



## **Figurations of Knowledge**

### Application to Stream 9: “Art as Research”

**The Future Reflections Research Group**  
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**Introduction and Epistemic Statement:** Based at Chelsea College of Art and Design (London, UK) the Future Reflections Research Group investigates the theory and practice of art research as an emerging and transgressive field of inquiry. This collaboration is comprised of four PhD student researchers with divergent art practices, skills and sensibilities. Overarching these differences, however, is an interest in exploring practice-led research through various forms of collaborative art making. These include performative presentations, critical/creative writing and relational artworks as research. Some of the questions guiding Future Reflections’ recent projects include: When is art research? How can research be art? Where’s the “work” in art research? Where is the knowledge(s) in the art PhD?

**Panel Description:** What are the similarities/differences/overlaps between individual and collaborative practices, within the context of art research, and how can these distinct forms of authorship inform one another? To address this two-fold question, the Future Reflections Research Group proposes to self-organize as a panel for the “Art as Research” stream and preformatively present the group’s emerging art research on the interplay of authorial practices. Dialogic art (Grant Kester and Eduardo Kaz), Relational Aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud) and New Genre Public Art (Suzy Gablik and Suzanne Lacy) provide the immediate theoretical context for this project. Polyphony, informed by the sociolinguistic

theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, will serve as the figuration for organizing this dialogue-qua-artwork. Future Reflections seeks to explore how this type of musical composition might (a) preserve the contributions of individual researchers as distinct registers of expression within the context of the collaborative art project as a whole; and (b) provide a structure for expressing both concord and discord between and among individually and collectively authored utterances.

**“Project” Abstract/Proposal:** Future Reflections will create a paper for performance and publication, using polyphony as a structure for representing creative similarities/differences amongst the individual contributors involved in this collaborative art research.

This specific interest developed out of two recent projects exploring the relationship between art *and* research and art *as* research. The first of these was *Future Response*, a paper performed at the Art of Research Seminar (Helsinki, Finland, October 3, 2007). Complementing the published version, this iteration used cryptic gestures, curious diagrams and quirky equations to investigate “the question” as a rhetorical structure. Through this research into interrogative forms, Future Reflections recognized the urgent need for new representational structures that more effectively acknowledge the complex provenance of questioning that occurs in collaborative art making.

Future Reflections’ upcoming project builds on this interest by considering lines of questioning in collaborative practice-led research: the ways in which these lines are often drawn from/through/around different authorial positions. *Future (Re)turn* will be performed at Desvios/Detours III: International Forum on the Relevance of the Local for Contemporary Art and Thought (Torres Vedas, Portugal, October 18-20, 2007). Part of this project presents video documentation of *Future Response*, over which is dubbed a conversation-cum-critique of the work. What at first sounds like collaborators reflecting on their recent research outcomes soon gives way to a creative construction, a digital recombination that echoes, repeats, eclipses and ignores utterances comprising the original recording. *Future (Re)turn* thus experiments with processes of reworking to reify the convergence/divergence of perspectives occurring in collaborative research.

For the “Art as Research” stream, Future Reflections will continue this investigation by using polyphony as a form/function to structure a relational art project. The paper and presentation comprising this project will juxtapose utterances originating from both individual members and the group as a whole. By coupling and uncoupling these expressions, Future Reflections will propose an experimental aesthetics of art research in which different types of authoring can not only coexist but also productively inform one another within the context of collaborative making.