

RESEARCH PRACTICE FORUM

Curatorial Research as Boundary Work

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Abstract Curatorial research is a new field only emerging in the last few years within museological discourse. The notion of curating as research offers useful suggestions on how to escape historically induced binary oppositions between theory and practice, the academic and the artistic. Moreover, curatorial research instigates critical questions on the significance of knowledge production in the context of public museums, particularly the relationship between research, display and museum audience. This article explores different notions of curatorial research as they emerge through current museological discourse. Three models of curatorial research are identified, each conveying a distinct – yet related – understanding of knowledge production through curatorial practice in the museum setting. The article then uses the exhibition *In Between* as a case to explore these models further. Building on the analysis of the case and the three models, a fourth research model is proposed. The new model is based on the concept of “boundary work”, emphasising the multiple epistemological contributions curatorial research entails as it traverses borders between the domains of science and culture, thereby blurring the distinctions between theory and practice, the discursive and the immersive, the systematic and the creative.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the museum as a mirror representing an encyclopaedic ordering of the world dominated museological discourse up until the end of the 20th century. With the emergence of New Museology in the 1990s, this epistemological understanding of museums was replaced by socio-political and ethical readings of museums that aimed at problematising museums as authoritative forms of representation (Ames, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Clifford, 1988; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Karp & Lavine, 1991; Macdonald & Fyfe, 1996; Pearce, 1994; Vergo, 1989). This disciplinary reinvention generated a shift in focus towards public programming and social outreach, leaving limited attention to research as professional practice in museums, usually called “museum-based research” (Pringle, 2020). Consequently, research has become an ambiguous component of museum work, both to museum staff and visitors (Sigfúsdóttir, 2019). This ambiguity has not only led to conflicting perceptions amongst museum staff on what counts as research and what does not, but it has also generated a

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lack of recognition towards museum-based research as “research” (Pringle, 2020, pp. 30–31). At the same time, museology attempts to clarify what research entails in the museum setting by issuing formal definitions and guidelines to the global museum community. In their textbook *Key Concepts in Museology*, Desvallées and Mairesse (2010) define research as “the intellectual activities and work aimed at the discovery, invention, and the advancement of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out”. This notion of research is broad enough to accommodate the many types of research that thrive in museums, with collections-based and exhibitionary-oriented modes of research being amongst them. Furthermore, this museological understanding of research aligns with what is typically understood by the term in academia, described in the Frascati Manual as “the creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge” (OECD, 2015, p. 44). Furthermore, the ICOM Code of Ethics issues guidelines on research as an activity that “should relate to the museum’s mission and objectives and conform to established legal, ethical and academic practices” (ICOM 2017, p. 20).

This article explores curating as a particular form of research in the museum context. It builds on a growing bulk of literature in the field (Bouquet, 2001; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist, 2008; Hansen et al. 2019; Herle, 2013; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; Moser, 2010) and grows out of my personal experience of curating *In Between*, an exhibition held at Hafnarborg Art Museum, Iceland (Sigfúsdóttir, 2011). The article identifies three models of curating as research as they emerge through current museological literature. Such an overview creates a comprehensive understanding of the many ways curating can be seen as research, and enables an analytical reading through its multiple forms, overlaps and differences. Building on this analysis and considering *In Between* as a case through which to explore these different models, the article proposes a fourth model of curatorial research as “boundary work”. Boundary work is a concept related to the idea of “boundary objects” originating in the field of museum studies to describe objects that function as mediators between diverging perspectives in interdisciplinary research (Star & Griesemer, 1989). In the context of this article, I use the concept to describe the distinct epistemological qualities of curatorial research as its output oscillates between the domains of science and culture while, at the same time, it manages to bridge them.

THREE MODELS OF CURATORIAL RESEARCH

After decades of minimal attention towards museum-based research within scholarly discourse, the topic is gradually regaining attention. Following Hooper-Greenhill’s (1992) seminal work in this domain, museology is increasingly turning its attention to the capacity museums have to carry out and sustain research activity (Anderson, 2005; Appleton, 2007; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist, 2008; Graham, 2005; O’Neill, 2006; Sigfúsdóttir, 2019). Focussing on how museums generate knowledge through their museum-specific qualities and operations, they are described as mediums, methods and sites for knowledge production (Grewcock, 2014; Herle, 2013; Message & Witcomb, 2015; Persohn, 2020; Putnam, 2009; Shelton, 2013; Thomas, 2010; Whitehead, 2009). Most

recently, the focus is directed at the practice of curating *as* research, where the act of curating is understood as a form of research in and of itself (Bjerregaard, 2020a; Hansen et al. 2019; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; O'Neill & Wilson, 2010, 2015; Pringle, 2020). This understanding of curating as a form of research raises challenging questions about the relationship between museums and research, especially between the curatorial process, exhibitionary display and dissemination of research.

This section of the article contains an analysis of the discourse on research through curatorial practice as it appears in contemporary museological literature. It identifies three research models of curatorial research, each embodying diverging, yet overlapping, tendencies towards the notion of curating as research. The first sees exhibitions as an outlet for the dissemination of prior and concluded research, while the second understands exhibitions as an integral part of the research process itself. The third model develops the notion of curating as an event of knowledge.

First Model: Curating as Research

As one of the fundamental museum professions, curating is typically seen as the practice through which knowledge is produced in the museum (Anderson, 2005; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; Message & Witcomb, 2015; O'Neill, 2006; Pringle, 2020; Thomas, 2010, 2016). The curator as connoisseur, or expert, has developed into the idea of the scholar-curator, a dominating role in museum research activity, now slowly being expanded by new practices based on community-based curation and co-curation with the audience (Pringle, 2020, pp. 18–19). Additionally, curatorship has increasingly moved out of public museums and galleries to become an independent profession, following the early onset of international art biennales in the 1960s and '70s (Fowle, 2010; Obrist & Bovier, 2008; O'Neill, 2012). Moving from monographic exhibitions, the group exhibition presents a new form of curatorship where the exhibition itself has come to be seen as a medium for storytelling and narrative (O'Neill, 2012, pp. 90–92). In Krysa's approach, the curatorial aim is not only to set up an exhibition, but to engage in a dynamic process of asking questions, developing frameworks for experimentation and dissemination of curatorial thinking in non-propositional forms (Krysa, 2017, p. 67). This understanding of curatorship is especially prominent in the art museum domain while less prevalent among museums of cultural or natural history, where curatorship manifests as a more withdrawn practice.¹

The idea of curating as research explores the role of non-discursive elements – such as objects, space and the body – in the knowledge-generating process. The museum is seen as a site for research and the exhibition as an embodiment of theory, together forming a complex “locus of theory” (Message & Witcomb, 2015, p. xxxvi). The critique on the exclusive scholar-curator has created a paradigm shift from taking care of collections to what Rogoff calls “curating in the expanding field” (Rogoff, 2013, p. 41). The notion of the expanding field refers to programmes and events that extend beyond the form of the exhibition to publications, conferences and public talks that reach beyond the museum institution itself, while at the same time raising the profile of the museum as a site for research. In the expanding field, knowledge production is problematised and destabilised, where

curating is seen to entail a specific mode of research that may or may not take on the spatial and temporal form of an exhibition. Here, definitions of practices, their borderlines and their institutional frameworks have shifted and blurred, allowing practitioners to participate simultaneously in multiple domains and share multiple knowledge bases (ibid.). Similarly, Nelund understands curatorial research as a practice that extends beyond the exhibition, constituting a process of unfolding practices which are “investigated through various media, sensibilities and practices” (Nelund, 2015, p. 174). Following this development, Sheikh describes two distinct modes of curating: one at the “meta-level”, with its aspects of theorising, historicising and politicising the practice, and the other as “the hands-on level of exhibition-making”, occupied with installation, funding and publicness (Sheikh, 2019, p. 97). In this new landscape, curating becomes a reflexive investigation into what it means to engage in research activity in a museum context, testing modes of dissemination and experimenting with impact on audience and society. In an earlier work, Sheikh (2015) articulates the importance of reflective practice in allowing for experimentation with various forms of public address. He argues how the curatorial is “that which can research into, and onto, an object of study that does not necessarily stem from artistic production and development per se” (Sheikh, 2015, p. 34).

Second Model: Exhibitions as Research

Exhibitions have been established as fundamental sites of cultural exchanges where meaning is constructed, maintained and deconstructed (Greenberg et al. 1996, p. 2). Every exhibition tells a story, and every exhibition space is always a narrative space (Grois, 2010, p. 47). As such, the exhibition is always entangled in a strategic system of representations made up by a complex set of signifiers, ranging from architecture, wall colourings and lighting to curatorial premises and pedagogical and political stances (Ferguson, 1996, pp. 178–179). With increasing attention to the curatorial and the role of the curator in the context of Foucauldian museology, critical curatorial studies have set the scene for the “educational turn” in the world of curating (O’Neill & Wilson, 2010). Throughout this discourse, however, the relationship between exhibitions and research is vague, where the heavyweight of research is focussed on the process preceding the exhibition rather than the exhibition itself as a form of research output. The currently emerging discourse on museum-based research has involved a more in-depth analysis of exhibitions *as* research. In this model, exhibitions, as analytical tools or philosophical propositions, are seen as a means of engaging in continuous knowledge generation, or as extensions of conceptual and discursive research projects. This attitude signals a paradigm shift that sees exhibitions as platforms for knowledge-in-the-making rather than static forms of dissemination (Bjerregaard, 2020a; Hansen et al. 2019; Herle, 2013; Krysa, 2017; Moreira, 2013; O’Neill & Wilson, 2015). By exposing research through material and visual three-dimensional displays in public institutions, exhibitions have the potential to create what Bjerregaard calls a “research surplus” (Bjerregaard, 2020b, p. 1). Through the making of exhibitions, he states, researchers are liable to learn more about a topic or a subject, accommodating alternative ways of knowing and understanding.

Embedded in the notion of exhibitions as research is the idea of experimentation or research lab (Macdonald & Basu, 2007a). Macdonald and Basu argue for a non-linear and open-ended process

towards the unexpected, approaching the curatorial as an experimental process. They emphasise how experimentalism in the exhibition context is not just a matter of style or novel forms of presentation, but rather “a risky process of assembling people and things with the intention of producing differences that make a difference” (Macdonald & Basu, 2007b, p. 17). However, the attention to open-ended and non-linear research methods is not limited to the museum field, as other disciplines are increasingly experimenting with creative forms of research, especially within the social sciences.²

Third Model: The Curatorial as an Event of Knowledge

Whether situating the act of research within curation or the exhibition, both models above provide useful tools for a theorisation of curatorial research in the museum context. Inclusive of both is Martinon and Rogoff’s concept of “the curatorial”, a continuum of the curatorial research process and its most tangible form, the exhibition (Martinon & Rogoff, 2013). I identify this as the third research model in relation to curatorial research. Here, Martinon and Rogoff understand the curatorial as a critical analysis of the knowledges on which curating builds and as a contextualisation of the knowledges it produces. From their perspective, the curatorial is “an event of knowledge” (ibid., p. ix), an activity that emphasises a shift from simply staging an exhibition to a conscious engagement in critical reflection on everything that takes place on that stage, intentionally and unintentionally. It is a mode of address that facilitates reflection amongst both curators and audience, encouraging “another way of thinking or sensing the world” (ibid., p. x). Martinon further develops the notion of “the curatorial” from a philosophical perspective, where the curatorial pushes curating out of its comfort zone by embodying a “disruptive” practice that, in order to give birth to new knowledge, disrupts received knowledge (Martinon, 2013b, p. 26). In other words, the curatorial is never fixed or definitive but takes off by challenging preconceived orders or unsettling the firmly established. Similarly, in her elaboration of “new realities” of research, Rogoff (2017) explains how research has moved away from stable bodies of knowledge to an arena where knowledge is “negotiated”, both in the domains of institutions of higher education as well as cultural institutions, like museums (ibid., p. 62). Her view of contemporary research practices as no longer exclusively occupying the realm of formal learning nor that of pure self-expression, but instead as harnessed in both realms, is particularly relevant in the discourse on curating as research. This new research reality is shared through social communication in the cultural arena and enables a new relation between these two realms of research, the formal and the personal, creating a new habitat for knowledge to be generated and received. Rogoff’s idea of hybrid forms of research not only calls for a new vocabulary to talk about research, but also creates an opportunity to articulate new models for the performance, delivery and display of research.

IN BETWEEN: THE EXHIBITION

This section of the article discusses the case of *In Between*, an exhibition I curated at Hafnarborg Art Museum in Iceland. By reflecting on the process in retrospect, critical distance and theoretical understanding become possible, especially as most of the literature I use to contextualise it now was

not yet published at the time of the exhibition. The exhibition was designed as a case study within my ongoing doctoral research in museum studies at the University of Iceland.³ As such, it crosses borders between the domains of science (university) and culture (museum) and becomes “a moment in a longer impregnation of research”, to borrow Bjerregaard’s words (2020b, p. 13).

Context

Framed as a curatorial research project, *In Between* was a study into the ways in which knowledge is generated, disseminated and contested within public museums. By framing the exhibition as a research project, I used the curatorial method as a vehicle to explore public museums as research institutions through a collaborative process involving artists and scholars from various disciplines (Sigfúsdóttir, 2011). The process culminated in an exhibition and a series of related events at Hafnarborg Art Museum. The museum became a dynamic platform for discussion and debate on art museums as research institutions, both in the immersive and the discursive sense. The project took inspiration from previous work by artists working in the realm of institutional critique, such as Mark Dion’s *Cabinet of Curiosities* (see Sheehy, 2006) and *The Marvelous Museum* (see Macdougall, 2010), Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* (see Wilson, 1994), and Andrea Fraser’s *Museum Highlights* (see Fraser, 2005). Theoretical underpinnings were drawn from the fields of museology, epistemology and institutional critique, influencing my curatorial vision and framework as well as fuelling the creative process of the participating artists. A group of sixteen local and international contemporary artists were invited to participate in the project, based on their interest in collecting, taxonomy, institutional critique and the history of science.⁴ Through an exploration of the Renaissance as a Foucauldian *episteme*, the group focussed its attention on the emergence of a new paradigm of knowledge production, based on formal, visual and sensorial attributes of objects. In this paradigm, sensual qualities like texture, touch, smell, colour and form became defining factors in the shaping of knowledge as it slowly replaced the receding worldview at the time, predicated on theology, philosophy and rhetoric (Daston & Park, 2001; Greenblatt, 2017; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). This historical landscape provided a useful setting for our exploration of museums as research institutions, looking into the history of collecting, naming, categorising, archiving, labelling and displaying in the museum context. Furthermore, such a historical examination allowed for a comparison of existing research models in the current science hierarchy, with the natural sciences at the top, followed by the social sciences, the humanities and the arts at the bottom (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 83).

Methodology

Starting as an exhibition proposal in response to an open call by the Hafnarborg Art Museum, *In Between* was selected for development and production after a formal evaluation process by the museum. An important aim was to study what effect it would have on the research process and on myself as a researcher to operate simultaneously as an independent curator and a PhD student, with one foot in the cultural domain of the museum and the other in the academic domain of the



Figure 1. Exhibition participants in one of the workshops.

university. By organising a durational, open-ended and collaborative research process, my intention was to bring together divergent knowledge practices from different cultural and scientific spheres, in an attempt to foster a flow of ideas and cross-pollination between participants. Not only did this assembly of participants and assemblage of ideas influence the individual work of the artists, it also significantly contributed to the development of the curatorial vision and final display as the project unfolded (Figure 1). In this way, the curatorial method functioned as a durational, transformative and speculative activity, a method that is “a way of keeping things in flow, mobile, in between, indeterminate, crossing over and between people, identities and things, encouraging certain ideas to come to the fore in an emergent communicative process” (O’Neill, 2012, p. 89). This vision is in line with Thomas’s view of the “museum as method” (Thomas, 2010). Describing the research process as an unpredictable journey, Thomas sees chance, serendipity and unpredictability as characteristic of the curatorial research process. In his mind, museum-based methodology is deeply embedded in what he calls “a happening upon” (Thomas, 2010, p. 7), a process leading to unexpected affinities between objects, or between objects and subjects. This approach to museological methodology manifested itself in *In Between* as the unexpected emphasis on space and architecture, which came to be one of the core elements of the project as it unfolded, as explained below.

As the project’s curator and primary researcher, my role was to lay the foundation for the research process ahead and establish the theoretical context, develop themes and topics for exploration, select the participating artists and invite relevant experts to workshops and seminars. As noted by the museum director, the integration of a series of workshops and events into the curatorial process, both before and after the exhibition opened, turned the museum into a site for a dynamic and collective knowledge practice: “In the run-up to the exhibition, the museum has been a site of discussion and reaction to a greater extent than is usual when group exhibitions of this kind are being prepared” (Sigurðardóttir, 2011). *In Between* was an unusual exhibition in terms of the artists’ collective engagement and contribution to the project beyond their own individual artworks. This integrated method of regular input from the artists to the curatorial vision created unexpected turns towards the final decision of how the exhibition was installed within the museum space. Throughout the project duration the group met regularly with invited scholars and museum staff in multiple on-site visits, workshops and seminars. The research process was documented through multiple media, such as photography, audio and video recordings, sketches, notes, drawings and diary entries, in addition to written reflections by the artists and interviews with the museum director and staff. The methodology was left open and experimental, and the process was designed to create conditions within the museum setting where knowledge was emergent rather than found, driven by the instigation of further questions rather than providing definitive answers. This emergent nature of the project was integral to the methodology, as knowledge production is about testing and pushing boundaries, which also means testing personal and institutional potential. The aim was to create a platform that would address the meta-level of curating, making visible the research process itself in a reflexive manner, similar to what Macdonald and Basu (2007) advocate for in their idea of exhibitions as experiments (see also Schneider, 2013; Schorch & McCarthy, 2018).



Figure 2. The main gallery was left empty.

Dissemination

Together with museological technologies of display and manipulation of the museum architecture, *In Between* formed a complex “knowledge network” within the museum space (Moser, 2010, p. 30). Aligned with the idea of curating in “the expanding field” (Rogoff, 2013), the project generated a range of outputs. With the exhibition and its artworks at the centre, it included the exhibition catalogue and a series of public events with curatorial talks, artists’ talks, an educational programme, and a conference held in collaboration with the Iceland University of the Arts, where invited scholars and artists problematised the notion of knowledge production within the museum space.

Through debating different ideas within the group about the exhibition display, the museum architecture became a fundamental element in creating the atmosphere of the show. Speaking to the ritualistic and auratic qualities of museums (Duncan, 1995; Fisher, 2006), the main gallery was left empty, while the artworks were installed in the museum’s back rooms and interior spaces, places usually not accessible to the public. Emptying the gallery space for *In Between* was an affective means of creating this kind of a conceptual disruption, a display technology that played out in the arranged gap, functioning as a rupture between the exhibition as a temporary event and the museum as a permanent institution. Here, the notion of “empty” becomes charged as it implies a signified presence of nothingness, turning into a massive framework for the curatorial concept of the exhibition. This notion of loaded nothingness in the museum has been coined by Bergsdóttir, who sees the interplay of absence and presence of matter in museum displays as hybrid matter that affects the interplay between space, objects and people in the museum context (Bergsdóttir, 2017; Figure 2).

The display also signified how exhibitions, through the work of the curator, are able to involve transmission of affect by staging situations and controlling environmental stimuli that evoke feelings and sensuous responses in the audience (Fisher, 2006, p. 29). These formulations are typically beyond words and distinct from those created by discourse, turning the museum into extra-discursive and experiential zones. In *In Between*, this played out in the arranged gap as an exhibitionary affect. Through the focus on the museum architecture and the physicality of the gallery space, the project directed attention to the relationship between the museum and its public. By creating an atmosphere of a pause, a liminal space between the museum and the surrounding environment was staged by clearing the gallery space. Here, the Foucauldian concept of “effective history” becomes useful, a concept that gradually became central as a theoretical framework for the physical setting of the final exhibition display. For Foucault, effective history is a view of the past that emphasises discontinuity, rupture or displacement (Foucault, 1974, p. 4), perhaps in the same manner that Rogoff (2013) describes the curatorial as a destabilising practice. Similarly, the “empty” gallery space served as a borderland, a semi-neutral territory between the exhibition and the museum, allowing the audience to contemplate the physical act of entering a museum space and what it means to dwell in it. The boundaries between the “empty” space and the exhibition space were demarcated by a black cloth at an entry point and an exit point, inviting the audience to unravel what loomed within. Moreover, this display technology was an attempt to curate a context for an alternative research practice that would dwell within the liminal spaces between theory and practice, science and art, the university and the museum. The project, along with its immersive and discursive products, were generated in the borderland between these realms, still in the making (Figure 3).

CURATORIAL RESEARCH AS BOUNDARY WORK

Growing out of my reflection on making *In Between* and building on the three research models described above, this section will develop a fourth model, based on the concept of “boundary work”. Boundary work is a concept I borrow from Star and Griesemer’s study on “boundary objects” in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Boundary objects are adaptable to different viewpoints but robust enough at the same time to maintain their core identity as they traverse between domains. An example of a boundary object in Star and Griesemer’s study would be a collection item on display in a natural history museum, serving as a carrier through which people from different scientific disciplines or different social worlds are able to come to a common understanding (ibid. 404). Here, I use the concept in the abstract sense to indicate the curatorial, with the exhibition as its main research output, as a vehicle to pass diverging ideas between people, disciplines and domains. This notion of boundary work further relates to Martinon’s description of the curatorial as an activity taking place “in the middle, between promise (a coming reflection, contemplation, or action) and redemption (intellectual achievement, aesthetic emotion or political resolution)” (Martinon 2013b, p. 29). In this model, the curatorial intent is to bring together distinctly different research modalities, drawing on Rogoff’s idea of “kidnapping knowledges and sensibilities and insights”, in a shared space of cultural and social interaction (Rogoff, 2013, p. 48). In this sense, *In Between* was an experiment in engaging disciplines, practices and fields of cultural and knowledge production, while



Figure 3. Entrance to the exhibition.

at the same time attempting to transcend their supposedly invariable appearances and functions. As this attitude seems to be gaining momentum in museum practice as well as museological discourse (see Grewcock, 2014; Nelund, 2015; O'Neill, 2012; Sheikh, 2015), it will be useful to understand it as a fourth research model. Sheikh (2015) describes curating at the meta-level as a reflective practice aimed at the historicisation, theorisation and politicisation of its subject through excavation, re-evaluation and re-enactment of objects, exhibitions and curators (Sheikh, 2015, p. 34).

O'Neill (2012) has named this development “the curatorial turn”, a form of curatorial activity beyond exhibition-making in its emphasis on discourse production (O'Neill, 2012, p. 85). Here, the curator's role is to organise activities and events outside the parameters of an individual exhibition as a single narrative, i.e., with discussions, lectures, publications, performances, off-site projects or other related events (ibid., p. 81).

The Added Value of Curating as Research

The notion of boundary work has recently migrated into the field of artistic research, an emerging research field from which *In Between* took inspiration. Artistic research represents a research model where knowledge and understanding emerge through the creative process by negotiating theory and practice, the formal and the personal, the scientific and the aesthetic, placing its output simultaneously in the world of academia and the arts (Borgdorff, 2012; Borgdorff & Schwab, 2014). As an alternative research model, artistic research develops its topics, methods and means of dissemination from within the artistic practice itself, often traversing borders into other disciplines and knowledge practices. Looking at art *as* research draws attention to the tacit, material and sensuous dimensions of knowledge production and dissemination. A core component of artistic research is the researcher's critical reflection on the research process, typically focussing on its affect as it oscillates between making and thinking, doing and writing.⁵ I argue that museums and curators would benefit from adopting this model, creating an added value to curatorial research by reflecting critically on the process and contextualising subjects, methodologies and output. This would enhance the epistemological qualities of curatorial research output, as it exists in between the discursive (theory) and the immersive (practice). As such, it would contribute to both domains of science and culture, whose borders have already become porous and interconnected. This approach would go beyond understanding the making of a display as a means to turn established knowledge into something tangible and accessible. Here, curating becomes disruptive in the sense Rogoff (2013) intends it, where practitioners traverse into multiple domains, working simultaneously in several modalities and bringing them together by creating new constellations and connections rather than protecting or conserving prior and established knowledge (Rogoff, 2013, p.48). Knowledge practices of this sort are particularly relevant in cultural institutions as they are not restricted by verifiable and measurable knowledge management used in institutions of higher education. Similarly, Arnold (2016) claims that museums, through their experimental and temporary exhibitions and events, are able to procure an “enhanced epistemological significance” (Arnold, 2016, no page numbers). He sees this potential especially in exhibitions and events that “aim not just at reflecting and disseminating already established knowledge, but

rather at shifting understanding and producing new ideas” (ibid.). Museum practice of this sort would enable different ways of knowing and foster alternative means of knowledge production through the non-textual quality of objects, open for interpretation and open-ended questions (Alpers, 1991; Arnold, 2016; Bjerregaard, 2020b). Again, this ties into Rogoff’s (2017) view of “new research realities”, where contemporary research practices no longer exclusively occupy the realm of formal learning nor that of pure self-expression, but instead are harnessed in both realms. Here, research is shared through social communication in the cultural arena and enables a new relation between these two realms of research, the scientific and the artistic, creating a new habitat for knowledge to be generated and received. Rogoff’s idea of hybrid forms of research not only calls for a new vocabulary to talk about research, but also creates an opportunity to articulate new and alternative models for research practices, of which curatorial research would be one example.

CONCLUSION

Research is a core element of professional museum practice, providing the basis for many other activities like collecting, preserving and display. Nevertheless, it remains ambiguous and sometimes unrecognised, both to museum workers as well as to museology itself. For the last three decades or so, scholarly discourse on what is now called museum-based research (Pringle, 2020) has been sporadic and fairly silent within museological literature. It is only recently that scholarly interest in the topic is being regenerated, now with emphasis on curating as research.

This article presents an overview of the notion of curating as research as it appears in current museological literature. Through this literature analysis three research models have been identified, each conveying a distinct, yet related, understanding of knowledge production through curatorial practice. The first model reflects an approach to exhibitions as a vehicle for the dissemination of prior and concluded research, the second understands exhibitions as an integral part of the research process itself, and the third understands the curatorial as an event of knowledge. All three models overlap, sustain each other, and are proposed as tools to identify the various research elements embedded in the curatorial process rather than creating hierarchical distinctions between them. The models provide a comprehensive overview on the specific epistemological qualities curatorial research entails, the most important of which is its ability to cross borders between domains of knowledge practices. This border-crossing activity dissolves the opposition these domains are usually held up to, only to render visible their entanglement and porous lines of division.

In addition to the analysis of the different tendencies in the discourse on curatorial research, the article develops a fourth model based on the notion of boundary work. The concept of boundary work originates in Star and Griesemer’s (1989) study on so-called boundary objects within interdisciplinary research: objects that serve as translators between different disciplines to create a common understanding between stakeholders, who will each interpret the objects against the backdrop of their disciplinary tradition and personal experience. The concept has also been used in the field of artistic research to describe how its twofold output, disseminated in cultural institutions on

the one hand and academia on the other, has epistemological value in both domains and serves to dissolve dichotomic attitudes towards theory and practice. It is in this sense that the idea of boundary work is adopted for the context of the fourth research model proposed in this article. By reflecting on the case of *In Between* and the migration of its output through academic and artistic domains, an understanding emerges of the interconnectedness between binary oppositions like theory and practice, science and culture, the discursive and the immersive. The exhibition was designed as a research process to study museums as research institutions in a durational and experimental manner. As the project's curator and primary researcher, I think of it as a platform to study the various ways in which curatorial research takes shape within the museum setting. It was an example of a knowledge practice, to use Rogoff's term, undertaken in the borderland between art and science, oscillating between the contexts of museums and academia. It was the outcome of a year-long experimental and open-ended research process, during which the museum was activated as a site for a critical exploration on museums as knowledge-generating institutions. The exhibition was therefore a site for both enactment and presentation of research, perhaps a form of curating at the meta-level in Sheikh's (2015) sense. END

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NOTES

1. Art historical discourse on curating is abundant, of which most relevant to this article are Martinon 2013a; Obrist and Bovier 2008; O'Neill 2012; O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 2010; O'Neill et al. 2017, 2016; Rand and Kouris 2010; Schubert 2009.
2. Another fruitful field of alternative knowledge practice is found in the cross-fertilisation between artistic practice and anthropology, especially at the level of methodology and dissemination; see, e.g., Dion and Coles 1999; Ethnographic Terminalia Collective 2015a and 2015b; Macdougall 2010; Pink 2009; Sansi 2020; Schneider 2013; Schneider and Wright 2010 and 2006.
3. The aim of my doctoral research, titled *Rethinking Research in Museums*, is to carve out a space for museum-based research, not only as practice in museums but also as a subject within New Museology. The study

explores the ways in which knowledge is generated, contested and disseminated in museums, with a focus on collections-based and curatorial research. Via a multi-perspectival approach, the project identifies various existing research models, managerial challenges and divergent understandings of the concept of research amongst museum staff and museum scholars. The study addresses research questions such as “How is knowledge is generated in museums and by whom?”, “What form does that knowledge take?” and “What are its epistemological characteristics?”

4. Participating artists were artist duo Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson, Daniel Björnsson, Gretar Reynisson, Haraldur Jónsson, Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir, artist duo Hugsteypan, Ingirafn Steinarsson, Jeanette Castioni, Magnús Árnason, Olga Bergmann, Ólöf Nordal, and artist collective Skyr Lee Bob. The project was organised in collaboration with the Iceland University of the Arts with participating scholars from the fields of cultural studies, philosophy, anthropology, museology and folkloristics: Dr. Guðbjörg R. Jóhannsdóttir, Sigrún Alba Sigurðardóttir, Dr. Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson, and Dr. Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, in addition to the curator, Ólöf G. Sigfúsdóttir.
5. For further reading on artistic research, I suggest Ambrožič and Vettese 2013; Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2014; Dombois et al 2012; Gehm 2007; Kaila et al 2017; Kaila and Schlager 2012; Macleod and Holdridge 2006; Michelkevičius 2018; Schwab 2013.

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