

Artistic Research as Situated Practice - Performing with Lichen

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The notions of site and situation have been discussed extensively in contemporary art, for instance by Miwon Kwon (2002), whose genealogy of the changes in the understanding of site-specificity is still valid in many ways, by Nick Kay (2000), Lucy Lippard (1997) and others. Many variations of the term have since been proposed, like site-oriented, site-responsive and the like... The purpose of this text is not to rehearse these discussions, but to look at the notion "situated knowledge" developed by theorists like Donna J. Haraway (1988) and consider how that could be relevant in artistic research.

This text grew out of a paper "Performing (with) Lichen as Situated Practice", presented at the 7th Annual Conference on New Materialisms, Performing Situated Knowledges: Space, Time, Vulnerability, in Warsaw 21-23.9.2016. Prompted by the invitation of the organizers to revisit Donna Haraway's text "Situated Knowledges" from 1988, this text first focused particularly on her claim that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource (Haraway 1988, 592). This article proposes, however, that Haraway's notion 'material-semiotic actor', the object of knowledge as a meaning-generating part of the apparatus of bodily production (Haraway 1988, 595), and her emphasis on situated knowledges could be useful in the context of artistic research.

Two attempts at "performing landscape" on the northern shore of Bornholm during Easter 2016, resulting in the videos *Lichen at Allinge 1 and 2* will serve as examples. By looking at the practice or mode of production used in creating these video works and contextualizing them in relation to previous experiments made further north on the shore of the Finnish Bay, the situatedness of artistic practice will be discussed. The question of transposing methods used in one location and situation

into another, for instance from a familiar site to an unfamiliar one, will be touched at as well. As is common in the context of artistic research the works described are created by the person discussing them. A first-person perspective is an important feature of much artistic research, which is here further accentuated by the fact that the artist researcher also functions as the performer. Writing in first person singular, 'I', rather than using the academic 'we' or a neutralized passive voice, might give an impression of wanting to emphasize a subjective interpretation, an explicitly personal account or engaging in artistic self-absorption, even when that is not the case. In the following I will nevertheless switch to that style of writing, honoring the feminist legacy of criticizing the illusion of the objective or detached, supposedly universal perspective and endorse the partial perspective of being entangled, embedded and enmeshed in and with a site and situation. As Haraway pointed out and many others have since emphasized: "Feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*." (Haraway 1988, 581)

By describing my initial response to a specific characteristic of the environment and the ensuing attempts at alternating the focus between contributing agents, like the position of the human figure among the colonies of lichen inhabiting the rocks, the question of artistic ideas, proposed by the editor – where they come from and what they might consist of – will be considered as well. With the help of Haraway, I will approach the notions of site and situation, with their strong legacy within contemporary art, from a slightly different angle, through a situated practice of artistic research.

"Feminist objectivity makes room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production; we are not in charge of the world. We just live here and try to strike up noninnocent conversations by means of our prosthetic devices, including our visualization technologies" (Haraway 1988, 594)

The above sentence from 1988, in "Situated Knowledges", describes very well the aim of the small works discussed here, where I try to perform for a video camera on tripod together with some yellow lichen growing on the rocks on the seashore. I read Haraway's text long after making those works, and was fascinated by how relevant it still is. After struggling with understanding Karen Barad's (2007) rather sophisticated arguments, related to the notion material-discursive practices, Haraway's writing seemed so light and witty, although I probably missed many of her jokes due to my lack of knowledge of the discussions among US feminists at the time of its writing. She proposes "an argument for situated and embodied knowledges" which is also "an argument against various forms of unlocatable and so irrespon-

sible, knowledge claims", which cannot "be called into account." (Haraway 1988, 583) Here I am not going to discuss the importance of her ideas to rebalance current philosophical discussions related to speculative realism or object-oriented ontology and the attempts to move beyond an anthropocentric perspective in a manner that disregards the inevitable situatedness of all knowledge (see Alaimo 2010; 2014). Rather, I want to say a few words based on the experience of making these video works. It is nevertheless useful to repeat some of Haraway's explanations as a starting point. For her "... objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment" rather than "about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility". According to her "only partial perspective promises objective vision". (Haraway 1988, 582) She explicitly writes:

"Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see." (Haraway 1988, 582-3)

Haraway's now historical claim is a helpful reminder for everybody engaged in artistic research because an artist is necessarily involved in the creation of her work on some level. This is not a drawback in terms of lack of objectivity, but a reminder to explicate one's location, situation and perspective, which might actually be easier to neglect in other types of research.

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Lichen at Allinge 1-2 (à 14 min 13 sec), is a video work in two parts; a split screen version is called *Lichen at Allinge* (14 min 13 sec). The first part (on the left, if shown as a two-channel installation) was recorded on the evening of March 26 2016 and the second part (on the right) on the evening of March 27 2016 on the shore between the villages Sandkås and Allinge on the north-western shore of the island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. In the first part a human figure dressed in a long dark purple coat and a cap stands among the rocks covered with yellow lichen, in the second part the rocks with the lichen stand on their own. These works are publicly available on the Research Catalogue, as small files.¹

These videos are "old school" in the sense that they are unprocessed documentary images, despite being digital. Such images are of course never unmediated, although by letting the automatic functions of the camera react to changes in the environment, and by editing the works without post-production manipulation, au-

¹ See <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=266076>

thorial interventions are minimized. As Haraway observed long ago, the prosthetic “‘eyes’ made available in modern technological sciences shatter any idea of a passive vision” and demonstrate the fact that “all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building on translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life.” (Haraway 1988, 583).

The automatic functions of the camera are constructed in accordance with cultural historical ideas of what constitutes a good image, and so are my choices in framing the view. Referring to the ubiquitous profusion of images Haraway suggests that all our “pictures of the world should not be allegories of infinite mobility and interchangeability but of elaborate specificity and difference” as well as “the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another’s point of view, even when the other is our own machine.” (Haraway 1988, 583). Obviously, these images of and with lichen are not trying to look at the world from the perspective of the lichen. Rather, ideas of background and foreground, distance and proximity as well as contrast were the starting points for performing together with the lichen, or at least next to them, seduced by their striking colours. The same technique was deployed as in works created elsewhere: performing for a video camera on a tripod by entering the image to show a human figure looking at the view, thus splitting into a video photographer and a performer in turn, and then editing the video cutting out the entering and exiting.

The background to these small experiments consists of a series of twelve one-year projects, called *Animal Years*, video recorded on Harakka Island off the coast of Helsinki, Finland, which I began in the year of the horse (2002) and finished in the year of the horse (2014). The projects were based on the Chinese calendar and its twelve-year cycle, with each year named after a specific animal. The key question explored was how to perform landscape today. The main purpose of the work was to bring attention to changes in the landscape, consequent of the shifting seasons, weather and climate, to focus on the environment and to document its changes. Thus, returning to exactly the same spot was important. While performing a still-act or simple action in front of a video camera, the events taking place in the background, in the landscape, can come to the forefront. By repeating a performance at regular intervals during relatively long periods of time, and condensing the material by editing, the slow happenings not discernible in real time become visible. Thus, the project produced ‘souvenirs’ of what the landscape looked like on the north coast of the Baltic Sea during these years at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Over the years the aim of *Animal Years* shifted more and more into making visible the passing of time, which initially was a side effect of the work.² The project focused on seasonal changes resulting from the cyclical nature of our planetary time, based on the movement of Earth around the Sun and around its own axis. On another level it responded to the logic of a cyclic video loop in an installation context rather than the progressive storyline of a film, for instance. Performances for a static camera on a tripod, repeated once a week for a year in the same place with the same framing of the image, and then condensed by editing to form short videos or multichannel installations, show time passing in the landscape by keeping space, place and framing constant. Repetition was used to generate material with variations, which could then be put together chronologically, using all the ‘slices of time’ in the order they were created. The shifting conditions, or various accidental occurrences, produced changes around the basic structure of a few initial choices.

After working with “performing landscape” on that specific island on the northern coast of the Baltic Sea for more than twelve years, being site-specific “by default”, a brief visit to the island of Bornholm during an Easter holiday in 2016 seems the very opposite of a situated practice. Although the work was created spontaneously during an extended weekend, the relationship to the site is nevertheless highly relevant in this case. Due to the short time available my response to the site was necessary superficial, focusing on the most immediate visual elements. But this urgency also helped in choosing the obvious. What was immediately different, interesting and inspiring for me, as a visitor, was the color of the rocks on the shore. Because I could not use my customary technique of repeating the same image over longer periods of time, I had to consider which elements of my practice I could utilize in this new situation, how to transform my method according to the circumstances. Due to the contingencies of the situation - I had to make do with what was available in terms of time, dress and so on - the work turned into much more of a conversation with the site than would have happened if I had more time to plan.

While arriving at the north-western coast of Bornholm, an island situated in the southern part of the Baltic Sea, today officially part of Denmark, for a few days during Easter 2016, I noticed already the first evening the yellow lichen on the cliffs at the shore between the villages Sandkås and Allinge, where the path follows the shoreline. In the afternoon, the following day, when the sunlight was softer than at noon I took my camera and tripod and tried to place myself next to the lichen on the rocks. The only rules I decided to follow were to stand with my back to the camera, as I usually do, and to place the horizon at the centre in the image, to facilitate

² In “Performing landscape for years” (Årlander 2014) I discuss the project with regard to various time conceptions.

editing. The approaching dusk and the diminishing light surprised me; the camera needs quite a lot of light for video recording, so I decided to continue the following evening. Pressed for time I decided not to enter the images on the second evening, but to make short 50 second close ups of the rocks and let the yellow lichen come to the fore. I wasted time with the open views, however, fascinated by the combination of black, white and yellow rocks, and dusk was approaching again too soon. The last close ups are not really sharp due to lack of light. When I edited the material, I realized there were very few images of the lichen, after all...

Thus, in this case I came in as a tourist, looked around, was impressed by the yellow cliffs coloured by the lichen and decided to do something with them, did that and left, without getting to know hardly anything neither of the human community living in the area, nor of the community of lichen, for that matter. The work created is not site-specific in any of the different meanings analysed by Miwon Kwon, for example – it is not focusing on sharing an embodied presence with the viewer, nor discussing the institutional sites of production and consumption framing the work, nor creating a discursive site through the topics dealt with in the work. Nevertheless, the videos are the result of a situated practice in the sense that the impulse for doing them came from the place, they were inspired by and responding to characteristics of the site. Moreover, they were formed in reaction to the situation, including the limitations in terms of time.

Opposing these two approaches to site – working in a familiar environment, committing to a community, for instance, or responding and reacting to an unfamiliar site, grabbing the available contact points as a visitor – is probably not fruitful. It is easy to criticize the visitor's gaze as the opposite of situated knowledge, but the visitor's position can also be a useful tool. Only when a place is still unfamiliar and strange one can see details that later would be overlooked when considered customary.

I suggested that Haraway's notion 'material-semiotic actor', the object of knowledge as a meaning-generating part of the apparatus of bodily production (Haraway 1988, 595), could be useful in terms of artistic research. In this case, besides the lichen (which were not fully foregrounded despite being the real reason for the work), the specific evening light and the restricted time span available for recording, were the main factors, or material-semiotic actors, to use Haraway's term, informing and forming the work, together with other entangled actors like the camera, the tripod, the legacy of western romantic painting, my previous experiences of performing landscape, the weird woollen cap I happened to wear and so on.

Rather than thinking of the various material-semiotic actors and their entanglements, the question of scale, is perhaps more interesting. When looking at the images I regretted not creating more close-ups with the lichen and realized I had

followed a very human scale. But that presumes an idea of the lichen as minuscule. If colonies of lichen are thought of as larger entities, they do not even fit within the image frame... As Karen Barad exclaims in an interview, referring to studies with colonies of slime mold: "How can we expect the notion of an organism understood as an individual that is situated in a container we call the environment to begin to speak to the complexity of the intra-active reconfiguring of bodily boundaries that defines the slime mold's astonishing material existence?" (Barad 2012, 77)

In this case the choice to focus on the yellow lichen on the rocks at the seashore was the main artistic idea. This artistic idea was in turn based on aesthetic ideas related to the experience of colour, on my initial response to the site and the kind of actions it affords, on historical ideas related to the tradition of landscape imagery and on the context of my previous works. If there is an artistic idea beyond the rather conventional aesthetic one, it is not very obvious. One could challenge the work by saying that it rests too much on aesthetic ideas, a rather dated interpretation of beauty and a romantic idea of landscape. One could even claim that the work lacks an artistic idea, in a strict sense. What is the conceptual challenge or paradox presented? What is the critical or ethical point to be made? What is the taboo or ambiguity played with? And so on. In contemporary art some form of criticality is mostly expected to motivate aesthetic concerns even outside a research context. In defence of the work one could point to exploration of theoretical ideas of 'performing with' or 'becoming with' other creatures, topics, which are increasingly relevant today.

A recent text by Haraway (2016) where she emphasizes the relationality of creation and production using the term sympoiesis can serve as example: "Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means 'making with'. Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or selforganizing." For her "the radical implication of sympoiesis" is that "earthlings are *never alone*." She links sympoiesis "to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems" and understands it as "a word for worlding-with, in company". Moreover, sympoiesis "generatively unfurls and extends" autopoiesis. (Haraway 2016, 58) She reminds us of the importance of 'becoming-with' and writes:

"Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all." (Haraway 2016, 4)

The others Haraway refers to here are not only human. Importantly, regarding situated knowledge she further stresses, in concordance with her text from 1988, how such a "material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplacé, entangled and worldly." (Haraway 2016, 4)

As an idea, performing with lichen is in many ways suitable as an example for “becoming with” although I was not aware of the notion at the time of making the work. The main reason is that lichen are themselves products of a sympoiesis of sorts, of a symbiotic relationship between algae and fungi. Lichen include some of the toughest life forms on the planet that can survive in the harshest of circumstances. The yellow lichen growing on the rocks at the shore in Bornholm are probably some form of Common orange lichen, Yellow Scales or Shore Lichen (*Xanthoria parietina*), which prefer growing on bark but can live on rock in areas with nutrients from bird droppings. They consist of a vegetative body or tallus, an outer skin of fungal hyphae, and the photosynthetic symbionts or photobionts from the green algae *Trebouxia*. All lichen are composite organisms that consist of algae or cyanobacteria living in a symbiotic relationship with the filaments of fungi and they have properties that differ from their component organisms. Although lichen can seem plant-like, they are not plants.³

Returning to the question of artistic ideas as a starting point for research, where to find them in this case? In the recording or the editing? When thinking of the example with the lichen we could perhaps distinguish the story of the making from the story of the reflecting involved in editing the work. The story of the making was told in some blogposts at the time.

In my blog post from Bornholm 25.3. 2016 I describe my visit to the island and especially its north-western villages, and depict how I video recorded a sea view in my series of responses to Sugimoto’s seascape photographs. In a blog post in Finnish 27.3.2016 I describe my walks around the area, exploring tourist attractions like the castle or the ancient rock carvings. The blog post describing my attempts at working with the yellow lichen is written in Swedish 27.3. 2016 and titled “Gula klippor i skymningen” [yellow cliffs at dusk]. Some excerpts are translated here:

“What do you choose in a new landscape, what becomes chosen after a while when you acquaint yourself with a new landscape and aim to create images in it? Or preferably, what do precisely this person become attached to in order to be able to disregard all the other interesting or beautiful details during the process? Of course, I did notice the yellow lichen on the cliffs at the shore on the north-western coast of Bornholm, and especially on the shore between Sandkås and Allinge, where the path follows the shore line closely and where I walked

³ My knowledge of lichen is rudimentary, based on internet sources like wikipedia.

already the first evening on arrival to the area. I had the thought that my dark violet cardigan, which I packed with me in the last minute to have something to pose in, could function as a nice contrast to the yellow, [--]. And so, in the afternoon, when the sunlight was softer due to some haze and the approaching dusk I donned my costume - besides the woollen jacket a stocking cap and gloves in the same hue - and tried to place myself next to the rocks.” (Årlander 2016 b, no page numbers)

Was that an artistic idea? In performance art we often ask ourselves, what could be the action in a situation, what could be done? The blog post continues:

“Sunday was sunny; there was no chance to combine images of rocks in bright sunlight with the images I had made the previous evening. Thus, I spent the day as a tourist [--] and continued with my attempts only in the evening. [--] [To place oneself in the image is always something of a hazard, because it is hard to estimate where exactly you end up in an image with long distances. Often, I have actually ended up posing outside the image. So, this time I would [not enter the image, but] create “extra material”, images of the rocks where the yellow lichen could come to the fore. [--] I think I will be able to put together something out of this material, although there might not be very many images including a human figure.” (Årlander 2016 b, no page numbers)

A story of the watching, notes or reflections while editing the videos could start with a description of the 17 images of both videos. To make a long story shorter, the first part, with the human figure, begins with an image of a beach with rocks and grass in the foreground; a dark figure standing near the shore. It ends with an image of two stripes of rocks, the one further away lit by the sun; a white house glimmers at the far shore; a fragment of the human figure is visible in the foreground among the rocks. The second part, without the human figure, begins with an image of a shore with yellow reeds, some yellow and black rocks behind them with waves coming in; a greyish blue sky above the greyish blue sea. It ends with a close-up of rock with lichen, really close, so the structure of the lichen is visible; some white ones among the yellow ones.

The main observation regarding the first part concerns the performer, who seems very heavy and stiff due to the long cardigan and the woollen cap. The human figure seems separated from the environment, not so much because of the color contrast but due to the heavy dress. Actually, the color contrast does not work at all in

many images, due to lack of light. Rather some kind of visual merging takes place with the shadows. In the second part the sea view is dominating in the beginning. The rock formations and the ragged coastline rather than the lichen are playing the main part, although the lichen become visible only at the very end. Paradoxically, despite my aims, the lichen remain in the background and form a backdrop or scenery in most of the images. The order of the images follows the order of recording, loosely, but I made no notes while editing, and I remember moving some of the images to have a sense of continuity in the diminishing of the light.

Working with lichen, almost by accident, in this small experiment, serves like an introduction to the research project on performing with plants that I was about to begin at the time. To perform and co-operate with plants and especially trees is an artistic research project, which develops and specifies the question how to perform landscape today, a question I have worked with in various forms during several years. The question is not rhetorical; our relationship to the environment has dramatically changed due to global warming and other more or less manmade disasters and demands new approaches. A posthumanist perspective prompts us to rethink the notion landscape and to consider how the surrounding world consists of creatures, life forms and material phenomena with varying degrees of volition, needs and agency. What forms of performing, realizing or activating landscape could be relevant in this situation? One possibility is to approach individual elements in a landscape, such as specific trees, and explore what can be done together with them, for instance how to perform for camera together.

Rethinking our relationship to the environment is a central task for artists today. Artistic research can contribute through its capacity to allow and to generate hybrid forms of thinking and acting. This project participates in the new materialist post-humanist discussion by way of a) developing artistic practices and producing art works that can critically question existing conventions and habits in our relationship to the environment and b) by theoretically reflecting, based on practical exploration, what it means to collaborate with plants and especially trees. The importance of the project rests ultimately on the importance of the plants themselves – they are producing the preconditions for life on the planet in its current oxygen-based form.

Performing with plants started with the question how to perform landscape today, focusing on plants and especially trees. It soon evolved into exploring what it means to be “performing with” entities unlike us. For Michael Marder “the dispersed life of plants is a mode of being in relation to all the others, being *qua* being-with” (Marder 2013, 51). “Living with” is a core task for humanity (Marder 2013, 53), or, as Donna Haraway writes: “We become-with each other or not at all” (Har-

away 2016, 4). Learning from plants could be a way to start. How can we live, exist, act or perform with creatures, with whom we cannot communicate directly, or even ask for their consent for posing for a camera with them?

The plant kingdom – to use a term that refers to the so called great chain of being with rocks at the bottom and humans at the top and plants just a few steps above the rocks – is so large, that it is hard to imagine any general way of performing with plants. To perform with lichen and to perform with a pine tree is very different, although we all do collaborate by exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide and other chemical substances in the atmosphere. As an artist, I take that common knowledge for granted, and leave it to colleagues working in the field bio art to figure out how to perform together on a molecular level. In performing with lichen as well as in later performances with trees I stick to the level of everyday actions, like sitting or standing in, on, with and next to trees. In terms of “performing with” I have tried to follow at least some basic rules of thumb, like 1) not to hurt the plant and to choose plants that are bigger than me, stronger than me, and plants that can share some of their energy with me, like trees; 2) to visit the plant where it grows, and to respect its particular relationship to place; 3) to spend time with the plant and to visit it repeatedly, although I cannot share the temporality of the plant, I can at least respect its relationship to time.

These principles were developed later, after my small experiments with the lichen, and are not necessarily respected in that work. Lichen are not bigger or stronger than me in the same way as trees nor possible to visit in the same manner. I did visit the lichen where they grew and respected their particular relationship to place, but I did not visit them repeatedly nor consider their specific relationship to time.

How should we understand these experiments in terms of artistic research? Or should these experiments be understood as artistic practice, which become research only when I am reflecting upon them? There are not many typologies created around artistic research; most categorisations concern the various relationships of art and research, often assuming a dichotomy and some form of resolution to it, like the three configurations suggested by Elkins (2009), creating a third zone (Biggs & Karlsson 2011) or some form of boundary work (Borgdorff 2012) between the two. Another option is to suggest various combinations: research interpreting art, art interpreting research, art placed in a research context, research placed in an art context, art contributing to research, research contributing to art, and so on (Keinonen 2006). Other typologies relate to methodology in a more general sense

adding a third dimension to quantitative and qualitative research, such as performative research (Haseman 2006), arts-based research (Leavy 2009) or conceptual research (Smith & Dean 2009). In many cases, artistic research can be understood as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activity; different inter- or transdisciplinary entwinements lead to different types of artistic research (Arlander 2016 a). We could also distinguish four main types of artistic research based on the focus on product or practice, and with regard to relationship to time.

When research involves artistic practice, terms formed around the notion of 'practice' are often used, such as practice-based, practice-led and practice-as-research.⁴ The use of the term 'practice' can be criticized for maintaining a practice-theory dichotomy, or for not distinguishing artistic practice from other practices. Within contemporary art the shift in emphasis from artistic practice aiming mainly at producing an artwork into an action undertaken mainly for itself, as an exercise, performance, contemplation or social activity, is a strand in the general trend since the 1960s, towards valuing the 'working' of art above the artwork as an object. This trend can be related to research as well, and to the discussions about the impact of research, as Barbara Bolt has done in distinguishing the work of art and the work it does (Bolt 2014, 29-30). She does not, however, distinguish between working (the practice), and the work (the result of that practice), but only notes that both have effects.

Elsewhere I have suggested that research, which entails an attempt to articulate and theorize an on-going practice, based on acquired (and thus more or less unconscious) skills, often has a different focus and uses different methods compared with research that tries to develop and conceptualize an artwork or a new type of design product, and explain the route to that result. We could therefore distinguish a) product-oriented or object-led artistic research, focused on the creation of an artwork or a design product from b) practice-based or practice-led research, engaged with an on-going practice, often with a practical, critical or emancipatory knowledge interest. To make it simple we could say that artistic research can be a) product-oriented, when the main goal is the creation of an artwork, or b) practice-led, when a particular form of practice is more important than a specific artwork or performance. (Arlander 2011, 321.) This distinction could be attributed to traditions within the crea-

⁴ This is especially popular in fields related to performing arts and is evident in the names of anthologies such as *Practice as Research – Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (Barrett & Bolt 2007), *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen* (Allegue et al. 2009), *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Smith & Dean 2009) and *Practice as Research in the Arts – Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Nelson 2013). Sometimes the term 'performance' is used, as in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research* (Riley & Hunter 2009).

tive and the performing arts respectively. Contemporary art, however, often focuses on processes and interaction rather than products and finished works, and practices can be reified into object-like methods.

Another dimension concerns the relationship to time. The research process can be c) developmental, striving to create something new. It can also be d) reflective, trying to understand and articulate what one has already done. Either approach, or rather, emphasis on either aspect, can be found within artistic research, although you would expect the developmental to dominate. For the critically minded, however, the reflective approach provides a space for questioning and criticizing the ingrained conventions of the art world. For the more conservatively inclined, it offers an opportunity to formulate and document tacit knowledge and to articulate methods within an existing tradition.

We can form a classical field combining these four aspects:

	Product-oriented (a)	Practice-led (b)
Developmental (c)	(ac)	(bc)
Reflective (d)	(ad)	(bd)

Creating this kind of typology can seem like a useless habit borrowed from social sciences, but could be clarifying, if we remember that most cases of artistic research include all these aspects in some degree. As generic examples we could imagine a research project aiming at developing a technological innovation (ac) or a new method (bc), a research project trying to understand the responses to an artwork (ad) or criticizing a traditional teaching technique (bd). In real life clear-cut examples are hard to find; nearly all research projects, for instance, include a reflective or backward-looking component simply because they are reported. And all forms of artistic research could be called speculative practices, because the speculation, the imagining of alternative modes, takes place with the help of and through practice.

So far so good, but is this kind of typology of any help in understanding the research dimension in a project like performing with lichen? The project itself was product-oriented in the sense that I deliberately set out to make a video work, although my way of working was a further development of an ongoing practice of performing landscape elsewhere. And it was definitely developmental in the sense that I wanted to try out a new approach to performing landscape by using a method based on repetition developed elsewhere in a new situation and a new site. By discussing

the work here, in this article, however, I am of course reflecting on the work as a past experience, trying to extract some understanding of artistic research as a situated practice by revisiting both the work itself and the story of its making. With hindsight the work is perhaps most of all a modest example of experimentation and variation, an attempt at developing a previous artistic idea into something else, something different, something new. And as is familiar in all forms of research, such attempts do not always lead to astonishing successes or breakthroughs but form the slow steps of trial and error that in the best of cases lead to an artistic idea worth exploring further.

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