

## Scholaristry

Incorporating Scholarship and Art

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*Published in:*

Journal of Problem Based Learning in Higher Education

*DOI:*

[10.5278/ojs.jpblhe.v6i1.1957](https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.jpblhe.v6i1.1957)

*Publication date:*

2018

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Shanks, M., & Svabo, C. (2018). Scholaristry: Incorporating Scholarship and Art. *Journal of Problem Based Learning in Higher Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.jpblhe.v6i1.1957>

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## SCHOLARTISTRY: INCORPORATING SCHOLARSHIP AND ART

**Or: A polyphony of voices in conversation about a couple of images with reference to problem-based learning**

*Michael Shanks and Connie Svabo\**

### ABSTRACT

*The notion of scholartistry, hybrid scholarship-arts practice, is introduced by situating it in the academic literature on research methodology. The article offers dynamic, dialogical exemplification and demonstration; it takes the form of a conversation among the visitors to an imaginary exhibition of scholartistic artifacts. Several examples of arts-based research methods are discussed in terms of knowledge production and creative competencies. Connections are drawn with post-disciplinary agendas in the academy and beyond. The argument is made that a distinctive field of scholartistry offers an expansion of project- and problem-based learning in manifold cultural and organizational fields that are looking for open-ended creative modes of design and production.*

**Keywords:** arts-based research, scholartistry, problem-based project work, post-disciplinarity, design thinking, play-based learning, archaeology, performance design

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Hello, welcome...

Voice #1, our guide, clears his throat to summon the attention of the visitors. We are in the heart of rural west Wales, at the entrance to a temporary “pop-up” exhibition that has been arranged in the corridors of a nineteenth-century abandoned mental asylum under redevelopment as luxury apartments.

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Please, hello – thank you.

The man smiles at the disorganized crowd of people.

### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE - VOICES**

Voice #1 – the guide

Voice #2 – an archaeologist and academic – scholartist

Voice #3 – a performance designer and media academic – scholartist

Voice #4 – a disembodied voice heard over the public-address system – a “meta-voice” – the manager of the exhibition space, the “Editor” of the journal

Voice #5+ – various responding voices, visitors to the exhibition; one may hear the voices perhaps of an art sceptic, a conventional archaeologist, a theater actor (who performs dramatic scripts), a traditional academic, an academic cultural critic, and others of uncertain identity).

### **THE WAY OF CREATIVE SCHOLARSHIP**

The group stands in a large hall-like space with a curtained entrance. The oxblood-red walls and dim lighting create a compact atmosphere.

Hello, hi – it is my great pleasure to welcome you on this exclusive guided tour of a special exhibition of works of scholartistry.

He has a good voice for talking in spaces like this. Visitor eyes are on him.

Yes, *scholartistry* – this being a combination of scholarly and artistic work (Lewis & Tulk, 2016). Scholartistry will be our angle today, in our somewhat specialized topic of *Integrating Academic and Artistic Methodologies within Problem-Based Learning*.

We realize, of course, that it is not conventional for a paper in an academic journal to take the form of a guided exhibition tour, but a short etymological excursion might help us understand that this is not as far-fetched as one might think. As we conventionally understand it, a journal is a serial publication of a collection of texts.

He looks out at the visitors and several nod.

In fact, *journal*, traced to Late Latin *diurnalis*, derives from *dies* – day, and in Old French, *jornel* – it may mean a day’s travel. We take this notion of travel, of a day’s journey – and offer a journey, a guided tour of our subject matter...

Inspired to contribute to the introduction, the archaeologist and Stanford University Professor of Classics steps in next to the narrator guide. He looks out, spectacles crouched on his long nose.

Voice #2. Archaeologist, Professor of Classics, Scholartist.

Ah yes – our topic is one of method – how to operate and maneuver as scholartists in the space, the borders between scholarship, research, and creative artistry. Here we might note the derivation of method from the Greek *hodos* – a track, path, road, with *meta* adding a sense of pursuit after or following something. Our topic is *met-hodos*, method, understood as looking for *the way* of creative scholarship.



Image One. The way of creative scholarship. The path to the heugh, Lindisfarne, Northumberland. From the book *Itinerarium Septentrionale (The Northern Journey): A Chorography of the English-Scottish Borders*, Michael Shanks, 2013.

The Associate Professor of Performance Design steps up next to the grey-haired archaeologist. A redhead, a head taller than him, wearing black.

Voice #3. Associate Professor of Performance Design and Visual Culture, Scholartist.

*Meta – hodos*: the way of research – the journey towards knowing.

She says it slowly and continues.

Hello all, we are pleased to be here and so happy to be able to exhibit our work as manifestations of what we would like to contribute to problem-based project work.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

And mind you – we think project work is great – it is student centered and engages people in working with relevant real-life situations! That’s marvellous.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Agreed, yes, BUT, what we’d like to contribute to problem-based project work is aesthetics – aesthetic learning experiences (Uhrmacher, 2009). We exhibit these works here today as manifestations of processes of sensuous cognition (Welsch, 1997), what we, based on Baumgarten, call sensitive knowing (Kjørup, 1999).

We would like to suggest that problem-based project work can be enriched by engaging students in learning experiences that have their aesthetic components heightened in processes of making. Our images and this guided tour are meant to be sample suggestions for incorporating aesthetic ways of working in academic projects.

Voice #1, our guide, clears his throat, gently interrupting the flow of words from the academics, the scholartists. He draws back the curtain.

Let’s enter.

He ushers the group through an archway. The visitors walk a little way into a corridor and stop at two images.

The first image appears to comprise superimposed, layered, and altered photographs with surface attachments. It seems to be an outdoor scene, but it is blurred. The second is an abraded mirror-like surface with a dim emergent image of what looks like a face. Both images seem to be composites, layered, with disparate elements brought together.



Image Two. In medias res – starting in the midst of things and following connections, working and remediating. A screen shot of the video installation *Driven Pheasant* (collage/montage of YouTube footage Hunting at Powis Castle, Wales, and mixed media artwork, Brændeskov Denmark), Connie Svabo, 2013. An image from the book *Ghosts in the Mirror: A Media Archaeology* (daguerreotype, anonymous USA c1850, purchased eBay 2003, rephotographed), Michael Shanks, 2013.

Voice #1. Guide.

Professors, please tell us about these works.

How did your projects start? What are their origins?

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Ha! – Good question, where does any work start?

### **PROJECTS EMERGE IN THE MIDST OF THINGS – IN MEDIAS RES**

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Animal relations. I am interested in negotiations between human and non-human lives, negotiations between “nature” and “culture”, the boundary lands and conflict zones between different forms of existence.

Driving along the roads of the rural landscape I live in, these conflicts play themselves out with fatal consequences: road kills. I often see pheasants lying dead at the side of the road. I also often see people driving cars on country roads holding their phones in their hands, glancing at them, texting. I even feel the urge myself, to text and drive, from boredom and need for connection through mediation. One day while driving, these two things associated in my mind: texting and dead animals. This, combined with my appreciation of the beauty of pheasants’ feathers, led me to create a painting: *Pheasant Killed by Text* – plastic screen, a canvas very like translucent vellum, with layers of acrylic paint and pheasants’ feathers smattered on it. Red, brown, white. Dramatic. One

thing led to the other – I wanted to work with video projection, and why not project on this canvas, this skin?

On YouTube I found some footage of a pheasant shoot at Powis Castle in Wales. It was a point-of-view recording, made with a head-mounted GoPro Camera, a “document” of a man with a gun shooting the birds, one after another after another, with his labrador retriever dutifully fetching the bodies for him. The Go-Pro camera is fixed to his head; every time he moves his head, the camera moves – you see along the barrel of the gun as he fires. And BANG, BANG, BANG, you hear the loud noises.

She pauses.

What I mean to say is – for me, the starting point is a chain of associations: driving, landscape, roadkill, texts, beautiful pheasant feathers, a plastic screen, paint, video projections.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Photo traces. I have long been interested in a curious convergence of field and practice between early photography and antiquarian interests in old ruins and artifacts that became the modern field of archaeology. One of the first-ever photography books, for example, Henry Fox Talbot’s *Pencil of Nature*, is a deep exploration of what we can call an archaeological sensibility – an attunement to the remains of the past in the present, their presence, their record, the (al)chemical transformation of perception into document and archive.

I was aware of the competitor to Fox Talbot’s early 1839 photographic negatives – Louis Daguerre’s one-off photographic plates. I had seen some in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and was fascinated by their materiality, the image caught positive-negative in the surface of a mirror – daguerreotypes are light-sensitized polished silver on copper-plate substrate, exposed to light, which leaves a positive-negative image when chemically fixed. I found many for sale on eBay and the archaeologist in me was drawn to the ones, the cheapest, that were scratched, oxidized in patina, such that you can hardly now see the image. I bought about 50 at only a few dollars apiece in the summer of 2003.

I wanted to see into the images, through the veil of scratches, abrasions, the aging of the daguerreotypes, a kind of archaeological excavation of these old photos. A kind of media archaeology (Svabo & Shanks, 2013). How might this be achieved? I scanned and photographed with different light and settings, and lost images emerged from the gloom. Faces not seen for maybe a century – revived. Remediated.

Fascinating. And I remembered Adorno's aphorism – that the best magnifying glass is a splinter in the eye!

He looks out at the audience. Several have raised their hands.

He nods at them. Several start saying something.

Voice #5+.

It seems almost random, and certainly accidental – your discoveries of eBay daguerreotypes and selection of YouTube videos?

Voice #5+.

How did you choose such starting points?

Voice #4. Editor.

Forgive me, but what you are saying seems to have little to do with problem-based project work.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Typically, in our academic training, we learn about method, procedures, algorithms – how to approach a topic. It might start, for example, with the definition or framing of a field and then gathering data.

Voice #4. Editor.

Or with problem orientation!

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Our own *modus operandi*, in scholartistry, is to bracket, to place in parentheses such methodological principles, and instead, to plunge *in medias res*, to immerse oneself and see what surfaces.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

This, for me, is not a random process but involves gathering possible candidates for a starting point and assessing their potential to generate commentary and critique. The key is to consider rhetorical purpose. This is a specific matter related to the concept, audience, and purpose, and broad principles of genre, such as what kind of media(tion) and argument you might wish to pursue. There is a full discussion, with case studies, of such plunging *in medias res* in my book *Art and the Early Greek State* (1999) and in *Archaeology: the Discipline of Things* (2012).



Voice #5.

I don't understand – this seems very highbrow to me – it's almost like contemporary art!

Voice #5.

Is there a systematic *method*? Is there a logic to all this?

Voice #4. Editor.

Professors – I need to remind you that you need to talk about problem-based learning.

Voice#3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Yes we should deal with our sponsor, the journal, with its topic of problem-based learning. After all, that's the reason we are here!



Image Three. Working with aesthetic learning in student project development. *Thesis Landscape* (collage, photographed), by Performance Design student Linh Tuyet Le, 2017.

### **EXERCISING AESTHETIC LEARNING IN STUDENT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

Let me try to relate what we have talked about to my practice as an educator: I am responsible for the thesis-writing module in the Performance Design Master Study Programme at Roskilde University – where problem-based project work composes half of the students' activities. I do workshops with all thesis writers, and when I work with students starting up their final theses; one of the sets of exercises I do with them is to guide them through envisioning their projects. For example, in a workshop, I may ask them to imagine their projects as "landscapes". I ask them to explore their thesis: what kind of landscape is it? Is it full of mountains? Is it a vast open meadow? How is the

foliage, the light, the atmosphere? Sometimes I give them a large piece of paper and ask them to draw this landscape; sometimes I ask them to describe the landscape in a free-associative kind of writing.

When this is done, the students have made manifest in either text or image some qualities of their “thesis landscape”. They have created something that potentially acts back on them, makes them understand and see new things about their thesis and how they feel about it.

The audience looks a bit puzzled. She continues.

After this, I typically ask them now to imagine they are going to guide a traveler through the landscape. I ask them to imagine they are tour guides; they will take a potential reader/voyager through the landscape – what might the highlights be? What would the traveler experience? To which special features of the landscape would they as tour guides draw attention?

This exercise is a continuation of the work with the imagined thesis landscape from before, but it introduces a shift in perspective and dialogical form as new “generators of insight”. Imagining this “taking on a voice of authority” in relation to the thesis landscape – accounting for it (Butler, 2001; Hughes, 2005, p. 72) – again generates new insights about the thesis. The imagined landscape and the imagined dialogical account of it helps one to envision and understand the thesis in its becoming. The thesis is imagined, and in these processes of imagining, of drawing and telling, a vision for the thesis is generated, crafted, created.

What I do here, as educator and creative process facilitator, is to provide a starting point. For example, “landscape”. This is a creative, associative technique. Insights are generated about one thing, by exploring them through the features of something else. The thesis is enacted as landscape and as dialogue about a landscape. These actions are not targeted “problems” or “solutions”. They are aesthetic, evocative, and imaginative.

Now let’s link this back to the works we have on display here; let’s link back to this exhibition and why we think our images have something relevant to say in relation to integrating artistic practice in academia – and specifically to problem-based project work.

What form do things take when we explore and experiment with aesthetic form giving? What emerges?

I have attempted to demonstrate how I, in my work with students, attempt to generate aesthetic learning experiences, which provides insights about the project at hand. These kinds of exercises feed into the process of “making” a project – of performing it into existence through imagined spatiality, visuality, and dialogue and through processes of translation and mediation (Svabo, 2016).

We posit that the making of a project (an academic thesis, for example) can benefit from the creative, crafting exploration, which characterized the creation of the images on display here, that by “making” in aesthetic forms (drawing a landscape, telling a story) the project is also made. Important insights are generated.

So what we are trying to communicate is that evocative, imagined, intuitive, play-based, aesthetic forms of working offer an expansion of problem-based learning. They add aesthetic learning experiences to project work. Scholartistry highlights aesthetics in academic work, suggesting that working with aesthetic forms and expressions adds to the epistemological rucksack of the journeying project worker.

Voice #1. Guide.

All right, that does make somewhat more tangible how scholartistry may actually be implemented in learning in higher education – although I do have some issues I think could be clarified ...

The voice of the guide is abruptly interrupted by the Stanford Professor of Classics, who clearly also has a take on the issue of learning and forms of knowing.

## **OPEN KNOWLEDGE-MAKING PROCESSES**

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

It’s not controversial to see problem-based learning, and related project-based learning and experiential learning, as long-standing efforts to deal with the relation of learning in the academy to worlds beyond that are not organized in disciplinary ways. Involved are shifts from formal instruction to student-centered differentiated learning and, yes, beginning with a problem, a challenge to be pursued through (improvised) problem-solving skills or competencies.

If I may speak as a student of classical antiquity, in a traditional sense, we are dealing with the reconciliation of modes of learning and knowing in that genealogy of the body politic since the polis, the ancient city state. The challenge has long been to reconcile what in antiquity were called *episteme* (scientific knowledge), *sophia* (theoretical wisdom), *techne* (practical know-how and applied knowledge), and *phronesis* (socio-

cultural savviness) – manifold epistemic fields ranging from formal bodies of propositional knowledge, to technical skills and creativity, to ethical dispositions with respect to knowing of what consists the *good life*.

And let's not forget that we are dealing here with an elision of learning and knowing – these forms of knowledge all refer to competencies thought essential to leading, contributing to, and shaping a rich life as a full member of a political community.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

So – we are tackling here how the academy – as research and as educational environment – produces knowledge for society and citizenship. And, indeed a classical, archaeological approach offers a broad-brush understanding of this.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

(Chuckle). Yes, indeed! We archaeologists offer an almost geological perspective.

At the beginning of my career, I was also part of a significant shift in how archaeological science was construed. Eschewing an essentially inductive process of digging up the past – visiting and investigating sites, gathering remains, categorizing, synthesizing, interpreting, and explaining – from the late 1960s, archaeologist in the Anglo-American academy promoted what was called hypothetico-deductive reasoning. As archaeologists, we weren't to set out simply to explore and discover. Direction was required – problem orientation – a methodological precept construed from *philosophy of science*.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Aalborg and my own University at Roskilde in Denmark were established in the 1970s to deliver problem-based experiential learning (Andreasen & Nielsen, 2013 Andersen, 2015).

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

I recall studying their curricula as part of the dissertation I wrote for my Masters in Education on radical student-centered pedagogy.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Yes, so we very much draw on and are sympathetic to the intent of project-based learning. However, let's say right off that we are awkward with problem orientation.

Let me share an anecdote from the process of writing my doctoral dissertation.

In a somewhat confessional style, she looks at the audience.

I found it extremely difficult to work with the much-heralded phase of *problem formulation* in problem-oriented project work – which is the Roskilde University version of problem-based project work (Olsen & Pedersen, 2015).

At one point, I even had a list of 121 problem formulations! I couldn't settle on any one of them!

This was not about writing. I wrote a great deal during my thesis work, publishing several articles and book chapters along the way, and on top of this, the monograph. But the process of problem formulation did not work well for me. My way of working was more one of crafting texts.

I worked ethnographically with a broad focus and interest in the interactions between sociality and materiality in visitor experiences of a museum of natural history (Svabo, 2010). Given the exploratory character of this fieldwork, it was counterproductive and actually quite impossible to predefine what I was after. The focus of my project, indeed the formulation of its problem, emerged in parallel with my presence in the exhibition, and indeed one specific “eureka”-like moment in my participant observation generated the focus of my thesis.

I suggest there is an *overestimation* of the importance of initial problem formulation, at least in the way we practice problem-oriented project work at RUC.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

I concur.

My own doctoral research indeed started with a broad problem – why in the middle of the first millennium BCE we see the emergence of city states across the Mediterranean. I translated this problem into a question. As an archaeologist interested in design, art history, and material culture, I framed the problem as follows: how might the design, style, and manufacture of widely traded and consumed ceramic wares be related to the social changes associated with the formation of city states in the Mediterranean? But this framing of the “problem” didn't help me figure out what to actually do, where to start, how to proceed, even though I was very aware of the methodological precepts in archaeology regarding the positing of hypotheses to be tested against data. There was something of a paradox – if I came up with a specific hypothesis, that ceramic design represented ethnicity and so could be used to track the settlement of different peoples in new kinds of community; for example, I would be predetermining the story I could tell.

Later, I researched how archaeologists actually work on their projects, in contrast to what textbooks tell you that archaeologists and other social scientists do. In a series of interviews on how archaeology works – what became of the book *Archaeology in the Making* (Rathje, Shanks & Witmore, 2013) – I found that identifying and solving problems was just a small part of a complex and very messy process of doing what gets called archaeology. The work of archaeologists is actually much more open than what method and theory stipulates (Shanks, 2012).

Of course, this is the great insight of science studies, the understanding of scientific practice that has emerged since the late 60s, rooted in ethnographies of knowledge making in science: science is a mode of cultural production (Latour 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979).



Image Four. Opening up knowledge making. Interdisciplinary scholartistry carried out in more than twenty years of the theatre/archaeology of performance artist Mike Pearson and archaeologist Michael Shanks. Rearticulating fragments of the past as a real-time event: visiting the ruined farmstead of Esgair Fraith, Wales, and derivé through the streets of Riga, Latvia. From *Theatre/Archaeology: Pearson/Shanks 1993-2013*, see also *Theatre/Archaeology: Reflections on a Hybrid Genre*, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, 2001.

Voice #5+.

You are both focusing here upon *research*, are you not?

Voice #4. Editor.

Do explain how this is connected with problem-based *learning* in higher education.

## PLAY-BASED LEARNING AND DESIGN THINKING

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

There is a growing interest in exploring the role of creativity and aesthetics in problem- and project-based learning (Armitage, Pihl & Ryberg, 2015). One specific example of calls for aesthetic learning, which relates precisely to problem-based learning and project work, comes from a professor of architecture at Aalborg University, Hans Kiib. He has promoted the idea that problem-based project work needs an injection of *play*. Kiib and colleagues have developed a model for problem-based learning, which they call PpBL: *problem- and play-based learning*, which seeks to focus on the interplay between the intuitive and the goal-oriented aspects in university pedagogy (Kiib, 2004, p.195).

Kiib says: “PBL requires intuition, play and action in a continual dialogue with reflection and rational problem solving. This requirement is strong in all educational programmes, but perhaps more particularly those programmes that focus strongly on innovation and artistic development, coupled with technical competences.”

Kiib supports this by referring to Kolb (1984) and Schön (1983, 1987) for their focus on experiment and intuition (Kiib, 2004, p. 202).

Feezell (2013, p. 23) sums up some of the features of *play* that have been emphasized and analyzed in the literature on the topic – mentioning, among others: freedom, non-seriousness, illusion, unreality, purposelessness, make-believe, superfluousness, suspension of the ordinary, internal or intrinsic meaning, serious non-seriousness, diminished consciousness of self, absorption, responsive openness, contingency, spontaneity, improvisation, fun!

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

With play we might well associate design thinking, for which the design group at Stanford has become notorious (Kelley & Kelley, 2013; Plattner, Meinel & Leifer, 2018), as another way to enrich and develop creative aspects of problem-based learning.

To paraphrase Jackson and Buining (2011, p. 160): in Design Thinking, problem framing and diagnosis are developed and often replaced with a process of exploration that is facilitated through extensive questioning, through research. Through research exploration, design teams come to understand the human complexities that are often embedded in a problem. This makes it possible for them to see more easily a multitude of problems from different perspectives. A common outcome of this human-centered research is thus a complete reframing of a design challenge or problem. This exploratory stage provides the basis for a generative stage in which numerous potential solutions to the explored problem(s) are identified and explored through prototyping processes – much akin to learning through trial and error.

Design Thinking does not follow an analytically reasoned pathway; it is fundamentally different from the scientific, rational, linear, and convergent processes that tend to be encouraged in academic higher education environments. Yet also, and as Peter Miller (2015) has argued, design thinking in many ways mirrors – in its pragmatic focus – the features of what have been traditionally called the liberal arts, a cornerstone of the western academy. The *artes liberales* are the competencies (*artes*) appropriate to lead the life of a free and creative member of a community (*civis libertus*).

Voice #4. Editor.

I am so glad you've brought up the distinction between the arts and design – in relation to the academy and life beyond!

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Indeed, we don't want to be drawn into the old and very pertinent distinctions between fine and applied arts (Schnapp & Shanks, 2009), and the role of the designer as agent in industrial production, though this again raises the perceived need in many business fields for a disposition toward creative innovation and associated competencies.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

We are focused on the convergence here between art, play, and design as activities that involve open-ended, autotelic, exploratory, improvisational, and intuitive *workings*.

Voice #1. Guide.

This exhibition is about arts-based research and learning that takes in techniques and attitudes from the fine and applied arts (design) that foster creative, open-ended, action-oriented exploration, with associated competencies.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Yes, we call this *scholartistry*.

Voice #1.

The term scholartistry here refers to work exemplified in the academy that subsumes research and learning through open-ended processes of exploration, experiment, and yes, the pursuit of knowledge of different kinds.

And problem-orientation may be part of such scholarship, but not the defining feature.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Scholartistry adopts a tool-kit, rather than a methodology, from the fine and applied arts and is rooted in age-old competencies identified with the field of rhetoric.



I'm sure we'll come back to this in a moment as we pursue the question of method.

### HYBRIDIZING THE ACADEMIC GENRE

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Certainly the attempt at integrating art and academia is a scholarly act of putting oneself (and/or one's research) on the edge, in contested territories, in boundaries and borderlands. Borgdorff (2011) and Schwab and Borgdorff (2014) have also pointed this out.

Arts-based inquiries potentially hybridize the academic genre – making it impure, bastard, monstrous (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 135). Scholartisty may be seen as a hybrid, a bastard kind of research and learning. A hybrid is an offspring that has dissimilar parents; it is impure, monstrous. Cognate terms that may be invoked are pirate, cyborg, phantasmatic, schizo, polymorphic, perverse. And an-archic (playful) inversion or negation of state-authorized and/or disciplined normative states of being in the world. Scholartisty is carnivalesque.

Hybrid research may deliver textual works that inhabit the lands of in-between, not being purely one thing or the other, mixed-up works. Familiar examples of this kind of work are literary non-fiction, the personal anecdote, and pieces of prose-poetry... “texts which do not know what they are, texts which hold qualities of being something and something else” (Svabo, 2010, p. 146).



Image Five. Hybridizing the academic: *Scholartisty* explored in a katachrestic aesthetic (mixed media collage/montage of found imagery and derived tagcloud), Connie Svabo and Michael Shanks, 2017.

Voice #2. Scholartist — archaeologist.

Scholartisty may be essayistic. An essay (Latin *exigere*, to assay, weigh, make trial) is an experiment, a trying out to see what results.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

A book comes to mind from the *Swedish Academy for Practice-based Research in Architecture and Design* (Grillner, Glembrandt & Wallenstein, 2005). Concerned with experimental research in design and architecture, this book advocates the value of experiment – understood as open-ended processes of inquiry – in academic work. It is based on the premise that a central quality of research is to explore and to experiment. Exactly this quality is a crucial quality of arts-based research. It is research for *inquiry*, more than *proof*.

Pelias (2011, p. 660) makes the point that writing may function as both realization and record: “These terms – realization and record – point toward the writer’s process and completed text. Writers come to realize what they believe in the process of writing, in the act of finding language that crystalizes their thoughts and sentiments. It is a process of ‘writing into’ rather than ‘writing up’ a subject. When writing up a subject, writers know what they wish to say before the composition process begins. When writing into a subject, writers discover what they know through writing. It is a process of using language to look at, lean into, and lend oneself to an experience under consideration.”

Techniques derived from the fine and applied arts are great for such exploration – doing stuff without knowing where it will lead or even why you are doing it. We suggest that creative and productive processes of opening up and writing into (open exploration) are essential extensions to problem-based playful learning and project work.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Our works on show here are meant to foreground slippage, shape-shifting, metamorphic processes.

Outrageously, perhaps, the essayistic shape shifting may end up more important than any distinctive message or proof. Playful exploration may become an end in itself. The scholartist might not actually have anything to say!

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

The arguments for arts-based research (as well as design-based research) extensively overlap with and draw on the arguments for qualitative research that have been developed in, for example, anthropology, since the representational crisis of the 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Van Maanen, 1988). Again, Michael, we might cite your work *Experiencing the Past* (1992) in this context.

The broad point is that, in writing, in authoring, text is not an innocent medium (Conquergood, 2002; Geertz, 1989). In writing of people and culture, scholarly work is very often narratological work. As scholars, we concoct narrative devices (Czarniawska, 2004) in order to make our point. We make active choices of making our texts seem realistic, descriptive, or not. We can also make active choices of foregrounding our personal standpoint, positioning ourselves and our work in relation to the topic of inquiry (Baarts, 2015; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). We can employ various writing strategies, for example, writing explicitly from the positions of the personal, the poetic, or the performative (Pelias, 2011).

### **PRAGMATICS AND SCHOLARISTRY AS ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Voice #5+.

This is all very fuzzy, it seems, and not the kind of rigorous application to problems that we need in today's complex runaway world!

What has happened to *discipline*? What are the procedures of scholartistry, its methods?

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

Okay, we have arrived at method!

We suggested earlier that we think of method as being about the way of knowing. How to operate – how to proceed – how to find one's way.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Another way of saying this is that we see discipline and method as *modi operandi*, ways of doing things – pragmatics.

Design thinking is quite well conceived as a kind of pragmatics, as action-oriented project management. There is no formal methodology, and this makes it difficult to teach and learn. As faculty in the d.school at Stanford, we show and share, rather than tell and instruct. This kind of pragmatics is best learned through doing, by pursuing projects, typically in studios, that run through inquiry, ideation, framing, interpretation, explanation, testing, modeling, manifestation (document and delivery).

Rather than (conventional understandings of) method and theory, this is *met-hodos*, itinerant – the *way* of design. Scholartistry is in a similar manner the *way* of knowledge making.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

In relation to the orientation on problems in problem-based learning, our objective in scholartisty is to elaborate the space, the transgressive space between problem and solution – between formulation and production.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

We will not be the first to comment on the problem-solution fixation of so much of the wealth, business, and culture of Silicon Valley (for example, Morozov, 2013) – an engineering attitude, seeking problems for which solutions may be engineered and, in so doing, delivering value, whether that be wellbeing, a new gadget, or monetary profit...

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

It's not at all wrong to be problem oriented, but we wish to make space for open exploration, to consider alternative perspectives, to consider other frames of reference, holding problems and associated solutions in parentheses, *deferring* definitive statement, diagnosis, and prognosis.

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Scholartisty is peripatetic, wandering, browsing, selecting, discarding through *dérive*, through borderlands and temporary autonomous zones or third spaces.

Voice #5+.

Right, Okay. You are both academic faculty. Do your students help you? How do you do this in the classroom?

How does this connect with school and college curricula, if at all?

Voice #2. Scholartist – archaeologist.

Scholartisty is about our lives as full members of a creative community.

Scholartisty emphasizes an aesthetic of sensuous embodied engagement, personal, committed, inflected. By aesthetics, we mean the complementarity of thinking, sensing, and feeling in the *experience* of knowledge making – the cognitive, sensory, and evaluative/emotional are all involved, as they were in ancient rhetoric.

Voice #3. Scholartist – performance designer.

The interstitiality and potentially transgressive politics of scholartisty relate to its situated character, that we are always located, never neutral. We always stand for something (Haraway, 1988).

Ultimately, scholartistry is an essential component of active engagement with the world. This is surely also the objective of problem-based learning – to effect such active engagement, to make the most of our individual and collective *agency*.

I was reading a text by Ronald Pelias the other day (2011) about compositional strategies and writing. He includes a quote. I don't remember by whom. But I remember the direction of the quote. To write is to make a demand on the world. Research demands space. The quote even said that to do research is to colonize the world.

Energizing scholartistry is the conviction that expression, giving voice, having a say is a crucial capacity, a key human faculty. Expression that comes from the heart, gut, mind (Behar, 1996; Pelias, 2011; Rosaldo, 1989). Expression that is situated, located in one's body, coming from the corporeality of one's being. Our agency is precisely the acknowledgement that such expression is valuable and legitimate. Our agency is the conviction, thought, and felt, that we matter.

Maybe this is the colonization, the making of the world as one's own in fleshed out making of knowledge.



Image Six. Scholartistry at work. Remains in a studio space of an exercise in collaborative graphics used to explore concepts and connections (color crayon on paper). Roskilde University research collective in arts-based research: Connie Svabo, Dorte Jelstrup, Pernille Welent Sørensen, Anja Lindelof, Sine Nørholm Just, facilitated by Henriette Christrup, 2017.

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