

Title Experience of Resistance in Artistic Research Process
Título in Spanish (Times New Roman, font size 12, bold)

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Abstract

Instead of starting my doctoral research, *Relation between Idea, Means, and End in Three-dimensional Art Making*, with the particular theory, concept or claim, I have begun with my experiences of the three-dimensional fine art practice. Even though my art practice is visual, it also is three-dimensional, and therefore it is based on a broader experiential spectrum than just the sense of sight. My main research material constitutes itself during the practice-led process of artistic research. While pursuing my artworks, I move and work on materials, and, as a result of this, the experience of resistance (Biesta 2012) reveals itself.

According to Varto (2012), it is possible to separate oneself from the world against the resistance. In my art practice, the experience of resistance also means that my surroundings and others set clear boundaries for my art making; the world participates in the determination of how I can act and think. The tangible experiential signifies that there is something in my way, and I need to reach for the frustrating middle ground of collaboration. Because the world and the experiences from the interaction with it are all the time included in my art making, my practice is not based on mind's abstract freedom.

I test the phenomena, which appear in my experience, with the experience of resistance. It is the key element of my artistic research, with which I question my position as an artist doing academic research by making art. The objectivity of my study arises by understanding my subjectivity, singularity and the nature of fine art. The latter I see as Carroll (1988) puts it: both a historical and cultural practice.

In this paper, I intend to identify tendencies and problems of research strategies in artistic research. I present Biesta's (2012) three different options to responding to the experience of resistance and explore, which of these could offer tools or techniques to artistic research.

I explicitly demonstrate how the experience of resistance occurs in my research practice by presenting my artwork as a case study: *From A Container to A Room for A Female Elk*, 2011, porcelain, glazed stoneware, rutile and Ikea table, 70 x 50 x 50 cm. By examining my working process I illustrate what I mean by the experience of resistance as the key element of my artistic research.

Key words

Artistic research, practice-led research, fine art practice, three-dimensional art making, experiential, experience of resistance

Extended Abstract in Spanish (Times New Roman, font size 12, bold)

This abstract in Spanish must not be shorter than 1.500 words (Times New Roman, font size 12)

Key words in Spanish (Times New Roman, font size 12, bold)

Three to five key words in Spanish (Times New Roman, font size 12), use commas between the key words.

In my doctoral research, *Relation between Idea, Means and End in Three-dimensional Art Making*, I have begun with my experiences of the three-dimensional fine art practice. I have observed that my artworks evolve in the three different ways: strictly from an idea, sometimes an idea modifies during the working process and occasionally without any idea. I do research mainly by making art. My main research material constitutes itself during the practice-led process of artistic research. While pursuing installations and sculptures, I am reflecting my practice on the question: are you able to work before you have an intuition of the image, or is it possible to have any shape before you have realized it? I need a phenomenological research method for examining the phenomena, which emerge in my experience. My dissertation will consist of three production parts and the text. When making three-dimensional artworks, I move and work on materials, and, as a result of this, the experience of resistance reveals itself.

Materiality and the resistance in experiencing it have an influence on my working and thinking. Earlier I have used the two similar terms: the material resistance and resistance of the world. The latter I see as the more general concept of philosophy as Juha Varto (2012, p. 89; 2009, p. 129; 1994), has used it when discussing on art and art education. In the experience of making art I try the contact surfaces between the world and I, in the other words, the resistance of the world. If nothing resists my activity from the outside of me, it is an indication that I am totally outside the shared world (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, p. 42).

When my intention has been to describe the resistance specifically in my tangible, material art practice, I have chosen the term of the material resistance. The palpable materiality in experience signifies that there is something in my way. Its resistance keeps me in a specific time and place. The world I act in is not solely a projection of my mind. The mind does not possess the actual resistors, as one can think of anything in all possible ways. In the sensory experience, the world immediately resists such activity. Although there are limits on what is made possible materially, I do not need only to imagine or illustrate issues and ideas in my art practice. For example, making a material form to touch instead of imagining it on my mind provides me with a concrete contact to the phenomena and concepts that I wish to explore in my art making. Because the world and the experiences, which arise from the interaction with it, are implicitly included in my three-dimensional art making, my practice is not based on the abstract freedom of my mind. Even though I had a very good idea in my mind at the beginning of the work, in the concrete, three-dimensional reality, I could not ensure and master its implementation.

I collect my main research material by making art, during the practice-led process of artistic research. Such a sensory and experiential practice always involves the experience of resistance. This is the term, which Gert Biesta (2012, p. 95) has used in the field of education. According to him, there are three different options to responding to the resistance in the experience. First, one can try to overcome that which resists. For example, I, in my art practice, can attempt to impose my will upon the evolving piece. This means stressing the subject of action as a free individual, taking over the procedure and trying to act against that which resists. Secondly, one can withdraw oneself from that which resists. In such a situation, no one can be active or initiative. To shy away from that which offers resistance also means not connecting to the mutual reality. The third option is to engage with that which resists, rather than trying to dominate it or withdraw from it. In the first two options, I do not see possibilities for art to be implemented, because art stems from both the singular experience and the connection with other people (Carroll 1988). Thus, only the third option is fruitful for art making and as a result I need to reach for the frustrating middle ground of collaboration.

In my three-dimensional art practice, this means that I have to come to terms with resistance. I have to admit that I, as an artist, am only one part of the entirety. My challenge is to stay in the

frustrating middle ground of working together. The collaborative objectives cannot be reached through the one-way controlling of mind, skills or working materials. When I take into account the experience of resistance but do not try to control it, the relationship that art requires between the maker and her or his surroundings becomes real (Carroll 1988). In this optimal art making situation, my working materials themselves can suggest the way to proceed.

This was the case with my artwork called *From A Container to A Room for A Female Elk*.



Figure 1: Riikka Mäkiköskela, *From A Container to A Room for A Female Elk*, 2011, porcelain, glazed stoneware, rutile and Ikea table, 70 x 50 x 50 cm

It began to evolve when I was kneading more clay for another piece. At the same time, I was pondering my old class mate's post and photos, which I had seen on Facebook before starting to work. I was quite astonished: it was hard to believe that precisely this person has a hobby of hunting, and that hunting still seems to be a popular hobby among the fathers of my age, even if none of my friends hunt. The clay was elastic and easily deformable. It was the clay of which smaller and plastic forms could also be made. Instead of that, I was going to do a bigger plate for the base of construction. I fingered and played with the high quality material. I modeled the small chunk of clay on and noticed that it started to have the shape of animal's head. It seemed like I was left to reflect on the continuity of hunting hobby in today's culture.

I do not have any relationship with the natural elk animals, but I am a girl of an enthusiastic hunter. All what I have heard of, and know of elks originate in my father's hobby. The small chunk of the elastic and easily deformable clay turned out to be a hunted and stuffed head of a female elk, which is attached to the suspension plate. Next, I began to ponder, what I could do with this head of a female elk. Where could I hang this trophy? I needed a wall for it.

So, I continued with clay. As the majority of the walls are white today, I changed the red clay white. The wall became an entire room. Because I made the room of clay, it reminded me of a container. I wanted to utilize the interior and exterior surfaces of the piece. When modeling I wondered my

working material: clay and its history. It is very craftsman like and practical, too, and bound to food dishes. I wanted to highlight the meaning of working by hands on the outer surfaces of the form, which are seen first. As a contrast to that, the inner surfaces, the walls and floor, could make a reference to the present. Today, the buildings and rooms are industrially produced, although there is still much labor needed on construction sites.



Figure 2.

On the twenty-sixth of November 2010, I wrote in my diary: The firing of the heads and room is done now. I am looking at the parts after a short break, and I realize that the room has to be even larger in relation to the smaller head. It is the impression of a hall I am looking for. Because of the rough quality of the white clay I had at the moment, the room does not look inside finished enough. The inner walls of the room should be straight and their surfaces smooth. For the new version of room, I will change the clay material, in order to achieve these. I also have to change the modeling technique, because I need the straighter corners inside the room. Porcelain would emphasize the impression of dishes, but can it be modeled the way I want?

I consulted a ceramist. She gave me instructions on two different porcelain masses, which I should attach together as plates, in order to achieve the two different surfaces of the piece. But, the results of the next couple of versions were disasters.



Figure 3.

Once again I was in such a situation, that I was trying to do something I did not have skills for. So, I headed for an audience with another ceramist. She told me patiently, why a rectangular container is not usually made of clay. She also asked, why I want to do such a thing out of porcelain – the most difficult type of clay. As an organic material, clay has a mind of its own, which affects on its working. The rectangular container made of clay, especially if it is large and high, does not preserve its shape during the drying and firing processes. It will inevitably bend the edges toward the center. The ceramist suggested that if I want to work with porcelain, I should change the masses to paper porcelain.

I found out, that, with the paper porcelain, I was able to do the thinner walls. Due to the paper fiber, the thin and high walls remained standing at least during the drying process.



Figure 4.

But, when opening the kiln, I faced the disappointment. I was not even able to remember, how many times this had already happened. I felt I was still trying to turn the impossible to possible. Porcelain has to be fired at the high temperature in order to achieve its translucency and delicacy. The higher I fire the piece, the more the walls will bend. I was already to throw the piece to the garbage bin, but then, I comprehended, that it clearly emerges something of my endeavor.



Figure 5.

Outside it looks like a ceramic container made by hand. Inside it is finished into a rectangular room without a door, window or ceiling. But it is made out of porcelain, and this kind of change is impossible. It changes with time and different circumstances to something else. This is the utopia of a closed, white parlor and my memories, a desperate attempt to keep up the specific scenery.

In my art practice, the experience of resistance means that my surroundings and others set clear boundaries to my art making. This experience is sometimes difficult and frustrating, as I cannot do anything I would like to. Of course, I could try to overcome that which resists, but for example in this case, I was not able to change the character of clay and porcelain.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

I also utilize this in my practice-led research, as I study with the tangible experiences of my art practice. Then, although there are limits on what is made possible, on the other hand I do not need only to imagine or illustrate issues and ideas. I test the phenomena, which appear in my experience, against the experience of resistance. This is the key element of my practice-led research, with which I question my position as an artist doing academic research by making art. The objectivity of my study is based on my understanding of my own singularity and the nature of fine art. In this way, making art or artistic research is not only fictional, pictorial or hypothesized.

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