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PRACTICE BASED RESEARCH, A REFUTATION OF THE PROPOSITION: SCIENCE IS NOT FOR ARTISTS

Since the in the XIth Century, when the Bologna University started offering its first European academic degrees, the question of practice-based research in the fields of visual arts (cinema, theater, painting, photography, music) remained one of most disputed issues of contemporary academia. Practice-based projects, often misunderstood as professional degrees, that suggest the possible "removal" of the academic requirements when it comes to art, are still questioned and are still questionable. One of the ways of integrating artists into the academic system was the "professional degrees" offered as if the demonstration of skills can be equivocated with the competency. Yet the "artists" are most of the time rejecting the research processes as foreign to their practice. For this line of thought to practice is, naturally, to have nothing to do with the constrains of the scientific discourse. Thus "doing" art or any activities related to visual or artistic representations are

considered, in some circles, as "sufficient" for proving a qualification in any given field. It was the Columbia University who offered, in 1767, its first "professional doctorate" for the medical school, and this was later followed by other field. While in France the doctorate degree is offered only for research based studies, other European countries offer the possibility to equivocate experience with academic skills. Looking for "equivalents" of qualifications was a practice widely accepted in Communist time Romania, yet the new education laws are now less permeable, since the requirements for a doctorate (PhD) are mandatory in order to teach in the higher education system, which brings us back the question of the separation between the artistic and the scientific practices.

On one hand it is obvious that rejecting the rules of scientific discourse and only practicing a given art does not mean that research is embedded in that process. While research means creativity and originality, it is also true that the process of systematic and methodic coverage of the field may hinder the practical abilities. In order to find a common ground we

need, as underlined by Patricia Leavy, to bring the practice based research to the place where the methods "meet" the artistic efforts (*Method meets art: arts-based research practice*).

Some of the articles of the current issue of *Ekphrasis* are centered around these problems. It is relevant, as it is the case with Cristi Puiu's interview at the end of the journal, that the process of producing a movie, the effort to make a cinematic representation of society, is often accompanied by an intellectual and research based process. Puiu's works are expressions of an anthropologist, albeit not a scientifically grounded one, in which he recognizes directly that the process is one specific to any science, the discovery of truth. If one of the most important directors of the new Romanian cinema describes his method of working as being embedded in a deep research effort, then there is an opened way for many other creators.

As Miruna Runcan, Mihai Pedestru and Raluca Sas, members of one of the most provocative programs financed by the Romanian Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, present in the results of their project *Everyday Life Drama*, one available approach is to base the practice on "heavy" ethno-methodologies, like ethno-drama and ethno-theater. Their paper shows how coherent the study of social practices and the subsequent transformation of these practices into discourses can be, and how the playwriting practices can become relevant for the social and political contexts in which they are made.

The following papers, presented by Manuela Borza and Paula Oneț, are the

result of an approach I am using in my course activities, where the students were following a combination of research design and practical exercises, in one of my classes of visual arts. The group of students were instructed by me to follow a "practice based" line of understanding the artistic objects of their choice. As Graeme Sullivan has put it (in *Art practice as research: inquiry in the visual arts*) in order to achieve the understanding of a visual art object, one must understand the way it was produced. Using art as a base for research and for understanding the inner mechanisms of the craft is one of the most important tools of research, where several methods can come into place, like autoethnography, which was the key to showing how self-consciousness and the ability to transform art practices into discourses is available.

In her paper, Daria Ioan is discussing a similar approach as developed in a program applied by the IRI (Research and Innovation Institute) program of the Pompidou Center in Paris. Florin Țolaș and Dan Curean, who are both cinematographers, with a long experience both in film making and in television production, show how their skills as professional, with a long practice experience, is integrated in their activities with some of the most important concepts in the art of cinema and in the art of composition. Last, but not least, the paper of Liviu Malița is putting the theoretical questions regarding practice, utility and aesthetics into the general debate about how practicing can be reunited with reasearching.