More about w/k

by Till Bödeker - Sunday, December 30, 2018

https://www3.hhu.de/wuk/en/construction/

The text w/k in 5 minutes is a first introduction to our programme. More about w/k provides further background information.

1. Widely accessible

w/k publishes articles on art and science which aim to be accessible to a broad readership. While reading a scientific journal (e.g. a physics or psychology journal) may be challenging without in-depth theoretical and methodological insights into the scientific discipline and its terminology, w/k aims to communicate information in such a way that no particular background knowledge is required. Technical terms, for instance, if unavoidable, must be explained by the authors.

2. On ‘Art and Science‘: The Journal’s Perspective

To avoid any misunderstandings, this section explains the journal’s conception of the relationship between art and science: They are two independent fields of study and are differentiated institutionally - at least in contemporary western culture. Whether this also applies to other cultures is further explored in the w/k section On ‘Art and Science‘. Science and art are equally essential to society; the journal editors therefore deem them to be equally important for cultural development. As cultural forces, both art and science contribute creative achievements to humanity, albeit in different ways.

Hierarchies based upon statements such as “science is more important than art”, and vice versa, are explicitly rejected. For w/k, this means that artists and scientists meet eye-to-eye. This, however, does not ignore the fact that artists and scientists possess different skills to tackle different problems.
Due to the widespread assumption that art and science are to be seen as separate, the online journal is particularly interested in precisely those who cross the boundaries between art and science through their own practice in both fields. A prime example of the crossing of boundaries in the realm of fine art and good science is Leonardo da Vinci.

However, the main point of interest for w/k lies not only in the differences but also in the connections between art and science. w/k focuses on artistic works and how they are studied through the lens of science for the advancement of knowledge. The unique w/k profile enables artists, scientists and those who share a general interest for the topic, to broaden their horizons through the discovery of new links and dimensions in the art and science universe.

3. Questions to the Editors

Question 1: Don’t journals of a comparable structure already exist?

In recent times there have been various attempts at defining the relationship between science and art. These can take the form of a lecture, workshop, book or essay, online publication, or exhibition. So far, however, there does not yet exist a journal with the aim to address such a broad audience, portraying the ways in which the arts – particularly the visual arts exploring their relation to science – are presented in all their diversity, whilst simultaneously being investigated through a scientific lens. Whilst the specialist literature currently available shows important findings addressing the relationship between science and the visual arts, what it lacks is a clear connection – as well as sufficient research – between the two subjects. On the whole, w/k is an innovative project in many ways; like almost any new project, it builds upon pre-existing research and expertise.

Question 2: Why do we need it? What is its use?

With the help of the w/k programme you can surpass a traditional approach towards the relationship between art and science, benefitting all those involved:
Through w/k, artists can inform themselves on what art has to offer when on the periphery to science. Science-based artists are given the opportunity to place themselves more precisely within the field of art and science. As their knowledge surrounding the connections between art and science broadens, they can assess which other overlapping disciplines and their respective representatives are worth getting into contact with. One's own artistic practice therefore benefits from the knowledge gained through these diverse connections.

Art historians whose main focus it is to explore the connections between science and the visual arts can use w/k to gain a solid overview and reach more precise conclusions.

The same goes for scientists, who would like to further explore the scientific connection with which some visual artists work.

Arts-based theorists, philosophers and aesthetes of any kind can profit from reading Sections 1 – 3 (Articles by Artists, Articles about Artists, Interviews with Artists) for the advancement of knowledge in their respective disciplines.

Curators can gain inspiration for exhibition concepts.

A broader audience interested in the visual arts and their connection to science in general can feed their diverse interests through w/k.

In short, w/k provides a new source of inspiration for all those who deal with connections between science and the visual arts - be it artists, art historians, art theorists, scientists interested in art, curators or simply people interested in art.

Question 3: Why an online journal rather than a book?

An online format was chosen to best cater for the project's complex structure, aiming to work as a long-term, international platform. One singular publication would not sufficiently cover the desired range of content. Nonetheless, this does not exclude the possibility of a w/k book publication.

4. Which disciplines are not considered?

Artists who share an interest for science, exploring scientific theories, methods and outcomes have been in great demand in recent decades. This is examined in greater depth in Sections 1 – 3. However, due to the special profile of the journal, artists who would do better in journals other than w/k, include:
• Those who predominantly work in disciplines based on an unconventional scientific approach, for example esoteric psychology.
• Those who primarily explore religious or areligious ideologies (for example Christianity, Buddhism, anthroposophy, atheism).
• Those who primarily concern themselves with writers and literary texts. On the other hand, those who concern themselves intensely with literary theory, and utilise their research in their artistic practice, are more apt for the w/k discourse.

5. On the Topic of “Artistic Research”

Terms such as “artistic research”, “arts research”, “art through research” and the German term “Künstlerische Forschung” have been circulating for many years.

“Künstlerische Forschung”, artistic research, and further variations of this terminology have come to be frequently cited, yet also highly scrutinised catchphrases. They have found their way into the discourse of art schools, scientific institutes, as well as (European) policy guidelines surrounding culture and the creative industry. They aid the foundation of new institutes, journals, societies, support programmes, etc. At the same time, natural and social scientists, as well as artists, take on a critical, even hostile stance towards the terminology, forms, and programmes surrounding artistic research.

In Sections 1 – 3 works from artists relying upon concepts of artistic research are presented and examined. Concepts of artistic research are further discussed in Section 5 (On „Art and Science“). Only some concepts of artistic research are related to science; these are of the greatest interest for w/k. However, other variations of artistic research are also considered.

6. “Boundary Crossers” between Science and the Visual Arts

Those who work in the fields of both art and science are referred to as “boundary crossers” in the online journal. Content-wise, their artistic works can – but don't necessarily have to – reveal connections to their scientific activity. Artworks of those whose practice is based on the crossing of boundaries are only considered if their artistic activity meets a certain level of professionality and autonomy. This stands in direct contrast to amateur art-making which doesn't surpass a basic understanding. We are interested in art that goes beyond amateur hobbies and surpasses basic understandings. The editorial team decides upon the fulfilment of these criteria.
Whether these boundary crossers are mathematicians, medics, philosophers or social, natural or cultural scientists, their approach plays just as little a role in the selection process as their type of occupation (at a university, college, research institute, business or private scholar).

7. Collaborations between Scientists and Visual Artists

w/k creates a space for artistic works which evolved from a collaborative arts practice, clarifying their position embedded in the field of science. An example of a historical perspective on collaborations between professions in science and the visual artists is embodied by painters and draughtsmen, who, through European research expeditions, depicted detailed botanic and biological illustrations of unknown plants and animals. On the other hand, a more contemporary example of such collaborative practices would be that of aesthetic economy. Martin Tröndl understands this to be a process which uses specific artistic knowledge and competences, to apply them in a setting outside the realm of the visual arts: Artistic competences and ways of working are woven together with scientific ones in order to generate new knowledge based on a particular problematic.”

Central are therefore

“forms of perception in a scientific context to generate new knowledge (...) Within the research discourse, the production of other forms of knowledge, which a solely scientific or artistic approach could never achieve alone, takes place as a social practice in its own right.”

8. w/k-Sections explained in further Detail
This section provides a more detailed explanation of the ideas briefly introduced in w/k in 5 minutes.

Articles by Artists

These can be based either on a particular exhibition, or the development of a more extensive work. The following regulations help serve this purpose:

- For science-based artworks created in recent years, artists can share their work within the construction framework specifically put together by the editorial team. For current work, w/k is developing an experimental ground in which the framework can be adapted for each individual case. This experimental ground enables, for example, a video piece, created especially for the online journal, to be published.
- A presentation of this type can, in turn, be expanded upon through a regular text contribution explaining the artistic experiment.

Interviews with Artists

Interviews published since the first round in November 2016 reveal the entire range of possibilities so have a look and get inspired.

Articles about Artists

In this section, both the past and present artistic practice of art historians and theorists (amongst others), operating at crossroads between science and the visual arts, will be examined individually and in closer detail. In a conversation which took place in 2015, the supporters Kunibert Bering (Düsseldorf Art Academy) and Rolf Niehoff suggested various possible historical topics to engage with: Piero della Francesca; Andrea Pozzo in S. Ignazio in Rome; Athanasius Kircher; Pictor doctus in the middle ages; in the 16th century: Vasari contra Gian Paolo Lomazzo and Giulio Delminio Camillo; Ruskin: The Stones of Venice; Prinzhorn; Max Imdahl; Apfelmännchen – Mandelbrot-Menge: computer generated art; Gerhard Richter: Silitium. It doesn’t have to be one of these topics, but this gives an idea of what we are looking for.
Sections 1 – 3 provide a more extensive and in-depth introduction into art whose main point of focus lies in science. The aim is to thoroughly comprehend the various connections between science and the visual arts, in order to gradually distinguish and systematise them. Above all, one should get an impression of what an artist's practice of this kind really consists of.

Art-based Scientists

Here the main focus lies upon scientists, whose teachings, research practice and/or publications utilise artistic concepts/methods/outcomes. Earlier constellations of this type are also considered from a historical perspective.

This section is structurally identical to the sections 1 – 3, meaning there exist the following three options: Firstly, Articles by Arts-based Scientists (clarifying the status these artistic components have within their teaching and research), secondly, Interviews with Arts-based Scientists, and thirdly, Articles about Arts-based Scientists. We have not yet introduced subsections as we have just created this section. On ‘Art and Science’: In recent years, the discourse surrounding the relationship between art and science has (again) intensified. This becomes apparent when one looks at the edited volumes Art and Science [3], Arts Research as Aesthetic Science [4], ArteFacts: Knowledge is Art – Art is Knowledge [5], amongst various other online texts which appear in the w/k-bibliography. In Section 5, a theoretical forum is being established in order to encourage further thinking regarding the relationship between science and art. Its aim is to provide a platform to activate a discussion encompassing all aspects of this relationship, always with the goal to develop further insight into the broad topic of “art and science”.

Close ties between the sections Articles by Artists, Articles about Artists and Interviews with Artists enable an objectified discussion to be reached surrounding the relationship between science and the visual arts. The w/k profile typically prefers to use individual artistic activities, using various singular studies as a basis, in order to reach more general conclusions regarding the relationship between science and the visual arts. In doing so, inaccurate generalisations common in specialist literature can be avoided. Reflecting upon the relationship between science and the visual arts gains new impulses through the presentation of artworks and its accompanying research, also supporting the advancement of knowledge. Through its connection to Sections 1 – 3, the section On ‘Art and Science’ becomes a theoretical forum with an innovative profile.

Aesthetics & Art Theory
As mentioned in w/k in 5 minutes, Section 6 plays a complementary role: w/k is not a forum for all types of aesthetic and art theoretical contributions. However, it welcomes selected studies – after having been evaluated by the editorial team – especially those which can be *usefully applied indirectly* to the online journal.

Incoming contributions determine which of the above mentioned sections and sub-sections are deemed active.