

Dear members of the Society for Artistic Research,

In these challenging times our thoughts go out to all our institutional and individual members: to those of you in the institutional management and services who now take responsible and farsighted decisions to keep the quality of (artistic) research and education robust despite these circumstances; to the artistic researchers and teachers amongst you at institutions who are now facing massive workflow disturbances and complications (we are glad to know that and in what way our online tools contribute to easing this situation); and to the freelance artists and students amongst you who are already living under precarious conditions and who are now enduring the consequences of the current restrictions.

The crisis has rendered our *Crisis Collective* Conference impossible. This has taken away this year's richest opportunity not only for research presentation and knowledge exchange but also for networking, for putting one's work on the map in terms of content and quality, and also for getting in touch with relevant peers, and to connect to new collaborators, learn about new opportunities, meet new voices, join new conversations, attract new interest, be inspired. We extend our gratitude and appreciation for the efforts that have gone into conference preparation to the KMD Bergen leadership and staff, as well as the members of the two Conference Committees. Frode Thorsen, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design of the University of Bergen and myself were looking forward to opening the event in the spirit of dialogue and celebration of artistic research. Right now the Bergen conference organisers and the SAR Executive Board are looking for ways to channel the work done and impetus gathered into an alternative format. For the time being I can only suggest that all those who involuntarily may have time at their hands might consider turning towards preparing research, documentation, and findings for publication – digging into, exploring, and perhaps further unleashing the potential offered by the Research Catalogue (RC), and the Portals. For our institutional members with Portal Partnerships, the portals are a genuinely worthwhile resource for the creation of multimedial workspaces, archiving, and student assessment – in fact this is still the most versatile such environment for multimedial expositions out there – but also for the management of student admissions.

2019 was a highly active year for the whole SAR Executive Board, the JAR editors, and the RC staff. The report below details the year's developments in the finances, membership, JAR, RC, Portal Partnerships, the SAR conference in Zürich, the Funding Agency Expert Meeting (which 2019 was in Stockholm), the Annual Prize for Excellent Research Catalogue Exposition, the SAR announcement service SARA, and the newly founded SIGs – the developments were positive throughout and consolidated.

All the while, behind and beyond the tasks described, a new, exciting spirit is present in the actions of the Executive Board. The Executive Board is now collectively developing a vision of how SAR – integrating the achievements of its past Presidents and Boards – can further recognise and respond to the needs of its members and the wider artistic research community, and together we spent a considerable amount of focused time in thinking towards means with which the existing SAR opportunities and tools for research publication and networking could be extended into becoming a shortcut to the current state of the art and the central site for discourse in artistic research. As I had declared to the GA, the furthering of dialogue and collective thinking is a highly important aim in my presidency, and we are also heeding the GA's call for diversity, inclusion, and sustainability in taking measures towards this refined vision.

A brief look back shows that, on top of the numerous points in the report below, SAR is actively involved in drafting an improved description of artistic research and its requirements towards a improved categorisation within the Frascati Manual. Members of the Executive Board and of the JAR editorial team gave presentations, including keynotes, at important new conferences in countries so far little represented, amongst them France (Nice) and South Africa (Johannesburg).

Presently, we're already substantially advanced in the planning of the 12th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research 2021 which will take place in Vienna. Three renowned institutions join us in the efforts towards a unique event and experience: the conference is a joint co-operation between MDW University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Applied Arts Vienna and SAR. The call for submission will be launched soon, and will promote a diversity of presentation formats including a large spectrum of actual practice and features a new curated format that puts pairs of presentations into dialogue. We have been and are continuously working towards increasing the status of JAR and are pleased to have prolonged Michael Schwab's role as Editor in Chief.

And a brief look into the future will see efforts directed towards considering options for a database of doctoral dissertations in artistic research, plus further extensions to the RC functionality towards ease and creativity of use, but also towards a layer of discursivity and crossreferencing. As we are now fast approaching the elections of a good part of the Executive Board, for which you will receive recommendations by the election committee, I very much hope you are in favour of the immediate online procedure suggested by us.

The global effect of the current pandemic underlines the urgency of rethinking and transforming some fundamental traits of human behaviour and attitudes. Extended reflection through artistic media, including first- and second-person perspective explorations and new ways and qualities of collaboration and collective thought bring new ideas, actions, sensitivities, discoveries, insights, and understandings. In its pluralistic, epistemic ways, artistic research will not only enrich and replenish art itself, but make a lasting contribution to the necessary change.

Extending our best wishes to you all,



Deniz Peters (President) on behalf of the Executive Board

What follows is an account of SAR activities and status quo in the period of 2019.

Executive Board members

Deniz Peters, President (Graz, Austria)
Geir Strøm, Vice-President (Bergen, Norway)
Giacco Schiesser, Vice-President (Zurich, Switzerland)
Angela Bartram (Derby, United Kingdom)
Alexander Damianisch (Vienna, Austria)
Leena Rouhiainen (Helsinki, Finland)
Gabriele Schmid (Ottersberg, Germany)

SAR Executive Officer

Johan A. Haarberg (Bergen, Norway)

Membership

In 2019, SAR encompassed 39 regular institutional members compared to 33 in 2018 and 17 portal partners, compared to 15 the year before. We are very happy to welcome our new institutional members that joined us in 2019:

- Anton Bruckner Private University,
- Bauhaus University Weimar,
- Falmouth University,
- Newcastle University Institute for Creative,
- NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- University of the Arts Bremen

The strong upwards trend continues: We have registered five new institutional members already in the first three months of this year, bringing the total of institutional memberships by the end of March 2020 to 57 (up from 47 in 2018).

Since we have yearly memberships, the number of individual members changes significantly from year to year. We gain most individual members before the annual conferences, hence the number is closely tied to lower or higher number of these sign-ups. For 2018, we had 68 paying members, while in 2019 we reached the highest number of individual members to this day with 132 registered payments. At this stage in 2020, it does not seem likely that we will reach the same level of individual members. A main challenge here is to keep our individual members from one year to the next, and we also see a significant number of people who request a membership without actually making a payment.

Finances and budget

The aim for 2019 of a significant rise in the institutional membership has been reached, not at least because of a more active membership recruitment over the last years, and we did achieve the ambitious target set in the budget. Although we did not reach the full income level expected on RC Feature Improvement Costs, we did succeed in establishing the portal partner funding consortium for further development of the RC. Due to the modularised plan for these developments, the cost side could be adjusted accordingly.

For the remainder costs, the results are close to what we budgeted, and the total result is in accordance with the expected deficit in the endorsed working budget. This is a significant positive turn from the € 52.000 deficit in 2018. Consequently, the reserve by the end of 2019 is approx. € 20.000 plus.

The presented budget for 2020 aims to keep the balance around € 10.000, but – as pointed out also earlier in this report – this depends on increased income compared to 2019. It is obvious that further growth of institutional members – and in particular more portal partners – will be crucial for the long-term sustainability of the organisation. There is substantial work going on to achieve these aims. The Executive Board must, at the same time, actively keep seeking external sources for funding.

Journal for Artistic Research

JAR had a successful year in 2019. Two issues (#18 and #19) containing 15 expositions overall as well as five reflections and eight book reviews (13 JAR Network texts overall) were published. A JAR publication (Macek) won the SAR RC prize the second year in a row. Publishing three issues per year – as it was decided in 2016 – remains a challenge.

JAR has expanded its use of the Facebook page to engage in network development within social media platforms. The number of page followers within 2019 increased by 67%, which is promising.

The editorial structure and workflow were continually improved while basic arrangements have not been changed. This might occur when the Editorial Board in 2020 is renewed partly.

The main new development is that JAR now also accepts submissions in Spanish, Portuguese and German. In order to cater for those, JAR recruited additional editors and created two internal 'language panels' (in German and in Spanish/Portuguese). Both language panels consist of a chair and two additional editors who speak the language of the the panel. With respect to editors JAR started to accept more editors from outside of Europe, which is crucial for its international standing as well as author and audience development in Asia, Africa and Latin and South America.

Research Catalogue (RC)

With currently close to 14.000 registered users, the RC offers the largest existing forum and network for the artistic research community and artists interested in research today. It is used for profiling and self-publication, as an institutional repository and archive (via the portals), as a research and education management tool, as well as a publishing platform for several online journals. In the spirit of open access, the RC source code is freely available.

During the last years several pressing software developments were realised. This includes: (1) a new responsive exposition format (text-based editor) for smart phones, tablets and similar devices; and (2) an application module – a provision within the RC to handle submissions for project funding and for the handling of admissions to degree programmes etc. The module has now been used for handling submissions and selections to the Bergen Conference, and will be used for the same purposes for the coming conferences.

For 2019, we took an even more pro-active and productive approach and developed plans for a major upgrade project, depending on joint funding from a number of our portal partners. This upgrade addresses the connectability and repository functionalities of the RC, as well as the RC exposition format. The upgrade facilitates the connection of the RC to external media repositories by implementing a programmable interface (API). Further, the upgrade comprises the development of a media repository, which allows users to navigate and manage their media files and to share files with other users. In addition, a new fully specified exposition format that merges both existing formats will be developed. This new format will allow for a wider use while building on a strict and transparent structural core. This will significantly improve the extensibility, referenceability, responsiveness and long-term archiveability of the Research Catalogue.

The partners that have decided to back this joint funding operation are: Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen, SKH - Stockholm University of the Arts, Uniarts Helsinki and University of the Arts The Hague. The Executive Board highly appreciates the support for this joint effort!

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 during 2019, and some additional members are considering joining later this year.

The Executive Board organises meetings twice a year 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 2019 spring Portal Partner meeting took place in Leiden over two days in June, with Leiden University as local host. Twenty participants representing nearly all the partners were present. The autumn Portal Partner Meeting took place in Vienna over two days in January, with the University of Applied Arts Vienna as local host. Twenty-five 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 Research Catalogue (RC), mainly focusing on general and portal use, admin roles and responsibilities, creating content on the RC etc.

During 2019, the Executive Board has decided on a new portal partnership fee policy, which offers more diversity and lower fee levels for potential East and South European partners, see attachment to the Financial Report.

10th SAR International Conference for Artistic Research, Conference Report

The 10th SAR Conference on Artistic Research 2019 in Zurich – with 3 keynotes, 60 contributions and more than 250 participants (a record!) – was very well received. The participants especially praised that artistic research really was at stake very concretely, and presented and discussed in manifold ways and with enough time thanks to the 90 minute format of the sessions. The Zurich conference showed (again) that our annual event has become internationally *the* conference where the Artistic Research Community meets.

The conference is documented comprehensively online. It includes all three keynotes on video, the full programme with abstracts of all the contributions, a report of the written feedbacks, a series of photographic impressions of the conference, and downloads and links options.

It is accessible here: [https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/641989/641990!](https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/641989/641990)

Funding Agencies Expert Meeting

The aim of “Art and Research Funding: Third Expert Meeting of Funding Agencies - 2019 Stockholm”, initiated by the Society for Artistic Research, was to bring together agencies active in the field of art and research funding. Since its inception in 2017, the format offers the opportunity to focus on shared interests and reflect experiences, with this year’s focus being on discussing questions about how to judge, evaluate and enhance quality in artistic research and its funding. The opening presentation was given by Frode Thorsen, Head of UHR – Art, Design and Architecture and Dean at Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design in Bergen, who raised the question of how to better categorise Artistic Research in relation to the structure offered by the Frascati Manual. This was followed by presentations by agency representatives from Austria, Czech Republic, Netherland, UK, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

One important initiative by past SAR President Henk Borgdorff as a result of the SAR Academy, Barcelona 2018 and taken up by the current Board was to establish Special Interest Groups (SIGs). SIGs are founded, moderated and coordinated by SAR members with the aim of developing an ongoing discourse and diverse activities around key topics relevant to artistic research.

After the launch of this initiative at the 2019 SAR conference in Zurich and over the course of the year three Special Interest Groups were put forward to and endorsed by the Executive Board, with the following topics and founders/coordinators: (1) "Language Arts-Based Research (SIG 1)" – Emma Cocker, Alexander Damianisch, Cordula Daus, Lena Séraphin; (2) "Spatial Aesthetics (SIG 2)" – Gerriet Sharma; and (3) "Arts, economics & management crossings (SIG 3)" – Claire Gauzente, Régis Dumoulin, Benoît Pascaud. We are looking forward to the SIGs keeping us up to date on their activities!

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 approx. 10.000 of the Research Catalogue registered users. This service is offered for a reduced price to our members. We received 56 requests for SARA announcement in 2019, ten of which were from non-members. The fees were adjusted as of 01.01.19 and are now € 100 per announcement for members and € 200 for non-members. The income generated through this channel was expected to be low in the start-up phase, but the 40% increase in comparison to 2018 shows that it is an attractive service, points in the direction of good acceptance and may thus be of more substantial support for the organisation in the long-term perspective.

SAR's Annual Price for Excellent Research Catalogue Exposition 2018

The Price for Excellent RC Exposition 2018 was announced at the the 10th International Conference on Artistic Research in Zurich on March 21st. The Executive Board of SAR nominated a jury for the prize that included Karst de Jong (The Hague/Barcelona), Leena Rouhiainen, chair (Helsinki) and Michael Schwab (London). After shortlisting the three best submissions, the committee members unanimously agreed that *Investigations into the Meaning of Pain* <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/308804/470238> was the most outstanding submission, awarding the price to Barbara Macek.

Graz 25.03.20 – On behalf of the Executive Board,

Deniz Peters
President Society for Artistic Research