

Intimacy: Meetings between Art and Research

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Introduction

This collaborative project involves the research project *Being together: Remaking public Intimacies* (funded by KULVER¹) at the Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo (UiO) and the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). At Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, the project is managed by Vice Dean and artist Christel Sverre, who will put together a group of master students to be working on the project for two semesters. The main goal of the project is to produce an exhibition and a catalogue detailing the meetings between artistic processes and research on intimacy. Both the exhibition and the catalogue will be made available to the general public. To achieve this goal, the project will organise working groups, reading groups and seminars with master students from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, researchers from the project *Being together: Remaking Public Intimacies*, and external lecturers.

Background and research questions

Both research and art are engaged in intimacy as social practices, representations and performative acts. Late modern culture is characterised by intimate, sexual, personal and private topics being a part of the public sphere and of all media and communication (see also the project outline for *Being together: http://www.sfk.uio.no/til_nedlasting/BeingTogether.pdf*). Cultural and artistic repertoires and discourses, in the form of representations and aesthetic, performative, social and communicative approaches, are about changing intimate and close relations – both private and public.

The project *Intimacy: Meetings between Art and Research* is linked to the main research questions in the research project *Being together*: What are the implications of changing discourses, aesthetic expressions and values in late modern understandings of intimacy, sexuality and gender? How do public representations of intimacy create change in public landscapes?

Approaches: art/research

The objective of both art and science is to understand and grasp the world, this through investigating the nature of things, the becoming of objects and the many ways in which life is lived and performed. Science and art communicate and interact, they influence

¹ The Research Programme on Assigning Cultural Values (KULVER) is the Research Council of Norway's programme for cultural research for the period 2008 to 2012.

and create each other, and we suppose that both fields are mutually dependent on each other. Artists and researchers contribute continuously to cultural practice, and political and social positioning. The ways in which knowledge and aesthetics move between the different fields, between different disciplines and different materials, have led to unions, convergences and critical innovations and ideas.

An artist like Scott Hocking, for example, narrates photo-romances about homeless people who pick up the material waste from our techno-scientific society. The Indian artist Shilpa Gupta creates web-installations about international trade with human organs. A contemporary exhibition in Stedefreund in Berlin show how art and science are designated as separate spaces for knowledge production (http://www.stedefreund-berlin.de/sf_aktuell.html). Art is set in relation to the improvisational, intuitive and creative, whereas (natural) science is understood as a source of measurable, objective truth. The exhibition is an invitation to explore advances, norms and values of knowledge production, and to challenge the (natural) sciences' approaches to phenomena like affect, death, and the unconscious.

Silke Schicktanz, who works with the history, theory and ethics of medicine, analyses the socio-cultural dimensions of bio-medicine. Also, she does research on the role of Utopia and theoretical approaches to the binary construction of fact/fiction (for example Pethes and Schicktanz, 2008). Cecilia Åsberg does research on the aesthetics of scientific icons or figurations, and the shifting boundaries between fact and fiction (Åsberg 2002, 2003). Cultural studies and gender studies also focus on how media, knowledge production, culture and art work as interconnected processes (for example Buikema and van der Tuin 2009).

The project *Intimacy: Meetings between Art and Research* functions as a meeting point and an exploration of approaches to knowledge, representation and performativity within the production of art (the processes for the NTNU master students) and within socio-cultural research (the processes for researchers in the *Being together* project). "Approaches" are here considered to entail the different methods and approaches within the fields of art and research, and as the ways in which different fields approach the objective of the project, namely intimacy.

Organisation

The project is administrated from the Centre for Gender Research, UiO, under the management of project leaders Jørgen Lorentzen and Wencke Mühleisen. The main activities of the project take place at the Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, NTNU, under the management of Christel Sverre.

The project starts autumn 2010 and will end in the spring 2011. Works, materials and text that are produced for the exhibition will be incorporated into the closing conference for the project *Being together* in 2012.

The collaborative project *Intimacy: Meetings between Art and Research* includes seminars with master students from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, researchers from the KULVER project *Being Together* and external artists, curators and researchers. As part of the realization of the collaborative project, researchers from the *Being together* project will form alliances/collaborations with master students concerning approaches to art/research in relation to their respective research projects. The seminars and the exhibition will take place in the facilities and gallery of the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art. However, the master students will also participate in the research seminars arranged by the *Being together* project. Collaborative reading lists for the project *Intimacy: Meetings between Art and Research* are under development.

Partners

In addition to our partner and project manager at the Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, Christel Sverre, the project is in collaboration with sociologist and artist Nina Wakeford at Goldsmiths College, University of London and head of INCITE (Incubator for critical inquiry into technology and ethnography):

<http://www.studioincite.com/people/nina.html>). Wakeford will be invited as a lecturer to our planned seminars, and contribute to delineating the project and the process.

References

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