of primarily artistic content, but initiates a research process that is carried out with artistic means, processes and practices” (Solstreif-Pirker 2019a, 52–53). Rather, with reference to Klein (cf. Klein ([2010] 2017) he understands artistic research to take place whenever we strive for knowledge by entering a framing – a further level of reality – in order to experience it. Then, he argues, this research can be called artistic.

<sup>22</sup> This understanding presented by the Danish National School for Performing Arts is not to



wider topic. Arlander divides the artistic research process into three overall phases by which she also addresses the question on the temporality of the artistic research: planning, experimentation, and reflection (Arlander 2016, 15), and suggests considering when the artistic research *writing* is produced to get a clearer idea of the nature of one's artistic research work (Arlander 2016, 16f). Considering this guiding principle I have manifested *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy* as large-scale manifestations for almost a decade and now take the time to reflect and write about how this practice contributes to a wider topic based on an expansion of my theoretical fundament and framework; this will be applied to the reflective material generated through the practices, and subtracted as 'data' here, in a timespan of focused study. As we shall see below, and as indicated above, I believe I had deep reflections during the experience. However, as described here, a deep process of reflection that also entails a structured 'going deeper' into the material, also happens during a timespan of focused writing, as in the writing process of this book. Thus, I both understand the reflective processes to happen through experience and through writing. Each manifestation of *Dome of Visions* and *Sisters Academy* respectively is also to be understood as iterations that are continuously refined through the post-reflection processes, by which the manifestation of the projects and their concentrated post-reflective processes are very much both part of a hermeneutic process (Gadamer [1960] 2013) continuously deepening over time.

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be confused with cultural theorists Niels Lehmann's pragmatic dualism, which can roughly be understood as experience first, reflection afterwards. Rather, profound reflective realizations often unfold through the experience. However, having time to organize those thoughts and put them into writing happens after the actual manifestations in my specific case. As witnessed by Arlander's (2016) 'process-model' it could very well have been before or during as well – thus, the artistic research field offers many different opportunities for the combination of the experience and reflection.

### Transcending art and academia

When operating at the transdisciplinary intersection of art and academia, the emerging and continuously becoming field of artistic research contributes with a unifying terminology and methodological fundament for operation at this intersection. In my experience, I have previously had to justify such a position through an argumentation of the power of research and theory when communicating with the arts world, for example, when teaching at art academies. Similarly I have had to justify my position through an argumentation of the research validity of the realizations harvested through artistic practices when communicating with academia, for example, when writing my BA and MA<sup>23</sup> theses on practices I myself was involved in. Both art and academia are now in motion, and the rigidness of boundaries between the respective fields is softening. Artistic research expands the field of maneuverability, within both fields and everything in-between in the celebration of transdisciplinary engagements and oscillations at the transcending intersection<sup>24</sup>.

To artists, artistic research can be perceived as an invitation to expand and deepen the understanding and potentiality of their practices in response to the environment and to build up a vocabulary to better articulate the aesthetic potentiality of their work as part of this response<sup>25</sup>. To academics, artistic research can be perceived as an

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<sup>23</sup> At Theater and Performance Studies, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. see Andrea Braidt's presentation *On transdisciplinary disciplines* (2019) and Arlander (2016) arguing that inter- and transdisciplinary approaches are at the heart of and one of the defining factors for artistic research. See also Manning (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Which was articulated as a felt desire by more participating artists at the conference *Art and Social Change* (original Danish title: *Kunst og Social Forandring* arranged and hosted by the artistic urban performance-laboratory Metropolis ([www.metropolis.dk](http://www.metropolis.dk)). This also resonates with the feminist artist, writer, and activist bell hook's (birth name: Gloria Jean Watkins) relationship to theory, which she explains thus: "[...] I came to theory because I was hurting [...] I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend – to grasp what was happening around me [...] I saw in theory then a location for healing" (Hooks 1991, 1). I read this as a