

# CUMBERSOME RELATIONS

## THOUGHTS ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

Since music is a form of communication that originates in the mind of the creator and is interpreted in the mind of the receiver, I, like many others, believe that the entirety of “music” is a highly personal process and experience <sup>1</sup>. The fact that something can be music to one person and simultaneously considered noise by another is proof of this. As a musician with experience in free improvisation, noise, crooner vocals, Scandinavian-style jazz, and more, I know that context is key and that anything can become something.

With this in mind, I have long found it challenging to establish research boundaries for my project, in which I aim to explore “what kind of music arises when combining different artistic identities.”

At the time of writing, I divide my time between:

\* *Observation* – a position that allows for theoretical analysis and the application of various research frameworks,

**and**

\* *Practice* – a position in which I create and produce, guided solely by my personal artistic vision.

I have chosen this division because, as the American author E. B. White once said: “Humour can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind.” <sup>2</sup>

Applied to my area of research, this means that while I can discuss many aspects of the artistic process—like recording techniques, inspirations, practicalities, and instruments—trying to research it while actively engaging in it tends to hinder the creative flow.

This leads me to believe that my artistic practice cannot be researched directly. It is, and will (almost) always be, a cyclical process where practice informs observation, which in turn informs practice, and so on. I would argue that during the act of artistic creation, there is a flow of intuitive knowledge—a state in which any form of measurement or observation disrupts and, therefore, invalidates the results.

As I enter my final year, I see this as a clear example of the relational conflict between practice and theory. I want to focus on creating the final artwork, but right now, I see most interpretations of the word “relation” as distractions that interfere with the creative process. Returning to the idea that music is a highly personal process and experience, it follows that a beneficial interconnectedness of various elements leading to artistic creation will only occur if they integrate on a level that impacts without causing disruption.

This text and this seminar serve as examples: while in the act of creation, I want to access knowledge intuitively. Reaching this point requires time, as the knowledge gained needs to be processed and internalized before it can be used, much like practicing a specific technicality on an instrument. As such, this will disrupt my artistic process for a time before becoming useful.

The conflict, however, is not between artistic research and new relations, but rather between new relations and the time it takes to process them. Thus, the challenge for the remainder of my fellowship is knowing *when*—and *when not*—to engage with new relations. The goal is not to avoid new knowledge or connections, but to properly access and implement them.

This brings me to a key question I would very much like to discuss: Is there a way of integrating new knowledge and relationships (relations) into an artistic practice, without disrupting the creative process?

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<sup>1</sup>Sacks, O. (2007). [Musicophilia: Tales of music and the brain](#). Alfred A. Knopf.

<sup>2</sup>E. B., & White, K. (Eds.). (1941). [A subtreasury of American humor](#) (p. 20). Harcourt, Brace and Company.