



# Erasmus Cycle

Framework for a practice-based arts  
3rd cycle degree, equivalent to a PhD

–Intellectual Output 2

# Creator Doctus: National Proposition of the Athens School of Fine Arts

## The PhD programme of department of the Visual Arts of the Athens School of Fine Arts

The department of Visual Arts inaugurated its PhD programme only three years ago and has already recruited nine (9) PhD students, but none of them has graduated yet. The Theory Department of ASFA has its own PhD programme that is operating for more than ten years and has thirty-eight (38) students enrolled in the PhD programme, as well as seven (7) graduates. The PhD programme in both departments is recognized by the Ministry of Education, but the research pursued should be theoretical while the dissertation should be a written thesis, following the same standards as in the humanities. What distinguishes the PhD programme of the Visual Arts Department is that the research areas of the program are the transdisciplinary fields that connect, the Arts with the Social and Natural Sciences, as well as the Arts with technology. Artworks could be included in the research as examples or foundations of the research project, but are not part of the main body of the thesis, which is exclusively textual, and are delegated to the appendix.

## Development of a Research environment

The Athens School of Fine Arts follows a polycentric structure, built around workshops (e.g. Painting, Sculpture, Mosaic, Iconography etc) that are run by individual professors. The PhD is part of the same structure where the PhD researchers are placed in the workshop of their individual supervisor. In order to facilitate communication and exchange, we decided to organize a PhD seminar, as part of the new model of 3rd Cycle education, that will function across the different workshops and bring researchers and their supervisors in the same context. The seminar was inaugurated last year following the commencement of CrD and is becoming more formalized starting this academic year. The seminar will hold internal meetings on the first Monday of every month, throughout the academic year (the first meeting already took place on the 7th of October 2019) and at least for the next two academic years, as long as CrD is going to be active. During the internal meetings each PhD student is presenting the findings of her/his research and receives feedback. Parallel to the internal meetings, once a month a guest is invited to present her work in the seminar. These sessions could also take place in a non-academic context (in collaboration with our societal partners, eg the National Museum of Contemporary Art EMΣT) and they will be open to the public, in order to facilitate broader interaction and exposure of the research conducted in the Academy. During the last academic year, two open Sessions were organized as part of the PhD seminar, one with the German artist Carsten Lisecki, in the old library of ASFA, and one with the PhD researcher Macklin Kowal (US) in Circuits and Currents – the project space of the ASFA in the centre of Athens. The first meeting for this academic year took place at 'ΥΛΗ[matter]HYLE on the 18th of October 2019 with the participation of the Swedish artist Ingeborg Paulsrud.

## Development of the practice-based arts research area in relation to educational frameworks and existing research

The framework for PhD research, as it is sanctioned by the Greek Ministry of Education and the Academy's programme, does not formally recognize the role of artistic practice in research. Artworks, performances or other material produced during the PhD research are not to be included in the main body of the dissertation, and are delegated to the appendix of the thesis. Still, our interaction with the PhD researchers of the University all of who (with one exception) are artists and graduates of ASFA, is that artistic practice indeed plays an important role in the research and in the development of their theses. Actually, there is a growing community of artists in Athens who have strong research element in the practice, even though not always explicit or systematic, that are connected with the Academy and interact with the PhD programme both formally and informally. In order to make this apparent and also to map out how exactly artistic practice motivates research, producing new knowledge, we have requested from all the PhD candidates to produce a short, written, account of their research, stressing the role of artistic research and supporting it with other media (photos, videos, sound). At a later point this material will be made available online, representing a repository of artistic research for the Academy. In order to facilitate the development of these texts we advised the researchers to use a series of concepts and ideas that were developed in order to map Artistic Research in the development of CrD, namely: appropriation<sup>1</sup>, epistemic object<sup>2</sup>, explanatory gap<sup>3</sup>, experimental systems,<sup>4</sup> different format,<sup>5</sup> trans-disciplinarity,<sup>6</sup> transposition<sup>7</sup>. These texts will provide the foundation of the discussions in the newly founded PhD seminar and are also part of our effort to create a new model for 3rd Cycle education in the arts, as it is required by the CrD project. This model could be integrated to the regulations of the PhD programme that is in the process of being updated and expanded.

In addition to the discussion of the contribution of artistic research in the PhD programme of ASFA, there are specific efforts made to allow access to the researcher to artistic research internationally, both through peer-reviewed journal and by participating in international conference. The library of ASFA is in the process of subscribing in eJournals in the field, eg JAR, PARSE and others, while a database of electronic resources that would allow easier access both to research and to international conferences is prepared. Finally, there are discussions with community partners about sponsoring art residencies in Athens focusing on artistic research. We are already in com-

- 1 Appropriation denotes the use of scientific concepts or methods in artistic research, the employment of which is pursued in a manner that is not necessarily consistent with their use in the original context.
- 2 Artworks and art practices can assume the status of epistemic objects (or epistemic things) when they are used in research and the production of (new) knowledge. The concept was introduced by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger. As Rheinberger argued, artistic research could be understood as an epistemic attitude that transforms what is initially at hand ("stuff") into an object of investigation (an "epistemic thing"), with the arts emerging as experimental systems with artworks becoming epistemic objects (Rheinberger 1997).
- 3 Explanatory gaps, are areas where scientific reasoning has not yet provided an explanation. These gaps are usually located in areas between scientific disciplines.
- 4 The idea of experimental systems comes from the history of science and challenges the viewpoint that science tests and accepts (or rejects) single hypotheses by conducting simple experiments. How research is done is through complex experimental systems that are developed transdisciplinary.
- 5 Different formats are used as a point of comparison to the unitary, text-based analysis of the humanities. Different formats in artistic research can include among others exhibitions, performances, artworks, seminars, master classes.
- 6 Transdisciplinarity is an epistemic attitude that tries to combine concepts, methods and instruments from different disciplines in the sciences, humanities and the field of technology.
- 7 The term "transposition" originates from linear algebra, where it denotes the switching of rows and columns in a matrix. In artistic research, transposition is a specific methodology that alters the epistemic position of the researcher by restructuring the field of inquiry, allowing access to data that were not available before.

munication with TWITLab<sup>8</sup>, A \_\_ Dash<sup>9</sup> and 'Υλη[matter]HYLE<sup>10</sup> to materialize these plans.

## Collaboration with the community partner

(Formal) Artistic research is in its early stages in Greece, both in the University Education and in the scientific practice. Nonetheless, there has always been a strong interest among Greek artists on social, historical and scientific questions that has been informing their artistic practice for decades. The past experience of public engagement is supporting the growing interest in the role of artists in the research process and in communicating scientific knowledge. As part of CrD we have developed further the collaborations of the School, intensifying existing partnerships and forming new ones. Our aim is to enhance the research environment for our PhD researchers, allowing them different venues to present their project as well inviting other researchers, both PhDs and professional artists, in the debate around artistic research and about the individual PhD projects in ASFA.

Our main community partner is the National Museum of Contemporary Art, EMΣT; we plan to have some of the open sessions of our PhD Seminar there, both to invite more audience and allow more exposure to the PhD students. At a later stage, we are going to propose a symposium on the possible contribution of artistic research in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge, inviting faculty, representatives of the Ministry of Education and the local art-scene in an effort to energize the discussion of artistic research in Greece. The symposium will be held in Greek, so as to be as inclusive as possible for all these three different groups.

We are in the process of forming partnership with art-spaces that have an interest on artistic research or have conducted artistic research in the past. As already suggested in Section 2, we are already in communication with TWITLab, A \_\_ Dash and 'Υλη[matter]HYLE in order to enhance the research environment of our PhD candidates.

## Research Programme accreditation

The PhD programme of ASFA is already recognized by the Ministry of Education in Greece and its part of the study of the University. Both departments, namely the Visual Arts Department and the Theory department offer PhD. The Visual Arts Department PhD program, which is the one that is relevant for the CrD, is newer and now tries to define its own field and comparative advantage in relation to the theory departments and other PhD programmes in Greece. The senate of the School, which is the main administrative body, is in the process of amending the study guide and discussions are being held in order for the Academy to find ways to integrate and valorise artistic research in the PhD program.

8 <http://twixtlab.com/>  
9 <https://a-dash.space/>  
10 <http://hyle.gr/>

## Research Programme title

The title is Διδακτωρ which is the equivalent of a PhD and is recognized by the Greek Ministry of Education.

## Aims of the programme

To produce innovative, quality research in areas that border and inform visual arts, including technology studies, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, contemporary history. Also, to train our candidates to be able to develop skills that are useful in their professional development both inside and outside the academic field.

## Mode and length of study

The length of study is three years full-time and six years part-time.

## Programme structure

The program is structured following the workshop model of the School, there are no specific modules (eg research methods, ethics, quantitative or qualitative methods) to prepare the PhD researchers. Each PhD student is part of the workshop of the school where his or her supervisor participates. The student and the supervisor hold regular meeting to monitor the development of the research and provide feedback and direction to the supervisee. In addition, the PhD student is expected to participate in the monthly PhD seminar and to present her work there.

## Programme learning outcomes/benchmark statement

The Academy follows a model that is developed upon student-centred approach. The aim of the program is to transfer skills and competencies that are considered to be most advantageous for successful creative and academic careers, including the best methods and settings to develop them. At this point the PhD programme does not have a benchmark statement or a detailed programme leading to specific learning outcomes or transferable skills. The participation in the research project is an opportunity for the Academy to develop a strategic plan that will set clear criteria of assessment of the quality of 3rd Cycle research and education, addressing the desirable outcomes and skills. This will be by capitalizing on the experience of the partners in CrD, especially EQ-Arts, in order to build the necessary structures and processes. Also, staff members, especially those involved in PhD supervision, would be involved in the training seminars that will be taking place as part of CrD, in order to acquire the necessary competences towards facilitating the production of such outcomes and development of such skills as part of the 3rd Cycle education.

## Teaching, Supervision and Assessment

During the duration of the PhD the candidate should have regular meetings with his main supervisor, as well as consistent communication with the other two members of his supervising committee; every year there is an assessment of progress taking place following these exchanges. At this point there is no formal requirement for the PhD candidate in taking courses, teaching or participating in public events, even though candidates are encouraged to be active in the educational process and to participate in the PhD seminar that was developed as part of the new 3rd Cycle education model, developed as part of the CrD Project.

The process of the formal assessment of the thesis is initiated after the approval by the three supervisors participating in the candidates' PhD Supervisory Committee. After the thesis is submitted by the PhD candidate in the Secretariat of the Department, the Supervisory Committee, starts the formal process for the composition of a seven-member Examination Board. The Examination Board consists of the three members of the Supervisory Committee and the remaining four are designated by the General Assembly of the Department. At least two (2) members of the seven-member committee must be faculty members and belong to the Visual Arts Department, while the other two (2) members should come from the Department of Theory and History of Art. After a period of 30 days, but no more than 45 days, the Chairman of the Examination Board decides on a specified place and time where the candidate is going to defend his/ her dissertation publicly and orally.

## Selection of candidates

The selection of candidates is conducted on the basis of an application, a project proposal and an interview. The formal requirement, following the standards of the National Education Policy, is that the candidate should have successfully completed her/ his graduate / 2nd Cycle education.

## Quality development and quality assurance

The Academy provides the candidate with quality supervision and makes all the arrangements necessary to ensure the availability of all the resources required for the completion of the PhD research. Currently, the Academy does not have a formal policy for the quality development and quality assurance 3rd Cycle education programme. As already suggested in section 10, the Academy following the participation in the research project aims to develop a strategic plan that will set clear, goals, processes and mechanisms for quality development and quality assurance, capitalizing on the experience of the partners in CrD, especially EQ-Arts in order to build the necessary competences to that effect. Ideally, ASFA would be in position to develop such a plan in the next period.

CREATOR DOCTUS

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