

The Jumping Bean of Artistic Research

*Introduction by Geir Harald Samuelsen
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Let me begin with a story.

In the mid-1930s, the poet André Breton and the philosopher and naturalist Roger Caillois argued over a tiny seed — the Mexican jumping bean.

Midt på 1930-tallet kranglet poeten Breton og naturforskeren Caillois over en bitteliten bønne som hoppet.

When placed in a warm hand, the bean moved by itself.

Caillois wanted to cut the bean open to find out what caused the movement. He saw it as an act that would prove that knowledge and wonder could coexist.

He wrote to Breton: *Here we have a form of the Marvelous that does not fear knowledge.*

Her har vi en form for det vidunderlige som ikke frykter kunnskap.

To understand, he said, does not destroy wonder — it confirms it.

Å forstå ødelegger ikke undringen — det fordyper den.

But Breton was furious.

For him, the bean's movement was not something to be explained, but something to be experienced.

It revealed, he said, the secret continuity between dream and the real — what he called “the marvelous real.”

As Breton wrote in the book *Mad Love*:

What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic — there is only the real.

Det beundringsverdige ved det fantastiske er at det ikke lenger finnes noe fantastisk — bare det virkelige.

To explain it, to name its cause, was to kill its poetry.

Han mente Caillois drepte poesien med forklaringer.

That quarrel — over a seed— ended their friendship, but it revealed something bigger:

the tension between the poetic and the scientific mind.

Spenningsfeltet mellom det poetiske og det vitenskapelige sinnelaget.

Breton defended the dream; Caillois defended knowledge.

Between them, the bean kept jumping — alive and unpredictable.

Mellom dem fortsatte bønnen å hoppe — levende og uforutsigbar.

And perhaps this is also where artistic research takes place —

not as a balance, but as a rhythm between imagination and reflection, between wonder and method.

Ikke en balanse, men en rytme mellom undring og metode.

When method becomes rigid, art stops breathing.

When intuition drifts without reflection, it loses ground.

Når metoden stivner, slutter kunsten å puste. Når intuisjonen flyter uten refleksjon, mister den fotfeste.

This seminar will not trace the whole history of the term Artistic Research.

Vi skal ikke gå dypt inn i begrepshistorien.

If you wish to explore that, there are excellent resources online — for example, James Elkins' writings and his YouTube channel.

Elkins har kartlagt feltets utvikling grundig.

One of today's lectures will, however, touch upon this institutional framework — the Norwegian model of artistic research, the system that supports it, and the questions it raises.

Vi skal også høre om den norske modellen for kunstnerisk forskning — systemet, strukturen og spørsmålene det reiser.

The rest of the day we will look at examples and practices — how reflection and method interact in actual works and projects.

Resten av dagen ser vi på praksiser — hvordan refleksjon og metode møtes i det kunstneriske arbeidet.

It's worth remembering that artistic research is not only an institutional concept.

Det er ikke bare et byråkratisk begrep.

It lives inside almost every serious artistic practice — including your own.

The scientific researcher and Psychologist Ellen Langer once said: *I'm not interested in what is. I'm interested in what could be.*

Jeg er ikke opptatt av hva som er, men av hva som kan oppstå.

That could describe an aspect of artistic research itself — an inquiry into potential, into ways of opening the world differently.

And as the philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard reminds us, science once grew out of poetic imagination — before it learned to measure, it learned to dream.

Før vitenskapen lærte å måle, lærte den å drømme.

So, as we begin, keep this small image in mind:

a tiny bean, moving by its inner life — both poetic and mechanical.

Et lite frø som beveger seg av sitt eget indre liv — både poesi og mekanikk.

It reminds us that our task as artists and researchers is not to choose between the poetic or the scientific mindset,

but to keep them in motion together —

between what is and what could be.

Mellom det som er, og det som kan oppstå.