Artistic processes in digital media: What happens to old communication models in new media?

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Abstract. In this artistic research two art projects about new information- & communication technology (ICT) is organized to find out how artists practice has been affected by the technology. The aim is to understand how a culture like the art world adjusts to changes due to ICT. The work is also an exploration of Fine Art as a qualitative research method.

Keywords: Artistic research, contemporary art, memory work, digital art, artistic processes, curating, curatorial practice, artist as curator

Starting point: Change and resistance due to ICT

From an artist's point of view, new communication technology gives new tools for collaboration and communication. Especially for artists working with digitalized techniques like photo, sound, film & video the technique has changed their working conditions. But the technology can also be seen as a threat especially when it comes to economy. When copies can be shared endlessly why would anyone pay for "the original"? The role of the artist, his genius and his privileges, are also questioned when the production methods are getting cheaper and smarter and technically anyone can publish their family tragedy on line. The aim with this PhD thesis work is to investigate in processes of change and resistance due to ICT, looking at the culture of the art world. Here I use an institutional approach to art and artists, as something produced inside the art world; art is what the professional artists & the art institutions think is art.

Method: The process of making art

Processes of change and resistance are complex objects of study. Just to grasp changes in a small part of my field of interest, for example "the use of photos in Swedish art world during the year 1980 and 2000" one could imagine many different quantitative methods; counting the artists using photos in their art, counting the amount of photo art at auction houses, counting the word photo in art reviews etc.

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One could also use qualitative methods, asking the artists them self what they think about the use of analogue and digital photo in their art and how this have changed their practice, using surveys, interviews or group discussions. This would at the best give me the information that we (the involved researchers and informants) already have about the subject. But cultural processes are something we are not always aware of, why conventional interviews and surveys can miss relevant information. There fore some researchers also use time and memory to find answers that not always comes directly. This is important in *memory works*, a method used in feminist discourse as a research method as well as a tool for empowerment, where the informants take part in the information gathering as well as the analysis (Pickering 2008). Following the ideas behind memory work, I here suggest the process of making art as a way of creating new knowledge, involving and activating the informants on a deeper level, both in defining the questions and in the process of analyzing the data. In two thematic art projects artists will create art that in different ways associates to *processes of change and resistance due to ICT*.

The first project is *Parafras*, where artists are invited to use the parafras – a restatement of an artwork in another form – as a method of investigating a 50 year older artist. The main question is *how ICT has changed artists working conditions*. The project is a comparative work to an ongoing research in economic history at the university of Stockholm (Praktiske Grunde 2008), where data from artists graduated from the KKH 1945-2005 is collected.

The second project is *Networked Art*. Here art students at Royal University College of Fine Art in Stockholm (KKH) are involved in a playful investigation of new communication technologies and old ones, using network theories from sociology and anthropology as a starting point. Here we ask ourselves *how we can use ICT to change the role of the artist*.

The outcome of these artistic processes, the documentation of the process and the exhibited art works will be contextualized and analyzed with theories from the field of cultural study.

References

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