

Inter-Mediation

Artist –researchers’ methodology applied to management mutations

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ABSTRACT

Inter-Mediation is a research based art installation and performance. The idea is to propose to the viewer/participant to experience the process of connecting art-based methods to management mutations research.

Inter-Mediation stems from the French National research project “ABRIR: Art to Reassess the Critical Transformation of Organizations, Challenges for Art and Management”. This project aims at developing an alternative research approach, which consists in placing artistic practices at the heart of the scientific investigation process. The original feature of this approach resides not only in the transversal nature of the project, combining artistic and managerial research but also, in the inclusion of under-analyzed aspects of transformations, like aesthetics and sensible dimensions.

Our work starts with a scientific method developed by the ABRIR collective: ABCD (**A**rt–**B**ased, **C**ollective and **D**ialogical). The art-based method consists on allowing the production of knowledge through the sharing of experience by actors in the field, and of the way works of art and research itself are perceived.

In management research, beyond the founding studies on the subject, it has become common to take into account the aesthetic characteristics of organizations and the role of emotions, bodies and senses to reach a certain understanding of organizations beyond works based on reason and measure (Strati, 1992, 2000; Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Hatch, 2002; Guillet de Monthoux, 2000, 2004; Clegg, 2005; Carr et Hancock 2003). The turn to affects (Clough,

2007) represents a major contemporary evolution of qualitative surveys. Analyzing affects allows the uncovering of subtle, invisible and transient signals that are nevertheless critical (Abrir 2012; Berthoin–Antal et al., 2011; Strati, 2000), and to increase awareness of what moves and prompts us into action, as opposed to a priori representations (Stewart, 1996; Carr and Hancock 2003). Art can also be used to address the sensible dimension of relations between different actors.

We rebuild from this method and existing research to develop another component. Our contribution takes a methodological stand and aims at unveiling key processes and mechanisms typical of art-based methods, and how they are experienced by the participants. Inter–Mediation breaks up the stages followed from research questions to art forms.

The exhibition/performance shows the bridges, links, permeability, issues and challenges lying between artistic methodology and social scientific research. The logic of our intervention is sourced in how minimal and conceptual artists appropriated the bureaucratic aesthetic and thus ended criticizing institutions (Buchloh, 1990).

For Guy Debord: *“In a world that really has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood”*. Therefore, the goal of Inter–Mediation is to deconstruct the representational processes and the power systems that depend on them. Instead of being a simple representation, our experience seeks to play with different levels of (re)presentation in order to enhance the role of presentational knowledge. Among the four types of knowing identified by Heron and Reason (1997)— experiential, propositional, presentational and practical— presentational knowing mobilizes an implicit embodied knowing building a bridge between experiential and propositional knowing. Moving away from Debord, we state that it is only through a conscious use of fiction that the interplay between the many actor’s perceptions and social representations can be better apprehended.

Inter–Mediation proposes a journey exploring the notions of auto–fiction and *théâtre du réel*. Through this journey, the audience can re–live, revisit and rebuild the process followed by the artists and researchers of the ABRIR group. This “revisit” is not only conceptual but experiential. Based on the self–reflective methodology of practice–based research in arts, Inter–Mediation seeks to raise awareness about the challenges, issues and contributions of art–based methods applied to research on organizational mutations. That way, we can move away from stereotypes about art and organizational research and produce another type of knowledge.

The performance takes place in a custom designed installation that functions as a set. Each act of the performance will involve different modalities of speech: guided tour in the first act, reenactment of conversations in the second, and an

open participation in the third. Viewers participation will increase in every act making them actors of an experimental play. We take our inspiration from different artists and theoreticians who seek to widen the boarder of what is considered art or not (Tiravanija, 2005), to enhance or theorize the participation of the spectator (Bourriaud, 1998; Hirschorn, 2014), or to create hybrid forms between theater and life (Guy de Cointet, 1979).

Synopsis: We, as the dedicated team in the ABRIR project in charge of the valorisation of research outcomes, will narrate our journey confronting two very different methodologies ...

The installation and the performance are organized as follows:

At the beginning of the performance, the stage will appear as empty.

In the first act, we will install the set while explaining our process, reflections, realizations and dead ends.

The second act will be more interactive, as the persons in the public will be invited to play a part that they will discover while reading it. The text that participants will be invited to read a fiction inspired by conversations within the ABRIR collective about the methods, issues and experiences involved in the process.

The third act will be less theatrical and fully interactive as the participants will be invited to draw a composition on large sheets of paper, transforming their research findings into statements.

The three acts combined seek to confront different levels of meaning and to unravel our research and art-making process. Since the beginning our idea was to create hybrid dysfunctional forms that transform traditional views on research methodology.

This installation takes its inspiration from the concept of presence/production developed by the artist Thomas Hirschhorn. His work is based on the idea that his everyday presence is a key element of the exhibition, and that the participation of the visitor can also be a meaningful part of the exhibition, which is considered as an artwork in itself. Our installation/performance aims to create images that testimony our art-based research process.

Inter-Mediation is a pop up exhibition that can be unfolded adapting to different venues.

***Specific requirements**

The performance will be part of the stream 6 “Art, Space and the Body”. We suggest the performance to be scheduled at the beginning of the conference so the installation can be displayed during the whole period. Therefore, the dedicated area for the installation should be accessible and visible to participants all the time.

Ideally, we need two high empty walls that we can nail into. The set/installation is 3 meters high and 5 meters wide, but we would like to have some empty space around it to allow the participants contributions to spread. We will need a ladder to install, and we will bring our tools. We will also need a video projector.

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Exhibitions

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Rirkrit Tiravanija, Une Rétrospective (TOMORROW IS ANOTHER FINE DAY), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC, 10 février – 20 mars 2005.

Thomas Hirschhorn, Flamme Éternelle, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 24 avril – 23 juin 2014.