



Society for Artistic Research
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2017 Annual Report from the President

Amsterdam, 31 March 2018

Dear member of the Society for Artistic Research,

Since our last General Assembly, convened in Helsinki on 30 April 2017, the Executive Board of SAR has been active on many fronts. It is again my privilege to report here on the state of affairs and operations of SAR from April 2017 until April 2018.

The mission of SAR is to promote, nurture and disseminate artistic research in all art genres, inside and outside academia, thereby contributing to the further development and benefit of the field. After its establishment in 2010 SAR has focussed on its three main tasks: the support for the online, Open Access and peer-reviewed *Journal for Artistic Research*, the maintenance and further development of the documentation, collaboration and dissemination platform: the Research Catalogue, and the organisation of meetings where artistic researchers exchange and discuss their work, most notably the annual SAR International Conference on Artistic Research.

But the SAR project has expanded over the years. Although still a young organisation, SAR has become a vibrant society that fosters several other initiatives. This to a significant extent thanks to the support of an ever-growing number of art schools and art universities that we were able to welcome as institutional member of SAR. The success and expansion of the Portal Partner project deserves special mention here: more and more art schools and journals use the Research Catalogue as base for their research documentation and management. But also other initiatives – described in more detail below – like the Funding Agencies Seminar, the SAR Academy, the Annual RC Prize for excellent RC exposition, the SAR Correspondents, and SARA, the SAR Announcement service, testify of the expansion of SAR's workings.

Now this success of SAR also increased the workload of the members of the Executive Board to a point where we had to reconsider how to continue the support of these activities, without asking too much of the individual board members. The Executive Board of SAR – taking the budget conditions into account – therefore decided to install a support structure for the many operations we are involved with and to contract a SAR Executive Officer for 0.5 FTE from April 2018 onwards.

Much of the work over the last years has been done by our first vice-president and treasurer, Johan Haarberg, who among others steered the Portal Partner project. Johan will have to step down as board member at the General Assembly in Plymouth, and the Executive Board of SAR has unanimously agreed that Johan will take up this position for the next two years. On behalf of the board I therefore welcome Johan back to the organisation and I am looking forward to our further collaboration.

In what follows, an account will be given of the various affairs of SAR in the period April 2017 – April 2018.

Executive Board of SAR

The composition of current operating Executive Board of SAR is as follows:

Henk Borgdorff, President
Johan A. Haarberg, 1st Vice-President (Treasurer)
Giacco Schiesser, 2nd Vice President (Secretary)
Alexander Damianisch
Leena Rouhiainen
Gabriele Schmid
Geir Strøm

At our annual General Assembly in Plymouth on 14 April 2018 there will be elections for some of the board positions. More information about the elections is included in this information package.

Finances and budget

In general, the financial activity level over the last years has increased considerably, from approx. € 50.000 in 2012, over approx. € 135.000 in 2014/2015 towards around € 170.000 in 2016 and € 180.000 in 2017.

The aim for 2017 of a significant rise in the institutional membership has been reached, not at least because of a more active membership recruitment the last years. The total activity level for 2017 has been higher than expected, mostly due to a higher level of requested Research Catalogue feature developments. Although this has also required some higher cost levels, the outcome of this year is a positive deviation from the endorsed budget, resulting in a substantial surplus of € 19.000 – instead of an expected deficit of € 4.500.

Consequently, the reserve by the end of 2017 is approx. € 82.000, compared to average annual reserve in the previous years in the range of plus/minus € 60.000. This leaves SAR with certain opportunities for the coming year, where the Executive Board sees a clear need for a financial endeavour beyond the estimated yearly income in 2018 – to secure a more robust operation in the years to come. As a result, we expect to end with a deficit in 2018, which will bring the reserve back to approx. the same level as in the years before.

There is already in place a substantial increase in the institutional membership fees for this year, and – at the same time – it is obvious that further growth of institutional members/portal partner members will be crucial for the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

This is the place to thank all our members – institutional and individual – for the support we have received through their membership. A special thank for our ‘elite’ members who generously sponsored SAR with additional resources: the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, Zurich University of the Arts, University of Applied Arts Vienna and Norwegian Academy of Music. SAR also would like to express gratitude for the substantial contribution of the University of the Arts Helsinki for the SAR Conference 2017 and Plymouth University for its support for the 2018 SAR Conference.

Membership

The number of applications for SAR individual membership is relatively stable. We had about 75 applications in 2016 and 79 new applications in 2017. Most applications come in during the time period when the registration for the SAR conference is open.

The level of individual members that pay their fee is also stable. We had 104 paying members in 2016 and 97 individual members have paid their membership fee for 2017. In 2018 56 individual members have paid for this year (reference date March 30).

We are very happy to welcome our new institutional members:

- Amsterdam University of the Arts
- Academy of Performing Arts in Prague
- ISEACV Institute Superior Ensenyances Artistiques C.V.
- MSH Medical School Hamburg
- The Royal Danish Academy of Music
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- University of Derby

SAR now has 50 institutional members

Journal for Artistic Research

In 2017, JAR delivered only two out of an expected three issues of high quality expositions of practice as research. Although the submission rate is up and we peer-review more submissions than ever, the success rate is down due to the growth of negative recommendations that we receive from peer-reviewers. It may be that we receive an increased amount of submission only at the bottom end of the quality spectrum; it may also be that as the field develops, peer-reviewers have started to expect slightly more.

The editorial board and the editor in chief are aware that the speed in which submissions are processed needs to be improved. We started to re-structure the editorial workflow in order to better deal with the higher submission rate. The new website, which had just about gone live a year ago, is working stably. JAR has started to reach out to its 'network' in order to receive so called 'reflections' and eventually 'reviews' which are published alongside the journal. JAR is also more proactively using its Facebook page as a means to publicise calls and events. Those additional elements including the peer review board, however, require more work, which we aim to gain from the restructuring process of the submission workflow.

Research Catalogue

With currently more than 10.000 registered users, the RC offers the largest existing forum and network for artists interested in research today. It is used for profiling and self-publication, as an institutional repository and archive, as a research and education management tool, as a publishing platform for several online journals.

In 2016/2017, much work was dedicated to the development of an 'application module' in the RC: a provision within the RC to handle submissions for project funding and for the handling of admissions to degree programmes. The development of this module was supported by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (NARP) and was implemented for use by NARP during 2017. This year the module was also activated for processing internal research funding at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen.

Another major step in the same period was the RC overhaul, which provided a significant improvement of the RC performance and included some new features. In the first part in 2018, we implement a new version of the RC Editor. And this spring we are developing a new exposition format for smart phones, tablets and similar devices on a request from the Norwegian Academy for Music (NMH).

For all these new developments, we would like to thank all involved in the projects, especially Luc Döbereiner, Casper Schipper, Johan Haarberg on behalf of SAR Executive Board, NARP, NMH and the software developers Mühlshlegler Gbr.

The Portal Partnerships

The Portal Partnership scheme is now well established with 15 partners, of whom most now actively operate their portals. Three new partners signed up in 2017 and two new have signed up for 2018, while one has stepped out. The annual standard fee as portal partner will for most partners be increased towards € 10.000.

The Executive Board organises twice a year meetings for representatives of the partner institutions, where new functionalities are presented, future developments are discussed, experiences shared and contacts between institutional representatives established and developed. The spring Portal Partner meeting 2017 took place in Vienna over two days in June, with University of Applied Arts Vienna as local host. Twenty-one participants representing all the partners were present. The autumn Portal Partner Meeting took place in Bergen over two days in December, with the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen and the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme as local hosts. Twenty-three participants, representing nearly all the partners, were present.

At both meetings, we also arranged a workshop session for new members and new administrators on the RC, mainly focusing on general and portal use, admin roles and responsibilities, creating content on the RC etc.

In the portal partner meeting in Gothenburg in December 2016, it was decided that, with support from and under the leadership of Leiden University, a proposal for funding would be prepared within the Call: Horizon 2020 – EINFRA-21-2017: Platform-driven e-infrastructure innovation; Universal discoverability of data objects and provenance. In March 2017, the proposal was submitted to the European Commission, with the title: 'FEDRO: The Research Catalogue as a Federated E-infrastructure for the Identification and Utilization of Digital Research Objects'. Only one project could receive support under this call, and, unfortunately, this proposal did not succeed.

Partly based on the work done for the EU-project, Stockholm University of the Arts in co-operation with SAR made an application in the autumn 2017 to the Swedish Research Council on pre-qualification for Research Infrastructure Funding for Artistic Research. In case this application in the end is funded, further developments of the RC will be an important part of the project.

SAR - International Conference on Artistic Research: PLEASE SPECIFY!

The SAR 2017 Conference PLEASE SPECIFY! Sharing Artistic Research Across Disciplines took place in partnership with the University of the Arts Helsinki. The PLEASE SPECIFY! Conference explored new perspectives on conditions of sharing research in the artistic field. Artist-researchers presented and reflected upon specific research constellations in which they engage.

The conference was arranged through an open call. The program involved 5 keynotes and 43 other presentations with cross-artistic and contextually differing points of view. The program had several different strands, namely, performative presentations, text-based working groups, collaborative sessions and interventions. 215 participants from 22 countries attended the conference. More information on the PLEASE SPECIFY! Conference can be found on the conference website: SARconference2017.org.

Funding Agencies Expert Meeting

The Society for Artistic Research initiated the first Expert Meeting of Funding Agencies: Art and Research Funding. The meeting took place in mid-September 2017 in Vienna and was locally supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). The FWF is known for its innovative Funding Programme for Arts-based Research: PEEK.

The aim of this meeting - which will be regularly organised by SAR in the future – is to bring together agencies active in the field of art and research funding. The first meeting in September was attended by experts from the Austrian Science Fund, the Danish Ministry of Culture, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, the Swedish Research Council, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and the Volkswagenstiftung. The participants engaged in sharing, reflecting and reviewing their funding activities. Each of the organisations/institutions presented their opportunities for funding artistic research and the presentations were followed by vivid discussions.

The meeting was accompanied by a side event 'Projects and Profile' curated by FWF to introduce the participants to PEEK funded projects and to the people involved.

The second Art and Research Funding - Expert Meeting will take place in Oslo, Norway, 20-21 September 2018, upon invitation by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme.

SAR Academy

Since its inception in 2010, people involved in and engaged with the *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) and with the Research Catalogue (RC), supported by the Society for Artistic Research, have worked hard to further and promote the dissemination of artistic research projects. With 80 peer reviewed 'expositions' in JAR, over 10.000 people worldwide with an account on the RC (not all of them that active, though), and a series of annual conferences where people meet to discuss artistic research projects, we think we can say that a substantial contribution has been made to the manifestation and articulation of artistic research.

Putting artistic research at display, so to say – through JAR and the RC - and organising events where projects are presented and discussed, is one thing. What should accompany all these endeavours, however, is an in-depth discussion on what it means to expose art practice as research, i.e. what the theoretical rationale is of research where art practice is central; epistemologically, methodologically – art practices that embody or enact new knowledge, insights and experiences.

Although more and more people state that the time to discuss ‘first principles’ of the research field is over, and we have to focus instead on concrete practices and what they amount to in real life (or in the art world), there is in our opinion still an urgency to debate what we are doing on a conceptual level. Not the least because what we do in the field of artistic research might have a bearing, not only on how we understand ourselves as artist-researchers, but also on how we might begin to think about art, and about research. (We might even export our insights to the art world and academia.)

The Society for Artistic Research has therefore started this initiative of the SAR Academy. At this first instance of the Academy (theme: epistemology) – hosted by the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Department of Humanities, Barcelona, 14-16 March 2018, - the members of the Executive Board of SAR have invited each two or three other artists/researchers who we think might contribute something interesting to the debate about epistemology (and methodology, and artefacts, and languages, and ...). By the selection of participants, we have taken into account disciplinary background, gender balance and regional distribution. Of course, there are others who we could have invited, but we have to start somewhere, also taking into account the size of the group and logistics.

This first instance of the SAR Academy, with various introductions and sessions, was a success, as became clear during the feedback session on the last day. Many suggestions were made about how to continue the initiative. The Executive Board will take these into account when planning the next SAR Academy.

SAR Correspondents

The Society for Artistic Research is the central node for an internationally widely branched network of artist-researchers, working in a variety of local, regional and national institutional and intellectual environments.

SAR's *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) strives to include the voices of people from all over the world, witnessed by its pool of authors, peer reviewers and editors. Artists from countries worldwide use the Research Catalogue to build, to document and to publish their practice as research. However, other activities of SAR - including its annual conferences - are until now mostly confined to Europe.

It is a fact (and a strength and bias at the same time) that the Society for Artistic Research has a strong membership base in Europe, more specifically in north-western Europe. However, it's mission to nurture, connect and disseminate artistic research as a specific practice of creating knowledge and insight, in and outside academic institutions, reaches beyond the mentioned regional borders.

In order to connect with and to reach out to other regions in the world where artistic research is or is not yet on the agenda, the Society for Artistic Research has installed a scheme of 'Correspondents': artists and scholars dedicated to the field of artistic research, who both represent SAR in their local, regional or national environments, and report to the SAR community from their environment about issues pertaining to artistic research.

For this purpose, SAR invites individuals and groups (artist/scholars) from a wide variety of countries and regions to act as SAR Correspondents. They will be provided with support and space in our online communication (newsletters, SAR website and Research Catalogue) to contribute to the international research environment and infrastructure that SAR offers, thereby strengthening the global community of artistic research. SAR Correspondents will also act as local 'agents', probing the ground to host events co-organised by SAR, thereby strengthening the local communities of artistic research.

We are very happy to have already published two reports by SAR Correspondents: one about artistic research in Chile, by Maria Jose Contreras, and one about the condition of artistic research in Argentina, by Eduardo Molinari. These reports are disclosed via the SAR website.

SAR's Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Exposition

The Executive Board of SAR has launched the Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Expositions. The goal of the prize is on the one hand to foster and encourage innovative, experimental new formats of publications and on the other hand to make more visible internationally the qualities of artistic research.

The jury of the prize is appointed by the Executive Board and consists of one member from the Editorial Board of the *Journal for Artistic Research*, one member among the Research Catalogue (RC) Portal Partners and one member from the SAR Executive Board. This year's jury consists of Karst de Jong (The Hague/Barcelona), Leena Rouhiainen, chair (Helsinki) and Michael Schwab (London). All in all, eleven submissions were offered for evaluation, out of which nine fulfilled the criteria of having been published in 2017.

The members of the jury all familiarized themselves with the nine eligible proposals sent in for the annual prize. They separately shortlisted the three best expositions. The committee members unanimously agreed on the winner. The criteria on which the committee members based their assessment were those mentioned in the announcement the SAR annual prize. They related to the chosen exposition being an example of innovative and experimental formats of publication and making visible qualities of artistic research in an original manner.

During the General Assembly in Plymouth on 13 April 2018 the winner of the Annual Prize will be announced and celebrated.

SARA: the SAR Announcement Service

As you may have seen, we have published the first announcements through SARA, the Society for Artistic Research Announcement Service on the Research Catalogue, and we have launched our on-line booking and payment system for this service.

SARA enables individual and institutional members as well as non-members to distribute announcements of relevance to the artistic research community, such as symposia, conferences, exhibitions, performances, publications, study programmes and available positions etc. via a dedicated email list, reaching colleagues who have registered at the RC.

SARA will have a well-targeted and wide reach: There are more than 10.000 users on the Research Catalogue; SARA will reach most of these practitioners in the area of artistic research worldwide.

SAR members will pay 50 euro per announcement this first year, while the rate for non-SAR members will be 100 euro per announcement in 2018. After this initial period, the rates will be adjusted. You will find the specific template/form available for posting to SARA here: <https://www.sar-announcements.com>

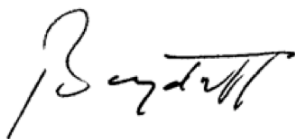
SAR in Venice

In the context of the 2017 Venice Biennale, SAR presented on 6 June 2017 its portfolio of activities with information about the Research Catalogue, the *Journal for Artistic Research*, the annual SAR conferences, the different Portals supported by SAR via the Research Catalogue and the options for Membership. During the session, Executive Board members of SAR gave presentations on all SAR activities and discussed those activities with the participants.

SAR in Venice took place as a so-called cameo event upon invitation by the Research Pavilion hosted by University of the Arts Helsinki.

I am looking forward to meet you all in Plymouth at the SAR General Assembly on 13 April 2018!

On behalf of the Executive Board,
Yours sincerely,



Henk Borgdorff
President Society for Artistic Research