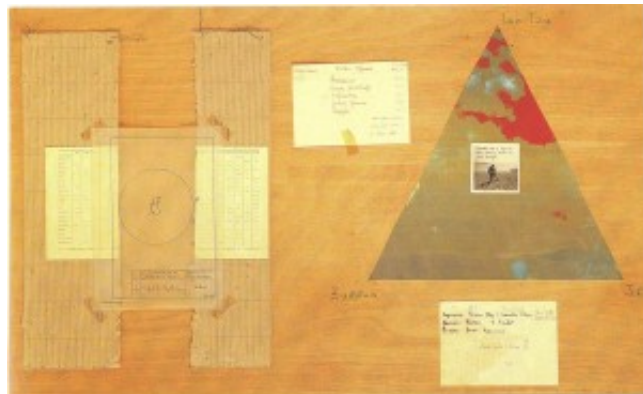


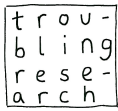
## Research as a Mode of Operation: Knowledge Production and (Self)Empowerment in an Art Historical Perspective



[caption id="attachment\_666" align="alignnone" width="300" caption="Robert Filliou, Research on Art and Astrology, 1969 (Steinbeck 1)"]

[caption]

The current discourse about research in the arts suspiciously lacks almost any historical perspective, as if the contemporary situation were unprecedented. Arguably, this apparent lack provides the proponents of the research-driven art university with the authority of an academic (and quintessentially Western) research ethics and imbues them with the status of inventors of a ‘new’ paradigm. In the realm of academia (internationally but also in the case of Austrian ‘art universities’) a new “Forschungsbegriff in der Kunst” (“concept of research in the arts”) had gained in influence and prominence throughout the last years. Even though everybody tries to be cautious not to narrow down and simplify the understanding of science and scientificity in order to apply it on the arts, the power to denominate and define this “Forschungsbegriff” remains without much asking the domain of funding schemes, public educational politics and various agencies of accreditation and evaluation. In this situation it seems necessary to (re)construct the history of research about, within and by art, deliberately to be written by the protagonists and practitioners and along their respective aesthetic and discursive investments. This historiographic project aims at the development and establishment of a methodological and epistemological resource of contemporary’s artistic research, and wants to make discernible the very problems entailed by the forced accessibility and endorsement of ‘research’ in contexts of art education and beyond. Hence, “Research as a mode of operation” focuses on a collection and reading of programmatic theoretical treatises, statements and other utterances by artists, critics, and curators in the second half of the twentieth century, but will also consider earlier efforts by artists to put themselves in the places and positions of scientists and researchers and/or represent a decisively critical stance vis-à-vis the sciences (e.g. Marcel Duchamp, the Russian Constructivists and Productivists of the 1920s, the ‘artistic research’ at the Bauhaus, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, the Bureau de recherches surréalistes, De Stijl, Black Mountain College etc.). The body of contexts and persons to be considered is open and will expand during the project. Preliminary attention will be granted the various names and concepts given to ‘research’ in relation to art – ‘Forschung’, ‘inquiry’, ‘recherche’, ‘ricerca’, ‘investigación’ etc. Contesting this de-historicising strategy of institutionalising artistic research, “Research as a mode of operation” elaborates an archaeology and genealogy of research as a mode of operation in the arts and as an aesthetic strategy containing its own traditions and trajectories in modernism and post-modernism, relying partly on a slowly growing literature on the histories of the art/science and art/technology nexus and on the debates around research to be found in neighbouring disciplines such as design and dance. This thematic thread is closely linked to all the other threads of *Troubling Research* for it concentrates on the histories of collectives and collaborations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, and especially on the period from 1950 to 1980, that appropriated or simulated the symbols, protocols and languages of scientific or academic-scholarly organisations, such as the laboratory, the scientific paper, the conference, the experiment, displays of methodological rigor (i.e. expressed in diagrams, graphs, maps, mathematical equations etc.), or co-operations in (sometimes transdisciplinary) networks. The project’s range embraces collective endeavours such as the Situationist International, Gruppe Spur, GRAV – Groupe de recherche d’art visuel, Gruppo T, Nove tendencije, Park Place Gallery, Art & Language, Artist Placement Group (APG), Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT), Raindance, N.E. Thing & Co. and others as well as more individually operating forerunners of current “artistic research” approaches such as Allan Kaprow, Gustav Metzger, Robert Filliou, Stephen Willats, Hans Haacke, Bernar Venet, Lothar Baumgarten, Michelle Stuart, Helen and Newton Harrison, Richard Wittenborn, Mary Kelly and others. What happens when artists start to act beyond the aesthetical



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and epistemic (but also social and political) boundaries which presumably make 'artistic practice' distinguishable from other practices? Contesting the imposed limits of skill and competency, artists after conceptualism (but even before) took license to explore areas of reality and knowledge they weren't necessarily 'entitled' to explore. Hence, 'artist-researchers' can be considered as part of a broader movement of the democratization of access to and participation in (scientific) knowledge. The project also looks into the, often marginal or marginalized, institutional and curatorial endeavours that tried to promote a research-driven practice in the visual arts. The context of independent feminist research and cultural production from the 1970s is of particular importance. Repercussions of these early attempts to embody a 'research attitude' in (or for) the arts in 'post' or 'neo-'-conceptualist collaborations (that were concerned with issues of the critique of science and biotechnological research since the 1990s) are of special interest for this thread. A selection of presenters (art practitioners as well as specialists from the fields of art history, philosophy and/or science studies) have been invited to engage the *Troubling Research* community in discussions of particular historical and conceptual issues of research archaeology and genealogy.