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Artist-centric Inquiry

Abstract

Recent attempts to situate practice-based dance as a subject for academic research have proven to be problematic since dance has not been traditionally viewed as an object of knowledge due to its kinesthetic, temporal, and experiential dimensions. Therefore, a new approach to inquiry must be undertaken that accepts dance practice on its own terms, without force-fitting it into preconceived notions of 'knowledge' or 'research'. Calling this new approach, 'art-centric inquiry,' I will argue that through direct, first-person involvement in the investigation dance can be academically studied without denying the characteristics which distinguish it from traditional domains of knowledge.

Introduction

As a practicing dancer/choreographer who has produced an extensive body of choreographic work over the past 30 years, the question of whether or not dance, as practice, is a researchable subject is one of prime personal interest to me. It is also a subject which has been embraced by a growing group of artists and academics in recent years. The reasons for this increasing interest in the subject matter are diverse but eventually seem to coalesce around questions about the position of the first-person artist and how what he/she does is related to knowledge. One possible reason these questions arise for many dancer/choreographers who are long-term practitioners of the art, is that as they mature as artists their approach to dance tends to migrate from the external to the internal; from being a primarily external, physical focus to one which becomes profoundly internal, multi-layered and subtle in nature. However, even though the dance artist may be attuned to this feeling on a very deep, personal level, it is an inner sense/state of mind that is quite difficult to express, explain or share with someone else – thus the drive to express it through the only medium that seems able to express it – the human body, through dance.

The Bharata Natyam dancer, Malavika Sarukkai, in a 1993 interview expresses this idea in thoughtful, searching sentences that attempt to reflect the deep-felt experience she is trying to put into words:

After so many years of dancing, I know what it does to me -- deep within. You feel a kind of awaking inside, a deep sense of harmony -- I mean I feel it when I perform. It changes... it changes you inside. And I think you have to feel this harmony. And I think feeling harmony is something which is not so easy, because I think most dance people are very fragmented, you know, and generally split up within, and I think dance gives you this -- it gives you a path. It gives you a way to harmonize.

(Grauer, 1993)

This heart-felt testimony successfully captures something about the essential nature of the inner life of a creative dance practitioner – yet, at the same time, it also suggests the difficulty of such communication. This raises an important question concerning how an artist can communicate the very personal, corporal experience of dance to people outside the actual experience – not in terms of projecting a performance, but in relating the actual *experience* to someone for the purpose of *understanding* that experience, and understanding the work that grows from it – a situation that would likely exist in a research environment.

Discussion

Since the interplay between performer and audience is beyond the scope of this present study, I will focus on the issue of communicability, from the aspect of a performer who is attempting to communicate his/her inner experience to another individual, such as a researcher. This would include speaking of the fragile creative moment he/she inhabits as well as the work that is thus created, in the moment of its creation. Issues related to what happens in terms of communication between performer and audience are a related, but perhaps tangential issue.

For the dance practitioner, it remains a seeming impossibility to remove the 'I' of the experience from the doing of their art work. If this is true, that only the first-person practitioner can experience the essence of what is being created, as a felt, 'embodied', completely mind/body experience, then it poses a profound problem for the accurate and complete transmission or recording of the dance experience to someone engaging with it from outside, e.g. a researcher.

There is the sense, as Melrose (2007) has written, that the signature practices of artists likely gain at least a part of their significance by 'a relational mark, established between "the work", its maker/s, and its validation by those whose judgements of taste and value are vital to the disciplines concerned.' For this present paper, however, rather than addressing the creative act of the artist in relation to a social context, I will address the artist's engagement in the very personal moment of creation. Once that creation becomes a part of performance, then society is likely indelibly involved in the equation, but in relation to the moment of creation, the idea of the social stamp of approval may not be as relevant to the present discussion.

Many other human pursuits seem to be intellectually accessible to those who are not practitioners – yet, in relation to dance, this kind of accessibility appears to be largely out of reach due to the fact that dance is primarily a non-verbal art form.

With the current academic interest in practice-based research, this perceived problem is one that is gradually being embraced in various ways by academics interested in the problems of knowledge in relation to practice in the arts (Scrivener, 2002; Nelson, 2006).

As dance has been increasingly accepted by academia, dance practitioners, perhaps in an attempt to fit into the academic environment, have begun to call this internal kind of artistic inquiry, 'research' (Borgdorff, 2005; Haseman, 2006; Liamputtong and Rumbold, 2008). But the question arises, how is it research? In what manner can the internal, personal journey of the artist be seen in this way?

It is indeed this very problem that has led to my present interest in the questions expressed in this study. In it, I address the possibility that this experienced, felt, personal, first-person dance *could*, possibly in the end, be seen as research; given a carefully delineated set of parameters that I will discuss toward the end of the paper. This potential will most likely also depend on the advent of an appropriate technology. Since self-reflection is a kind of distraction – something that moves the artist from the act of doing to the act of observing -- it is the promise of technology; of its speed, precision, miniaturization and accuracy that may eventually open the door to the creative world of the artist by removing the diversion that self-reflection necessitates and thus, potentially, making first-person 'research' a possibility.

Current debates concerning knowledge production and acquisition in relation to practice-based research in the arts demonstrate a growing interest in the general subject matter that this paper addresses. However, specific answers are yet to be reached concerning how practiced dance can truly be accessed and understood as 'research'. One approach artists are beginning to embrace is the use of new media to record and share the moment-by-moment accounts of their creative work, ostensibly in an attempt to make the first-person experience of the practicing artist accessible to arts inquiry. Yet, as in Auslander (1997: 2) and before him, Baudrillard (1994: 164), the idea that this kind of 'mediatization', somehow has changed the concept of 'liveness' to also include the media, is itself perhaps a conceptualization that may be part of the problem. Granted, live performance has begun to ape media and appear after a pre-creation of it within media; however this doesn't change the fact that the creative act of the artist is still just that. Nor does the phenomenon that the virtual reality created by media is often confused with actual reality alter the fact that the actual reality still exists. It is the flesh and blood artist that is the locus of the only thing that could be called practice-based research. The involvement of media hasn't changed this essential equation. The ephemeral *act* of creation is still a profoundly personal, *human* act rather than one that is somehow a hybrid of the human and the machine as in Hayles' (1999) idea of the 'posthuman'. I argue that it is still a human mind that is at the core of the machine – and even more so at the core of the creative act.

Robin Nelson, in his article, 'Practice as Research and the Problem of Knowledge', comments that 'The process of practitioner "action research" is a conscious strategy to reflect upon established practice as well as to bring out "tacit knowledge"' (2006: 113). This will be necessary if the practiced artistic act is to be understood in the sense of being research – i.e. the 'tacit knowledge' of which Nelson speaks will need to be more than 'brought out' – it will need to be wholly revealed.

This is precisely where the advent of the digital age has offered a kind of hope that practice as research in the arts may finally become a more meaningful objective. New media and digital, computer technology hold out the promise of one day being 'smart' enough to be able to capture first-person elements of the creative process that were hitherto off limits to technology -- for the types of technology that have existed up until now have been relatively slow and clumsy, and thus have interfered with the artistic act rather than unobtrusively recording or observing it. This type of technological achievement may eventually make practice-based research in the arts a much more attainable goal.

The very phrase, 'practice-based research in the arts,' can be read as somewhat of a tripartite anomaly. By looking at the definitions of each of the three aspects of this phrase in isolation, the reason for its anomalistic nature becomes more apparent.

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines 'practice' as being: 'to pursue or be engaged in (a particular occupation, profession, skill, or art)' ('Practise'). In this sense, it is the *act of doing* a particular line of work and therefore it is temporally limited to the present, as one cannot 'practice' in the future or the past. Practice therefore suggests the present as viewed from the attribute of action.

The final word of the phrase 'practice-based research' is defined by the *OED* as: a 'systematic investigation or inquiry aimed at contributing to knowledge of a theory, topic, etc., by careful consideration, observation, or study of a subject. In later use also: original critical or scientific investigation carried out under the auspices of an academic or other institution.' The word 'research' was thought to have first been recorded as being used in this sense by the English astrologer, John Harvey in his 1588 book: *A Discursive Probleme Concerning Prophecies* where he writes: 'Peruse some of their owne writings, research their antiquities, compare their chronologies, examine their records and registers' ('Research'). If one looks at key words in this definition, such as: 'systematic', 'inquiry', 'careful consideration', 'observation', 'study', and 'investigation', there is a theme that runs through all of them: *intention*.

The very concept of research is closely allied with the idea of intention since research is the willed decision to focus on a particular aspect of a subject. Art-making, on the other hand, often is much more open-ended than this – especially in the realm of improvisation. Sheets-Johnstone (1981: 400) writes that, 'A dance

improvisation is process through and through, a form which lives and breathes only in the momentary flow of its creation, a flow experienced as an ongoing or prolonged present.' Conversely, in differing degrees, improvisational artists at times can certainly use past memory or plan into the future, in momentary ways, for what the next movement or decision will be during a performance (Mendonça and Wallace, 2004: 2), however, this doesn't change the fact that the *doing* is taking place only in the present. One could argue further that, in terms of the act of improvisation itself, especially in relation to the body orientation of dance, that this kind memory use, or future thinking, are examples of not truly being in the improvisational 'moment'.

So, if indeed, improvised dance (and by extension, all performed dance) takes place in an 'ongoing or prolonged present', the conception of the practiced dance process itself as being also research becomes problematic. For if research is the business of contextually understanding something as it is situated within historical time, i.e. that which includes the past, present and future, how then can it be performed on that which is only taking place in an ever unfolding present?

Further difficulties arise when one looks more closely at what the final word in the phrase, 'practice-based research in the arts' actually suggests. 'Arts' is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* as being:

Any of various pursuits or occupations in which creative or imaginative skill is applied according to aesthetic principles (formerly often defined in terms of 'taste'); ... the various branches of creative activity, as painting, sculpture, music, literature, dance, drama, oratory, etc.

According to the *OED*, one of the earliest uses of the concept 'arts' in this sense was by Geoffrey Chaucer in his 1368 poem, *The Book of the Duchess*: 'Lamekis sonne Tuball that founde oute fyrste the arte of songe but grekis seyn pictagoras the fyrste finder was of the arte.' The dictionary continues with a more recent definition of the arts: 'The expression or application of creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting, drawing, or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. Also: such works themselves considered collectively' ('Art').

Art itself (the subject of the 'arts') is defined by the *OED* as: 'Skill; its display, application, or expression, as in the "skill" in doing something, esp. as the result of knowledge or practice.' The dictionary adds that there is a long precedence for this sense of the word, with the 'Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French *art*, meaning, method, or knowledge employed to gain a certain result, or technique', first being used around the year 1000 and the concept of it being a 'manner of behaving' arising as early as 1100 ('Art').

Analysis

What is noteworthy in these dictionary definitions of 'art' and the 'arts' is the fact that they are described as being an *applied* 'creative or imaginative *skill*'; or 'the expression or application of creative skill and imagination'; or seen as the '...*result* of knowledge or practice', and: '...a method or knowledge employed to *gain a certain result*' [italics mine] ('Art').

In other words art is the *result* of some kind of *applied* special training or knowledge, it is the result of training that has produced knowledgeable practitioners who are creating (producing) it. Is the resulting thing that is produced therefore knowledge? Or is it instead something on which knowledge can be *based* – i.e. a new referent in reality? If art itself therefore is not the knowledge, then what is taking place by the *practice* undertaken to create the art product? Is the practice, *research*? Or is it something else?

If research is indeed a 'systematic investigation or inquiry aimed at contributing to knowledge' ('Research') *of* something (of a theory, topic, etc.), then this '*of*' demands of research that it has an *object* of which it is gaining knowledge. In this sense, it is hard to understand how '*practice-basedness*' can be considered as a kind of research object – unless one is actually studying the practice itself, as a kind of *method* – i.e. looking in at the practice with an external gaze, in order to better understand how that practice works, where it might lead, what are its salient and non-salient points, etc. But this kind of research *about* practice (or method) is not what is meant by the term 'practice-based research' – i.e. practice *itself* being the research, rather than practice being the *object* of the research. In this sense, the phrase, 'practice-based research' becomes a koan-like utterance, in that it folds in on itself as a kind of meaningless contradiction in terms.

Using the *OED* definitions as a starting place, the three words 'Practice', 'Research' and 'Arts,' when placed side-by-side, connote something like, the *act of doing* temporally limited to the present, as a method for the *systematic, intentional, investigation* into the *results* of some special knowledge, technical skill or practice that is being performed to produce art. If viewed in this way, a kind of contradiction begins to emerge from the very use of the words involved – primarily between the definitions of the words 'practice' and 'research'. If practice is an act which is taking place only in the present, yet research is looking at past present and future, in an intentional quest to fully understand the results of the subject the practice is producing, it presents a kind of circularity that is confusing when one considers how indeed practice can be seen as research. This is especially true when both terms are being used simultaneously to talk about the same thing, as when artists or academics make the claim that the practice *is* the research.

Perhaps the key word here is actually the hyphenated 'based'. How can research be *based* in practice? Practice, as discussed above, only exists temporally in the present whereas research, by its nature, makes inquiry into all time periods, past, present and future. Research *of* existing art work or art history is easy to

conceptualize, but research as practice is more troublesome.

Research has commonly been thought of as that which scientists do to investigate a hypothesis to see what understanding or knowledge can be gained through the process. As Andersson (2009: 8) has so clearly indicated, there is a fundamental difference, between the products which artists and scientists produce, 'Artists produce works of art, and scientists produce knowledge.'

In a similar vein, Stephen Scrivener argues in his article, *The Art Object does not Embody a Form of Knowledge*, that:

Through original investigation (i.e., research) we arrive at knowledge and understanding of the natural and artificial worlds, past and present. In contradistinction, art making brings into existence artefacts that have to be interpreted. Drawing on the natural and artificial worlds and imagination, the artists generates *apprehensions* [italics mine] (in the sense of objects that must be grasped by the senses and the intellect) which when grasped offer ways of seeing and being. Whereas original investigation is concerned with acquiring knowledge of what is or was the case, art making is concerned with providing ways of seeing and ways of being in relation to what is, was, or might be.
(Scrivener 2002)

Scrivener's identification of the artist's artifact as being an 'apprehension' distinguishes it from the object of traditional research, which is that of knowledge. Drawing on and extending Scrivener's argument, this apprehension-producing artifact clearly suggests the difference between the artist's pursuit, when creating original artwork, and that of the traditional researcher when researching an object of knowledge. This leads Scrivener to surmise that in order to constructively serve the needs of artists and the nature of the arts, the term 'research' will have to be aligned to that which makes art practice what it *is*, i.e. a producer of 'apprehensions' and insights which, in Scrivener's words lead us to 'experience these insights as possibilities rather than conclusions: as, "I think that" rather than "I know that"' (2002). In this sense, artworks offer perspectives or ways of seeing ... and ways of being' as opposed to being objects that convey knowledge.

Scrivener concludes that if there is to be research in the arts, that research should not be a 'wholesale shift toward knowledge and knowledge acquisition' since it would, 'likely be at the expense of arts longstanding, but perhaps, implicit value' (2002). In other words, making this shift would go against the basic nature of the artistic process as being geared primarily toward realizing work as 'apprehensions'. He cautions against focusing on the potential for artistic art-making to be a conveyor of knowledge since this would relegate the produced artifact to being merely a second-hand by-product of this process. Scrivener points out that if 'we start from the position that art is the proper goal of arts research then knowledge derivation through art making would be research in

some other discipline'. In view of this, the embrace of research methodologies from other disciplines which are completely different in nature than the arts, could be seen as denigrating by situating the arts as being mere hand servants to those other fields of endeavor. Scrivener concludes that, 'we should not attempt to justify the art object as a form of knowledge and should instead focus on defining the goals and norms of the activity that we choose to call arts research' (2002).

Beginning with Scrivener's compelling argument that the arts artifact is not an object of knowledge, but rather an object of apprehension, I will argue that practice-based arts research be conducted in the first-person -- by the practicing artist who is doing the research. More specifically, since Scrivener only focuses on painting and the visual arts to make his argument (although it is, by extension, applicable to other art forms), there are special considerations that relate specifically to the very different field of dance which I will also seek to address in the context of Scrivener's argument.

To address the nature of practice-based research in the arts, specifically as it pertains to dance practice, suggests that one could focus on the following primary considerations that emerge from the above discussion: 1) the need for both the research and the art to be conducted simultaneously by the same person; 2) the importance of the fact that dance practice only takes place in the present, and 3) that in order to research dance from a first-person perspective, digital technology may be the only tool capable of implementing such research.

In relation to the first of these two aspects, since the goal of this research is not to understand an object of knowledge as such, but rather a 'state of being', or an 'apprehension', a valid inquiry would then literally mean that one would have to *enter* the interior, subjective, world of the practicing dancer, both physically and mentally. This is not to attempt to push for subjectivity in research, but rather to acknowledge, that such a method is *appropriate* for practice-based arts inquiry. In other words, since the essence of arts practice is either the experiential, 'being-in-the-moment' of a state of being or the production of an end product that represents a state of being, one would therefore have to, in effect, *be* the practitioner in both perceptual and conceptual ways, for at least the duration of the artistic creative process and the inquiry into it. Short of science fiction, there is no method that currently exists by which a person can inhabit the body of another – so the artist would have to do the research himself.

The method by which an artist-practitioner/researcher would be able to make their inner world known to those outside of it is by the recording of personal perceptions, impressions, flashes of creativity, thoughts, and processes, *as they occur* in the moment of creation. There are numerous, well-known examples of first-person research methods in other fields, such as sociology and anthropology; which include: introspective reflexivity, autoethnography, autobiography, first-person action inquiry, and so on (Elmes, 2011). The use of first-person narrative

forms is another approach for openly bringing the researcher directly into the inquiry. Dance therapists, Cruz and Berral speak of the usefulness of ‘storytelling, autobiographical accounts, [or] split-page formats’, suggesting that ‘through such methods the researcher can give clear voice to their own experience’ (2004: 113).

Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold also speak to the possible usefulness of, and growing interest in, narrative research methods and reflexive storytelling as a way to access first-person experiential knowledge in their book, *Knowing Differently: Arts-based and Collaborative Research Methods*. The authors point out that since, ‘propositional knowing is so dominant, other ways to knowing, that access experience more immediately and richly or that translate it into action and practice, tend to receive less attention’ (2008: 2). This lack of attention may be changing with the current increased interest in practice-based art as a possible locus of research.

However, it remains questionable whether, or not, these types of reflexive, first-person research methods are actually appropriate for practice-based arts research since any method that involves the artist also demands of him/her a certain kind of division of labor, between mind and body, or between arts practice and art reflection – a division that can disturb the tenuous, in the moment, creative muse that is initiating, formulating, and driving the creation of the art at hand.

This heightened creative state may be alluded to in the concluding remarks of Maria Kozhevnikov’s study of practitioners of Buddhist meditation techniques. In it, she suggests a possible correlation between the heightened state of physicality in athletes who participate in intense physical athletic training and the heightened state of visuospatial processing efficiency experienced by meditators who intensively practice Deity Yoga meditation (2009: 651-652).

In this present study, I raise a similar question concerning dance. Since the dancer’s discipline is *both* physical and mental in nature, it is conceivable that the intensive regime of the practicing, creative dance artist is also able to induce a heightened state, both physical and mental in character, which is comparable to the special physical and mental states mentioned by Kozhevnikov. If such a state exists, new, or yet to be invented, digital technologies may be the only possible tools by which an outside observer would be able to gain access to it.

This suggested importance of the use of digital technology to explore the first-person experiences of practicing artists becomes more apparent when one looks at other methods of accessing such experience. For example, the study by Lian Loke and Toni Robertson, ‘Studies of Dancers: Moving from Experience to Interaction Design’ (2010) is an example of an attempt to make use of first-person accounts of dance creation by applying them to a practical field of knowledge. In an effort to garner usable information about performed and choreographed dance to inform interaction design, the authors developed a

system of both recording the dancer/practitioners and taking note of their choreographic processes. The first-person accounts were recorded by researchers who interviewed the dancers as they improvised their movement. The dancers were also videotaped and both the interview and videotapes were used to gain insight into the dancer's experiential process. The dancer/performers were also asked to become outside observers of their own movement by later viewing the video tapes and commenting on their own movement and experience.

Although the intention in such studies is clearly to gain access to the dancer's inner world, these types of 'recording' techniques ultimately fall short of actually accessing what is going on in the first-person moment of creation. The dancer, in having to speak to an outside observer while they perform, may be conscientiously explaining what they are doing/feeling in that moment, but the simple act of having to communicate comprehensible utterances to outside observers at the very moment the artist is in the act of creation, changes the artist's creative process and flow of creative energy. It adds a synthetic, additional component that disrupts and changes the artist's personal creative dynamic, thus leaving the researcher with perhaps valuable observations, but not with the material that they were originally seeking. In like manner, first-person writing exercises, which take place after the practice of the artist, at best can only approximate what was actually taking place at the moment of creation.

In one passage from the Loke and Robertson study, the authors explain, 'Participants would answer verbally and quite often begin to move again to demonstrate aspects of the action/process of falling. In some cases, the researcher asked the participant to teach the technique to the researcher, so that more information could be gained through the learning process' (2010). This, however, suggests that the danger of this is the possibility of the creative trajectory devolving into a pedagogic exercise, thus forcing the artist to break their inner concentration in order to discuss it with an external observer. At that point, the artist would no longer be creating and the research would no longer be about the practice-based, creative act.

Art-making necessitates a great deal of concentration and personal investment by the artist and to break the flow of either is to change the entire act of practicing the art. In the study by Loke and Robertson, the researchers then edited the written recollections of the dancers into an abbreviated form which they called 'a first-person experiential account' (2010: 4). These edited accounts were then 'reviewed with participants in a follow-up session to ensure that they were a faithful record and representation of [the dancer's] understanding of falling' ('falling' being the focus of this particular study). The fact that the record that these researchers were left with was produced either at the expense of the spontaneity of the practicing artist, or after the fact of the creative work, when the art practice was already completed, suggests the difficulty which exists even for those who intend first-person accounts to be the focus of their research.

Methodology and Technology

To best conduct research within a practice-based context, I suggest that the following conditions would possibly need to be considered: 1) the concentration and artistic 'flow' of the practicing artist would need to be held sacrosanct and uninterrupted; 2) the research would need to be conducted by the person practicing the art; and 3) the research would need to be taking place in the precise moment that the artist is creating it. At a later date, the data produced by such research would also have to be made both understandable and accessible to those outside of the situation, which suggests the existence of some method of transcribing the original 'recorded' material. Great care would need to be taken in this act of transcription not to alter the original meaning or intent of the record, which clearly suggests that the only person capable of maintaining the integrity of the record would be the artist himself.

So, how exactly could such a record be made? On its face, this would be a daunting task. However, one possible candidate for such recording is digital technology, since it has already been shown to be of great use in various recording techniques currently used in practice-based arts research. It is the speed at which digital technology can act which makes it the most likely candidate to record artistic insights which happen at the rapidity of the subconscious. In a sense, one would actually have to be able to record *thought itself* to truly catch the artist in practice.

Over the past 4 decades, brain-computer interface (BCI) research has been conducted by various researchers such as (Miyawaki, et al, 2008; Mazzatenta, et al, 2007; Abbott, 2009; Quiroga, et al, 2008) who have applied their findings to the study of dreams, the mental manipulation of prosthetic devices and the partial restoration of sight and hearing. The specific technology for actually recording thought may only become an actuality at some future point but the potential for its use is ripe (Cerf et al, 2010).

For the present however, one possible way one might be able to approximate this in-the-moment recording might be as simple as having the artist learn to 'think-talk' – i.e. to consistently talk out loud to him/herself as he/she works and for those thoughts to be simultaneously recorded. This would have to be done in a completely unselfconscious way so it would not interrupt the creative flow of the artist's ideas.

As Dan Zahavi has observed, first-person accounts can be problematic when one becomes *purposefully* self-observant, or reflective,

When we are absorbed or immersed in our daily concerns and simply live through our experiences, they are not given as objects; they are not something we observe from a distance and they do not stand opposite us.

This, however, is precisely what can happen when we reflect. In reflection, we can place ourselves in contrast to a part of our own experiential life. We can distance ourselves from an experience.
(2006: 64)

The first-person, practice-based arts researcher would need to avoid this kind of self-distancing. Indeed, the goal of practice-based arts research, if it is actually going to be reflective of the vision of the artist in the moment of working, would necessitate the accurate and appropriate recording by the artist of his/her own art experience. This suggests that on some level the practitioner must be reflexively cognizant of the experiential creative process he/she actually embodies while not allowing himself to be distanced from it -- a task which an artist, due to their unique training, may actually be uniquely suited to do. Once one sheds the pretension that art produces knowledge (which it can do, but not as its regular focus) and embraces the true nature of art as existing for its own sake -- not as a didactic tool or reference work, but as a projection of *being* -- a much more in focus, appropriate, method for practice-based inquiry in the arts will begin to emerge.

Inquiry into arts practice holds potential to produce new insights into the internal, creative vision of individual artists; and by extension, to increase understanding of creativity, per se. Intimate engagement with the first-person, experiential viewpoint of the artist through the use of digital tools may give researchers increased access to the private world that artists inhabit. This would enable artists, during the research process, to stay in the flow of the creative process that is being researched, rather than being reflexively sidetracked. The subsequent benefit of such an inquiry may be an increased understanding of the artistic process itself and on a larger scale, of what it is to be human.

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