



Society for Artistic Research
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Annual Report from the President 2018/2019

Amsterdam, 12 March 2019

Dear member of the Society for Artistic Research,

Artistic research is a relatively new and still emerging field of investigation. The Society for Artistic Research (SAR) is a key player in this field. SAR was initially set up as a legal entity in the form of a membership organisation with the sole purpose of supporting the *Journal for Artistic Research* (and the Research Catalogue). Meanwhile it has developed to include a variety of initiatives to support artistic research, in and outside higher education.

The *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) is the flagship of SAR. If one wants to learn what artistic research is or could be, investigate what JAR has published over the years and examine its Editorials and Network contributions. Meanwhile SAR, through the use of the Research Catalogue, also supports other journals in the field: – *RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research*; *JSS – Journal of Sonic Studies*; *VIS – Nordic Journal for Artistic Research*.

The Research Catalogue (RC) has developed over the years into a widely used platform for the archiving, documentation, management, publication and dissemination of artistic research. While still functioning as the technological base of JAR and other journals as a multimedia platform to handle and display research, the RC is also used as an institutional repository. A growing number of European higher education institutes, most notably art schools and universities, use the RC as their local research portal through which research by students and faculty is administered and communicated. Together the journals and institutes constitute SAR's 'portal partners'. RC portal administrators meet on a regular basis to exchange experiences and discuss future adaptations and extensions of the software platform. The further development of the RC can be seen as a research project in itself, steered by our RC managing officers, Luc Döbereiner and Casper Schipper, under the supervision of SAR's executive officer Johan Haarberg. I would like to thank them for their constructive work over the years.

Now the RC is also used beyond these portals – by artists who use the free-of-charge platform as an archive, as a private or collaborative workspace, as a web channel to share their work-in-progress, or as site to self-publish their work in the ever growing network of others using the RC. Over the years, the number of users has grown from about 250 in 2011 (when the beta version of the RC was released) to almost 12.000 from all over the world in March 2019. We will celebrate this during our 10th International Conference on Artistic Research in Zurich, 21-23 March 2019.

Meanwhile the operations of SAR have grown to reach beyond the support of JAR and the RC. What follows is a report about SAR's financial situation, its membership base, information about JAR, the RC and the Portal Partners, and about the 2018 SAR Conference, the Funding Agencies Seminar, the Annual Prize for excellent RC exposition, and SARA: the SAR Announcement service.

The work of the Executive Board of SAR focuses more over the years on strengthening the organisational and financial stability and sustainability of the society, among others, by putting energy in our relationships with (potential) institutional members and RC portal partners. One could say that the board has focussed on the infrastructure and conditions on the basis of which artistic research can flourish, both inside and outside academia.

With the organization of the SAR Academy, Barcelona 14-16 March 2018, the board has taken the initiative to encourage the artistic-intellectual debate in our field of investigation, next to peer-reviewed publications and conference contributions. The evaluation of that event has led to the initiative to establish **Special Interest Groups** (SIGs) under the heading of SAR Academy.

SIGs consist of people (e.g. artists, curators, scholars, educators) who gather around a shared theme or concern regarding artistic research (examples are given in a message posted on SARA, the SAR announcement service). SIGs are moderated and chaired by one or more members of SAR, i.e. individual members and/or representatives of institutional members. The initiative will be launched at the conference in Zurich. From 2020 SIGs will have the opportunity to assemble the day before the annual International Conference on Artistic Research.

Dear member of SAR,

It was a privilege to serve the society as its president for the last four years and I am looking forward to continuing my involvement with SAR as an ordinary member in the years to come.

What follows is an account of the various affairs of SAR in the period April 2018 – March 2019.

Executive Board of SAR

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

Henk Borgdorff, President
 Geir Strøm, 1st Vice-President (Treasurer)
 Giaco Schiesser, 2nd Vice President (Secretary)
 Angela Bartram
 Alexander Damianisch
 Leena Rouhiainen
 Gabriele Schmid

SAR Executive officer: Johan A. Haarberg

At our annual General Assembly in Zurich on 24 March 2019 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 2017 and more than € 200.000 in 2018. The increase in 2017 was mainly due to a substantial rise in the institutional membership (including more portal partners), in combination with a high RC commissioned feature development income that year.

The aim for 2018 of a significant rise in the institutional membership has been reached, not at least because of more active membership recruitment the last years. However, we did not achieve the target set in the budget, nor the income level expected on RC feature improvement costs. On the cost side, the results in most areas are either close to or under budget, but the total result is a higher deficit than planned.

The annual reserve was fairly constant over the years 2012-2016 at around € 60.000 plus. By the end of 2017, this had grown to approx. € 80.000 – but has been reduced during 2018, because of the need for expanded cost levels. It is expected that the reserve will be stable at approx. € 25.000 by the end of this year.

The presented budget for 2019 aims to keep the balance at that level, but this is – as pointed out also earlier in this report – dependent on increased income compared to 2018. It is obvious that a further growth of the number of institutional members – and in particular portal partners – will be crucial for the long-term sustainability of the organisation. The Executive Board must, at the same time, actively seek external sources for funding. There is substantial work going on to achieve these aims.

Membership

The number of applications for SAR individual membership requests varies somewhat from year to year. While we had about 80 requests in both 2017 and 2018, we have registered approx. 110 requests during the timespan from just after the Plymouth Conference to this date (10.03.19).

We did not keep the number of individual members from 2017 (97 paying members) to 2018, mostly due to lower number of sign-ups before the annual conference. For 2018, we had 69 paying members. There is already a higher number this year, with 87 registered payments by March 10, and a significantly higher number of membership requests in front of this year's conference.

We are very happy to welcome our new institutional members and new portal partners:

- NTNU – the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (portal partner)
- Anton Bruckner Private University
- Newcastle University – Institute for Creative Arts Practice

Two of our institutional members have decided to become portal partners this year:

- Aalto University, Helsinki
- National Film School of Denmark

SAR now has 49 institutional members.

Journal for Artistic Research

JAR delivered three issues (#15-#17) of high quality expositions of practice as research in 2018 (the third issue was delivered in January 2019, for technical reasons). As in 2017, although the submission rate is up and JAR peer-reviews more submissions than ever, the success rate is down due to the growth of negative recommendations that JAR receives from peer-reviewers. It may be that JAR receives 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 strategies to improve the situation include more informational materials on the website as well as webinars – once the software is setup – to raise the awareness of what is required to publish in JAR.

2018 has been a busy year for the editorial board as they continue to grow the journal and the website. JAR made improvements to the website and workflows, although substantial resources had to be invested in fixing and now re-developing jar-online.net. Azadeh Faterhad was appointed to join the Editorial Board after a previous position as intern. Azadeh has a particular responsibility to improve JAR's social media presence. Leonella Grasso-Caprioli as well as, more recently, Alex Arteaga left the Board.

Research Catalogue

With currently close to 12.000 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 well as a publishing platform for several online journals.

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 etc. – was supported by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (NARP). In 2018, the module was also activated for processing internal research funding at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen.

A major step in the period 2017-18 was the RC overhaul, which provided a significant improvement of the RC performance and included some new features. Consequently, we implemented a new version of the RC Graphical Editor in the first part in 2018. The RC source code has been cleaned up during 2018 and is now made available.

Last spring we developed a new responsive exposition format (text-based editor) for smart phones, tablets and similar devices on a request from the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH). This has – in general – been very well received. During autumn 2018 and spring 2019, we have developed the outline for a major upgrading of the Research Catalogue. To reach this new level SAR will be depended on joint funding from a number of our portal partners.

The regulations defined in the EU GDPR has been implemented in the RC during 2018.

The Portal Partnerships

The Portal Partnership scheme is at this stage well established with 18 partners, of whom most now actively operate their portal. Two new partners signed up for 2018, while one stepped out. Two new additional partners have signed up until now in 2019. The annual standard fee for portal partners will for most partners increase to € 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 2018 spring Portal Partner meeting took place in Zurich over two days in June, with Zurich University of Arts as local host. Thirty participants representing nearly all the partners were present. The autumn Portal Partner Meeting took place in Copenhagen over two days in December, with the Rhythmic Music Conservatoire as local host. Twenty 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.

Just now we are participating in a major EU-application for funding co-ordinated by the Fine Art Academy at NTNU – Norwegian University for Science and Technology in Trondheim, related to a call under Horizon 2020 named Arts' Expansions in the Social. In case this application is funded, further developments of the RC will be an important part of the project.

9th SAR International Conference for Artistic Research, Conference Report

The 9th SAR International Conference for Artistic Research took place in Plymouth, UK from April 11 to April 13. The Conference was co-organized by Plymouth University and SAR and hosted by the Arts Institute at the University of Plymouth with additional support from Kingston University and the Contemporary Aesthetics and Technology research programme, Aarhus University, Denmark. Geoff Cox, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Johan Haarberg, Laura Hopes, Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior, Gabriele Schmid and Geir Strøm worked together as the conference committee.

The provocation of the title “Artistic Research will eat itself” could be understood as a warning against the dangers of methodological introspection and as an invitation to explore the possibilities of a field in a constant state of becoming. The imagination of auto-cannibalism was recognized as an analogy for broader socio-political and environmental concerns. The selected contributions responded to the dynamic tension between self-destruction and regeneration with a broad range of interpretations of the theme.

On the first day a number of workshops was conducted followed by the opening and the first keynote by Alex Murray-Leslie. On the second and third day the wide range of parallel paper sessions was framed by performances, installations, and further keynotes by Florian Schneider, Elaine Gan, Martin Crowley and Ayesha Hameed. Part of the programme was an informal session with the JAR Editors and a presentation of the Research Catalogue by members of the SAR Board. The conference closed with a party at KARST Gallery, where the outcome of a research/PhD workshop that was run in advance of the conference (April 8 – 11) was exhibited.

The conference with 200 delegates was fully booked as were the prior conferences in Helsinki and the Hague.. It was especially successful in provoking lively debates and it offered insights into the controversial understandings of the socio-political and aesthetic aims and methodologies of artistic research. The programme and the conference booklet with the abstracts are still available on the conference website:

<http://www.sarconference2018.org/>. The conference proceedings are published on the Research Catalogue: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749>

Funding Agencies Expert Meeting

The Second Expert Meeting of Funding Agencies took place in Oslo and was supported by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. In the context of this event five projects funded via the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme were presented in a pre-seminar programme hosted by the Academy of Music in Oslo.

The event gathered 13 participants representing 7 agencies active in the field of art and research funding (Austrian Science Fund, Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, Swedish Research Council, Swiss National Science Foundation, Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) and SAR. The seminar format offered the opportunity to focus on shared interests, reflect experiences, talk about aspects of the three themes: evaluation; open access and data management plans; and impact, challenges and achievements in the field of procedures, documentation and disseminations of results.

The director of NARP, Geir Strøm, and the chair of the board of NARP, Cecile Broch Knudsen, initiated an exchange concerning evaluation of research schemes. They discussed previous criteria and outcomes of evaluation used by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. The Swedish Research Council, represented by Senior lecturer Niclas Östlind, addressed Open Access and data management plans and additionally considered the relationship art has within issues of management. The impact of artistic research was a topic presented by the SAR Executive Board member Alexander Damianisch. The assessment of impact was scrutinized and it was related to measurement valorization, societal challenges, cross-disciplinary outputs, creative industry, the humanities, profit outside the academic context and accountability. Following the Austrian Science Fund (2017), the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (2018), the Swedish Research Council will host the event November 20-21, 2019 in Stockholm.

SAR's Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Exposition

The Executive Board of SAR launched the Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Expositions at the end of 2017. 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. The jury for the evaluation process for years 2018 and 2019 consists of Karst de Jong (The Hague/Barcelona), Leena Rouhiainen, chair (Helsinki) and Michael Schwab (London).

The call for the Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Exposition for year 2018 was announced in the SAR Newsletter November 2018 and on SAR Announcements on February 1, 2019. The final deadline for submissions was February 15, 2019. All in all, eleven eligible submissions were offered for evaluation.

The members of the jury all familiarized themselves with the 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 of 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. The selected prizewinner will be announced at the 10th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research in Zurich on March 21, 2019.

SARA: the SAR Announcement Service

SAR introduced a new announcement service in January 2018. This service offers both members and non-members an opportunity to make announcements for activities, positions etc. towards most of the approx. 12.000 Research Catalogue registered users. This service is offered for a reduced price to our members.

The administrative and financial handling of announcements works well, after some technical difficulties during the start-up period. The card payment goes directly through a payment provider to our bank account, with a small commission to the provider. We have received 40 plus requests for SARA announcement from January 2018 to the end of the year. Payment level has been € 50 for SAR members (individual as well as institutional) and € 100 for non-members.

The overall income for the year was € 2.000 plus. By the adjusted payment levels for 2019 (€ 100/€ 200) we have already had an income over € 1.000.

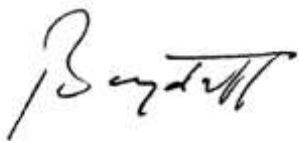
The income generated through this channel will probably still be low in the start-up phase, but may in the long-term perspective be of more substantial support for the organisation.

SAR Executive Officer

The function as SAR Executive Officer is taken care of by the former Vice President, Johan Haarberg. Due to his knowledge of SAR and our members we have been able to continue the Executive Boards activities in a very good manner. His time is also devoted to preparation of conferences, financial matters and contact with the back office. In 2018 he has carried out recruitment activities resulting in new institutional members and portal partners. The Research Catalogue activities is also part of his responsibilities and he is in charge for the RC Managing Officers. Adjustment of RC to the European GDPR has taken a lot of his time and effort in 2018. The Executive Board is very satisfied with the work and acknowledges the workload this represent on behalf of the board and the organisation.

Dear SAR members, I am looking forward to meet you all in Zurich at the SAR General Assembly on 24 March 2019!

On behalf of the Executive Board,
Yours sincerely,



Henk Borgdorff
President Society for Artistic Research