

Contemplations: A Perspective on Reflexivity Out of the ‘Brackish Waters’ of Artistic Research

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What is the artist-researcher doing, looking out the window of their studio? As artist-researchers, often working with a film camera, we take its frame and the technique of montage as the starting point of our contemplation. What is visually represented, and what is reflected? Specifically, this chapter attempts to look at what reflections become perceptible on the brackish waters¹ of artistic research. How can we reflect on the work between sensory input, artistic processing and output? How could we think about the circular relation of agency, perception and epistemic processing from and within this discipline? Exemplified by our own artistic research on states of dizziness, as states of uncertainty, unpredictability and confusion, we look for the spaces that open on the liminalities of reflexivity and experience. Separating and reconnecting experience and reflection in the vestibule of their convergence, the compossible space of con-fusion allows for a rethinking of the given and wont. Therefore, it is important for the artist-researcher to simultaneously get lost in thought and stay on track.

In other words, you don't become part of thought and get swept away in it, like in a boat. You get out of the boat and examine the nature of thought itself, and that I suppose is true epistemology ... for I would

¹ The beautiful metaphor of the ‘brackish waters’ is owed to the 2023 Symposium of the Vilnius Academy of Arts Doctoral Programme, titled *Not Quite King, Not Quite Fish. In and Out of the Brackish Waters of Artmaking as Research*. <https://sodas2123.lt/en/not-quite/> (Accessed 11 November 2024).

Figure 17.1: View of the Donaukanal

Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

imagine real knowledge begins with examining the nature or stuff of thought about knowledge, examining the ground in which thoughts take place. (Ginsberg 1974, 31)

The authors' film *Contemplations* (2011) ponders exactly that: can we stay on track and get swept away at the same time? And if so, what would we see? The images of Figures 17.1, 17.2, 17.6, 17.7, and 17.10–17.12 that accompany this chapter are film stills exploring the view from the artists' studio.

1. Artistic research and reflexivity

In an online conversation about artistic and creative practices of research with scholars and PhD candidates from Flinders University Adelaide in April 2024, contemplating together the many approaches, methodologies, prejudices and ideologies surrounding the contested field of artistic research in academia, we could all agree on one point: The quality of reflexivity differentiates artistic research from other fields of artistic (and even certain scientific) practices. Defining and explaining artistic research, nevertheless, is mainly conferred through emphasizing its diversity in methodology. As a hybrid field bringing together artistic and scientific research and their practices in its brackish waters, artistic research is commonly considered through this prism in an attempt to differentiate and organize the field of artistic research within academic practices. Having worked as experimental

filmmakers for 25 years, we see similarities in the ongoing discussion on experimental (or independent) film in relation to other film genres and the discussion about artistic research in relation to academia. Experimental film emerged as a field only through a differentiation in length. Every film that was neither feature nor short film length was subsumed under ‘experimental’ by film festivals, thus compounding and entangling documentary, fiction and art film practices, bringing about the highly diverse field of independent or experimental film. Artistic research relates to experimental film, as, in both fields, practitioners develop a heightened awareness of context, process, methods, materiality, and impact of their work and field, as emphasized by French filmmaker Nicolas Rey. Connecting it to the political, he holds that the term ‘experimental cinema’ is a tautology, like ‘organic agriculture’ or ‘participatory democracy’: we only need the adjective because there’s something wrong with the noun (Cohn 2014).

In like manner, we must assume that there is something amiss with the term ‘research’ if it were to exclude any association to creative, artistic and arts-based practices; vice versa, we can assume the expectations towards art go amiss if they were to exclude any (practices related to) research. The distinguishing principle between artistic work and artistic research work, however, is the level and quality of reflexivity and the practitioner’s ensuing openness to communication, learning and accountability. Thus, the artistic process can be distinguished from the artistic-research process, not merely by the introduction of methods ascribed to other (scientific) disciplines, but rather in terms of the reflexivity concerning the actions and decision-making during the working process. While the artist can claim to simply follow a sudden inspiration and never argue or question their decision, the artist-researcher will (*a priori*, *a posteriori*) question and reflect on their acting on impulse, bringing each of their decisions and processing into the foreground and argue them in the larger context of their work, methodology, progress, outcome, and in relation to their chosen field and current focus of work.

In the 1990s, in fine art studies, a popular model to explain the ideal construction of an artwork in relation to an audience used a pyramid shape: On its broad basis, the artwork invites its viewers to a sensory experience and immersion. The second layer allows for connections to be discovered to other artworks throughout art history, whereas the small peak on the top invites the appreciation of scientific, theoretical and conceptual aspects of research and thought. After this model, we could conceive of artistic research turning the layers of this pyramid upside down or even into different shapes: ellipses, quadrats, diamonds, and so on. With this example, we would like to show that reflexivity is key to both practices, but the quality and conditions of its application are different, forming expectations and thus allowing a disciplining of artistic research and artistic practices. There are, of course, exceptions. Certain artistic practices, such as concept art or

experimental filmmaking, may also demand ‘a meticulous evaluation of the medial context and a conscious choice of terms’ (Blos-Jáni 2021, 307). The rigour and importance of reflexivity in artistic research and the engagement in the communication, learning and sharing of the process and its findings, can be clarified by introducing Claire Pentecost’s concept of the artist-researcher as the ‘public amateur’ ‘who consents to learn in public so that the very conditions of knowledge production can be interrogated’ (Pentecost 2010, np). Her ‘public amateur’ learns in the public, for and with the public, in an emancipatory act, engaging and empowering both the artist-researcher and their audience. With Pentecost, we would argue that the main distinguishing principle of artistic research from ‘purely’ artistic output that also may be informed by research, as in research-based art, is the reflexivity that brings about emancipation and hence opens up new possibilities.

Both a great work of art as well as a great artistic research work offer an appreciation of the level of reflexivity and conceptual grounding alongside immersive or experiential elements, even if the proportions may be different. Reflecting on artistic and artistic-research decisions is diligent, exhaustive work which grows slowly and over time. Different layers of reflexivity are added as the experience, methodology, epistemology and the project’s overall trajectory progresses and transforms. In this process, it is not only the whole that becomes more than its parts, but also the parts can become more than the whole, start a life of their own, as a new idea or project. The development of the methodology, certain skills or techniques, or quite generally, the development of artistic or research practice or a specific contribution to a topic or practice, can become the leading focus. The initial spore, which sparked the project, however, will be found in every part of the work, even if the anticipated path of research and the initial project design may change in an unforeseeable manner, an occurrence which is to be found in most basic research and many PhD projects. Artistic working and thinking grow in surprising mycelia forms, as do basic and artistic research. Contemplation and observation are integral parts. Our 16 mm film *Contemplations* aims to reflect the phase in the artistic-epistemic process where observations, emergent thoughts and connections initiate, crystallize or dissolve (Figure 17.2).

2. Co-creation in progress

This leads us to our own artistic and artistic-research work, which we always fashion co-creatively, in changing teams or as a duo. Our own process of creating a new work, such as the case with the film *Contemplations*, involves a lot of research and discussion about the possible topic and focus of the artwork. As we have cultivated a co-creative practice for over 25 years, verbally expressing, arguing and reflecting on what we would like to engage in starts the process after the initial idea has appeared in either one of our team members. In these

Figure 17.2: View of the Donaukanal overlaid with historical drawing



Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

negotiations and expositions of an idea, turning it eventually into a topic of collective creative interest, the initial spark, fragmentary as any inspiration, is changed, challenged and enriched by the other person(s)'s input. In co-creative processes, it is never the one idea that forms the work but the in-between of ideas and perspectives, even if they will eventually fall into place as one collective focus. Along with the discussions, the process of research involves artistic as well as scientific sources to create a collective entry point. The team will consider the topic from different disciplinary scientific angles, as well as artistic work with the same or comparable interest. Only after this phase of preparatory work will we start the process of practical experimentation and creating artistic work. Filming, however, is a practice we mostly do as a duo. Enriched by the research and conversations beforehand, the process of filming is usually swift and done with very little talking. The cameras we use are 16mm or 8mm analogue cameras that pass hands between us during filming. The sound these cameras make when rolling is very informative. The person operating the camera informs the other by pointing and focusing the objective, but additionally through the mechanic sound that changes when the recording is paused or the recording speed altered, creating accelerated or slow-motion imagery. In this phase, embodied knowledge, sensory cognition, and related experiences and practices are essential. The camera, like a brush, captures and records the movements of our bodies, moving along with and between them, calibrating and recording the traces that are drawn along our movement through space on the linear strip of celluloid, which will then

represent the time the viewer will be able to watch. Movement through space is converted into time, in a tribute to spacetime, that we believe only celluloid film can provide. However, even though its material may be linear, the actual experience of the viewer can be that of non-linear time, an effect realized through in-camera cuts, tempo-manipulation, montage in the editing process and, as in *Contemplations* plainly obvious, double exposure while filming. Many parts of *Contemplations* are superimposed in the camera, which means the time and exposure along the length of the film strip were planned and sectioned into different phases before filming; once exposed, the film was rewound to be exposed a second time.

After filming, the artistic work rests again; additional research adds to its reflection. As we work on analogue film, we need to send it to the lab for development and digitization. This creates a fertile distance between the moment of recording and its memorization, and the observing and contemplation of the filmed material. It is important to forget much of the sensory and epistemic processing from the moment of filming to be able to see the filmed material for what it is – and what it could become – and to distinguish it from the personal or collective memories or desires of the moment of filming.

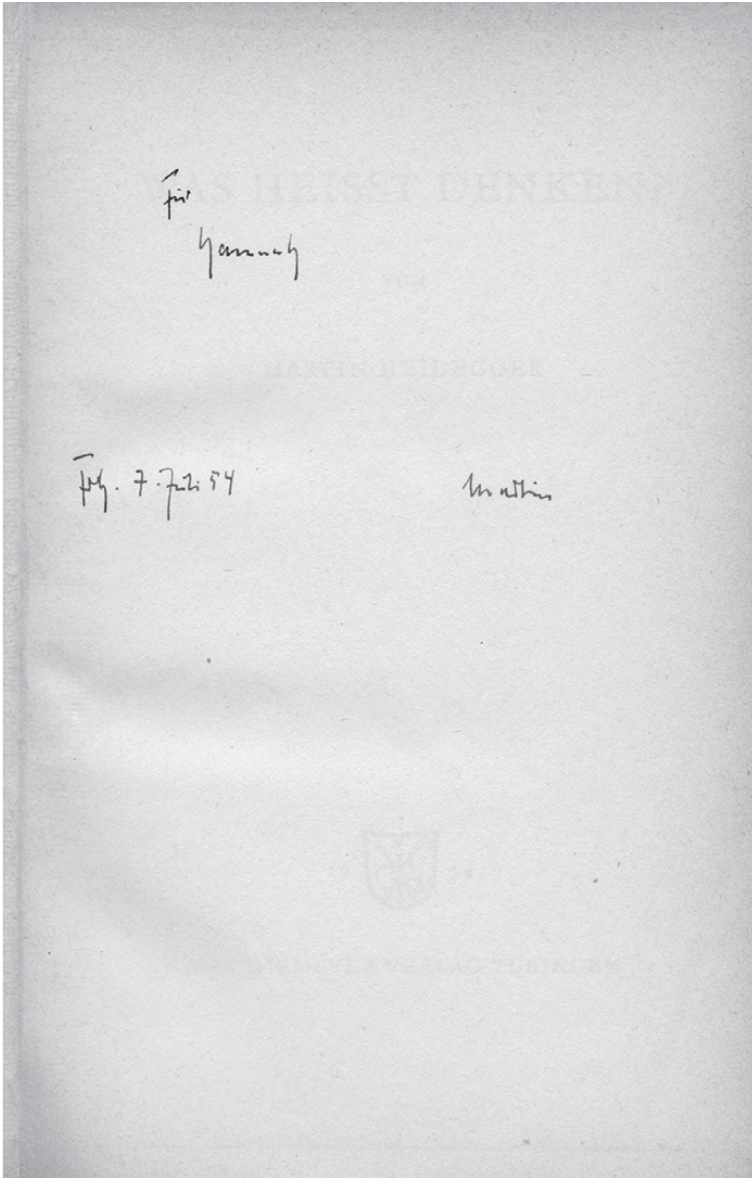
The editing process starts with viewing the material, weighing options of adding a soundscape, if and what to cut, where to bring in more focus, and where to insert breaks or disturbances. Even though recording and speed are uttered through the sound of its mechanics, our analogue cameras are not fitted with sound recording units. The consideration of silence, sound and potential collaborations for a soundtrack is the focus of this next phase. Eventually, the way in which the process of cinematic organization models the visible then fades into the background, and the cinematic experience encourages the audience to surrender to the flow of images (Schrödl 2004).

3. Creation and research in-between

In terms of inspiration and research material for the film *Contemplations*, we can name Margret Mead's poetic reflection of her garden and everyday surroundings – her main inspiration and topic, or Bruce Nauman's continuous exploration of himself as the artist in his studio. Clearly, the history of what seeing means, historical illustrations of perspective, and specifically Hans Belting's book *Florenz und Bagdad. Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks*² were an important resource; but also potentially less obvious sources had a great influence – namely a pdf of Hannah Arendt's copy of Heidegger's *Was heisst Denken?*. At one point in the process of creating *Contemplations*, we experimented with using excerpts of the book as a possible soundtrack.

² English edition: *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science*.

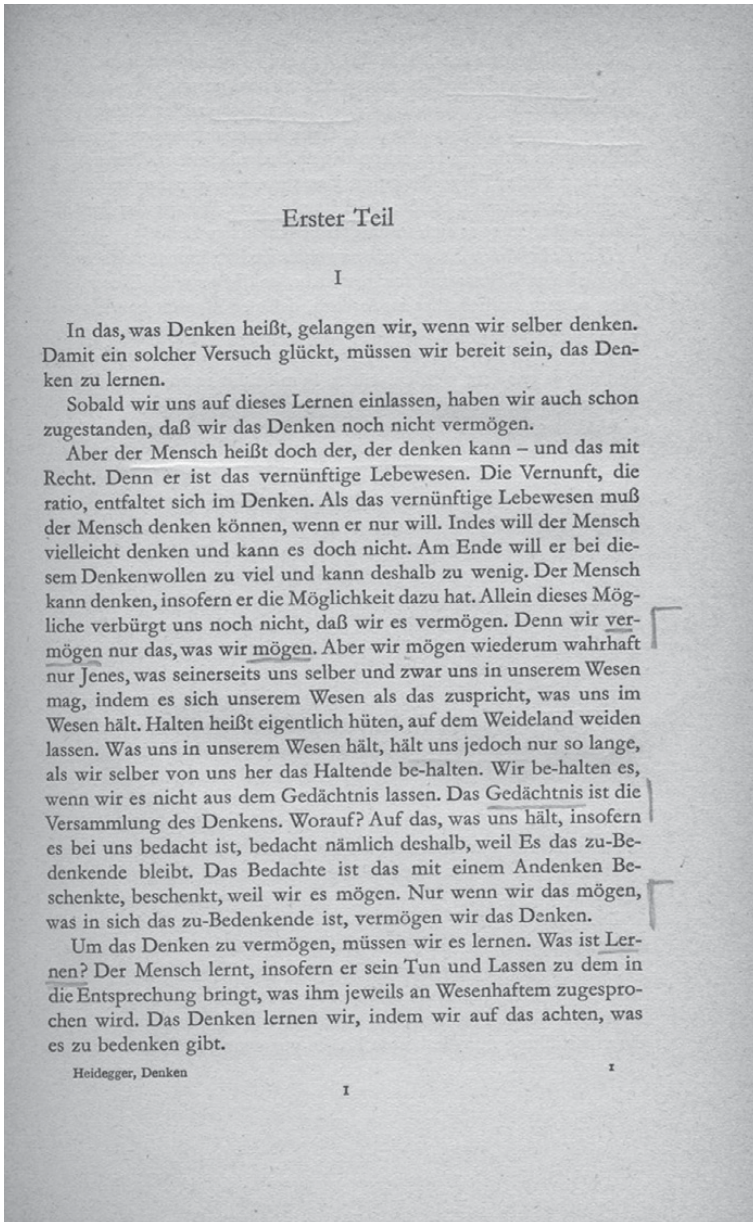
Figures 17.3, 17.4 and 17.5: Scans of Hannah Arendt's copy of *Was heisst Denken?* dedicated to her by Martin Heidegger, pdf, Hannah Arendt Archive, Bard College



Source: Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, Hannah Arendt Personal Library, <https://blogs.bard.edu/arendtcollection/heidegger-martin-was-heisst-denken/>

(continued)

Figures 17.3, 17.4 and 17.5: Scans of Hannah Arendt's copy of *Was heisst Denken?* dedicated to her by Martin Heidegger, pdf, Hannah Arendt Archive, Bard College (continued)



Figures 17.3, 17.4 and 17.5: Scans of Hannah Arendt's copy of *Was heisst Denken?* dedicated to her by Martin Heidegger, pdf, Hannah Arendt Archive, Bard College (continued)

Unsere Sprache nennt z. B. das, was zum Wesen des Freundes gehört, das Freundliche. Dementsprechend nennen wir jetzt das, was in sich das zu-Bedenkende ist: das Bedenkliche. Alles Bedenkliche gibt zu denken. Aber es gibt diese Gabe immer nur insoweit, als das Bedenkliche von sich her schon das zu-Bedenkende *ist*. Wir nennen jetzt und in der Folge dasjenige, was stets, weil einsther und allem voraus, zu bedenken bleibt: das Bedenklichste. Was ist das Bedenklichste? Wie zeigt es sich in unserer bedenklichen Zeit?

Das Bedenklichste ist, daß wir noch nicht denken; immer noch nicht, obgleich der Weltzustand fortgesetzt bedenklicher wird. Dieser Vorgang scheint freilich eher zu fordern, daß der Mensch handelt und zwar ohne Verzug, statt in Konferenzen und auf Kongressen zu reden und sich im bloßen Vorstellen dessen zu bewegen, was sein sollte und wie es gemacht werden müßte. Somit fehlt es am Handeln und keineswegs am Denken.

Und dennoch – vielleicht hat der bisherige Mensch seit Jahrhunderten bereits zu viel gehandelt und zu wenig gedacht. Aber wie kann heute jemand behaupten, daß wir noch nicht denken, wo doch überall das Interesse für die Philosophie rege ist und immer lauter wird, wo beinahe jedermann wissen will, was es denn mit der Philosophie auf sich hat. Die Philosophen sind »die« Denker. So heißen sie, weil sich das Denken eigentlich in der Philosophie abspielt.

Niemand wird bestreiten wollen, daß heute ein Interesse für die Philosophie besteht. Doch gibt es heute noch etwas, wofür der Mensch sich nicht interessiert, in der Weise nämlich, wie er das »interessieren« versteht?

Inter-esse heißt: unter und zwischen den Sachen sein, mitten in einer Sache stehen und bei ihr bleiben. Allein für das heutige Interesse gilt nur das Interessante. Das ist solches, was erlaubt, im nächsten Augenblick schon gleichgültig zu sein und durch anderes abgelöst zu werden, was einen dann ebensowenig angeht wie das Vorige. Man meint heute oft, etwas dadurch besonders zu würdigen, daß man es interessant findet. In Wahrheit hat man durch dieses Urteil das Interessante bereits in das Gleichgültige und alsbald Langweilige abgeschoben.

Daß man für die Philosophie ein Interesse zeigt, bezeugt noch keine Bereitschaft zum Denken. Gewiß gibt es allenthalben eine ernsthafte Beschäftigung mit der Philosophie und ihren Fragen. Es gibt einen rühmenswürdigen Aufwand von Gelehrsamkeit zur Erforschung ihrer Geschichte. Hier bestehen nützliche und löbliche Aufgaben, zu deren Erfüllung nur die besten Kräfte gut genug sind, zumal dann,

In an online resource provided by Bard College, we can see how Arendt underlined part of a sentence in a way that it became deeply impressed in the soft paper and is thus clearly visible on the reverse side of the page, even in the scan. The underlined sentence presses the question if humans, for centuries, have acted too much and thought too little about it – ‘zu viel gehandelt und zu wenig gedacht’ (Heidegger 1954, 2) (see Figures 17.3, 17.4 and 17.5).

These scanned pages impressed us deeply, and as if they were an artwork, we not only read their content but also their material aspects and aesthetic form – such as the transparency and colour of the paper that superimposes the dedication ‘Für Hannah’ (For Hannah) with the title ‘Was heisst Denken?’ (What is thinking?) – and the book’s preservation, including light and humidity marking the paper. In addition to the marks left by Heidegger’s pen and Arendt’s pencil, Heidegger’s words, printed and handwritten, and Arendt’s lines, both denote the in-between of their thought, gender, ethnicity, attention and contemporaneity. To us, the material imprints of her visceral reaction to his propositions indicate the narrative of their fraught relationship.

After this heavily underlined sentence on acting too much and thinking too little, Heidegger explains his understanding of the term interest, again underlined by Arendt. Interest, from the Latin *inter-esse*, literally means being in-between. In the following, we will observe different manifestations of *inter-esse* through the prism of our artistic research on dizziness and how it becomes fertile regarding reflexivity. Heidegger emphasizes that rather than diminishing something by calling it interesting, we should consider that which is of inter-est is the in-betweenness, the being in the middle and between something and staying with it, ‘unter und zwischen den Sachen sein, mitten in einer Sache stehen und bei ihr bleiben’. To us, being in the middle of and between something and staying with it, is exactly what reflexivity means as a practice. Being in the middle of something unfinished and staying with it furthermore reflects the work in the studio; the location and spacetime of thinking, making, explaining and discussing – inviting experimentation and reflexivity to take up shape and materiality and create momentum and energy in a circular process. We theorize this *inter-esse* as the ‘compossible space’ within our artistic research on dizziness and then will further connect it to the site of the studio.

4. The compossible space

The long-term focus of our artistic and research *inter-esse* revolves around a phenomenon we call dizziness (Anderwald et al 2019). It is essential to note that we understand dizziness as a dynamic that unbalances, unhinges and even suspends certainty, reflection, equilibrium and knowing, bringing us to a place of confusion, uncertainty, unpredictability and disequilibrium. It opens an

in-between. Dizziness occurs in different contexts and on different scales: from the personal to the societal to bringing whole systems out of kilter. Becoming dizzy and unstable is a somatic and mental phenomenon that we humans know well, but it can still leave us petrified, disoriented and vulnerable. Nonetheless, our research explores dizziness through the prism that it can become a resource; we regard dizziness as an unpredictable, dynamic state that can develop into the generative and the destructive. With Søren Kierkegaard, we acknowledge that dizziness creates the ‘possibility of possibility’ (Kierkegaard 1980, 51), meaning that even though this state may have a petrifying effect, it also signals an alteration or multiplication of possibilities and the freedom and possibility to choose leaves us dizzy (Kierkegaard 1980). A state that suspends what we perceive as given and stable, dizziness opens spaces of encounter and transformation, with François Jullien: ‘it’s the grey, the intermediary, the in-between, that is interesting – it’s ambiguity that makes us go back to the in-between of the non-separation of two opposites and that cracks our reflection and allows for new possibilities to unfold’ (Feyertag and Jullien 2019, 58).

Together with philosophers François Jullien and Karoline Feyertag, we came to describe these heterotopic spaces of encounter and in-betweenness as the ‘compossible space’. The compossible space conceptualizes a spacetime of (con-)fusing and conflating, potentially allowing new formations to emerge from its indistinctness (Anderwald et al 2018). Therefore, we understand the compossible space in two dimensions: as a theoretical and actual spacetime dynamized through states of dizziness created by the meeting of diverse and contradictory elements, atmospheres, dynamics and matter. The compossible space has become of methodological, practice-based and theoretical essence to our artistic research work. Where Heidegger’s *inter-esse* seems closer to contemplation, a way to be and spend time with or between something, the compossible space is dynamic, filled with, and actualized by, dizzying motion and changing possibilities. It is more difficult to come to a space of contemplation when possibilities suddenly multiply or dissolve, as excitement or fear may set in. Building on the concepts of dizziness and the compossible space, the tides of confusion, action, experience, reasoning, contemplation and reflexivity are all needed to play out and scale the multiplicity of possibilities we may find ourselves in, and their convergence makes the case ‘to release reason and subjectivity from negative typecasting, and to endow art with much needed and stronger epistemic credentials’ (Beech 2021, np). As there are different modes of considering reflexivity in artistic practice and research, the term reflexivity is here introduced as a dynamic movement to a more profound awareness, understanding and critical reflection of personal, interpersonal, structural, methodological and epistemological biases and basic assumptions, as part of the ‘unthought’ (Jullien 2006, 15). The ‘unthought’ constitutes the basis of our thinking, that which we cannot think simultaneously when thinking about something as in the direction of

something. As such, the ‘unthought’ roots and nurtures our thinking, shapes the perspectives, agencies and capacity to reflexivity, but cannot be reflected when our thinking is directed towards *something*, even though it shapes how and what we are able to consider in relation to this *something* (Jullien 2006). As Ginsberg holds, we need to get out of that boat to examine the moving ground ‘in which thoughts take place’ (Ginsberg 1974, 31).

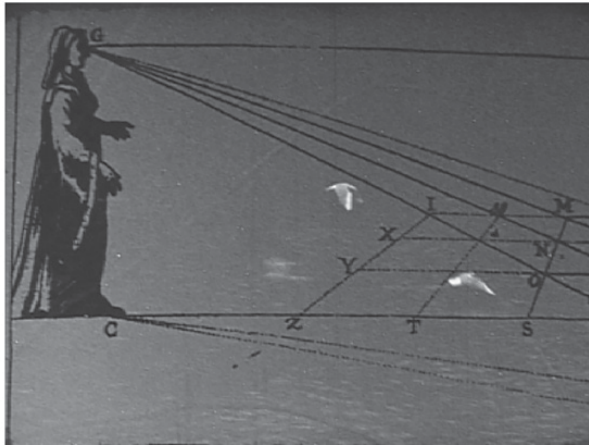
5. Embedded observation and contemplation

Our film *Contemplations* aims to create a visual abstraction or representation of the compossible space by showing an observing view and, at times, overlaying (moving) visual planes and fusing imagery of the outside and the inside, perspectives from the studio’s window, and insights from within the studio. The effect of finding outside connections to what preoccupies us is well documented in psychology. Reflecting on how these fusions play out visually and what creative impact these contemplations may have on artistic decisions was the speculative aim. More specifically, we reflect on the (visual) impact of our surroundings, conflating thought, sources and sites with sight and insight. The historical background of the geographical location we live and work in is a constant source of inspiration and is reflected in different artistic-research work, such as the performative *Mis/Guided Tours through the Neighbourhood* (2018–ongoing), which take participants on walks to specific sites of historical and/or artistic value around our studio’s location, or the two EU-funded projects on resistance we initiated: *Arts of Resistance* (2024–2025) and *ART WORKS! A European Culture of Resistance and Liberation* (2019–2022) are both directly inspired by our late neighbour, Irma Schwager, who had been a well-known Austrian resistance fighter during the Nazi regime and lived upstairs from our studio. The compossibility of historical, geographical, political, or other facts and occurrences, such as personal relations, emotions, insights and attitudes, all influence the (co-creative) work in the studio. The studio work allows for confusion and vagueness. It is a spacetime for the fusion, coexistence and transformation of mutually exclusive elements. Complex and potentially new relationships of aesthetics, inner imagery, materials, skills and outside reality merge and transform here. Thus, the studio becomes the de facto space of the compossible space and its dynamic processes (see Figures 17.6 and 17.7). Moreover, and beyond the practical, the studio can serve as a metaphor for the space of materialization of transformative compossibility through the artist-researcher’s work and artistic output.

6. The studio as the locus of *inter-esse*

The artist-researcher is a hybrid being with diverse needs, existing within different disciplines, conditions and demands related to their practice – their

Figures 17.6 and 17.7: View of trees overlaid with print, and of the Donaukanal overlaid with historical drawing



Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

studio, thus, necessarily a heterotopia. Be it discussion and critique or solitary contemplation, the needs of the artistic-research practice will evolve along the work's trajectory; they transform and change with the process. We can thus imagine their studio as a lab, library, stage, scriptorium, workshop, forum, cutting room, public space, or any other space predefined by technical and social possibilities supportive of their practice in the momentary stage of artistic research. This practice involves monitoring the development of artistic work, tracking the progress and outcomes of research, noting the influence of environmental factors such as changes in light, humidity and

temperature, as well as social dynamics as invited participants engage with the work. Moreover, it includes listening for critical moments in a composition, reflecting on selected techniques and possible approaches to apply, and considering emerging questions and changes. This list aims to show that the studio serves as a spacetime for learning and understanding, a place for experimentation and organization. In its essence, it is fertile ground ‘under the sign of process’ (O’Doherty 2008, 18), making it indispensable to artistic research as a process-driven practice. Also, in terms of artistic practice, the studio can be viewed as a space for *inter-esse*, as it finds itself removed from an outside world that may be regarded as the work’s inspiration and it will be again the destination of the finished work when it leaves the studio to be exhibited, stored or mounted in a home or office. The studio itself, therefore, becomes the in-between space of processing, a valuable metaphor as much as a resourceful spacetime. Its conditions become the subject of scrutiny as they impact the artist(-researcher)’s reflexivity.

Part of the treasures of the collection of Belvedere Museum in Vienna are Caspar David Friedrich’s drawings showing the view from his studio’s two windows to the river Elbe (see Figures 17.8, 17.9 and 17.10). The contemplative and concentrated working processes of the studio, symbolized by the scissors and frames of the right window, the key, note and broom of the left, reminding us of enclosure and the necessities of daily chores, are contrasted with the atmosphere in front of the studio: a riverbank in the sunshine, passing boats, waves and wind. It is easy to imagine voices, the murmur of water and wind to accompany the rhythm of Friedrich’s artistic work. The artist visible partly in the mirror above the scissors, as he offers this perspective from the inside to the outside, the two windows, their sills and open sashes, the thick walls – the windows are the membrane to the outside, shielding the artist from, as much as connecting him with, the external world. Metaphorically, we can locate reflexivity exactly as this locus: at the window – it is the membrane, the in-between zone of two spaces with different conditions, functions, atmospheres and elements which are coinciding, opposing and merging in this sluice chamber of compossibility. Compossibility is different to coexistence. After Jullien, it describes the difference in possibility through the meeting and merging of elements, conditions and matter. Reflexivity is considered the transformation happening through, with and at this membrane, inserted between, staying with it, and instrumental to the processes of artmaking, researching and to any epistemic processing. It is the sluice chamber of the window, where the atmospheres of two spaces, their inside and outside conditions such as temperature, humidity, smells, sounds and air movements, meet.

Contemplation is a process we find very fruitful to reflexivity, the fertilization of thought through imagination processes, inviting reflexivity to settle. What can be said about artist-researchers’ contemplation? Certainly,

Figures 17.8 and 17.9: These drawings provide a view through the windows of Friedrich's studio to the outside



Source: Friedrich, C.D. (1805–1806) *Blick aus dem Atelier des Künstlers in Dresden*, drawings, Collection Museum Belvedere, Wien

generalizations on artists and artist-researchers' processes are not expedient. We know from experience and research that creative processes develop with individual and conditional differences and can progress quite unexpected, even for the creatives themselves (Benedek et al 2017).

Asking what the artist-researcher is observing when looking out the window of their studio, we consider our own practice, as well as that of our friends, with whom we have long and recurring conversations on the topic. Most artists and artist-researchers experience phases, when the work needs to rest, meaning that no changes are made to it in material form, but it is considered and thought about from different perspectives. This is the phase when (consciously and unconsciously) looking out of the window and

Figures 17.8 and 17.9: These drawings provide a view through the windows of Friedrich's studio to the outside (continued)



Source: Friedrich, C.D. (1805–1806) *Blick aus dem Atelier des Künstlers in Dresden*, drawings, Collection Museum Belvedere, Wien

contemplating happens more often. In our work, we call these recurring phases ‘contemplation’ rather than observation, thus the homonymous film work. From many colleagues, we hear how germane this phase of invisible work is in their practice. New approaches, less obvious connections and further experimentation can emerge from it, at times, only to start the circular process of reflection anew. The essayist and novelist Anna Kim speaks about sitting on the sofa contemplating in order to let the novel, its characters, atmospheres and environments take shape inside her, as she feels compelled to make room in herself to allow for the forming of the plot. However, when she actually writes, she is adamant about her empty white cube studio providing the needed visual and auditory quietness, taking her away from any

Figure 17.10: View of the skyline overlaid with historical drawing



Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

further inspiration, which at this point would be a distraction (Anderwald et al 2023). In his *A Lover's Discourse*, philosopher Roland Barthes (2001) explains his intermittent work process quoting Flaubert's customs:

When his sentences ran dry, Flaubert flung himself on his divan: he called this his 'marinade.' If the thing reverberates too powerfully, it makes such a din in my body that I must halt any occupation; I stretch out on my bed and give in without a struggle to the 'inner storm'. (Barthes 2001, 201)

The film *Contemplations* reflects on this terrain: When it is storming inside, what of the outside finds its sensory entrance to the awareness of the artist? For Barthes, it is again a matter of location: 'The bed (by day) is the site of the Image-repertoire; the desk is once again, and whatever one does there, reality' (Barthes 2001, 201). As visual artists and visual thinkers, we are interested in what happens visually when 'marinading', contemplating and surrendering to the tempest of our inner life against the outside reality. What imagery penetrates our awareness and is thus observed? Is it the surroundings, or is it rather the observation of the images that arise from the imagination? Do they overlap and fuse? For the film *Contemplations*, we wanted to artistically explore and merge the different planes of visibility to offer ambiguity on a membrane, an in-between space of mental and outside perception of visual imagery; the actual surroundings and their fusing with the inner images conjured through the artistic practice, research, conversations, observation and thought. In *Contemplations*, we point the camera to the window and let it watch the outside, as we would standing by the window, then overlying

its imagery with perspectival drawings that aim to understand the optical workings, geometry and physical conception of a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane. By letting the camera eye contemplate what can be seen outside, we propose not only a view but indicate that the imagery is not simply there but also marks a beyond of the studio space. First, a beyond of the enclosed, concentrated space dedicated to open questions, unfinished works and scattered, fragmentary matters; second, the elements depicted are only a part of what makes the film. The black and white film material creates an abstraction, as it has a graphic quality reminiscent of a graphite drawing. This impression is further intensified by superimposed historical drawings. The title *Contemplations* indicates that these images are only the entry point to an ongoing inner monologue, an invisible or barely visible encounter of inner imagery, wandering thoughts and views of the outside world. The term hallucination, originally, was used to describe a wandering mind.

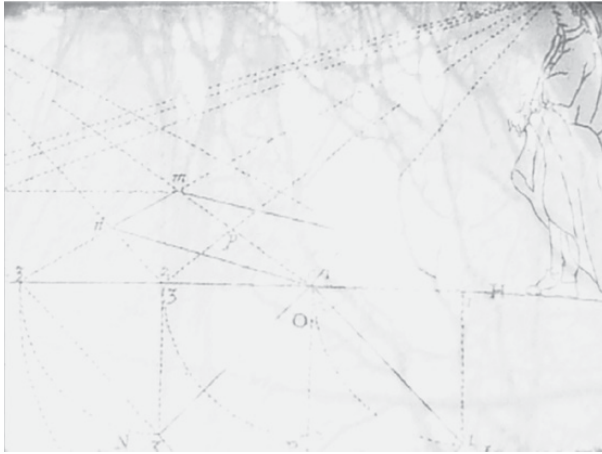
7. Observing art, an encounter in an ‘*agréable moment*’

As described, artistic research work needs time and space for contemplation. The studio’s inspiration, the library’s resources, or encounters with others (artworks, people, daily occurrences and surroundings) leave impressions in the mind, thus on the creative process that are transferred to paper, celluloid and other materials. To contemplate derives from Latin *contemplatus*, ‘to gaze attentively, observe; consider, contemplate’, but also ‘to mark out a space for observation (as an augur does)’³ and indicates deep and quiet thought and reflection over a temporal extension, the gazing in a specific direction, and spiritual modes of mediation and thought (-templum, Latin temple). It shares a closeness to Greek philosophy’s understanding of theory, which needs the insertion of distance via time and space, a travel, to account for something that one experienced on a different territory and brings back to a community (Figure 17.11).

Experience is made blindly, as philosopher Marcus Steinweg (2013) writes. The insertion of spatial or temporal distance is, therefore, important to understanding and reflexivity. The blindness of experiences applies to many activities, not only to being immersed in thought and creative practice but also to perceiving art. The in-between or *inter-esse* of the artistic research practice is mirrored in the space opening between the artist(-researcher)’s intention and the reception and understanding of the recipient or audience. When visiting a cinema in France, the following announcement will be made: ‘Nous vous souhaitons un agréable moment.’ This sentence doesn’t

³ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=contemplation>

Figure 17.11: View of trees overlaid with historical drawing



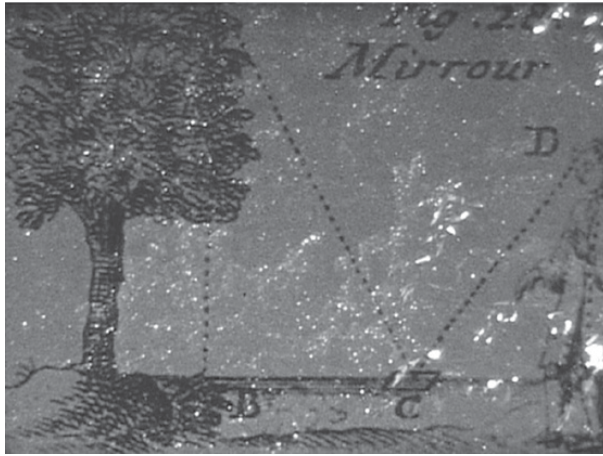
Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

express the wish that you might enjoy the film; rather, it wishes for you to enjoy the moment, the temporary meeting with the artwork. This can be read as a recognition of what happens between the artwork and its participant or audience; it transgresses the film work and takes into account what an encounter between an audience and a work does. The artwork constitutes the framework for this encounter that immerses the participant in all their thoughts, emotions and knowledges. The audience spends time with the work, experiences it, and might also enjoy it. Under those circumstances, what is observed in this *agréable moment*? If we turn to the work of psychoanalyst Esther Bick, we realize that observation is an experience where we learn as much about the observed as about our own emotional, cognitive, organizational, and somatic processes and attitudes, as these are evoked during the observation. Bick argues that ‘thinking and observing are almost inseparable’, which constitutes ‘an important lesson, for it teaches caution and reliance on consecutive observations for confirmation of any hypotheses made’ (Bick 1964, 565). But it also teaches that the blindness of experience still enables *inter-esse*, as different processes play out simultaneously, actively and passively, in the tension of observation and immersion, encouraging processes of criticality and reflexivity.

8. Consolidating contemplations

Reflexivity is not a conscious process only but is also informed by subconscious and visceral ways of processing information and findings (Figure 17.12).

Figure 17.12: View of trees overlaid with historical drawing



Source: Anderwald, R. and Grond, L. (2011) *Contemplations*, filmstill, 16 mm film, Cinédoc Paris Films Coop, Paris

Enriching the term reflexivity with contemplation, observation, Flaubert's 'marinade', and the *inter-esse* of the compossible space of the studio as well as the encounter with the artwork in a cinema, we aim to draw attention to the manifold processes impacting reflexivity in artistic research, practice and appreciation. Although we often employ the capacity for reflexivity to engage in reflection or deliberation, dizzying, non-deliberative, embedded, social, immersive and somatic experiences may constitute a generative factor for enhancing reflexivity. This is precisely why we need others as sources of knowledge, to build on their work and thinking or to enrich, criticize and question our work through their presence and attention. Reflexivity becomes the turning back of experience on itself and instigates learning and sense-making processes. George Herbert Mead strengthens the social function of reflexivity:

It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind. (Mead 1934, 134)

Artistic research progresses on different degrees of active and passive engagement of the artist-researcher themselves, their team and their audiences. These

phases of engagement may challenge the perceived borders between art, research and life, between experience and reflexivity, as they, in a circular and at times unpredictable manner, transgress and enter each other; they dissolve and metamorphose in the compossible space energized by dynamics that can become dizzying and transformative. However, it is exactly the experience of dizziness that incites a rethinking of the given, thus potentially making our being with the world more generative and allowing for the discovery of unexpected relations between elements, topics, individuals and their surroundings. Dizziness involves uncertainty, unexpectedness and vulnerability that need observation and mitigation in creative as well as social processes, and in thought. To us, this is what the *inter-esse* of artistic research holds; it invites reflexivity for a more autonomous and empowered thinking and being with the world.

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