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Christel Vesters

Research

That rupturing accepted standards – of permitted knowledge, tasteful spectacle, known experiences – motivates the curious mind and the artist-quester.

That curiosity is a form of resistance against received ideas.

Marina Warner, “Contradictory Curiosity”, in: *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing* (2012)

Can or does art produce its own kind of knowledge? And if so, what kind of knowledge is this? What drives it, and how does it operate? Where is the overlap or synergy with more accepted domains of knowledge production, such as the ‘hard’ sciences? And what value do we place on curiosity and imagination in today’s knowledge-driven economy?

Visual art as knowledge is often described as knowledge not produced by intellect or cognition, but by intuition, the sensuous, speculative imagination. As such, visual art as knowledge reaches beyond the art object as representation (of an idea); it creates its own epistemological map, circumventing or disrupting the laws of logic and prompting us to think – and view – the world differently.

Unfinished Systems of Non-Knowledge is a longer-term research project developed by curator, writer and researcher Christel Vesters, which investigates and tests the potential of art as an alternative knowledge system. The research starts from an investigation of the ways in which contemporary artistic and curatorial projects – understood as material and conceptual entities, practices and agents operating in a wider socio-political field – evoke different kinds of knowledge and different kinds of knowing (as opposed to formal knowledge systems). It focuses on those artistic and curatorial art projects from the last twenty years that engage with questions of amongst others knowledge production, cognitive capitalism, and informal knowledge. Some of the leading questions in this research are: “If art-as-knowledge possesses the radical potential to make us think differently, how does this work? What is the potential of art as other knowledge and how can it function as a social, political or utopian agent?”

The close-readings of artistic and curatorial projects are put in dialogue with critical readings of philosophical, theoretical and political texts on art and knowledge, knowledge and power and the impact of cognitive capitalism on our society.

Vester’s research has enriched her teaching at the Fine Arts Department of the [Gerrit Rietveld Academie](#), because it enables her to share her newfound insights and knowledge related to the area of art as/and knowledge production with students. This applies particularly to the second year course ‘Research & Writing Skills’. In addition, students were invited and some participated in the first public event related to her research, [Unfinished Systems of Non-Knowledge \(Part 1\)](#), which took place in [De Waag Society, Amsterdam](#), on September 6, 2014.

This first public event as part of *Unfinished Systems of Non-Knowledge* was held in collaboration with [De Appel Art Center](#) and De Waag. The programme consisted of lectures and performances exploring the dialogues between art, knowledge and science. Together with an astrophysicist, a curator and two artists the programme revisited examples from the early Modern period when art and science were not yet strictly separate disciplines, and when curiosity and unbound imagination were driving forces behind many new discoveries. The programme was a great success and attracted over 80 visitors.

In the coming three years the aim is to further develop and complete three related projects: the lecture and performance project *Unfinished Systems (Part 2)* in collaboration with amongst others the [Society of Arts \(KNAW/Akademie van Kunsten\)](#) and De Waag, a publication, and the website.

Related posts:

1. [Unfinished Systems of Knowledge \(Part 1\)](#)
2. [Unfinished Systems of Non-Knowledge \(Part 1\)](#)
3. [Krist Gruijthuijsen](#)
4. [Martine Neddham](#)
5. [Krijn Christiaansen and Cathelijne Montens](#)