Analysis of modern approaches to interdisciplinary art education: combining art with other fields of knowledge

Análisis de los enfoques modernos de la educación artística interdisciplinaria: combinando el arte con otros campos del conocimiento.

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between three different approaches to art: aesthetic, sociological and historical. The aim is to confirm the interdisciplinary connection between art education, on the one hand, and the status and role of discourse in contemporary art, cultural policy, educational reforms and institutional transformations that affect creative activity. The contemporary merger of art and theoretical discourse can be viewed from two interrelated perspectives. On the one hand, the “educational turn” in contemporary art shows a special interest in the production and dissemination of knowledge, which is marked by a focus on the educational aspects of artistic activity and its potential for mediation and intercultural communication. Using the method of literary analysis and processing of such databases as SCOPUS, Google scholar and Research Gate, the paper analyses the growing importance of the practice and spread of interdisciplinarity in contemporary art, its disadvantages and advantages. The results of the presented research indicate that in the contemporary context, the concept of “artistic research” is becoming the subject of increasingly complex discussions. Its use is becoming official and gaining scientific status, which makes it even more problematic. The relationship between the “educational turn” and “artistic
research” can be seen in the context of the political economy of knowledge, as it determines the cognitive value of contemporary art. The conclusion is that the educational turn in art opens up new opportunities and challenges for artists in terms of combining professional activity and the creative process. Although there are problems of disproportionality between teaching and creativity, the analysis shows that openness to interdisciplinary discourse can contribute to the development of shared knowledge and communication between artists and the academic community.

**Keywords:** Interdisciplinarity in education, integration of art, STEAM education, creative thinking, project-based learning.

**Resumen**

En este artículo se discute la relación entre tres enfoques diferentes del arte: estético, sociológico e histórico. El objetivo es confirmar la conexión interdisciplinaria de la educación artística, por un lado, y el estatus y el papel del discurso en el arte contemporáneo, la política cultural, las reformas educativas y las transformaciones institucionales que afectan a la actividad creativa que sale al mercado del conocimiento. La fusión contemporánea del arte con el discurso teórico se puede ver desde dos perspectivas interrelacionadas. Por un lado, el “giro educativo” en el arte contemporáneo muestra un interés especial en cuestiones de producción y difusión del conocimiento, centrado en los aspectos educativos de la actividad artística y su potencial para la mediación y la comunicación intercultural. A través del análisis literario y el procesamiento de bases de datos como SCOPUS, Google Scholar y Research Gate, se analiza la creciente importancia de la práctica y la difusión interdisciplinaria en el arte contemporáneo, así como sus desventajas y ventajas. Los resultados de la investigación presentada indican que en el contexto actual, el concepto de “investigación artística” se convierte en objeto de debates cada vez más complejos. Su uso adquiere un carácter oficial y obtiene un estatus científico, lo que se vuelve aún más problemático. La relación entre el “giro educativo” y la “investigación artística” se puede ver en el contexto de la economía política del conocimiento, ya que determina el valor cognitivo del arte contemporáneo. La conclusión es que el giro educativo en el arte ofrece a los artistas nuevas oportunidades y desafíos relacionados con la combinación de la actividad profesional y el proceso creativo. Aunque surgen problemas de discrepancia entre la enseñanza y la creatividad, el análisis muestra que la apertura al discurso interdisciplinario puede promover el desarrollo de conocimiento compartido y la comunicación entre artistas y la comunidad académica.

**Palabras clave:** Interdisciplinariedad en la educación, integración del arte, educación STEAM, pensamiento creativo, aprendizaje basado en proyectos.

**Introduction**

In contemporary art, there is a growing interest in interdisciplinary education that combines art with other fields of knowledge. This interest emerged in the context of the questions raised by relational aesthetics in the 1990s. The educational turn, which lasted for about ten years, reflected the convergence between artistic creation and discourse about art, viewed from the perspective of learning and knowledge dissemination.

This phenomenon is mainly related to the growing importance of teaching theory in art institutions since the 1970s and the emergence of a generation of artists who considered learning and writing not only an important part of their professional activity, but also necessary for artistic practice. To investigate this issue, we need to turn to the works of scholars, critics, philosophers and theorists who have shown interest in transforming art teaching into “teaching as art”.

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According to Chifor (2023), contemporary art is undergoing an “educational turn”, which can be seen as a shift from “teaching as art” to “art as learning”. This process is an instance and reflects the complex relationship between education and art. Corey’s (2023) work expands the horizons of experimentation with language and speech to include research related to audience reception, institutional context, and other aspects of artistic specificity.

Dorren (2024), considering the educational turn in the art world, offered a similar argument. In the 1990s, the term ‘performance’ began to emerge through contemporary dance to refer to a variety of previously heterogeneous practices that went beyond traditional art. Practices such as the increased value of conversation as a means of knowledge production in a world of hypercommunication and the role of contemporary research artists in the educational process became central to the new image of art.

As Mullen (2023) notes, the lecture-performance is considered in the context of the tradition of conceptual conferences and the history of performance. However, it seems that such educational interpretations can undermine the potential of this format by putting forward the concept of genre and media specificity. This necessitates a clear definition of the lecture-performance methodology and the need to confront limitations by problematising the status of information.

Pippin (2021) understands interdisciplinarity in art as language, visuality and the body. On the return of discourse to the present. Taylor (2023) looks at teaching as art through the lens of contemporary lecture-performance, trying to identify contradictions in the educational approach. He analyses the genealogy, history and different applications of art, considering it as a more artistic genre or less autonomous, and tries to overcome the distinction between aesthetic experience and knowledge production, between art and non-art.

Tupan (2023) explores the role of interdisciplinarity in art in the context of representation, power and culture, pointing out that conceptual art is becoming key in this regard as it shifts the paradigm in the relationship between artistic work and artists' theoretical production. Historically, the tradition of theoretical artists has its roots in the Renaissance and, in various forms, continues to this day through the avant-gardes.

However, according to Barcín (2020), for the modernist artist, writing was not simply an alternative aimed at aesthetic practice; it was a means of explaining a work that was never produced. This leads to the auxiliary status of modernist artistic discourse in an interdisciplinary context, where it was subordinated to plastic production and served to explain what was excluded rather than to define its own essence. Thus, the works of Malevich, Mondrian, or Kandinsky, according to the author, played the role of declarations rather than texts in the traditional sense, which refer to “a space with multiple dimensions where writing combines and interacts with each other, none of which is original” rather than ”a string of words that reveal a unique meaning that is, to some extent, theological (as if it were a ‘message’ from the Author-God)” (Brondino & Greaney, 2023).

In this context, the paradigm shift that took place in the 1960s can be seen as an attempt to revive the modernist approach that was suppressed with the emergence of interdisciplinary discourse in the field of art (Cahn et al., 2020). This transition did not only take place alongside the emergence of a new approach, as Koblížek (2023) reports in his work on Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Yvonne Rainer, and other artists. Drawing attention to the materiality of language as a kind of plastic tool, artists are now beginning to consider theoretical production as an integral part of their practice, displacing aesthetic categories that were established through the act of writing (in Derrida's sense), which, as it spreads, crosses all artistic media and questions the boundaries between them, disciplines and knowledge. By integrating theory and practice, language becomes an important element of an experiment that
transforms the field of art into a field of transdisciplinary research that opens creativity to questions related to knowledge.

From the perspective of the new great transformations in the art world and globalisation, Alesina & Tabellini (2024) discuss various aspects and uses of language in conceptual and post-conceptual art, as well as the importance of structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction. Rather, it emphasises the gap that separates the current situation from these historical models and the new role that artistic discourse is called upon to play in the era of “cognitive capitalism” and the politics of valuation, in the production of value and power. Because if “art as research” is currently labelled as experimental, reflexive and transdisciplinary and presented as the best of the contemporary scene, there is reason to wonder whether the decompartmentalisation of disciplines and the promotion of an experimental spirit are not combined with professional hyper-specialisation and the promotion of certain types of practice at the expense of others or even the constitution of new institutionally recognisable genres.

Theoretical framework

Firstly, the educational interpretation of an interdisciplinary approach to art is seen as a historical process that is responsible for a model of progressive “expansion” or “democratisation” of the artistic sphere to prevent it from being separated from the wider culture and society (Akkoyun & Uyar, 2020). According to this model, contemporary researchers, building on the legacy of the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s, could broaden their focus to consider not only aesthetic autonomy, but also issues related to information, communication, knowledge production and dissemination.

Nevertheless, even without the utopian grounding that characterised the historical avant-gardes, the critique of aesthetic autonomy in the 1960s and 1970s aimed to connect art with the outside world and language with society (Bull & Galimberti, 2022). Today, according to Rotter-Broman (2023), the main aspect is “the specificity of art as a structure of knowledge”. Over the past four decades, the expansion of the artistic sphere and the constant shifting of its traditional boundaries have been paralleled by fragmentation. This means that with the blurring of the boundaries between art and life, artistic production has become refined, fragmented and divided into new categories that can be found in the art world (Foster, 2023). The ambiguous status of contemporary art and the lack of clear criteria for its evaluation have not prevented its strong commercialisation and institutionalisation. It has also seen the development of various structures of control and mediation, as well as networks and parallel circuits of distribution, which shape what we understand as living art.

This process of particularisation also reflects a shift from the artist-theorist model to more specific roles such as artist-ethnographer, artist-mapper, artist-scientist, etc. In other words, it is a manifestation of interdisciplinarity in the form of practical and applied knowledge that gives rise to the call for contributions expressed in this paper.

Cole (2023) illustrates the evolution of language in art, which is now seen as a material tool, not just abstract or speculative knowledge. This is due to an awareness of the material conditions of art's dissemination and the importance of theoretical discourse in shaping the visibility and value of a work. According to the scientist, language is used in different forms and with different effectiveness as a material, concrete and practical tool. It can also function as a heteronomous entity that points to something other than language itself and frustrates any hope of fully understanding its meaning.

Theoretical and interdisciplinary reflections on the essence of art merge with its practice, which has become speculation (Wigena et al., 2023). From the very beginning, language was aimed at practical use and had an applied character, even when conceptual art used it to contradict the separation between artistic activity
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and the context of its perception by the viewer, as well as the traditional connection between the work and the discourse that accompanies it. In this context, Sligan (2020) adds: “Over the years, we have observed that most people learn about an artist's work mainly through print media or conversation, rather than through direct contact with the work itself. For a drawing or sculpture, where visual presence is important - colour, proportions, size, location - a photograph or description is only a support.”

But when art deals with aspects that are not related to physical presence, its intrinsic (communicative) value does not change because of its printed presentation. Using catalogues and books to communicate (and distribute) the work is the most neutral way to present this new art form. The catalogue can now act as the primary source of information about an exhibition, distinct from secondary information about art in magazines, brochures, etc., and in some cases the “exhibition” may actually be the “catalogue” (Simmons III, 2021).

The indexing of an artwork on the information and communication devices it requires tends to blur the distinction between the process of creation and dissemination, as well as between (theoretical) reflection and (practical) application (Say & Seng, 2022). In this context, Rugg (2022) adds that conceptual art remains ambiguous in relation to the knowledge domain (specialised, artistic) and the information domain (general, non-artistic). Indeed, if we understand “practical” and “applied” knowledge as that which is not specifically artistic and which changes in the transition from artist-theorist to artist-researcher (in a broad sense that encompasses various fields of knowledge), then this is the same relationship between knowledge and information.

Cognitive content, once isolated within a single discipline or specific discourse, is now becoming the result of interdisciplinarity, practices and knowledge, where it is formed in a “horizontal” way through mutual exchange, circulation and transmission between different fields, rather than in a “vertical” way within an established hierarchy of values (Rudenko et al., 2022). Paying attention to the didactic and mediating aspects of contemporary art, the educational field fits into a general trend that is associated with national and European cultural policies (O’Donnell, 2023). This trend is aimed at integrating artistic activity into the information and communication systems of cultural industries, assigning it a usefulness and practical function, such as the production of intangible capital.

Thus, the development of e-learning and the variety of STEAM education, project-based learning methods, MOOCs (massive open online courses), in particular those that focus on career strategies, the development of professional and social networks, fundraising and the collection of administrative documents, can be seen as interdisciplinary. This approach sees the specificity of art as a structure of knowledge that tends to be associated with abstract mechanisms that regulate the functioning and internal reproduction of the art world as a set of interdependent participants.

Methodology

The methods and design of the research included the method of literature analysis and processing of such databases as Scopus, Google Scholar and Research Gate. The paper analyses the growing importance of the practice and spread of interdisciplinarity in contemporary art, its disadvantages and advantages.

A literature analysis was conducted to identify current issues and trends in contemporary art in the context of the educational market. The collection and analysis of data from academic research made it possible to assess the deep understanding and attitude to the concept of artistic research in the context of interdisciplinarity. The paper also analyses the results of the study and formulates proposals for the further development of art education and research in the context of the modern educational market. This comprehensive approach allowed for a deeper understanding and assessment of the impact of
interdisciplinarity, highlighting the disadvantages and advantages, and addressing the issue of standardisation in the arts.

**Results and discussion**

Contemporary art is inextricably linked to the educational market. In a world where the spaces of knowledge production and dissemination are globalised, traditional structures are evolving into a network of diverse collaborations and partnerships that form a new landscape where the concept of artistic research becomes imperative for understanding and evaluation (Kelikli, 2024). Here, the concept of network is not limited to the interaction of individual and semi-independent actors, but rather represents a state where each actor acts as a node in this network or, if you like, forms itself as a network. This leads to a double movement of decompartmentalisation and hyper-specialisation of artistic knowledge, which needs to be taken into account in the context of cultural industries and the current conditions of interaction between art and knowledge markets, and of course, this process is characterised by advantages and disadvantages (Table 1).

**Table 1.**
*Advantages and disadvantages of art in the educational market*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes the convergence of art and education</td>
<td>Art's participation in the educational market can lead to commercialisation and standardisation of creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates the development of creativity and critical thinking of participants</td>
<td>Restrictions on artists' creativity and freedom of expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The globalisation of knowledge production and dissemination spaces fosters new collaborations and partnerships</td>
<td>Globalisation can lead to the loss of local cultural specificity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases the accessibility of art to a wider audience and broadens its impact</td>
<td>Globalisation can lead to the loss of the uniqueness of art from different regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concept of artistic research becomes more accessible and understandable to the public, which contributes to its evaluation and promotion</td>
<td>Focusing on the evaluation and understanding of artistic research can cause a loss of the creative process itself and its intrinsic meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the field of art education in Ukraine, there is a tendency towards concentration and independence. The transformation of regional art schools and the merger of institutions and local authorities is the first step in the development of art as a profession (Sydorenko, 2024). This means, on the one hand, that faculties of fine arts, deprived of their research monopoly, are gradually coming into direct competition with art schools, and on the other hand, it indicates a redirection of cultural policy towards the integration of learning and professional development, with an emphasis on values such as "intangible labour" and "knowledge capital" (Chi & Belliveau, 2022).

As public institutions, art schools face new challenges, such as the need to reach out to the general public (including through extracurricular and co-curricular activities), to cooperate with state and local authorities, and to generate new resources and develop partnerships (Kowalik, 2023). These requirements lead to significant changes in their organisation, management and work processes.

In recent years, art schools have been reorganising their programmes internally to strengthen teaching and research. This includes the creation of laboratories, the development of research areas and projects, and partnerships with other universities, museums and research institutions. An important aspect of this
process is the revision of the prerogatives of assessment, which is carried out by independent administrative bodies.

According to Gelsanda, Marchianti & Nurdian (2024), the importance of artistic research lies in its capacity to create new knowledge. This leads to the question of dissertations, which are the theoretical and critical work that young artists are encouraged to do alongside their visual work and which are directly linked to the master’s degree (Kłeczek & Hajdas, 2024). In the current context, it is evident that the scientific approach is often seen as an attempt to interfere with the creative process and subordinate it to administrative requirements imposed from the outside. According to Gunin (2024), the consideration of artistic practice as an object of research implies that the artist-researcher is able to demonstrate generalised results, separated from his or her practical experience, which, when displayed in the appropriate context, will testify to its originality and usefulness for the scientific community.

Thus, interdisciplinarity in the arts is emerging as a result of the globalisation of the knowledge market and the standardisation of European diplomas, which is caused by the Bologna Process. This situation should be considered in the context of research in the humanities and social sciences. As this new paradigm of learning also calls for a disciplinary formatting of university knowledge, its rigidity and separateness limit its ability to address contemporary issues and create new experiments.

In recent years, interdisciplinarity has become an important concept in the humanities, particularly in the context of art and culture, but the use of this term does not always raise genuine doubts about the boundaries between different disciplines. This may be due to the uniqueness of the Ukrainian higher education system and the organisation of research at the scientific, administrative and economic levels. On the other hand, the need for openness and transversality often masks a process in which the cultural sciences become the ideological foundations of a market economy, and the process of knowledge production becomes similar to the production of market value. This phenomenon is not limited to Ukrainian specifics, but is an intersection of national reforms.

Interaction between different disciplines in art can take many forms. It can be interdisciplinary research, where artists collaborate with scholars from other fields to study certain aspects of art or topics (Jove et al., 2022). It can also include the synthesis of different artistic techniques or genres, where artists combine elements from different fields to create new works (Jürgens & Hildbrand, 2022). In addition, interaction can take place through joint projects, exhibitions, residencies, where artists collaborate or exchange ideas with representatives of other disciplines, such as literature, science, technology, etc. (Kergel, 2023). These forms of interaction help to expand the horizons of art and create new and interesting creative opportunities (Fig. 1):
**Figure 1.** Interdisciplinarity in art.

The idea of interdisciplinarity, linked to key concepts such as 'excellence', 'originality' and 'innovation', seems more or less obvious as a tool for creating added value, provided it is properly planned and profitability is achieved (Abrudan, 2023). The growing importance of bibliometric data, the presence of a publish or perish logic (Arnold, 2023), and the semi-technocratic and semi-communication jargon from central research funding bodies all point in the same direction (Ioris, 2023), pointing to the current tensions between academic research goals and productivity demands. The interdisciplinarity of art raises the problem of its standardisation, which has already been noted by Baker & Joselit (2022). This problem has implications for art itself and its teaching, including the process of standardising, measuring and formatting artistic work according to scientific, administrative and educational standards (Hanna & Paans, 2020).

On the other hand, Baca (2023) suggests that standardisation in art education has its own merit, considering it as a distinct type of knowledge that can be generated in the field of art. This knowledge is focused on the specifics of a specialised network of professionals (artists, teachers, critics, curators, editors, managers, technicians, galleries) who develop “special skills” in search of greater recognition and legitimation. This is seen as a way of strengthening their position, rather than a process that raises doubts arising from the fragmentation and synthesis in this type of knowledge (Farokhinejad, 2022).

In this context, where artistic knowledge is becoming institutionalised and art is highly dependent on the interaction and collaboration of different actors in the contemporary art scene, art, as a branch of knowledge production, often turns into a specialised field of intangible labour (Di Sabatino & Mastrantoni, 2022). This labour is aimed at creating new forms of value or even value itself in its purest and most exchangeable form (Brannigan & Lawson, 2023). We are in solidarity, because the gradual transformation of art practice into the provision of certain services, often aimed at meeting the specific needs of curators, leads to the fact that the knowledge it incorporates also evolves in this direction. This knowledge becomes subject to quantification and rationalised content, which is formed through the interaction of a network of actors and operates in the accumulative mode of the market (Earley, 2023).

On the other hand, when artists often criticise the academic and institutional interdisciplinary discourse of art, questioning their system of legitimation and authority, one wonders whether, in this context, they do not feel the need to re-emphasise part of their aura and intellectual legitimacy. This topic is currently very relevant and represents an interesting object for further research.
Conclusions

In this paper, the educational turn is associated with the emergence of a new generation of artists for whom teaching and writing have become an important part of their professional activities, even an essential part of the creative process. However, there is a significant difference between “professional activity” and “artistic work” that is worth noting. Indeed, for many artists today, teaching is an additional or even the main source of income, not just a freely chosen means of artistic expression.

On a sociological level, the educational turn leaves a mark of a mismatch between professional demands and the creative process. For many artists, it becomes a means of turning sincerity into duty as they adapt to an increasingly competitive atmosphere that encourages the creation of artworks aimed at adding cognitive value. Although theory and practice are often seen as complementary, in practice they often turn out to be opposites. In such a situation, the artist-researcher and the teacher-researcher face similar challenges: the daily disconnect between teaching and research, which means that the more they try to reconcile these aspects, the more they are confronted with a sense of their asymptotic divergence.

The conclusions drawn from the literature analysis show that artistic research, consciously or unconsciously, can become a means of implementing cognitive and economic neoliberalism, or the interdisciplinary discourse it generates risks being reduced to a search for authority in crisis, in accordance with a completely different scenario.

The comparative analysis carried out in the academic environment was intended to show that the problem is not limited to the arts, but covers the broader context of knowledge organisation and management. The confrontation is not between practice and theory, but between different approaches to their relationship. This is especially true for the possibility of transferring artistic knowledge and communicating it by transferring it to other areas of experience in order to reconnect it with the real world and society.

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