

Reports on Postgraduate programmes in Artistic Research

This panel will consist of leading voices in the supervision of artistic research chaired by Professor Samuel Ravengai. The panellists will discuss their experiences in supervising this kind of work. The discussion will unfold around specific questions:

1. What examinable form might the creative project take? Can anything be accepted as a Creative Project; for example non-practical disciplines such as History of Art. Can an archive such as photographs which the researcher was not involved in taking be submitted as a creative project? Can work that somebody did before registering for a postgraduate creative practice degree be submitted as a Creative Project?
2. Can theoreticians not involved in creative practice supervise creative work? Can non-artists (who have never made any art) enrol for a postgraduate degree by recourse to creative practice?
3. What do we value in a Creative Project? Excellence, novelty, a means to an end, an end in itself? Is our approach in its making similar to that of creative writing for example where the work must break new ground?

Panellists

Samuel Ravengai is Associate Professor and former Head of Department of Theatre and Performance at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa. He is Head of Wits School of Arts Graduate Studies. He holds a PhD from the University of Cape Town. He is the current Editor of the *South African Theatre Journal* and co-author of the book *Theatre from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (2021) published by Palgrave Macmillan. He is particularly interested in the interconnection of race, nation, empire, migration and ethnicity with cultural production. He is currently involved in the research project called Afrosceology which seeks to propound and document a theory on African and Diasporic aesthetics based on their practice across several years. His book, *Decolonizing African Theatre*, is in production with Cambridge University Press.

Alexander Damianisch is the director of the Zentrum Fokus Forschung, also home of the Artistic Research PhD Programme of the University of Applied Arts Vienna. He is member of the Society for Artistic Research special interest group on Artistic Research and Literature, and of the ELIA working group "careers in the Arts/CCIs". He was inaugural manager for the Austrian Program for Artistic Research (PEEK).

Aja Marneweck is a puppeteer, educator, theatre maker and director specializing in puppetry and multimedia performance. She is currently a senior lecturer and convenor of the Laboratory of Kinetic Objects/Puppetry Arts (LoKO) at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape. Marneweck's work engages the art forms of Puppetry and Visual Theatre as a critical post-apartheid contemporary performance praxis and the trans-formative possibilities they offer for the revisioning of identity, gender, politics and meaning in the 21st Century. Marneweck holds the first South African doctorate in Practice as Research in Puppetry Performance entitled 'Towards a Feminine Semiotic: Spiritual and Sexual Emergency in Women's Puppetry and Visual Performance'.

Hans.L.Ramduth is an Associate Professor at the School of Fine Arts, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius. His current area of interest is exploring how geological history and the history of species are interconnected with human history.

Leena Ramduth is a Lecturer in the field of animation at the School of Fine Arts, MGI, Mauritius. She is doing her PhD in the field of animation, transmediating Malcolm de Chazal's Petrusmok (1951) into an animated documentary.

Between how-tos and making-ofs: exploring low theory artistic research for glocal contexts

Hans.L.Ramduth and Leena Ramduth

How does one draw the line between making an artwork and researching about the practice of making? How to teach artistic research without becoming overly entangled in the theoretical discourses developed in contexts that are virtually close to and yet physically remote from local realities? How can multimodal forms of documentation and reflexion help in articulating a low theory artistic research?

These three questions form the core of this paper, which is a snapshot of the research practices of two academic researchers – one in the field of the visual arts / graphic storytelling, the other in the field of animation / documentary film making – and the convergence of their research interests.

This paper proposes that the 'how-to' – now ubiquitous in the form of youtube video tutorials, but with a long tradition in written and oral history; as well as the 'making-of', the process of documenting and discussing the genesis of any type of artwork, are 'low-theory', practiceoriented methods to approach the field of artistic research. Low-theory being in part inspired by Halberstram's (2011) use of the term (inspired by Stuart Hall comments on the term 'Theory') as in a deliberate opposition to high theory, derived from eccentric archives and insufficiently theorized knowledges, running the risk of not being taken seriously, and here meaning prosaic and idiosyncratic approaches to artistic research. The 'how-to' dimension addresses reproducibility, step-by-step material processes, etc; while the 'making-of' dimension addresses the conceptual and contextual genesis.

This leaves certain questions unanswered, one key question being the positioning of this research in relation to the wider concerns of other academics in the field of artistic research, which is one weakness in our approach that needs to be addressed further along.

However we feel confident that developing a local and pragmatic approach has pedagogical implications, both within our insular context, and beyond it, in other local contexts that have difficulties to align their concerns to the high theory and underlying assumptions of Global North academia.

Our shared interests in the growing field of academic comics as well as in the video-essay is leading us to a hybrid format where the line between the artwork and commenting the artwork is becoming blurred, and the documentation, reflexion and commentary fold and unfold into the artworks themselves.

Keywords: Artistic research, how-to, making-of, low theory, academic comics, video essay, hybrid formats.