

4. PARADIGMS OF RESEARCH IN HYBRID ARTISTIC PRACTICES

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Abstract: *The context in which artistic practices are developed today requires a constant preoccupation with the challenges and commitments of artistic research, an intrinsic condition of these endeavors. Artistic research supports many points of coincidence, interaction, or overlap with the principles of scientific research, although they are characterized by a series of specific parameters. Due to the particularities of artistic research, art that questions topics of global interest (as happens in the case of sustainability, ecology or technology) is the art of our time, and the communication of these positions presupposes the development of ideas through research. The present text establishes a series of parameters related to engagement in artistic research, approached through the prism of representative contemporary artistic practices.*

Key words: *interdisciplinarity, artistic hybridization, artistic research, artistic practices, post-mediality*

1. Introduction

Artistic research supports many points of coincidence, interaction, or overlap with the principles of scientific research, although they are characterized by a series of specific parameters. In the case of artistic research, in addition to academic research (which involves going through and visiting previous research, publications and approaches on the subject under investigation), a fundamental importance is given to practice through experimentation, or artistic practice understood as research. Due to the particularities of artistic research, art concerned with topics of global interest (as happens in the case of sustainability, ecology or technology) is the art of our time, and the communication of these positions presupposes the development of ideas through research.

Considering the fact that one of the theses of contemporaneity is that everything that could be produced in art has already been done, the importance of researching the methods of artistic production by which new languages are obtained and innovative technical solutions are elaborated resides. These paradigms are made possible by the association of mediums, whether we are discussing artistic mediums with each other, or artistic mediums with other related fields and mediums, through mechanisms of translation and hybridization.

2. Discussions

The context in which the current research approach is defined is that of the art world hyperpopulated by cameras and electronic devices that have favored the process of democratizing access to (photographic) image production, and the consequence of this paradigm specific to contemporaneity includes the need to curate or manage this huge amount of information. These aspects associated with the current condition of the increasingly technological and digitized world, have resonated in contemporary artistic practices, which is why artistic mediums, but also the relationships between them, have been subjected to recontextualization and

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reconsideration, post-photography being such a result.

In post-photography we discuss the artistic practices in which the image is obtained through other tools or methods than the use of the camera, and in the case of post-painting, the pictorial material, therefore the color and the brushes, which assimilates in itself a mechanism of recycling or reuse of image archives. The current condition of contemporary artistic practices assumes an intermediate approach, at the border between mediums, in which the technological, material and conceptual resources specific to various artistic mediums (such as photography, painting, installation) are recontextualized and re-signified with the aim of obtaining new artistic discourses and innovative.

Wherever you look in the contemporary world, the photographic object seems to be an object of crisis, or at least in a process of severe transformation. Of course, it has been a long time since the reformulation of the history and theory of photography seemed a vital intellectual necessity, a process of art history born rather for the new importance of photography in the artistic practice of the '70s and '80s. But in the way it was theorized at the time, post-modernism could be described as a photographic event, since a series of artistic practices were being reorganized around photographic parameters, taking up Rosalind Krauss' idea of the *theoretical object*²²⁸. On the other hand, the photographic object has been completely absorbed by the last decades of digital recording and the world of contemporary art that seems rather to have passed the time, orienting itself towards the cinematic turn, more than the photographic one.

George Baker wrote about the expanded field of photography, contextualizing the beginning of the millennium in a moment completely different from that described by Krauss in 1979, referring to the sculpture in the expanded field ("Sculpture in The Expanded Field"). In this case, the categories of elastic and infinitely malleable media identified by Krauss at that time do not seem to coincide with the expansive situation proposed by Baker. The critical consensus held that the problem in the early 2000s was not that anything based on images could be considered photographic, but rather that photography itself had been "enclosed, removed, technologically abandoned, and aesthetically displaced"²²⁹.

The photographic artists of the period, most of whom are still active today, are precisely those figures like Jeff Wall who reconcile photography's relationship with an older medium, such as painting, through a surprising reversal of photography's revenge on traditional artistic mediums. Another case is that of practitioners such as Andreas Gursky, who were concerned with a new hierarchy and technology of digital recoding of photography (this condition being hardly evaluated as an opposition of possibilities: Wall also embraced the digital, and Gursky is considered among others, a pictorialist)²³⁰.

In the situation of Thomas Demand, he accompanies his photographic simulacra constructed with the help of simulated projections in the same way, dynamizing the obtained constructions, and Rineke Dijkstra chooses to place video recordings of the portrayed subjects alongside the information from the

²²⁸ George Baker, *Photography's Expanded Field*, *October*, Vol. 114 (Autumn, 2005), pp. 120-140

²²⁹ *Ibidem*

²³⁰ *Idem*, p. 132-134

photographic description. George Baker was of the opinion that even among those artists who continue in a certain way the photographic practice today, the medium seems like an expedient, an insufficient bridge to other, more convincing artistic forms, hence the need to confirm post-mediums²³¹.

More than forms of critical judgment and description related to the object, as well as the moment of announcing the technological extinction of the medium, the possibility of imagining how the “photographic object has been reconstructed” in contemporary artistic practice is delineated as a necessary act of critical imagination forms of contemporary art and one that will respond neither to technological exegesis nor to traditional formalist criteria.

But, for the reconstruction of the theoretical object that Krauss argued for, a structuralist vocation is delineated, as it was described a long time ago by Roland Barthes, respectively the critical gesture made more than three decades ago in the demonstration of Rosalind Krauss. At a time when the photographic turn no longer seems to dominate in postmodern theories, another explanatory device of the era appears (the notion of postmodernism understood as the opening to an “extended field of practice”) that only gains in utility²³².

Theorists such as Abigail Solomon-Godeau have absorbed Krauss's critical lesson and described postmodern photography as moving toward an expanded rather than reduced field of practice, but the precise mapping of this expansion has never been verified or imagined in concrete way²³³. Perhaps the epistemological notoriety of the photograph inherently rests from the structural order and analysis of what Krauss called the extended field. The purpose of all structuralist activity, reflexive or poetic, is to reconstruct an “object” in such a way as to thereby manifest the rules of operation (“functions”) of this object²³⁴. Therefore, the structure is not actually a simulacrum of the object itself, but a directed, interested simulacrum, because the imitated object exposes something left invisible or, rather, unintelligible in the natural object²³⁵.

Returning to a contradictory context, Baker named this condition “photography between narrative and stasis”, isolating the location within the aesthetics of the new objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) of the moment of high modernism²³⁶. In the case of Sander, that Baker offered as a reference, an aesthetic is identified located between the narrative dimensions of his archival compilation of portraits, and his repetitiveness, the inability to avoid freezing one's exposure through “the systematic and serial implementation of positions, formed and similar patterns”²³⁷. Thus, the problem of meaning and its construction in photographic terms raises a question to which photographic theories test or put pressure on the exchange in the technology of photography, and in other cases bring out the dimension of a kind of formalist or phenomenological account of the image.

In “Sculpture in The Expanded Field”, Krauss used structures of the kind that

²³¹ George Baker, op. cit., p. 132-134

²³² Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson: New York, 1990

²³³ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography after Photography*, Duke University Press, 2017

²³⁴ Rosalind Krauss, *Ibidem*

²³⁵ Roland Barthes, *Activitatea structurală*, în *eseuri critice*, trad. Richard Howard Evanston, III, Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 214-215

²³⁶ George Baker, op. cit., p. 132-134

²³⁷ *Ibidem*

trace whether modernist photography was somehow caught between two negations, between the conditions of being neither truly narrative nor static in the effects of its meaning. If modernist photography has become a sum of exclusions, then this opposition of negative terms easily generates a similar opposition, but expressed positively, namely that “(non-narrative) is, according to the logic of a certain kind of expansion, only another way of expressing the term (stasis), and (non-stasis) is simply (narrative)”²³⁸.

3. Results

On the other hand, George Baker's structured conclusions on the current condition of extended practices argued that “in contemporary art, we should instead pursue the life and potential transformation of the former extended field of the medium. We are dealing less with authors and their influence, and rather with a structural field of new formal and cultural possibilities, all ratified by the expansion of the photographic medium”. The current cultural expansion is a reason why the author considered it necessary to recover the model of the expanded field and map its photographic dimension.

Not being concerned about the recurrence of ideas about the medium in the essays of Rosalind Krauss or Hal Foster (in Krauss's work, this problem never went away, because the idea of the medium that these critics try to explore seems in line with the expansions mapped in their own earlier work), George Baker argued that, in retrospect, Krauss's text refers to a deep meditation on what a medium in the postmodern era might be²³⁹. It was this context that made it possible to call for a series of much more conservative practices from the perspective of the specificity of the medium, but the turn to traditional artistic objects, practices and discourses should have been treated with resistance, according to the author.

So the situation is identified in the act of returning to an medium that has been, if not expanded, then decentralized. As Foster has noted, the problem with Krauss's essay is to resist the latent need for “recentering” implicit in the extended field model of postmodernism²⁴⁰. Foster wrote that “the work is freed from the term sculpture...but only to be related to other terms such as landscape, architecture, etc.”²⁴¹. Although no longer defined in a single code, the practice remains distant. De-centering becomes re-centering, when the field is (precisely) “extended” rather than “deconstructed”²⁴².

In a more spatial than temporal extension of photography a series of artistic practices are built: from Louise Lawler and James Welling to younger artists such as Rachel Harrison, Tom Burr, Zoe Leonard and Gabriel Orozco. As Fredric Jameson suggested at an earlier fork in the development of postmodernity, what is needed now are maps. The solution would rather lie in mapping the expansion possibilities of the medium and not in withdrawing from the extended field of contemporary photographic (or pictorial) practice, deconstructing the potential of its

²³⁸ George Baker, op. cit., p. 132-134

²³⁹ Ibidem

²⁴⁰ Hal Foster, *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*, Verso, New York, 2015, p. 71

²⁴¹ Ibidem

²⁴² Ibidem

conclusion and the subsequent elaboration of multiple logics²⁴³.

Artistic research in the context of contemporary practices is deeply related to the demonstration through theoretical and experimental argumentation of the need for mixing and equivalence of mediums as a current method of obtaining new artistic discourses. While the relationships between the mediums are being redefined, photography and painting (and beyond) should occasionally come together in appropriate and ever-renewed exchanges and collaborations, for such an interaction will be mutually beneficial. The hybrid works that present photographic objectivity and pictorial matter through the explicit fusion of media demonstrate their potential to be metamorphosed with or in another media, and therefore, the need to elaborate a research on this direction.

Moreover, it is important to state that specific to artistic research are artistic practices (artworks, artistic endeavors, creative processes) which do not only function as a catalyst for the subject of research, but precisely the artistic practice itself and the processes in the workshop become processes of research. We talk about artistic research (“research in the arts”/research in the arts) when artistic practice is not only the result of research, but also includes its own methodological vehicle, when research is carried out in and through the act of creating and performing. Thus, a distinctive feature of this type of research is delineated within the entire academic research.

4. Conclusions

In a process of investigating artistic research as a form of knowledge production, the description of the process - in terms of subject, method, context and result - as research in and through artistic practices is delineated. Intrinsic to artistic and academic contexts, artistic research seeks to convey and communicate content that is embedded in aesthetic experiences, enacted through creative practices, and materialized through artistic products.

Particularly relevant to artistic research is the awareness that we do not yet know what we do not know²⁴⁴. Art invites and allows for lingering, resting at the edge of what is, while offering a glimpse of what could be. Artistic research becomes the deliberate articulation of these contingent perspectives, while the impact of research, in the case of artistic research, analyzes the reporting to the larger context, of the overall picture in which the artistic endeavor is positioned.

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²⁴³ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Chicago, 1991

²⁴⁴ Kavior Moon, *Research Art is Everywhere. But Some Artists Do It Better Than Others*, <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/what-is-artistic-research-1234660125/#!>

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