

Art is Not Research. Research is not Art.

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Art is not research. Research is not Art. (b. 2021)
Conceptual. Ink on paper.

1002001.100. MacDonald Vermeulen Gallery, Private Collection.

Figure 1: Gallery information for this paper.

ABSTRACT

Art is not Research. Research is not Art. is a multimedia, multi-site participatory installation by a collective of artists and researchers from Calgary, Toronto, and Lancaster; it is informed by these contexts. It reflects the tensions between how "participants" are treated in participatory art and interaction research. It offers a framework through which we can explore how epistemologies might evolve in a blending between Art and Research. Visitors download the paper to read, critically reflect on the relationship between art and research, and experientially engage with the material through a series of creative prompts. A performance variation of the piece will be performed in-person and online through the ACM SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems alt.chi track.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → Human computer interaction (HCI); • **Social and professional topics** → Professional topics.

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KEYWORDS

Interdisciplinary research, research ethics, arts and computing, research methods, knowledge creation

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1 CONSENT

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

No Research Ethics Board has approved this research study. Participation is completely voluntary and anonymous/confidential, unless you choose to make your participation public.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the differences between art and research from both the participant's and researcher's perspective. Participatory art invites people to participate in, interact with, or co-construct art artifacts. Research Ethics Boards (REBs) approve studies where human subjects voluntarily participate in a research

task, which may involve interacting with a research artifact and providing personal information in interviews or questionnaires. REBs and artists also have different norms and requirements in different countries and institutions. In some contexts, especially within projects which combine computer science and art approaches, notions of consent, expectation, credit, and participation can be very different among these parties. These differences can lead to conflict, stranded projects, and participants and researchers whose notions of consent are misaligned with the structures they work within.

We seek to provoke discussion on what it means to participate in art and to participate in research. We do so by engaging you in a consent process and study exploring your role as a researcher, artist, participant, and art-goer. This discussion thus also addresses the relationship between the practices and knowledge that emerge from research in interaction design and participatory art experiences.

1.2 What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to read a paper written for the alt.chi track at CHI 2022.

You will be asked to read this paper, and consider its contents. This includes reviewing related research and the authors' sources of artistic inspiration. You will participate in several knowledge-formation experiences and reflect on the nature of knowledge creation. You will be asked to engage with the underlying medium or artifact that carries the knowledge contained in this paper. Ultimately, we ask the reader to reflect on their own participation in art and in research, and where the line between art and research lies – if there is a line at all.

Participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

1.3 What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous. However, participants may choose to publicly share their participation and experiences on social media, at which point that data would be in the public domain along with any other identifying information they have publicly disclosed such as gender, age, ethnicity, or education level.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I grant permission to be audio-taped:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I grant permission to be video-taped:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I grant permission for video recordings to be shared:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I grant permission to have my company's name used:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I wish to remain anonymous:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:
Yes: ___ No: ___
The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____
You may quote me and use my name:
Yes: ___ No: ___
I would like editorial control over the results of the study:
Yes: ___ No: ___

You may revise the list of choices as necessary to accommodate the circumstances of your research participation. You may also add choices that are relevant to your circumstances.

1.4 Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks, harms or inconveniences to the participant.

If you participate in this research paper, you may critically think about how participants interpret art and research, which may make you reconsider – or even regret – past or present actions. If you are distressed by reading this paper, we encourage you to either take a break from the paper to sit with your discomfort until you feel that you can continue reading the paper, or withdraw from the paper and seek out local support for your distress.

You will not be paid to take part in this research paper; you may incur costs to access and take part in this research paper. To reflect open science practices, we are making the materials for this paper openly available.

1.5 What Happens to the Information I Provide?

All information you provide will be locally stored on the participant's copy of the paper. Participants will directly control access to the information collected.

We may refer to you by a pseudonym throughout this research paper. Please pick a pseudonym that you like and pretend that we are referring to you.

Participants are free to withdraw from this paper at any time. Withdrawal is no longer possible when the participant has run out of pages to read in this paper. The information they have provided up until the point of withdraw from this paper will remain locally stored on their copy of the paper, and may be destroyed by the participant unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.

No one except the participant will be allowed to see or hear any of the responses to the research paper. The participant's name does not appear in this paper. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. The paper is kept in a locked digital library only accessible by ACM members who have paid for a digital library subscription, or those with institutional access. Participants' anonymous data will be stored until either (a) they choose to permanently erase their data from their computer disk or (b) they decide to recycle a printed copy of the paper.

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results?
Yes: ___ No: ___
If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number):
_____

Are you interested in being contacted about a follow-up interview, with the understanding that you can always decline the request?

Yes: ___ No: ___

1.6 Signatures

Your signature on this paper indicates that (1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research paper, and (2) you agree to participate in the research paper.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research paper at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print)

_____

Participant's Signature:

_____

Date:

_____

___ I consent to participate in this research paper (proceed to next page).

___ I didn't read the consent form, but I want to participate.

___ I do not wish to participate in the research paper (stop reading, throw away or delete the document).

1.7 Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact the authors.

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the SIGCHI CARES committee (https://sigchi.org/resources/sigchi-cares/.. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

2 INSPIRATION

This paper contrasts the differences between empirical/science-based ways of knowing and creative/art-based ways of knowing. Specifically, we focus on the relationship between how artists and scientists include and interact with people as part of their knowledge-creation practice. Interactions with the public are dictated and bound by a variety of institutional systems, including research ethics boards.

We juxtapose two modes of knowledge creation – empirical "scientific" methods, and creation "art" methods. While much research in Human-Computer Interaction relies on empirical methods, CHI is also open to other types of knowledge contributions, including artifacts which represent generative activity [15]. This type of knowledge-generation or contribution is addressed in depth by Forlizzi and Zimmerman, who discuss the research practice of the creation of artifacts that "disrupt, complicate or transform the current state of the world" [4]. These goals share perspectives with those of artists, using art as a "strange tool" to explore how humans self-organize [8]. There are several examples of practices within HCI incorporating art as a way of knowing and as a practice that is complimentary to HCI research [12], including investigating planned obsolescence from the perspective of objects [13], and advocating for the importance of images in HCI publishing [11].

However, practices of knowledge-creation have localized interpretations and implications as they collide with institutional infrastructures. In Canada, the term "research-creation" characterizes arts-based research and art as a way of knowing and is intertwined with national research funding bodies [7]. Officially, it is "an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation" [10]. When working between artistic and scientific disciplines, however, challenges remain with defining the knowledge generated, how to evaluate it, where to do it, and how to fund it [9].

Numerous institutional forces around the world constrain how researchers can go about creating knowledge, and even what is considered a "worthy" research contribution. While it is clear that empirical research using human subjects require ethical review in many countries around the world, it is far less clear when and how research creation that involves people should require ethics review. We arrive at this particular discussion based on the co-authors' experience conducting research and art in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and Denmark. We are only able to reflect these experiences, but we recognize that there are academic and institutional cultures around the world that deal with these issues very differently. We invite reflections from these perspectives in the survey portion of this paper.

In Canada, the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (2018) states in Article 2.6 that "creative practice activities, in and of themselves, do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review" [3]. Does any creative work involving exhibiting work and responding to its reception constitute analyzing responses to answer a research question? If not, why not? Given that art is often intended to be provoking, and has its own norms of evolving negotiated consent, how do these norms mesh with or resist other standards of ethical research with humans, in different contexts around the world?

Our co-authors include a current and a former PhD student in the Computational Media Design (CMD) graduate program at the University of Calgary, both coming from an art background before arriving at transdisciplinary research at the intersection of art and technology. The University of Calgary has a Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB), which provides REB oversight over all research and research-related activities at the University. Both of these authors have collided with and responded to the ambiguity of research ethics oversight on participatory art in their own ways.

Lindsay MacDonald Vermeulen's experience with research ethics review in preparation for her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) work exemplifies how art and research norms and expectations can come into conflict.

In summer of 2009, I wanted to do a study/exhibition hybrid in the student gallery at my university. The basic premise was: the gallery walls would be completely covered in white paper and I wanted to provide creative prompts for viewers to be able to come in and draw

on the walls and connect their ideas with others that were already there. I wanted to know, by doing this, by participating and contributing, to what extent did viewers feel authorship/ownership over their contributions or the exhibition as a whole? The findings were meant to be like a springboard into designing and building a larger scale interactive art installation for my Master's degree. I was really into the idea of collaboratively authored digital art.

The problem was, I never got to do it. Not really.

The REB was not on board.

Admittedly, I didn't really know what I was doing when I wrote my first study design and ethics application. This was pretty new to me as an artist. I did propose to have a sign up on the gallery door informing viewers that by entering and participating this was informed consent, etc. etc. I would have a camera up to record who did what when. Video data wasn't going to be published.

My proposal was rejected after about 3 weeks of waiting for approval. The REB wanted me to assure them that a researcher would be present in the gallery at all times to answer questions participants might have. I didn't particularly like this because that meant people would likely be very self-conscious about engaging with the exhibition, and might also be suspicious about being used in some kind of untrustworthy, duplicitous academic study that would evaluate the quality of their contributions and then humiliate them.

The REB also had questions like, what type of technology are you planning to build? Why? Why art? Why you?

My knee jerk reaction was – well the heck if I know. I'm doing a creative exploration through participatory art. I don't know where this is going yet, that's the point.

After many discussions with the senior HCI researchers and PhD students in my lab, who had a lot of experience with designing studies and dealing with the REB, I submitted again.

And waited for a few more weeks.

And was rejected again.

In the meantime, the opening day of my supposed exhibition was drawing nearer and nearer and I wasn't allowed to do my show. I made revisions to my proposal and resubmitted to the REB. At this point, I didn't even know if what I'd told them I was going to do was true to the spirit of my artistic practice and intentions anymore. It really seemed like the REB wanted this collaboratively created, ad-hoc, improvisational work to be far more controlled (and maybe censored if someone did something offensive).

I never got approval.

On opening day, I had blank, paper covered walls in the gallery. There was no camera. I collaborated with myself on creative prompts and basically did a week-long performance. People could come in and talk to me, but I collected no data.

I didn't get what I needed and wanted from that summer project. I ended up having to change my entire plan for my master's degree because of this. But I did learn a lot about how difficult it can be to deal with an REB as an artist-researcher, and how proposing doing such open-ended artistic explorations as studies can be difficult or impossible on student timelines. My takeaway was to really ask myself, at what point in my process as an artist, or indeed as a designer, do I really want to get data from possible participants? Is it even reasonable to try to study people as they're having an aesthetic experience or should I focus instead on doing usability studies of the interaction design for various smaller components of my installations (and does that even matter for me as a researcher? Were these contributions worthwhile? I wasn't sure if this mattered for me as an artist.)

Another author's experience navigating research ethics for participatory art has been undertaken carefully, to facilitate some data collection while avoiding requiring visitors to consent to participate in research to participate in the art as well. Doing so would both be confusing, as the consent process for the research would confuse the art experience, and require commitment to a research endeavour before visitors have experienced the art and know what the research will be about. Therefore, instead of collecting data from participant's conversation in interactive, conversational installations, data collection is necessarily limited to follow-up interviews with participants who volunteer. This separation additionally avoids changing the art experience by making it research, which would become inextricably a part of the experience of the art for participants and change its meaning. An additional layer of complication in participatory art practices undertaken as research is the issue of authorship. In participatory art, the active engagement of the art-goer is vital to the artwork itself [2]. When this involves their contribution to a collaborative project, questions of ownership and authorship arise, which can conflict with standards of anonymity often required or assumed in research ethics processes [6], leaving each researcher to attempt to navigate their individual ethics review process as well as the question of how and whether to credit individual participants in the artwork itself.

Many of the specific approaches we use in this paper are inspired by participatory art and research instruments – surveys and prompts used for data collection in various studies; we will cite these sources of inspiration throughout the paper, adjacent to them.

As artist-researchers, we create art pieces in a variety of media and exploring many different themes; these pieces are difficult to discuss as contributions because they are "not REF-able". The Research Excellence Framework (or, REF) is a UK metric for the government to allocate funding for universities [14]. Academics are expected to submit their best work to be peer reviewed during the cycle every seven years. Depending on your department, school or faculty, certain types of output are more desirable than others. For example, in a design school, in the Faculty of Arts, an exhibition of artwork is rated highly. However, the same output in a computer science school is not seen as "excellent" and cannot be considered. Despite reviews of the system to allow for novelty and interdisciplinary materials, there is a still a reluctance to take risks when so much rides on the results of the framework: thus, artworks are not acceptable as research outputs in computer science (based on current experience by one of the authors).

All of these reflections on conducting research and generating knowledge between disciplines raises several questions. Whose knowledge is being generated? Whose contributions are respected? Are we creating knowledge with others, generating new things in their heads and our heads? Do we extract that knowledge from them? How do we negotiate that relationship on an ongoing basis? Is that exchange fair and free?

As a group of individual researchers whose work has intersected with these issues, the authors do not feel that we have concrete answers to these challenges. It may be that there are no concrete answers, nor a specific set of changes that, once made, would make these issues a memory. This is why we don't lay out a proposal

for changes to research ethics processes. Instead, we seek to encourage debate, conversation and commiseration among others in the research community dealing with these challenges. Any solutions to be found will likely come from that exchange, rather than proclamations.

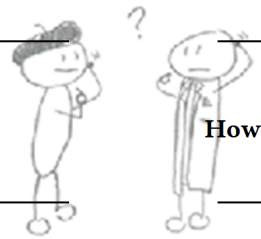
To that end, we ask that you take part in our survey.

3 SURVEY

Please reflect on your own experience of these tensions using the prompts in the survey below to guide you. You may decline to answer any question, and may answer in any way you see fit.

When do you create research?

When do you create art?



Whose knowledge do you create?

How do you grant ownership of knowledge?

Figure 2: Survey regarding your engagement with research and art.

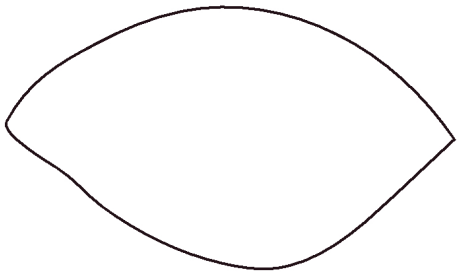
4 CREATIVITY EVALUATION

Please complete the below creativity exercises to contribute to research on researchers artistic creation practices within a research context. These exercises were inspired by the Torrance Creativity Test [5].

List as many art installations as you can.

List as many in-situ observation methods as you can.

Draw yourself experiencing art.



Draw yourself experiencing research.

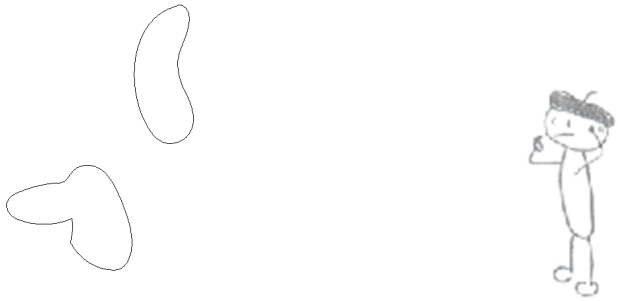


Figure 3: Creativity Exercises Set 1 - Please follow these prompts.

Draw yourself being researched.



Draw yourself researching people.



Draw a scientist.

Draw an artist.



Figure 4: Creativity Exercises Set 2 - Please follow these prompts.

5 CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH AND THE ARTS

For this component of the paper, please use the material qualities of this document to construct an edifice. You may supplement the material of this paper with tape, scissors, and glue. Please report the results of your construction activity here, incorporating your report into the construction itself.

If you are participating in a digital version of this research project (via PDF or web), you may choose one of the following challenges:

- Use images of the letter forms within this paper to create ASCII art.
- Clip images of the words in this paper and write a poem.

If relevant, record your result or experience below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6 WHAT TO HANG THIS ON



Figure 6: A hammer and nail you may wish to cut out and use to ground this research product.

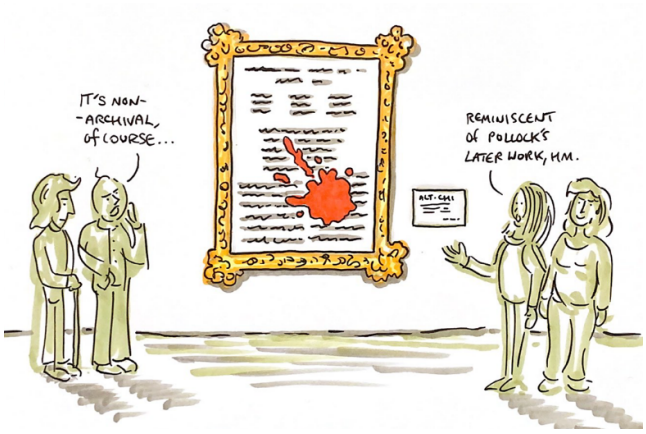


Figure 5: Time to draw the line? Or erase the line...

CREATE A CONSTRUCTIVE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF NORMS OF CONSENT WITHIN ART AND RESEARCH. FACILITATE THE CONDUCT OF ARTS RESEARCH THAT RESPECTS ALL PARTICIPANTS. AVOID ALTERING ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES, WHILE RECOGNIZING KNOWLEDGE GENERATION THROUGH ARTS-BASED PRACTICES AND PARTICIPATORY WORK. ELIMINATE THE TENSION BETWEEN "EXTRACTING" KNOWLEDGE FROM PARTICIPANTS IN CONTRAST TO CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE WITH THEM IN CREATIVE CONTEXTS. RECOGNIZE THAT AS ARTS-BASED KNOWLEDGE HAS UNIQUE QUALITIES, SO ARTS-BASED RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS REQUIRES UNIQUE RESPECT FOR HOW SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS GENERATED WITH PARTICIPANTS, AND THE OPTION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ART EXPERIENCE WITHOUT PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH.

Figure 7: Art is not Research. Research is not Art. manifesto. Inspired by the EAT Manifesto [1]

6.1 Reconsent

This paper was a deception study. While we presented this paper as communication of research ideas, we actually blend participatory art practices with research discourse to provoke independent thoughts from the reader. Given the true nature of this paper:

- Do you consent to this research study?
- Do you consent to this participatory art piece?
- Do you need to consent to read this paper as a research participant?
- Do you need to consent to read this participatory art piece?
- Does consenting to this piece change how you read it?
- Do you consent to reading this paper as a work of art?
- Do you consent to reading this paper as a work of research?
- Did you generate knowledge in reading this paper?
- Do you believe you are a co-author of this paper? If so, please write your name in at the end of the author list.

If you wish to share the results of your participation, you can choose whether you prefer to share on social media with the hashtag #artresearchart (or any other relevant hashtags at your discretion), or at https://forms.gle/H6Jc1v78RyzrAddG7. You are not obligated to share your experience or knowledge in any format.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the frustrated artists who force their knowledge into structures that don't recognize them; all the participants whose knowledge is extracted.

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