

Trans

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-disciplinarity as a work method overcomes professional and institutional boundaries, and it is neither guided by a single theory nor by just one method.¹ The heterogeneous collaboration of experts from different fields of knowledge, especially for issues that are usually located in the worldly context, present central characteristics of transdisciplinarity in the sciences and also turn out to be fundamental for artistic research. In the field of arts, such cross-border, contextual and collaborative ways of working are a matter of course, at least since the avant-garde.² Strictly speaking, transdisciplinary work not only means that different knowledge domains are involved, it also means that researchers work collaboratively and moreover benefit from the knowledge of others. One's own sphere of knowledge is subject to constant change, and it is necessary to commit to self-reflection on the potentials and limits of one's own discipline.

Such aspects are defining for the artistic attitude, or in other words, in the artistic work principle of George Steinmann. The development of the artistic problem goes hand in hand with the establishment of such a cooperation and communication network, in which artists and experts from other areas of competence are equally involved. The artist contributes competencies that lie mainly in the field of aesthetics as well as the linking of the aesthetic with other areas. The inclusion of multiple disciplines and areas of knowledge such as the organisation of a network, in which the participants work with a focus on processes and problem-solving, have the consequence that a gradual, though rarely full, sensual and intellectual experience of

¹ There are a number of different definitions probably due to the numerous disciplines that practice transdisciplinarity. See also: Jürgen Mittelstrass, *Auf dem Wege zur Transdisziplinarität*, in: "GAIA", No. 5, 1992; <http://blog.zhdk.ch/trans/>; <http://www.transdisciplinarity.ch/d/Transdisciplinarity/TRdefinitions.php> (visited on 25/07/14). Of interest in this connection are the observations of Helga Nowotny concerning timely forms of knowledge production, see: Helga Nowotny, *Transdisziplinäre Wissensproduktion – Eine Antwort auf die Wissensexplosion?*, in: Friedrich Stadler (ed.), "Wissenschaft als Kultur. Österreichs Beitrag zur Moderne", Wien–New York: Springer 1997, pp. 177–195.

² However, the avant-garde was mainly dominated by pure artist collectives. A transdisciplinary network of course involves a wide variety of scientific and non-scientific disciplines. In this sense the artist's personality can also be referred to as transgressive. There are many definitions of transgression; transgression (lat. *transgressus*) generally means exceed, progress, advance. Derived from this, transgressive is understood here as an action that crosses disciplines and pushes forward into worldly knowledge domains.

the artwork is made possible for the viewer. Because, the tangible work of art represents only a part of the research, whereas the sensual and spiritual spheres of knowledge that are (or can be) activated by the tangible work are mostly not obvious. The principle of transdisciplinarity can be demonstrated in the work *Mittendrin am Rande* (since 2012): On the Vilm Island, significant in terms of both natural and cultural history, Steinmann is implementing an architectural structure.³ Several disciplines - architecture, (research-based) art, (environmental) ethics and philosophy - are involved in the development of this structure just like the “ideal” users imagined by the project team. They can be either experienced in manifest form or are latently existent - they present themselves to the audience only in use. The architectural design assigns certain functions to it: sleeping, cooking, reflecting and walking. The observer is encouraged to act. Thanks to the integrated library, the disciplines of environmental ethics, philosophy and aesthetics become accessible to the observer - fields that are always present in Steinmann’s oeuvre.

Steinmann artistically develops the dialectical relationship between subject/object and people/nature represented by the classic aesthetics of nature. He seems to take up a thought of the philosopher Gernot Böhme, who established aesthetics as a general theory of perception. Thus, the understanding of aesthetics as a theory of beauty (in the Kantian sense) shifts towards an aesthetics that understands the perception of nature as bodily-sensory experience, which, according to Böhme, ensues when a person stays in a specific “piece of nature”, “stays, lives, works and moves” in there.⁴ The dialectical understanding is superseded by a view that is based on integration and interconnection. The construction of the perception of nature as an aesthetic experience and as an ethical action is then applied to the architectural design. Using large windows and differentiated lighting, the view, the attention is drawn to the surrounding nature, thereby introducing the subject/object topic. In addition, the visitor is asked to go to the structure, thus to move in nature and approach it. The structure turns into a carrier of several areas of knowledge, experience and action: of the aesthetic, of the ethical, of art, and only a few aspects of these spheres of knowledge are actually, tangibly comprehensible.

³In this context an architectural structure is spoken of, since this term, in contrast to the concept of the architecture, permits an interpretation relating to pure functionality.

⁴ Gernot Böhme, *Für eine ökologische Naturästhetik*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1989, p. 12.

The use and movement of the visitor in and around the structure are constitutive of the work. The term “extroverted exclusiveness”⁵ comes to mind. It is an experience of art (and hence, an appreciation of art), which includes the spatial environment as an essential element. From the perspective of transdisciplinarity, not only the spatial environment, but also the epistemic and social fields would have influence on the experience of art and therefore on the appreciation of art. But what can art achieve, for example, for environmental ethics? Can the added value of knowledge be found in the link with the aesthetic? One can certainly say that the artistic realisation in an architectural structure represents an extension of the space of experience in the field of environmental ethics. It offers a clarity that cannot be achieved by a mental power alone. The artistic realisation is an instrument of reflection on the relationship between people and nature, which takes place in practice.⁶

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⁵ Robert Morris, *Notes on Sculpture, Part 3: Notes and Nonsequiturs*, in: “Artforum” 5/10, Summer 1967, p. 24–29.

⁶ Based on the *model of interruption* developed by Rosalyn Deutsche, which constitutes a critical intervention in an existing situation when related to the site specificity of artworks. Deutsche distinguishes it from the *model of assimilation*, which adopts an affirmative attitude towards its environment. See: Rosalyn Deutsche, *Uneven Development. Public Art in New York*, in: “Evictions. Art and Spatial Politics”, Cambridge: MIT Press 1996, pp. 49–107.