

INTRODUCTION

The collection of articles has been created on the basis of the papers presented at the conference “Artistic research. Various areas, approaches, and experiences”, which was held in Latvia on 5–7 May 2022, at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. The conference took place within the framework of the national research programme “Cultural capital as a sustainable development resource of Latvia (CARD)”. The programme was implemented by a consortium that consisted of five institutions, namely Latvian Academy of Culture as the leading partner, together with Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Art Academy of Latvia, National Library of Latvia, and Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art of the University of Latvia. The aim of the research programme was to create an interdisciplinary knowledge base on the diversity and value of cultural capital as a resource for Latvia’s sustainable development. The unifying concept of the studies of the national research programme was the cultural and creative ecosystem, that is conceptualized as a set of interdependent elements – organizations, groups, and creative personalities – whose activities are aimed at balanced and productive existence of the entire society. It was important for the researchers of the programme to look at culture in a modern way and properly assess the economic, political, and social potential of culture in all three dimensions – past, present, and future – identifying cultural resources in music, visual arts and design, audiovisual, theatre, and performing arts. Not without satisfaction, and with reference to the assessment of international experts, we have concluded that the goals have been successfully achieved and, in some cases, exceeded thanks to the purposeful and systematic work of the researchers involved in the programme. A large number of researchers – 70 in total, including 30 university students of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral levels – have been involved in the research activity, creating new forms of cooperation among different institutions, sub-sectors, and generations. The scientific realization of the programme resulted in research articles, thematic conferences, academic monographs, collections of conference papers, glossaries of terms, exhibitions and digital collections, methodological instructions, and primary data acquisition, which ensured the approval of research results for a wide academic community. The conference “Artistic research: Various fields, approaches, and experiences” was also a great contribution to the achievement of the goals of the research programme, as well as to the growth of cultural capital in particular and the development of the international art research discourse in general.

The focal concept of the conference “artistic research” is an approach that essentially rejects the dichotomism of art and science. It is based on transdisciplinarity, inviting us to capture and analyze reality, using not only the tools of rationality and pragmatism, but also the techniques of impulse, emotion, intuition and, most importantly, techniques of unmediated, personal aesthetic experience. The format of the conference made it possible to share fresh ideas and obtain information about the best international practices, thus developing conceptual and methodological framework of artistic research, which is

necessary for the improvement of academic discourse. The authors of the reports perfectly revealed the diversity of artistic research at all levels – theoretical, methodological and practical. This collection of articles continues the discussions started within the framework of the conference and allows for a deeper understanding of the role of artistic research not only for researchers and university students, but also for higher education policymakers and society in general. Such communication of scientific results is very important, as it confirms the necessity and perspective of artistic research in the academic environment. As a result, new interdisciplinary knowledge is created, a multifaceted and deep understanding of art processes is promoted, and creativity as such is developed. It also creates the groundwork for the process of educating art professionals – outstanding charismatic personalities and smart and responsible artists. In a broader perspective, artistic research is becoming more and more important in the job market saturated with innovations and information technologies.

As a unique quality of the volume, I would like to emphasize the reflexive aspects of its content. Artists' reflections, i.e. the documentation and analysis of their own practice and experience, and the communication of the creation process on two levels – personal and epistemological – is typically regarded as the basis of artistic research. The ability to understand one's own artistic experiences objectively is referred to as the personal dimension. On the other hand, "epistemological" refers to new theories and methods developed and applied by the author, as well as contextual characteristics of the newly generated artwork in terms of its style, succession, and influence aspects.

My personal experience of participating in the accreditation and research processes of professional art doctoral programmes has shown that students specifically cite these reflexivity-related features as the most challenging ones they must deal with when working on their academic and creative projects. And it is completely understandable, because it can be difficult to explain to others the motivations, contextual, theoretical, and methodological components of a new artistic project. In this way, the authors of the volume encourage and perfectly demonstrate that academic reflection can also be very interesting, exciting and, above all, not only intuitive, but also clearly articulate. It provides a glimpse into the artist's unique experience and discoveries, highlighting the importance of artistic competences based on specific practice in the academic environment.

Thus, the value of the volume is both theoretical and empirical, general and quite specialized. Epistemological and methodological searches are general, whereas accounts of artists' practice-based experiences are specific. These seeing, and appreciating the diversity of research, inviting, encouraging and inspiring every interested person to search and find their unique approach in an unimaginably broad field of artistic research opportunities.

On behalf of the Latvian Academy of Culture and the state research programme "Cultural capital as a sustainable development resource of Latvia (CARD)," I would like to express my great appreciation and gratitude to the organizers of the conference, especially *PhD* Diāna Zandberga and *PhD* Andris Teikmanis. Many thanks to the editorial board, led by *Dr.sc.soc.* Anda Laķe, as well as editor-in-chief *Dr.sc.soc.* Ilona Kunda and editor assistant *Mg.sc.soc.* Ance Kristāla for their selfless work during the summer time. Our appreciation and recognition goes to all the authors who shared their valuable ideas and findings. Special thanks to all anonymous reviewers of the articles, whose responsible work and important contributions are often not highlighted and properly evaluated.

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