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INTRODUCTION Arts-Based Research in Communication and Media Studies***

Abstract

This article introduces the special issue on “Arts-Based Research in Communication and Media Studies”, starting from a discussion on the different strategies and models that have been used to move away from the dominance of the written text in academia. In a second part, the basic characteristics of arts-based research are introduced and discussed, partially through elaborating on the distinction between arts-based research and artistic research. In the last part of the introduction, the intentionally-kept-vague structure of the special issue is explained, with its more general reflective texts first, and then a series of more case-study-based approaches and more targeted and specific discussions, divided into a cluster on participation and interaction on the one hand, and mediation on the other.

Keywords

Arts-based research; Communication and Media Studies; artistic research; hybridity; academia; the arts; artademics; knowledge production; knowledge communication.

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1. RETHINKING ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION

Communication and Media Studies, as a discipline situated on the crossroads of Social Sciences and Humanities, has – for a long time – articulated the written text¹ as the domi-

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¹ Various concepts are being used in these discussions: Reid, Snead, Pettitway and Simoneaux refer to the written text as the “alphabetic text”; Murray writes about the “hegemony of discursive text”. Literat *et al.* use both “text-based” and “paper-based” academic formats. In this introduction, the concept of the “written text” is considered to be the most appropriate, keeping in mind that the concept of the “text” is defined, as Lewis writes, in a broad sense to “include every form of mediation in language, sound, smell and image”; G. Reid, R. Snead, K. Pettitway, B. Simoneaux, “Multimodal Communication in the University: Surveying Faculty across Disciplines”, *Across the Disciplines: A Journal of Language, Learning and Academic Writing*, 13, 1 (2016). Accessed November 29, 2020. <https://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/reidetal2016.cfm>; J. Murray, *Non-Discursive Rhetoric: Image and Affect in Multimodal Composition*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009, 8; I. Literat, A. Conover, E. Herbert-Wasson, K. Kirsch Page, J. Riina-Ferrie, R. Stephens, S. Thanapornsanguth, L. Vasudevan, “Toward Multimodal Inquiry: Opportunities, Challenges and Implications of Multimodality for Research and Scholarship”, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37, 3 (2018): 565-578; J. Lewis, *Cultural Studies: The Basics* (II ed.), London: Sage, 2008, 5.

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nant mode of academic communication, in combination with oral presentations at classes and conferences². This combination of written and oral communication has proven to be highly successful, not only in disseminating academic knowledge, but also in contributing to its production. The latter occurs, partially, through the mechanism of referentiality, where these modes facilitate academic dialogues (and sometimes heated debates) over time and space. But it also occurs through the act of writing itself, as the writing mode impacts on what can be said, and how it can be said. This, in turn, introduces a degree of contingency, not only in relation to our objects of study, but also to the mode of writing itself, as Bazerman³ reminds us, echoing Derrida's⁴ argument about iterability:

Each new text produced within a genre reinforces or remolds some aspect of the genre; each reading of a text reshapes the social understanding. The genre does not exist apart from its history, and that history continues with each new text invoking the genre.

However important the mode of the written text is for academia, as any representational practice, it has its limits. The short version of this argument can be expressed in Lacanian⁵ terms: the symbolic can never suture the Real. Academic writing cannot absorb and represent all knowledge, as also Bazerman⁶ writes: "Scientific formulations are a human construction and thus are heir to all the limitations of humanity". This then opens the door for the argument that other forms (or modes) of communicating academic knowledge remain possible and even desirable, because the particularity of each mode produces opportunities for the production and communication of knowledge, as each particular form has its own affordances⁷, and as the combination of these modes can only enrich academia.

As one of us has argued elsewhere⁸, several academic approaches have explicitly moved away from an exclusive focus on the written academic text. Approaches such as science communication, science popularization and knowledge dissemination on the one hand, and knowledge exchange, and participatory, transformative and interventionist (action) research on the other, all aim to democratize knowledge (production). In this endeavour, they do not have one particular academic discipline as their home and field of activity. In contrast, other approaches are more connected to particular disciplines (at least in their origins). These are, for instance, multimodal academic communication (with its links to writing studies, often focusing on the inclusion of audio-visual and online modes of academic communication), visual culture/cultural studies, visual anthropology and visual sociology (with their emphasis on film and photography), and arts-based research (with the inclusion of a variety of artistic repertoires).

These different approaches – and especially the more discipline-bound ones – show

² A major exception to this trend in Communication and Media Studies are Film Studies and Photographic Studies, which, also in their communicative orientation, often lean more towards the Humanities and the Fine Arts than towards the Social Sciences; see R. Kolker, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Film and Media Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

³ C. Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, 8.

⁴ J. Derrida, "Signature Event Context", in *Limited Inc.*, edited by J. Derrida, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988, 1-23.

⁵ J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, London: Penguin Books, 1991.

⁶ Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*, 294.

⁷ J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, New York: Psychology Press, 1979; D. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

⁸ Carpentier, "Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text".

that multimodality in academic communication is not novel. Ethnographic film is an established communication mode in visual anthropology, complemented with written ethnographic descriptions. Decades ago, key anthropologists such as Margaret Mead also already integrated photography and written text, grounded in a critique on anthropology as a “discipline of words”⁹. In 1942, Mead’s collaboration with Bateson, resulted in the book *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*¹⁰, which consisted out of a joint essay and an essay by Mead, then followed by 100 pages of photographs (and 100 pages of captions) by Bateson. Secondly, all these discipline-bound approaches also demonstrate the iterative¹¹ nature of knowledge production, in which the communicative dimension cannot be segregated from the entire process of knowledge production¹². For instance, in their manifesto on multimodality, Wysocki *et al.*¹³ make this argument explicit, by stating that the “practice of making” is not disconnected from “critical activity”:

Furthermore, practices of making and critical activity must be rendered mutually supportive. Such a perspective does not privilege one or another paradigm but sees them as two sides of the same coin: analysis informs production; production informs analysis.

Finally, this variety of multimodal approaches has also been used in Communication and Media Studies, even if many of these examples have remained a bit invisible. There is, for instance, the work of the multidisciplinary Collective for Advancing Multimodal Research Arts or scholars at the Communication Studies Department of Concordia University¹⁴. Communication and Media Studies scholars also publish(ed) their non-written texts in such specialized journals as the *Journal of Video Ethnography*¹⁵; *Tecmerin: Journal of Audiovisual Essays*¹⁶; the audiovisual essay track of *NECSUS*¹⁷; and (the now closed) *Audiovisual Thinking, the Journal of Academic Videos*. Moreover, both the International Communication Association (ICA) and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) have featured exhibitions at some of their recent conferences, the former with the 2017 Making & Doing exhibition¹⁸ and the latter with 2018 Ecomedia Arts Festival¹⁹, taking gentle steps toward (the acknowledgment of) non-written academic texts. We, editors of this special issue, have ourselves deployed

⁹ M. Mead, “Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words”, in *Principles of Visual Anthropology* (II ed.), edited by P. Hockings, New York: de Gruyter, 1995, 3-10.

¹⁰ G. Bateson, M. Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1942.

¹¹ Iterability gains here a meaning that is very much in line with its (qualitative) methodological meaning; see P. Aspers, U. Corte, “What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research”, *Qualitative Sociology*, 42, 2 (2019): 139-160.

¹² See Murray, *Non-Discursive Rhetoric*, 8.

¹³ R. Wysocki, J. Udelson, C. Ray, J. Newman, L. Matravers, A. Kumari, L.M.P. Gordon, K.L. Scott, M. Day, M. Baumann, S.P. Alvarez, D.N. De Voss, “On Multimodality: A Manifesto”, in *Bridging the Multimodal Gap: From Theory to Practice*, edited by S. Khadka and J. Lee, Logan: Utah State University Press, 2019, 17-29, 19.

¹⁴ O. Chapman, K. Sawchuk, “Creation-as-Research: Critical Making in Complex Environments”, *RACAR: Revue d’art Canadienne/Canadian Art Review*, 40, 1 (2015): 49-52.

¹⁵ <http://www.videoethno.com/>.

¹⁶ <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal/>.

¹⁷ <https://necsus-ejms.org/>.

¹⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/hl4vrpq>. The theme book of the 2017 International Communication Association conference (on interventions) also has one chapter on the exhibition; L. Henderson, M. Hogan, A.J. Christian, J.M. Erni, “A Dossier on Making and Doing”, in *Interventions: Communication Research and Practice*, edited by A. Shaw and D. Travers Scott, New York: Peter Lang, 2018, 273-284.

¹⁹ <https://oregon2018.iamcr.org/ecomedia.html>.

arts-based research, for instance, in the *Respublika!* exhibition in Cyprus²⁰, the *Mirror Palace of Democracy* installation²¹, the *Visible Invisibility*²² exhibitions in the Street Art Museum (SAM) in St. Petersburg (Russia) and in the Helsinki Art Museum (HAM, in Finland), the *Youth in the Media City* book²³, and the *Iconoclastic Controversies* book²⁴.

2. ARTS-BASED RESEARCH AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH

This special issue focuses on one particular form of academic multimodality – arts-based research – and its connections with Communication and Media Studies. Still rooted in academia, arts-based research articulates artistic repertoires with Social Sciences and Humanities research to produce and communicate academic knowledge, or, to use Leavy’s²⁵ words, it “advances critical conversations about the nature of social scientific practice and expands the borders of our methods repository”. Arts-based research is, as Leavy²⁶ writes, “a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation”. Also Finley²⁷, in her list of “salient features” of arts-based research, connects it to academic knowledge production, stressing the affective and aesthetic-formal components of this type of knowledge production and communication:

(1) makes use of emotive, affective experiences, senses, and bodies, and imagination and emotion as well as intellect, as ways of knowing and responding to the world [...] (2) gives interpretive license to the researcher to create meaning from experience [...] (3) attends to the role of form in shaping meaning (and) (4) exists in the tensions of blurred boundaries [...].

In other words, arts-based research articulates knowledge as a non-dualist assemblage of intellect and affect, acknowledging that knowledge can be understood, felt *and* experienced. To again use Leavy’s²⁸ words, arts-based research allows knowledge to be evocated and to resonate. Meyers²⁹, in her article entitled *Dance your PhD*, describes how, in one particular case the “scientist becomes molecule becoming machine becoming living system”, and how, speaking more in general, scientists become “*affectively entangled* with the phenomena they model in the lab”³⁰. But, as mentioned before, these communicative embodied practices are not disconnected from the research itself: arts-

²⁰ Carpentier, “Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text”.

²¹ N. Carpentier, ed., *Respublika! Experiments in the Performance of Participation and Democracy*, Limassol: NeMe, 2019.

²² <https://www.metroproject.net/stories/makingexhibition/>.

²³ J. Sumiala, A. Niitamo, eds., *Youth in the Media City: Belonging and Control on the Move*, 2019. <https://www.youth-in-the-media-city.org/>.

²⁴ N. Carpentier, *Iconoclastic Controversies: A Photographic Inquiry into Antagonistic Nationalism*, Bristol: Intellect, forthcoming.

²⁵ P. Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (II ed.), London, UK: Guilford Press, 2015, 11.

²⁶ Leavy, *Method Meets Art*, IX.

²⁷ S. Finley, “Arts-Based Research”, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, edited by J.G. Knowles and A. Cole, London: Sage, 2008, 71-81, 72.

²⁸ Leavy, *Method Meets Art*, 294.

²⁹ N. Myers, “Dance your PhD: Embodied Animations, Body Experiments, and the Affective Entanglements of Life Science Research”, *Body and Society*, 18, 1 (2012): 151-189 (153), emphasis removed.

³⁰ Myers, *Dance your PhD*, 177, our emphasis (previous emphasis removed).

based research's emphasis on doing (making) brings in the idea that knowledge is generated through the artistic practice itself, and that it is thus not an *ex-post* practice used to communicate what has already been established (through 'traditional' research). To use Cooperman's³¹ more poetic formulation, "Arts-based research is a research of the flesh where our source material originates from the closeness and collaboration of the bodies and voices of one another".

Furthermore, arts-based research needs to be differentiated from artistic research, as they are, arguably, embedded in different societal fields, and thus characterized by different discursive and material practices, rules, rituals and conventions, histories and spaces. While artistic research is part of artistic practice, and thus, embedded in the field of the arts (even if it can, and often does, reach out to other societal fields), arts-based research, as the previous discussion shows, is a hybrid, that has one foot in the academic field, and another in the field of the arts. This hybrid position is not without its difficulties, as Álvarez López and Martín, write (discussing the audiovisual essay, which):

remains – uneasily for some – a hybrid form, in-between art and scholarship. Not yet artistic enough for certain artists and curators, too shackled by exposition and rational argument; too arty and open-ended for conventional scholars of the publish-or-perish variety³².

Even when artistic research has a different home, we should keep Klein's argument in mind, when he writes – in an article very much focussed on artistic research – that "there can be no categorical distinction between 'scientific' and 'artistic' research"³³. Also this special issue illustrates that these borders are permeable and fluid, and that the difference between artistic research and arts-based research, as two of many types of research, is not always clear-cut. Moreover, arts-based research's hybrid position – operating in both the fields of academia and the arts – demonstrates even more how important it is to avoid privileging one field of knowledge production over another, and to avoid instrumentalizing one field through the other. We need to acknowledge both fields' contribution to knowledge production and, at the same time, acknowledge their structural differences in how this contribution is organized and institutionalized, regulated, policed and disciplined, and what logics, mechanics and dynamics are mobilized to produce knowledge.

Exactly this hybridity (of arts-based research) does generate a series of complexities that also affects its producers, who unavoidably end up identifying with different subject positions, seeking to balance them. Cooperman's³⁴ writing about arts-based research nicely exemplifies this point: "We choose to risk that identity as part of undoing the systems of power which so neatly construct and produce who and what we are". Even though both the subject position of the academic and the artist share a number of elements (e.g., creativity and intuition, as Janesick³⁵, argues), their explicit combination into what Sinner

³¹ H. Cooperman, "Listening through Performance: Identity, Embodiment, and Arts-Based Research", in *Creating Social Change through Creativity: Anti-Oppressive Arts-Based Research Methodologies*, edited by M. Capous-Desyllas and K. Morgaine, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 19-35, 22.

³² C. Álvarez López, A. Martín, "Analyse and Invent: A Reflection on Making Audiovisual Essays", *Frames Cinema Journal*, 8 (2015). Accessed November 29, 2020. <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/analyse-and-invent-a-reflection-on-making-audiovisual-essays/>.

³³ J. Klein, "What is Artistic Research?", *Journal for Artistic Research* (2017, April 23). Accessed November 29, 2020. <https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research>.

³⁴ Cooperman, *Listening through Performance*, 22-23.

³⁵ V. Janesick, "Intuition and Creativity: A Pas De Deux for Qualitative Researchers", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 5 (2001): 531-540.

calls “artademics”³⁶, and Finley labels “artists as researchers/researchers as artists”³⁷ is not straightforward. In particular, there is the issue of skills that are part of the performance of both subject positions as their absence might disrupt the hybrid subject position of the “artademic”. As Capous-Desyllas and Morgaine³⁸ write in their preface: “Some proponents of [arts-based research] stress that it is necessary for researchers to develop requisite skills and techniques in the chosen art form so as not to appear amateurish in their endeavors”. Other strategies consist of the establishment of collaborative teams³⁹, or of simply being less demanding, as, for instance, Leavy⁴⁰ suggests: “[Arts-based research] is not art for art’s sake. It is a different thing that is artistic, but not only artistic”.

Still, the practice of arts-based research demonstrates that both subject positions can be reconciled, and that they are (thus) not mutually exclusive. It is, in other words, possible to maintain an identification with an academic subject position, performing systematicity, a sense for precision and abstraction, an ethical positionality and transparency, and dialogical referentiality, in combination with the deployment of artistic repertoires that does not lead to the instrumentalization of the artistic, but instead respects its complex commitment to aesthetics, and the sense of abstraction, ethics, and dialogical referentiality that also characterize the arts, albeit differently. Moreover, these practices demonstrate that this reconciliation is potentially beneficial, allowing for the enrichment of academic and artistic communicative repertoires and for the development of knowledge in general.

Finally, arts-based research also alters the relationship with the audiences of academic texts. Even though, for instance, exhibition spaces also have built-in exclusions, and arts-based research is not a panacea for all ills of academia (and the arts), arts-based research does allow for audience diversification, and allows for more differentiated ways of experiencing academic knowledge. For instance, Ioana Literat and her colleagues, writing about multimodal scholarship, formulate this argument as follows: “by communicating research conclusions in multiple modes and on multiple platforms, scholars can reach beyond traditional academic audiences”⁴¹. In some cases, the arts-based research literature argues – sometimes quite strongly – in favour of intensifying the involvement and power base of audiences, by building in a participatory logic and emphasizing opportunities for joint knowledge production. Finley, for instance, writes that “At the heart of arts-based inquiry is a radical, politically grounded statement about social justice and control over the production and dissemination of knowledge”⁴². Others are less outspoken, and consider participatory arts-based methods, with “research participants creating art that ultimately serves both as data, and may also represent data”⁴³ as a subset of arts-based research, or consider arts-based research and participatory research as two separate traditions that can be combined⁴⁴. Without seeing (maximalist) participation as a requirement for arts-based research (and for artistic research), a num-

³⁶ A. Sinner, “Flight of the ‘Artademics’: Scholarly Gentrification and Conceptual+Art Discourses”, *Visual Arts Research*, 40, 1 (2014): 124-126.

³⁷ Finley, *Arts-Based Research*, 73.

³⁸ M. Capous-Desyllas, K. Morgaine, “Preface”, in *Creating Social Change through Creativity: Anti-Oppressive Arts-Based Research Methodologies*, edited by M. Capous-Desyllas and K. Morgaine, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, VII-XIX, XII.

³⁹ E. Eisner, “Art and Knowledge”, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, edited by J.G. Knowles and A. Cole, London, Sage, 2008, 3-12.

⁴⁰ Leavy, *Method Meets Art*, 30.

⁴¹ Literat et al., *Toward Multimodal Inquiry*, 572.

⁴² Finley, *Arts-Based Research*, 72.

⁴³ Leavy, *Method Meets Art*, 232.

⁴⁴ J. Gutberlet, B. Jayme de Oliveira, C. Tremblay, “Arts-Based and Participatory Action Research with

ber of contributions in this special issue demonstrate that participatory methods can be used and are useful in arts-based research.

3. ABOUT THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The starting point of this special issue was the *Respublika! Finland: Arts-Based Research or Communication and Media Studies? Yes, Please* workshop, which took place on 6 February 2020, at the Kone Foundation in Helsinki, Finland, creating a dialogue between different actors about arts-based research projects in Finland⁴⁵. The title of the event referred to an earlier arts-based research project, *Respublika! A Cypriot Community Media Arts Festival*⁴⁶, which was curated by one of us in late 2017 and early 2018, and which included an arts festival, three exhibitions and several seminars.

These events, and this special issue, are driven by the belief that more could be done in our field – the field of Communication and Media Studies – at the level of theorizing arts-based research practices and at the level of deploying them in different contexts. The aim of this special issue is to further stimulate the discussion on this topic, bringing together a diversity of voices, formats and approaches. In order to translate this objective into practice, we decided against using a very strict (and restrictive) definition of arts-based research, but instead welcomed contributions that allowed for an artistic-academic dialogue on arts, academia and research. For the very same purpose, we also welcomed a variety of formats, including multimodal formats, more artistic contributions and policy-oriented statements, even though we asked all contributors for relatively short contributions, to maximize the diversity of voices. This strategy produced a variety of contributions that, we believe, will inspire researchers in the field of Communication and Media Studies, and beyond, to reflect about the potentialities (and limitations) of arts-based research, and to consider adapting some of these approaches and methods in their own academic practice.

This strategy translated into a special issue that has a structure that was kept intentionally vague, as several articles functioned as bridges between different approaches and fields (and would thus fit into several sections, if we would have decided to have sections). The special issue starts with a number of texts that offer more general reflections on the relations between communication and media research, academia and the arts. Panos Kompatsiaris's article reflects about what it means for arts-based researchers and others to move into the field of the arts, with its already-established politics, economies and ethics. In his article, Mika Elo discusses challenges of multimodal publishing in academic contexts, with specific focus on the epistemic role of images in research publications in the area of artistic research. Sergio Minniti then discusses the interactions and mutual exchange between media archaeology and media art, reflecting on the commonalities and differences between artists' and scholars' work. The fourth text is a short article by Kalle Korhonen, who describes and illustrates the policies of the Helsinki-based Kone Foundation to promote collaboration between academics and artists.

Hernando Blandón Gómez and Polina Golovátina-Mora's cartoon opens a series of more case-study-based approaches and more targeted and specific discussions. A first

Recycling Cooperatives", in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research*, edited by L. Rowell, C. Bruce, J. Shosh and M. Riel, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 699-715.

⁴⁵ See <http://www.sqridge.org/action.html>.

⁴⁶ <http://www.neme.org/projects/respublika/>.

cluster consists out of a series of contributions that engage with the more participatory and interactive dimensions of arts-based research. Hernando Blandón Gómez and Polina Golovátina-Mora's work discusses the visitor positionalities and receptions, in relation to exhibition work on dystopia and utopia. Emanuele Rinaldo Meschini's article reports on, and reflects about, the sonic re-enactment of a football match (broadcast) in the Italian city of Trieste, with the objective to revive collective memory and strengthen social cohesion. Nico Carpentier's article discusses a project that was aimed at facilitating youngsters to use photography to unsilence nature, generating more respectful representations that speak from nature's perspective. Chelsea Bihlmeyer, in her article, describes how she (collaboratively) generated a series of creative responses from a group of readers to a text from the late 1800s, demonstrating the diversity of audience interpretations. The last contribution of this cluster, by Vincenzo Del Gaudio, analyses the interactive work of the Blast Theory collective, situated at the crossroads of theatre performance, video game dynamics and digital media research.

We then have a second cluster of these more case-study-based approaches and more targeted and specific discussions. This cluster includes contributions which focus more on arts-based research mediations of societal phenomena. In her article, Johanna Sumiala employs an arts-based research inspired methodological approach to her own emotive experiences, senses, and imaginations throughout her ethnographic journey exploring the digital ritual responses initiated by the 'Corona death'. Pekko Vasantola's article is a reflection on four art works that render artistic research on the digital – and issues of privacy, online identity and memory, and commodification – visible. Niina Uusitalo's contribution studies the problematics of climate change through research and photography, using the latter for the artistic interpretation of empirical results. Vaia Doudaki's text is a reflection on the heterotopic nature of public space – in particular the Prague passageways – through visual ethnography and photocollage. Grant Leuning and Pepe Rojo's text analyses a series of interventions and performances by the Comité Magonista Tierra y Libertad based around the flag of the 1911 Magonista Revolution. Finally, Pille Runnel and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt's contribution explores how academic and arts-based research have been combined in curating the contemporary, media-rich *The Time of Freedoms* exhibition, which is part of the permanent exhibition of the Estonian National Museum.

This special issue ends with a text written by Dalida Maria Benfield and Christopher Alan Bratton. Its title – "Reasons to Kill a Poet" – can be understood and misunderstood in a variety of ways, which is the reason why this contribution closes the special issue. It is a reflection on the counter-hegemonic capacities of writing – with discussions on the work of Victor Jara, Mumia Abu Jamal and Stella Nyanzi – that demonstrates the political relevance of poetry, the need for critical voices, and the struggle for having these voices heard. But, in our eyes and ears, this call also relates to the need for critical artistic-academic assemblages, and to the need not to kill the voice of poetry in ourselves.

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