CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS (DEADLINE 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)

Arts Research Africa at the Wits School of Arts
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Conference on Artistic Research in Africa:
22-24 January 2020, Johannesburg, South Africa

This conference invites contributions from African practitioners and academics as well as interested colleagues located beyond the Continent to initiate a dialogue about modes of Artistic Research appropriate to African contexts.

Internationally, there now exists a reasonable body of research outputs in the field of Artistic Research, generated mainly by artists and researchers active in Europe, Australia and Great Britain. However Artistic Research has not secured a significant position within most African university systems. Against this background, Arts Research Africa (ARA) at the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa invites submissions for an international conference on Artistic Research, possibly the first of its kind to be hosted on the African continent. We are pleased to include Michael Schwab, Editor in Chief of the Journal for Artistic Research, and Berhanu Ashagrie Deribew from the College of Performing and Visual Arts, Addis Ababa University among the invited speakers for this event.
Approaches to scholarship where artistic practices are viewed as modes of knowledge production and are integrated with traditional modes of inquiry have gained increasing traction over the last decades. While the nomenclature varies in different disciplines and parts of the world, suggesting some variance in understandings and focus, the growing number of approaches to scholarship termed ‘practice-based’, ‘practice-led’, ‘practice as’ and ‘artistic research’ indicate a potential tightening of the relationship between academic scholarship and artistic practice.

The integration within Artistic Research of theoretical and practical knowledge (*episteme* and *phronesis*, in Aristotelian terms) poses a challenge to the Cartesian division of these modes of knowledge. This separation, fundamental to much of Western philosophy, features far less in African philosophy and world views, where notions of holism are generally accepted as axiomatic. This suggests particular potential for Artistic Research to be approached within contexts of African philosophy and thinking.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- The position of the arts in research universities
- Artistic Research in relation to African philosophy
- African Artistic Research and the decolonisation project
- Artistic Research prioritizing practices beyond the Euro-American canon
- Matters pertaining specifically to doctoral degrees entailing Artistic Research
- Formats for the (re)presentation of Artistic Research
- Issues of nomenclature regarding Artistic Research
- Artistic Research in relation to geographic locale
- Issues of epistemology in Artistic Research
- Artistic Research and the Digital Humanities
- Artistic Research and Ethics (philosophically and procedurally)
- The implications of Artistic Research for existing notions of Intellectual Property

ARA invites proposals in a wide range of formats including:

- papers (20 minutes)
- lecture-demonstrations (45 minutes)
- panels and roundtables (45 minutes)
- performances and/or demonstrations (20 - 45)
- exhibitions, film screenings and poster presentations

Proposals should be submitted in MS Word format and include:

- an abstract with title (300 words)
- biographical note (not exceeding 50 words), e-mail address and phone number of presenter(s)

Proposals must be submitted to info.ara@wits.ac.za no later than 30 September 2019. Applicants will be notified by 31 October 2019.

ARA envisages this conference to result in the publication of a book on the conference theme. Selected participants will be invited after the conference is concluded to develop their papers into book chapters. Publication is planned for the second half of 2020.

About Arts Research Africa

Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Arts Research Africa project in the Wits School of Arts consists of a range of activities, from artist residencies and seminars, to symposia, online publishing, bursaries and grants. The purpose of these activities is to spark dialogue, stimulate practice, enable research and inspire collective engagement in developing artistic research in the African university. For more information, please see https://www.wits.ac.za/wsoa/ or https://www.facebook.com/artsresearchafrica/.

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