

# ON HOW THE LINE WAS STRAIGHTENED

In his various explorations of the history of lines, the anthropologist Tim Ingold creates a valuable distinction by describing the trace and the connector in opposing terms.<sup>1</sup> According to Ingold, traces are historically related to dynamism and improvisation: they represent pure movement. Connectors, on the other hand, are static; they join together a series of ordered points. The former are associated with the dynamic growth of the walk; the latter, with the distribution of goods. Contrasted in this way, they present the opposition between wandering and transporting and show how modernity has been winding up the lines of our lives into a succession of points on a map. Ingold introduces this analysis into different fields, including how we tell a story or design a genealogy.

We know, in relation to the latter, that the first family trees, for example, were born literally upside down. The slow process that brought about the change in their direction implied accepting that descendants could grow upward, feeding off the light of the sky rather than the strength of the ground. In this new paradigm, young people could leave behind their predecessors, illuminating the future as a stage of potential height with respect to the past. From rivers that fork, to living things that branch out, through to multi-screen global reality and distributed networks, we are well aware that every design contains a filter that interprets our surroundings. It can be subverted or nudged in different directions, but there is no metaphor that can survive being emptied of an ideology. Scientific genealogies also have their defining characteristics: they tend to resemble a constellation of connected points more than a tangle of dynamic lines.

## Augmented Nearsightedness

The Sala d'Art Jove published a call for projects in the category of artistic research for the first time in 2009. From that time forward, 15 proposals have been selected, two of which are currently in the process of development. The first thing that comes to mind when reviewing those projects is that the themes they address are very dissimilar and that said heterogeneity is common to the solutions that are utilized to bundle together and share the completed research. Following the trail of a lost film, reconstructing old polar expeditions; measuring the temperature of euphoria and tedium, investigating the policies that govern public collections, gender and the archive, censorship and metropolitan fabrics; probing the flexible notion of editing or the physical consequences of sound. Each of these possibilities have taken on specific forms in their realization, including publications, essays, installations, maps, performances or public conversations, and they have articulated processes which, in many cases, spill over in time toward the present and the past. In their breadth, they constitute absolutely different ways of inhabiting the same space.

This explosion of possibilities is highlighted from the first instance of the call. The catalog published that first year, in 2009, pointed out that, despite incorporating this new category under a grant model that establishes research as the initial phase of a project, "the idiosyncrasy of the projects has led us to understand research as

1. Ingold, Tim. *Lines: A Brief History*. New York: Routledge, 2007.



something that can be substantially more complex than a mere first step.”<sup>2</sup> Some years later, Beatriz Escudero, Sonia Fernández Pan, Rosa Lleó, Maria de Pfaff and Zaida Trallero emphasized the same aspect<sup>3</sup> by arguing a variation: whereas research is an inherent part of projects in other categories (publishing or education, for example), many of the projects in the research category ultimately take on the form of creation projects, which makes them practically indistinguishable in the exhibition space.

Obviously, the efforts of the Sala d'Art Jove have been directed more toward adding complexity to contemporary culture rather than simplifying it. Far from delineating a sharp border with the capacity to separate where artistic research begins and ends, those efforts have designed profuse collaboration networks, ways of working where lines reach out and probe interconnections in all directions at the same time. The different categories have tended to overlap. In an essay written for the call in 2009, Montse Romaní pointed out that “the singular knowledge that can be contributed by artistic practice [...] is founded on processes of subjectivization and socialization (of the individual), which set in motion forms and manners of collective cooperation and exchange.”<sup>4</sup> If, during the past ten years, these forms and manners have settled into a kind of characteristic culture – which reaches beyond the mere promotion of emerging art – one might tend to think that the Sala d'Art Jove in itself has woven together a fabric of knowledge as it was nourishing the cultural fabric of the city. From this point of view, none of its areas, from the most administrative materiality to the most abstract nuances, can be understood as falling outside the sphere of research.

## Wander

Whereas the idea of artistic research in itself sometimes leaves behind a wake of confusion, some of its characteristic traits appear repeatedly in a clear way. We could say, for example, that there is a broad consensus in recognizing its relationship to the dematerialization processes undergone by art beginning in the second half of the 20th century. There are also arguments to suspect that, in certain situations, it helps to smooth out the contact between contemporary art and the knowledge economy. Many authors have pointed out how values formerly associated with art – creativity, flexibility or the fantasy of absolute personal freedom – have been absorbed and transformed into the foundations of a precarious lifestyle for the masses. We have seen, on another front, debates about how educational frameworks can quantify and measure the productivity of artistic learning processes. How do we evaluate and monitor knowledge in art without falling into text-based supplements? Is evaluation even possible? Finally, we have discussed the contradictory, incredibly nuanced question that implies defending the figure of the artist as a legitimate producer of knowledge, as a salaried employee with full rights and benefits, while understanding art as something ineffable, deliberately opaque and resistant, a sort of “opposite of work.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, this notion participates in a whole list of complex debates. In his exploration of the history of lines, Tim Ingold sketched out a new aspect in proposing a kind of distant relative of Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledges” – a concept that is paradoxically omnipresent in international academic circles. Arguing that its specificity lies in moving *along* things as opposed to *across* them, his notion of “inhabitant knowledge” could be described as a kind of settlers’ knowledge or native knowledge that is articulated as a set of meandering knowledges, tangled into the territory. Native understanding is the kind that organizes, through movement, a dynamic thread to connect the things around it, and which has no beginning or end.

Our approach to artistic research is based on the premise that there is a space for exploration beyond the genealogies created from points and

2. Sala d'Art Jove 2009, Catalog, Barcelona, 2010.

3. Avantsala + Fuga, Art Jove 2013, Catalog, Barcelona, 2014.

4. Romaní, Montse. “Apunts sobre el gir cultural de la recerca artística”, in Sala d'Art Jove 2009, Catalog, Barcelona, 2010.

5. Echeverría, Guadalupe. “There is a plenty of room at the bottom.” In En torno a la investigación artística. Contratextos. Barcelona: MACBA, 2011.



connectors. We decide to be wayfarers amid the informal knowledge that is wound up in the projects, without trying to capture it. In this sense, we have proposed a methodology that is more similar to the murmur of oral culture than the forensic analysis of evidence diagrams: we catch a toehold in “The Republic of Witnesses”, that place described with horror and fascination where it would be possible to spark the emotional flow of experience and to recover the other “lines of research” that are also accelerated and stirred up when knowledge is bundled together.<sup>6</sup> Joan Bennassar, Marc Navarro, Ariadna Guiteras, Amanda Cuesta, Anna Dot, David Bestué, Eulalia Rovira & Adrian Schindler, Jordi Ferreiro and Lucía Egaña were invited to participate in a conversation. Those conversations were later transcribed and transferred to a mural poster format, creating a polyphonic surface that can be read at multiple speeds and in various directions. Although the conversations took place in an open format, their starting point was a series of areas emerging from the selection of three projects, included as physical anchoring points in the design of the exhibition.

### Choreography, Prospection and the Fold

*Zen Fascist* by Ariadna Guiteras, *Futuro Memories* by Joan Bennassar and *Per què tallar?* [*Why Cut?*] by Marc Navarro, projects developed for the research category of the call, articulate very different sensory worlds, temporalities and methods. As they gather speed in different directions, they effectively tow along the consensus on what knowledge is (and where and how it can take place). At the same time, they have the ability to act as catalysts for questions in the context of a collective conversation. In that sense, each proposal worked as the cornerstone for a meeting, where the conversation did not take place *about* the work, but rather *along* it. Rather than a focus, the projects acted as a filter through which to look at everything else. If, as we were saying, knowledge is integrated into movement, we ultimately opened the door to updating the work, picking up on the decisions that initially defined the materiality of each piece, its relationship with the space and the public.

*Why Cut?* explores the history of folded paper, focusing on the nearly anonymous series of groups in Zaragoza dedicated to origami. Initially presented as an article and adapted into a three-dimensional format, the project investigates the different perspectives and positions that can be derived from the practice of folding paper. What does a fold create? What does it mean to cut? Is it more important to preserve a finished figure than to improve its construction process as a group? Based on Marc’s research, we proposed talking about notions such as the fold and matter, oral tradition, community of knowledge or pure process. At the same time, we were interested in reflecting on how the genealogy of a cultural field is outlined, where the field, in this case, appears as an untouched expanse with its schools of thought and legacies, its small-scale internal controversies and its constellations of proper names, still in a free-floating, formless state. These questioned served as the triggers for an initial meeting, which took place at the La Caníbal bookstore, with the participation of Anna Dot, Amanda Cuesta and Marc Navarro.

*Zen Fascist* was born as a performance on the Neoliberal appropriation of New Age culture, with a special emphasis on the enormous diffusion the practice of yoga has received in recent decades. Whereas, in its initial presentations, the piece was developed as a demonstration and a reading, now it has become a kind of master class where the audience can participate in the choreographies, following along with the sequence of poses in real time. From our point of view, Ariadna’s piece carries questions about somatic knowledge, social choreographies, education, performativity and gender, and wellness as a commodity. At the same time, it lays bare an old debate on the possibilities for transfer and accumulation when what one is dealing with is an “embodied knowledge”. This string of questions served as the trigger for a second meeting at the bar in the Mercat de les Flors, where we talked with the artist as well as Jordi Ferreiro and Lucía Egaña.

6. Verwoert, Jan. “Saber es sentir, también, tanto si queremos como si no. Sobre el hecho de presenciar lo que se siente y la economía de la transferencia.” In *En torno a la investigación artística. Contratextos*. Barcelona: MACBA, 2011.

The third meeting took place near of the former Santa Mònica convent, where we met with Joan Bennassar, David Bestué and Eulalia Rovira & Adrian Schindler. The starting point was *Futuro Memories*, a long-term project that follows the whereabouts of the Futuro House, a project designed by the Finnish architect Matti Suuronen in 1965, which defined the principles for building a utopian and easily disassembled modern vacation house. After finding the current destination of some of the constructions (dozens surviving precariously in different parts of the world), Joan built a model that is now hanging in the stairway of the Arts Santa Mònica building. This solution for the assembly – hanging from the ceiling and marking an ascending path through the building – sets off a series of questions that range from the system of introducing novelty or the weight and scope of expectations, to the different ways in which a historic narrative is institutionalized and falls away. At the same time, we proposed speculating on the potential of this series of nested boxes of institutional architecture: the scale model of the Futuro House inside the Sala d'Art Jove, which is also laid out as a model or a miniature within Arts Santa Mònica. In that sense, questions also arose regarding the cultural policies that permeate and organize the experience of research.



COM LA LÍNIA ES VA FER RECTA  
Comissariat: Ingrid Blanco i Antonio Gagliano  
2016

Projectes en exposició

*Futuro Memories*

Joan Bennassar

Centre d'Art Fabra i Coats i sala d'Art Jove, 2014

*Zen Fascist*

Ariadna Guiteras

MACBA i Sala d'Art Jove, 2104

*Per què tallar?*

Marc Navarro, en col·laboració amb Goig i Bisdixit

Arts Sana Mònica i Sala d'Art Jove, 2016. A partir de la investigació homònima realitzada a Sala d'Art Jove, 2009

*De com la línia es va fer recta*

Ingrid Blanco i Antonio Gagliano. Mapa a partir de converses amb Joan Bennassar, David Bestué, Eulàlia Rovira, Adrian Schindler, Marc Navarro, Amanda Cuesta, Anna Dot, Ariadna Guiteras, Lucía Egaña i Jordi Ferreiro.

Arts Santa Mònica i Sala d'Art Jove, 2016

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Arts Santa Mònica. 19.07 - 02.10.2016

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