

ART AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE: CULTURAL LITERACY FOR SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

Riga, 22. April 2026



01 DO- DON'T OVERDEFINE



THE BASICS OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

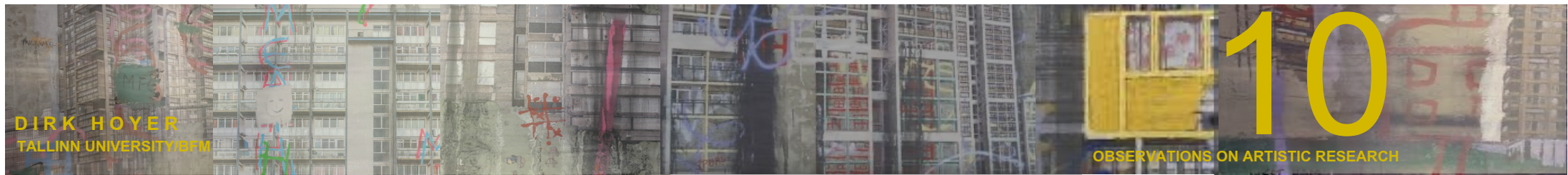
...artistic research as an open-ended, historical, context-aware and narrative enterprise.

HANNULA et al. (2014)

01

KEY DIFFERENCES TO “TRADITIONAL RESEARCH”

- 1) THE ROLE OF ART
- 2) THE TRANSLATION PROCESS
- 3) THE METHOD AND THE ARTICULATION
- 4). THE SCOPE
- 5) THE MATERIAL TRACK



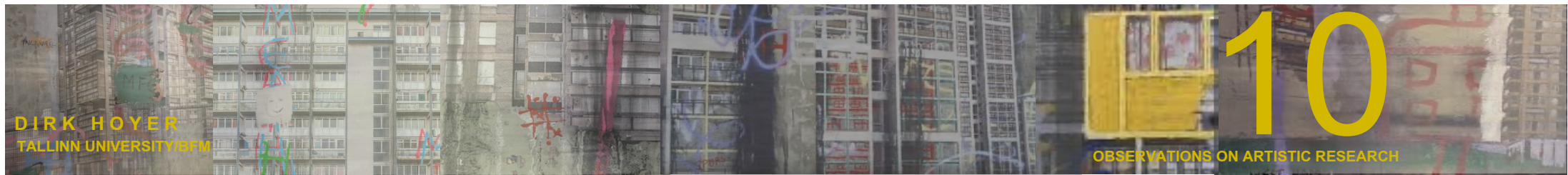
I) THE ROLE OF ART WITHIN RESEARCH

01

By artistic process, we mean acts done inside the practice (...) acts that possibly question the conditions of that practice, push the envelope, but still are in some relevant relationship with that practice, with its internal values, goods, commitments and so on.

Whichever way we want to describe it, taking part in the practice, being engaged in an artistic process means moving back and forth between periods of intensive (insider) engagement and more reflective (outsider) distance-taking. The need to adopt some minimal distance is one of the reasons why artistic research often pushes the boundaries of the artistic practice in question.

HANNULA et al. (2014)



II) A DIFFERENT TRANSLATION

01

The multilinguality of artistic research implies that artistic research is an act of translation. It takes part in at least two languages and can in some cases create new ones. It speaks the language of quality as well as of quantity, the language of the singular as well as the language of the specific, use value as well as exchange value or spectacle value, discipline as well as conflict; and it translates between all of these. This does not mean that it translates correctly – but it translates, nevertheless.

STEYERL (2010)



III) A DIFFERENT METHOD & ARTICULATION

01

At what times and in which phases can research be artistic? First, in its methods (such as searching, archiving, collecting, interpreting and explaining, modeling, experimenting, intervening and petitioning); but also in its underlying motivation, its inspiration, in its reflection, its discussion, in the formulation of research questions, in its conception and composition, in its implementation, in its publication, in its evaluation, in the manner of discourse – just to name a few. These phases can only be summarized and categorized post-hoc, such as in the customary triad of object, method and product.

KLEIN (2017)



IV) A DIFFERENT SCOPE

01

Who are we? How do we want to live? What do things mean? What is real? What can we know? When does something exist? What is time? What has causality? What is intelligence? Where is sense? Could it also all be different? These are examples of interests common to art and science. Their treatment does not always lead to secure and universally valid knowledge (with regard to the history of science, only in very few cases, no?). The arts are granted the authority to formulate and address such basal and yet complex issues in their specific ways, which must not necessarily be less reflected than those of philosophy or physics, and which are in a position to gain specific knowledge that could not be delivered in any other way.

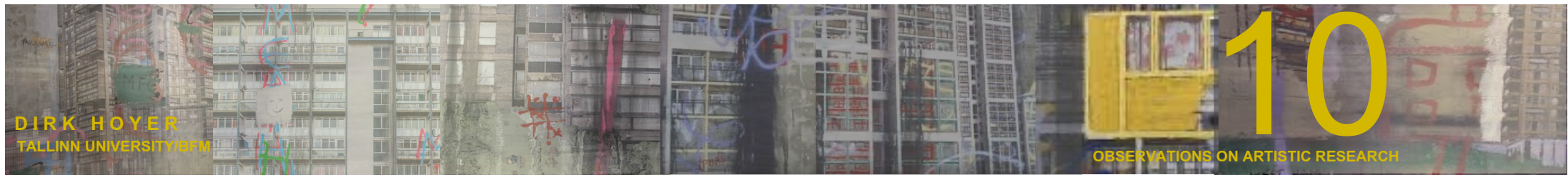
KLEIN (2017)



IV) THE MATERIAL TRACK

01





BUT: DON'T FORGET TO PLAY

...man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER (1794)

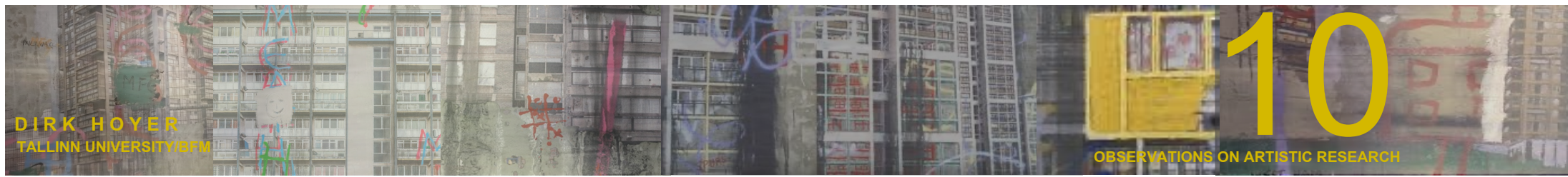
01

Three fundamental human drives:

-reason -matter -play drive

Johan Huizinga>>Homo Ludens





02 THE QUESTION OF KNOWLEDGE



THE INTERSTICES

02

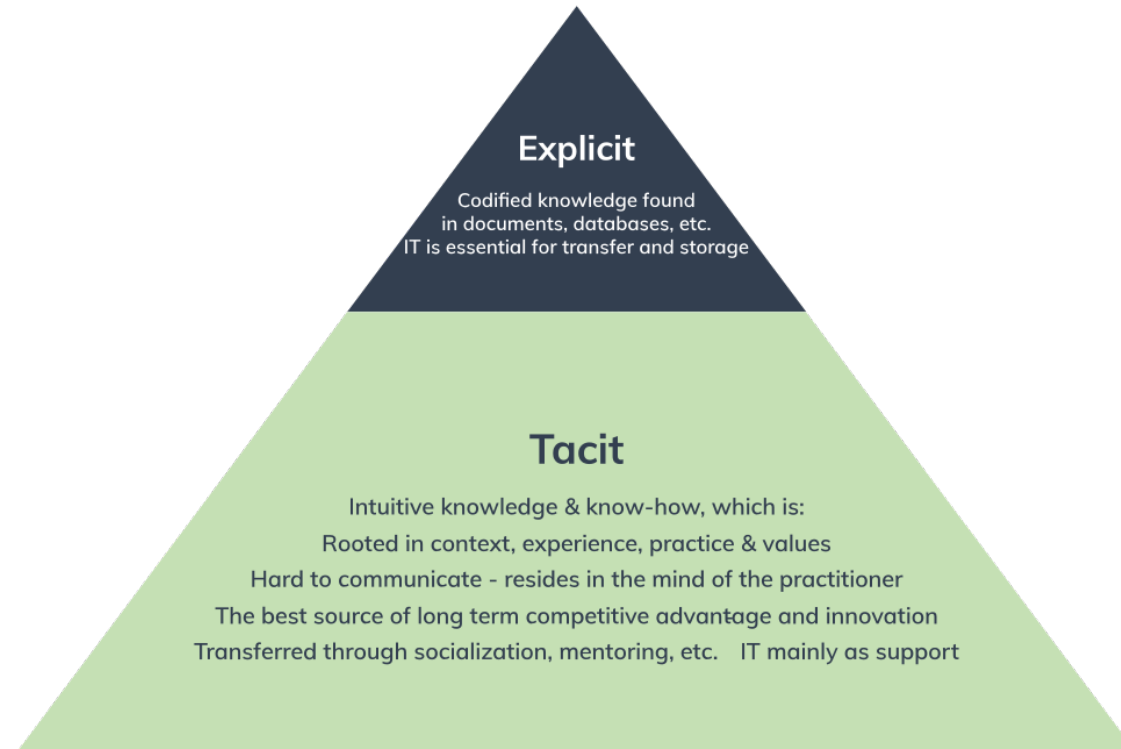
...artistic research describes a particular mode of artistic practice and of knowledge production, in which scholarly research and artistic activity become inextricably intertwined. Questioning the boundaries among art, academia, philosophy, and science, it enables the exploration and generation of new modes of thought and sensible experience.

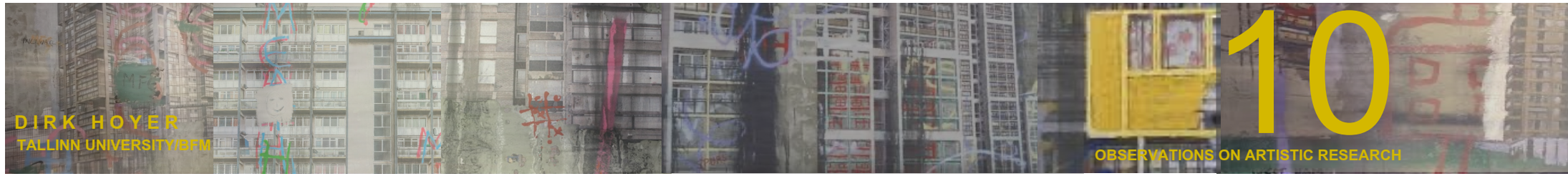
DE ASSIS/D'ERRICO (2019)



TACIT KNOWLEDGE

02



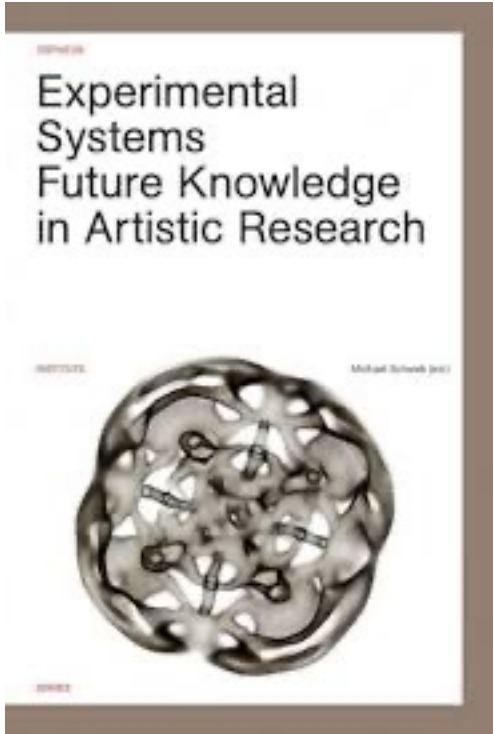


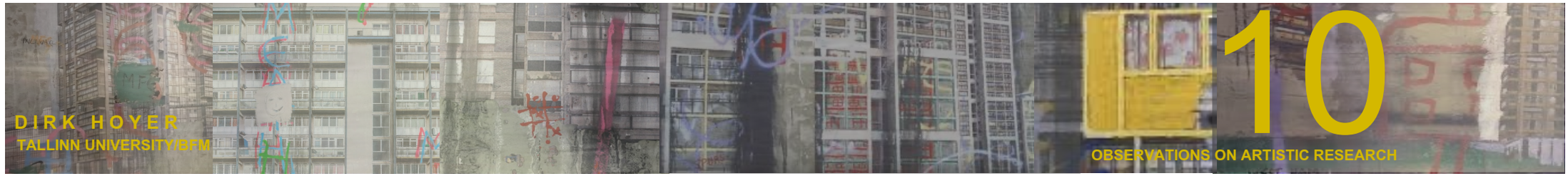
ARTWORKS AS KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

02

In the context of artistic research, artworks are epistemic things and events that have not yet been “understood” or “known”—or, to be sure, that resist any such epistemological grip. Art’s knowledge potential lies partly in the tacit knowledge embodied within it and partly in its ability to continuously open new perspectives and unfold new realities.

BORGDORFF (2013)





DICHOTOMY BETWEEN ART AND SCIENCE?

02

...academic research attributes to itself willingly an Apollonian insight and clarity ('We who know'), whereas artist-researchers, on the contrary, are frequently attracted by a concept of art and research that reverberates Dionysian overtones and the cult of genius.

HOVLAND (2023)



	Apollo	Dionysos
	Order	Chaos
	Reason, rational thought	Irrationality, impulse
	Control	Excess
	Dream	Intoxication
	Form and identity	Loss of self
	Structure	Nature, wildness, animalism
	Beauty, purity	Lust; fertility and abundance
	Protection	Cruelty
	Art of images (e.g., sculpture)	Imageless art (i.e., music)
	<i>Principium individuationis</i>	Original ontological Unity



03 VORSTELLUNGSKRAFT & BILDUNG



THE 10 TRANSLATIONS OF IMAGINATION

The English word “imagination” has ten translations in German:

03

- Fantasie,
 - Einbildung,
 - Einbildungskraft,
 - Vorstellung,
 - Einfallsreichtum,
 - Ideenreichtum,
 - Imagination,
 - Vorstellungsgabe,
 - Vorstellungskraft,
 - Vorstellungsvermögen
- (source: leo.org).

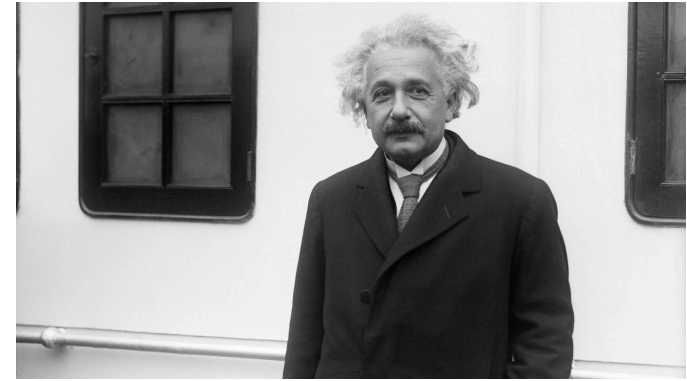


03

IMAGINATION AND KNOWLEDGE

“I believe in intuition and inspiration. Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN (1931)





03

VORSTELLUNGSKRAFT

Vorstellungskraft refers to the “strength”, “energy”, “agency” and “potency” to imagine. So Vorstellungskraft, the tenth translation of “imagination” is not re-translatable into English, but it actually means the strength, energy, agency and potency to “place something else in front the existing”, to develop ideas, conceptions, visions beliefs and images. In this all-encompassing complexity, Vorstellungskraft is the kind of imagination that is needed in order to develop new visions.



03

BILDUNG

Bildung means something akin to *formation in culture*, as the concept marks the individual's transformative journey and encounters with the world.

KORSGAARD (2024)

Education (Erziehung) is to educate oneself; cultivation, or formation, (Bildung) is self-cultivation.

GADAMER (2001)

BILDUNG=to form an image (of the world)





03

BILDUNG

Bildung is a German word for education, cultivation, personal formation and character, emotional and moral development, and maturation combined. Definitions abound, and we will never be done with exploring and defining them. Our currently shortest way of defining bildung is that it is two different kinds of knowledge:

The easily transferable kind of knowledge, which can be academic or practical, and where we can always expand our horizon. We can thus refer to it as horizontal knowledge and/or development.

The almost impossible to transfer kind of knowledge, which comes from life experience, particularly pushbacks. It is our emotional and moral development, our emotional depth and upbringing, and we can refer to it as vertical knowledge and/or development.

The combination of horizontal and vertical knowledge and development is bildung.

SOURCE: <https://www.nordicbildung.org/lexicon/what-is-bildung/>



04

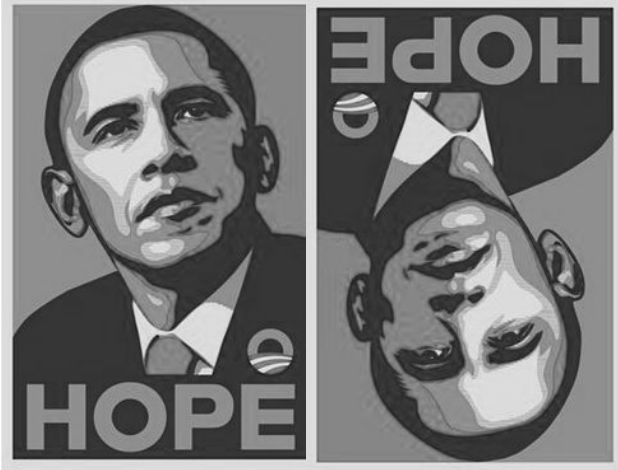
SELF, US, THEN, NOW AND THE YET TO COME



SELF, US , NOW

Marshall Ganz developed for Barack Obama's 2008 campaign the Public Narrative Method in which participants have to define what, for them, is the story of self, the story of us, the story of now.

04





SELF, US , NOW

04

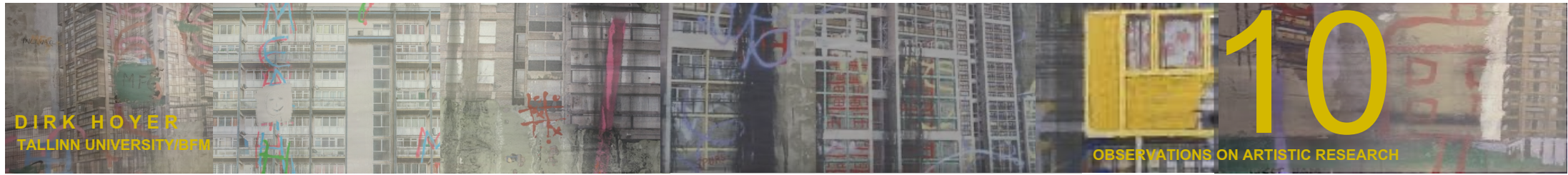
A STORY OF SELF: Why were you called to motivate others to join you in this action (...)

A STORY OF US: To what values, experiences, or aspirations of your community(...) will you appeal (...)

A STORY OF NOW: What urgent challenge do you hope to inspire others to take action on?

GANZ (2009)

Story of Self	Empathy 	Why take action?
Story of Us	Context 	Why take action?
Story of Now	Call to Action 	How to take action?



STRANDED IN THE MIDDLE

For to make sense of our lives from where we are, as it were, stranded in the middle, we need fictions of beginnings and fictions of ends, fictions which unite beginning and end and endow the interval between them with meaning. FRANK KERMODE (2000)

04



Nostalgic Imaginaries (Past)



Self(Present)



Future Imaginaries



THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future

MCLUHAN(1967)

04





THE CRITICAL DIMENSION

How can we capture the critical dimension on "self, us, now" (then, and yet to come)? How can we overcome the limitations of our perspective?





05 THE DANGER OF THE EGO-TRAP



AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

...four assumptions

- (1) culture is a group-oriented concept by which self is always connected with others;
- (2) the reading and writing of self-narratives provides a window through which self and others can be examined and understood;
- (3) telling one's story does not automatically result in the cultural understanding of self and others, which only grows out of in-depth cultural analysis and interpretation; and
- (4) autoethnography is an excellent instructional tool to help not only social scientists but also practitioners—such as teachers, medical personnel, counselors, and human services workers—gain profound understanding of self and others and function more effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds. HEEWOON CHANG (2008)



05



SELF-NARRATIVES

...self-narratives can be used as cultural texts through which the cultural understanding of self and others can be gained.

05

HEEWON CHANG (2008)



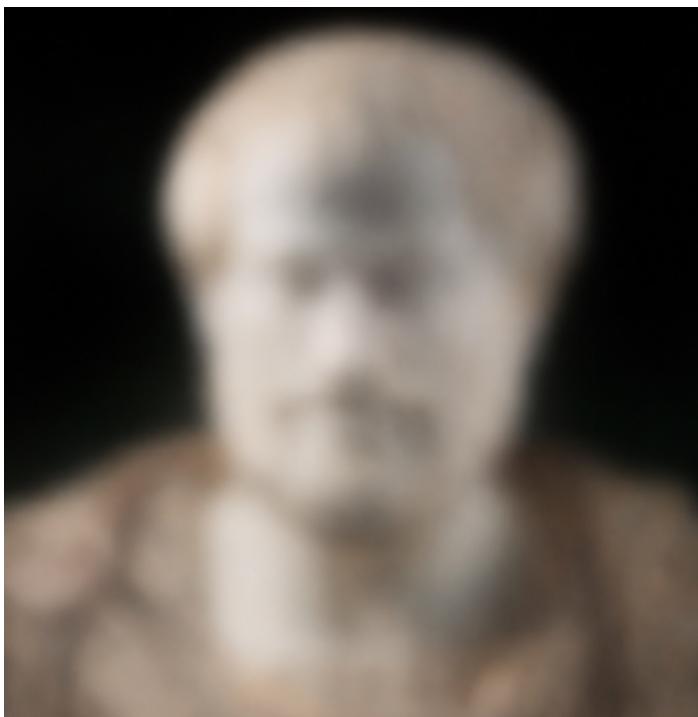


LIMITATIONS

“For it is difficult to know oneself.”

ARISTOTLE (Nicomachean Ethics IX.8)

05



05

NARCISSISM

“The atrophy of older traditions of self-help has eroded everyday competence, in one area after another, and has made the individual dependent on the state, the corporation, and other bureaucracies. Narcissism represents the psychological dimension of this dependence. Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. (...) For the narcissist the world is a mirror, whereas the rugged individualist saw it as empty wilderness to be shaped by his design”

LASCH (1979)

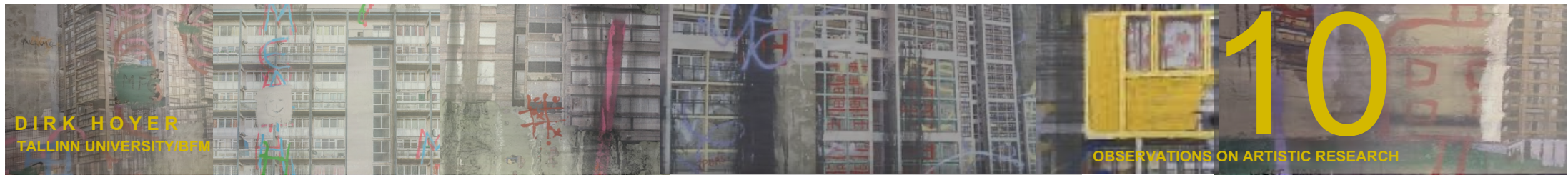
Do we have enough critical distance to understand our own narrative identity?





06 EVEN ABSURD IDEAS CAN BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER*

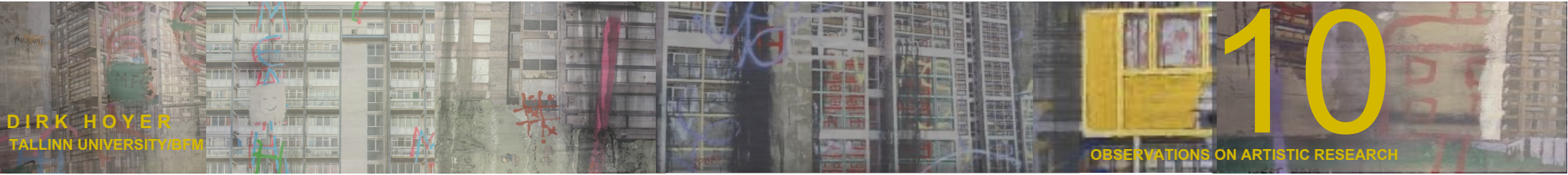
*NOT ONLY IN POLITICS BUT ALSO IN ART



WHEN FAITH MOVES MOUNTAINS (2002)

06





06

MOVING DUNES

“The dune moved: This wasn’t a literary fiction; it really happened. It doesn’t matter how far it moved, and in truth only an infinitesimal displacement occurred—but it would have taken the wind years to move an equivalent amount of sand. So it’s a tiny miracle. The story starts there. The interpretations of it needn’t be accurate, but must be free to shape themselves along the way.”

FRANCIS ALÿS





07 DIVERGENT THINKING



07





07

PAPERCLIP TEST

Or Alternative Uses Test

Developed in 1968 by George Land and Beth Jarman for the NASA in order to determine the creative potential of its engineers and scientists

Aim: measure divergent thinking (find creative, varied solutions to an open-ended problem)

Task: Find as many alternative uses for a standard paper clip within a time-frame of 2 or 3min.

0-10 average, convergent/10-15 good/200+ “divergent thinking genius” level





ONE RED PAPERCLIP

On July 12, 2005, Kyle Mac Donald posted a picture of a red paperclip on his blog and asked if anyone wanted to trade the paperclip for a better object. Through 14 barterers he managed to trade his paperclip for a house.

07





PAPERCLIPPING

Paper-clipping involves popping up sporadically in someone's life with no intention of meaningful connection. Reasons for paper-clipping include fear of intimacy, need for validation, and lack of self-awareness.

07



<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/social-instincts/202405/3-explanations-for-why-your-date-might-be-paper-clipping-you>



DIVERGENT THINKING AND DRIFTING

07

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. (...) the *dérive* includes both this letting go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities.

DEBORD (1956)





THE FOCUS ON LIKELIHOOD

The importance of assessing possibility rather than likelihood is that it puts our collective action at the center, while making confident predictions only encourages passivity.

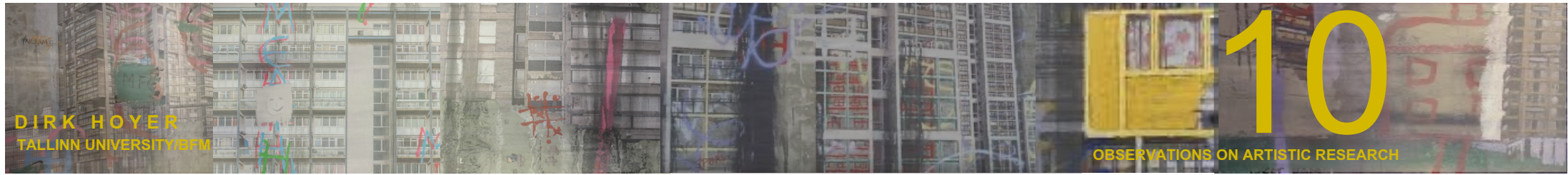
07

FRASE (2016)





08 PUBLIC ENEMY WAS RIGHT



08

ACADEMIC FASHIONISTAS

Think of all the significant hegemonic academic trends that ended up in the trash pile of history (of thoughts):

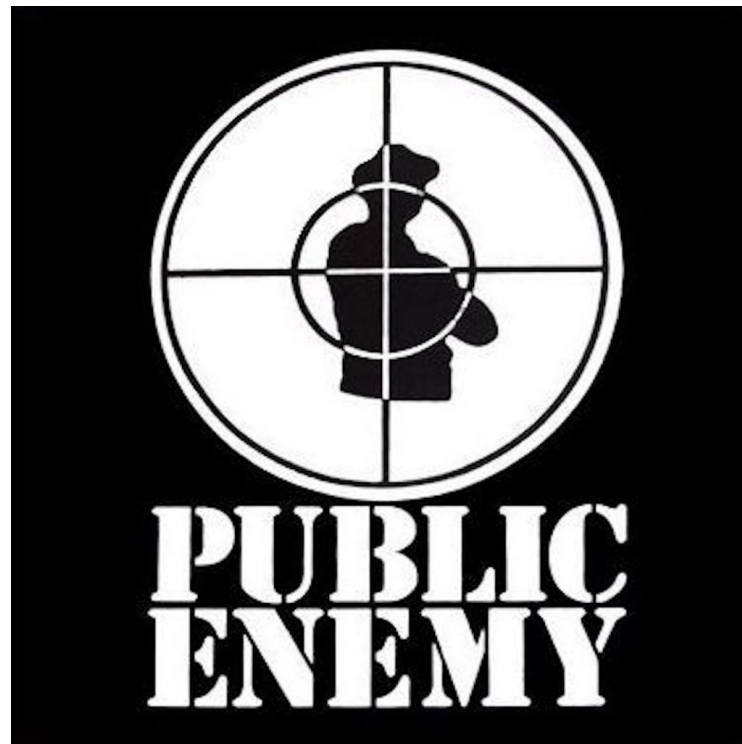
- phrenology
- post-modernism
- information society
- (...)

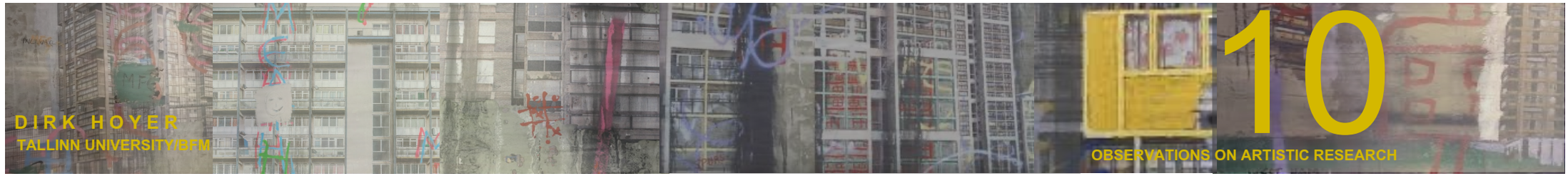
Think of Public Enemy





08





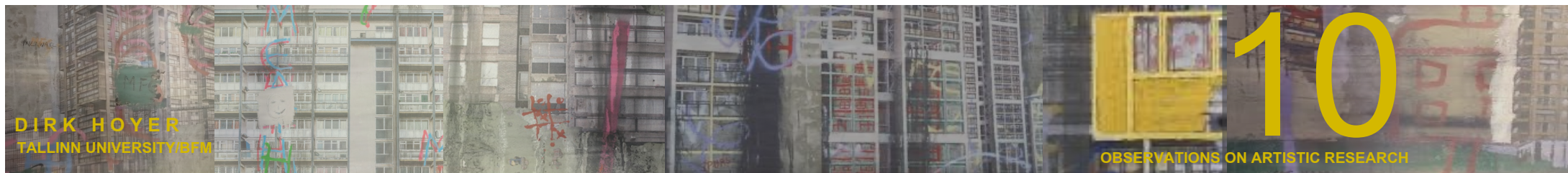
THE RACE HORSE VS THE ONE TRICK PONY

Think of academic trends that were just hypes. How to avoid becoming an academic fashionista?





09 AR IN THE TIMES OF AI



AN ATTEMPT TO COMBINE AR WITH AI

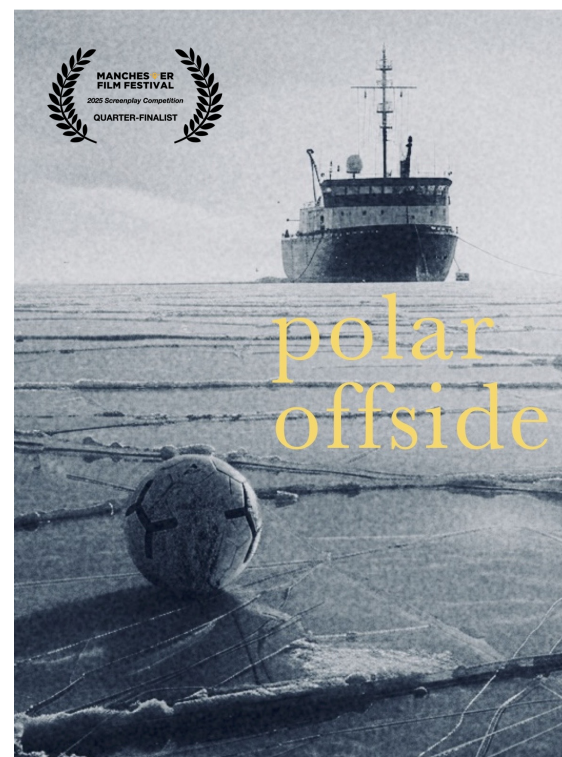
09

THE PENNED PARROT IN THE WRITERS' ROOM FOUR STAGE STORY GENERATION IN COLLABORATIVE SCREENWRITING WITH AI

DIRK HOYER
TLU/BFM

TOBIAS FRÜHMORGEN
Lusófona University / FilmEU / Film University Babelsberg

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON STEREO & IMMERSIVE MEDIA, Vol. 9 No. 1
pp. 32-47
DOI: 10.60543/ijsim.v9i1.9391
ijsim.ulusofona.pt
© 2025 BY-NC-SA





ARTISTIC INTELLIGENCE VS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

How can Artistic Research as "an open-ended, historical, context-aware and narrative enterprise" affirm the human dimension in creation?



10 (ARTISTIC) RESEARCH NEEDS A STORY



THE KEY INGREDIENT

10

“The development of storytelling abilities was one of the key factors behind humankind’s incredible evolutionary success. (...) without storytelling- without the ability to conjure up and communicate illusory worlds- there would be no gods or nations, no legal system, no money. It’s the power we have to imagine complex sets of ideas into being, and then to share them among the community, which creates both the societies we live in and the cultures that provide the meanings for our lives. Remove stories from the human equation and civilization itself fades from the picture.” PHILIP SEARGEANT (2020)





HOPE OR FEAR

You pin your story around two emotions: hope or fear. This is what drives the desire for change; it's this which leads to the conflicts which give to shape the plot.

10

SEARGEANT (2020)





THANK YOU!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me:

dhoyer@tlu.ee