



Artefacts as evidence within changing contexts

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The Artefact as a Site of Inquiry

A central feature of art practice is that it embodies ideas that are given form in the process of making artworks. Irrespective of the informing sources, media preferences, or image-base, the artist exercises individual control over the creation and presentation of artefacts as forms of knowledge. Further, the images and ideas created have the capacity to not only change the artist's conceptions of reality, but also influence the viewer's interpretation of artworks. Consequently art practice can be seen as a form of intellectual and imaginative inquiry, and as a place where research can be carried out that is robust enough to yield reliable insights that are well grounded and culturally relevant. This paper argues that artefacts created as a result of visual arts research have the capacity to be interpreted as evidence in a range of robust ways.

Artworks are artefacts that carry meaning and take on many forms as objects, images, events or actions, and these give rise to encounters and experiences that may be fulsome or facile, enduring or ephemeral. What is beyond question is the capacity of art to mean something, to be about something. The most recent institutional incursion into the interrogation of artefacts is the use of artworks as 'evidence' in the creation of new knowledge within the rhetoric of research. Theorizing the practice of making artworks and interpreting them within the context of research is opening up new possibilities for thinking about art making as a cultural practice, as well as for re-thinking conceptions of research. Taking up this challenge means that conventions of research, as traditionally understood within a scientific mindset, are considered but not blindly adhered to, for the intent is not to turn the artistic imagination into a pastiche of normative institutional inquiry. Rather, theorizing art practice within the language and context of research helps to understand the powerful possibilities that surround art making as a creative and critical human effort that can take place as readily in the academy as it can in the artworld, attic or the alley. What is also apparent is that the forms that artworks take on during the creative and critical process of artistic inquiry are sites of new knowledge where meanings can be revelatory in content, robust in method, and relevant in personal and public purpose. To create in order

to critique in this way captures the contextual complexity of art practice as a form of research.

To appreciate the way that artworks, as research artefacts, are sources of new knowledge, there is merit in briefly looking at a couple of art examples. At an exhibition in Egypt in 2005, Austrian artist Richard Jochum¹ included an artwork that showed a configuration of three easily recognized international symbols. A colon and an arrow are each overlaid with a 'stop sign' as a divided circle, which suggests that the meaning of these ubiquitous symbols cannot be trusted. These deceptively simple images carry a complex implication. What Jochum is suggesting is that statements do not easily lead to firm conclusions. As a readily understood punctuation mark, the colon is used to divide distinct but related elements in a statement so that the second part helps to explain the first. As a device used in titles such as journal articles, the colon separates and joins meaning in a way that assumes there is finality to what is said—in this sense a title of a text is like a contract with the reader as it defines what is covered. Similarly, in another example, Jochum's blurred, ambiguous exclamation mark disrupts the emphatic connotation this form usually carries. Consequently, when a simple graphic mark such as a colon, arrow or an exclamation mark is seen as an image, meaning is opened up as evidence found in the form or the context can suggest other possible interpretations. As Jochum suggests, perhaps we should stop drawing simplistic conclusions.

Another example of the art of Richard Jochum is an ongoing series he titles 'dis-positiv'.² Dis-positiv is a multi-media installation where art critics, curators, historians, and philosophers are put on display as art objects themselves, forcing viewers to think about how art and meaning are produced. What Jochum does is to install a large plexiglass enclosure inside museums or public spaces and to invite art theorists to sit inside for a period of time and to enact in some way what it is they do as creators of art knowledge. By creating a physical space that 'exhibits' those who educate us about art and by encouraging the public to participate in this process, dis-positiv challenges viewers to look at the possible ways in that art and culture are shaped.

Dis-positiv has been installed in several cities in Europe and the examples shown below give some sense of the variety of ways that theorists respond to the idea that they are the artefacts on display and the possibilities these events open up as sites and sources of knowledge. The project is a participatory event that serves as a public platform and questions the contexts that inform our understanding of contemporary art, and the cultural and educational debates that are raised by those who write about art.

There is a close connection these days between creative and critical practice such as that pursued by Richard Jochum as the edges that once defined differences among the personal and public worlds of artists, critics, historians, teachers, and their audiences, become more blurred. Similarly, the forms and contexts in which artworks are presented have increased dramatically. Therefore the manner by which art is created, critiqued and communicated is more seamless than ever with art objects, ideas and issues being debated and exchanged in many ways as artists become theorists and critics become creators. In taking on the additional role of an art researcher, Richard Jochum describes the situation this way:

Theory considers treating a painting as painting as obsolete and treating an object as object as historical. And so do the artists. Answering the historicising (and discriminating) tendency of the theorist, the artist has developed a series of self-reflective strategies. As a

result, 20th century art, to a large degree, cannot be understood without critical theory. Art now serves the additional function of providing interpretation. To warrant putting everyday items in a museum requires an intellectual analysis of those items. Duchamp was an intellectual, as is Beuys, as is Haacke. The artist has become a theorist. (Emphasis in the original, 2003, p. 102)

Research Contexts Informing Art Practice

In considering the conception of art practice that artists such as Richard Jochum pursue it is important to consider all the relevant contexts that influence how art is theorized as research practice. Art practice as an inquiry process takes into account more than the physical and formal process of creating images, objects or events. Not only is the artist involved in a 'doing' performance, but this also results in an image that is a site for further interpretation by others.

Contexts Informing Research Practice

The research tradition of defining, from an a priori perspective, all the relevant theoretical contexts within which an inquiry is situated (e.g. historical, philosophical, cultural, political), is at best a limited position to frame any inquiry. The demands of scholarship will always require necessary diligence and vigilance concerning prevailing views and present practices. This awareness, however, needs to be equally directed towards what is unknown, rather than only about what is known. The critical art researcher will raise questions about content structure, modes of discourse, positions of privileged information, omissions of knowledge and the like, as overall theories and practices are brought under scrutiny.

The methodological rationale here is that creative insight and critical distance have the potential to reveal new truths. Yet this is a messy process that requires a capacity to appreciate and negotiate between complex and simple realities, often at the same time. There may not be an elegant or parsimonious resolution to this—there rarely is. In all likelihood the shock of recognition that comes from new insight is mostly particular rather than general, singular rather than plural, for this is a more realistic description of how experience is enlivened and knowledge is accrued. At its core, the artefacts created in practice-based research are located in critical and creative contexts that are deconstructed, braided, and repositioned around other informing contexts during the inquiry process. These surrounding influences include Forming Contexts, Interpretive Contexts, and Critical Contexts (see Figure 1).

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of contemporary art practice to emerge from the linguistic challenge posed by postmodernism, whereby sign systems and visual culture were seen to be explained by language structures, has been the move away from media as a defining characteristic. Artists in general, can no longer be seen as individuals whose identity is best described by the way that they manipulate media. 'Style' is an impoverished concept that is no longer the singular signature of artistic authenticity. The intellectual and imaginative 'space' within which an artist works cannot be confined to pushing around pigments or pixels. Nor for that matter is the studio the only physical space where this occurs—productive artistic activity takes place in just about every setting imaginable, from the classroom to the community, the industrial park to the Internet, and the subway to the highway. The critical point is that messing around with thoughts has replaced messing around with media as a primary feature of artistic practice that shapes the creation of artefacts in their various forms.

Artists have always been deep thinkers. What has expanded, however, is the range of conceptual tools, creative approaches, and communal contexts, within which art practice takes place. A historical characteristic of this process shows that artists periodically “think in a medium,” “think in a language,” and “think in a context” (Sullivan, 2001). The creative and critical intent of artists who “think in a medium” emphasize formal and expressive properties that are revealed by their explorations of media. For artists who “think in a language” a rich interpretive landscape is opened up as art experience is extended through dialogue and discourse. On the other hand, artists who “think in a context” are interested in creating critical artistic encounters that change the way we think about things around us. Consequently, in considering art practice as theory, the way artists think about studio processes as forms, ideas and actions, as shown in Figure 1, gives a sense of the rich theoretical underbelly that propels art inquiry.

In theorizing about art practice in this way, the links to methods of research become more obvious. If the broad intent of research is seen to be the creation of new knowledge and the theoretical quest is to explain things, then art practice achieves this goal in a distinctive way. The methodological conventions that carry authority in mainstream research rely on the confirmatory methods of the quantitative paradigm, or the interpretive approaches of the qualitative paradigm. Both research traditions seek to construct theory, with the former relying on causal claims of probability, and the latter relational arguments of plausibility. Further, both research regimes hope to help explain phenomena around us, either by clarifying how things are different in degree, or different in kind. What is often missing from debates about the purposes of, and approaches to research is that 'explanation' as an outcome of inquiry is a limited description of the kind of knowledge we need. If knowledge gained as a consequence of research is to have personal and public meaning than surely it has to be understood in ways that can be used and acted upon. There is a 'making' or productive feature that links knowledge and understanding whereby new insights are enacted in some conceptual or concrete way. As such, it is 'understanding' rather than mere explanation that is of central interest in research activity.

It is precisely the way that art practice moves beyond the iterative conventions of quantitative methods, and the perspectival positioning of qualitative inquiry, that is significant. Art practice as research invokes a methodology that is premised on the need to 'create and critique' that opens up the possibility of achieving new understanding. In many instances there is merit in stepping outside what is known so as to see more clearly what is not. Normalized practices may help locate theories and practices within comfortable knowledge structures, but these can often be limiting if seen mostly as a repository of privileged information. The capacity to look beyond what is merely known to seek the possibility of new understanding is what artists do. This is how David Hockney describes it:

Although I am interested in theory, I am not of course a theoretician. I ask such questions and make the theories only afterwards, not before—only after I have done something. I keep pictures I have done around the studio; you want to look at them. And it takes a while to realize what I really did there, how it works; then I may use that in something else. But though painting can't be done theoretically, all painters must, to a certain extent, analyse their work afterwards. (1993, pp. 130-131)

Conceiving art practice as theory within a framework of contextual inquiry sets in place the prospect of doing research in art. When used as a site for research, painting for instance, brings into play the seamless relationship between the 'researcher' (painter) and the 'researched' (painting practice) and this builds on all the discursive arguments that disrupt untenable dichotomies such as the fictive subjective-objective divide. Or to put it another way, the task is to claim a legitimate place for the “author in the text” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998)—or in this case, the artist in the context. Another way to think about this is the idea that the artist is not only embodied in the making of images and objects, but these artefacts also exist within a set of creative and critical contexts and informing discourse that is partly directed by the scope of the research project, and partly by the field at large. Griselda Pollock describes an outcome of this expanded notion of inquiry as a “visual field.” She adds:

I'm very interested in images of people making paintings, for here we have a new form of documentation that privileges the act of art making, of the painter's body in action over time. The product of that activity is a visual field, not just necessarily a visual object. But in terms of painting or whatever, you are creating a field that calls to the visual fantasy of the viewer, but also speaks to the visual fantasy of the embodied maker. (Cited in Raney, 2001, p. 131)

As is shown in Figure 1, if theoretical and practical processes are central to art practice then the emphasis can be seen to involve research in art. This core practice takes on a different perspective when other research interests are pursued and wider visual fields and contexts encountered. As is explained below, when a structural interest is central to artistic inquiry, and various forming contexts influence how artefacts are created and critiqued, then research 'in' and 'about' art is important. Similarly, if the interpretive contexts that inform the relationship among the artist, artwork and the viewer is vital to the ideas and responses sparked by an artistic encounter, then research 'in' and 'with' art is crucial. Further, if the critical contexts surrounding purposeful artistic inquiry helps give meaning to the role artefacts can play as a form of social action, then research 'in' and 'through' art is significant.

Forming Contexts

Although the mind is the medium that most clearly shapes art practice, for many art researchers, art materials are still the most tangible means to give form to imaginative and critical thought. Therefore, when undertaking research 'in' and 'about' art making where there is a focus on structural qualities among other interests, the artist really does think in a medium. Research strategies such as visual problem finding and problem solving are characteristic of this kind of inquiry process whereby forms, materials, properties, and qualities, become the artefacts through which concerns are explored and expressed. This reflective intent fuels an exploratory tendency as new forms and images are created and these open up the possibility of new meanings. A further feature is that the forming or making systems within which an artist-researcher explores and creates incorporates all

kinds of visual and virtual artefacts. A crucial element within this kind of art research practice is that understanding emerges within the process of media experimentation, and this performative knowledge can be likened to more traditional inquiry strategies such as observation and empirical confirmation.

Consider the media exploration that characterizes the investigative art practice of David Hockney. For instance, his visual experiments with space and perspective using Polaroid photography during the 1980s helped reconfigure ideas about pictorial illusion and reality. This interest was sparked earlier when he curated an exhibition for the National Gallery in London, which was part of a series called *The Artist's Eye*, where he was invited to select works from the collection that had some connection to his art. It was part of a series of shows that sought to help museum visitors get a sense of what it is that an artist notices in artefacts. Hockney wrote about this in a catalogue essay, *Looking at Pictures in a Book* at the National Gallery, where he raised questions about the modernist dilemma posed by mechanically reproduced images and the different experience to be had from encountering original works of art as against viewing reproductions. For Hockney, the issue was best exemplified in photography for, although photographs create an image that is an illusion of real time and space, if photographs are used to take pictures of paintings then there is some element of truth in the reproduced image. He explains:

Now I think the best use for photography, the best use for it, is photographing other pictures. It is the only time it can be true to its medium, in the sense that it's real. This is the only way that you can take a photograph that could be described as having a strong illusion of reality. Because on the flat surface of the photograph is simply reproduced another flat surface—a painting. (1981, p. 8, emphasis added)

In his subsequent camerawork assemblages Hockney composed 'walls of images' made from single pictures, each taken as one aspect of an overall scene, which was then carefully aligned to depict a panoramic view of the space or object photographed. These visual compositions described scenes in a rather curious way because each photographic print reduced a section of three dimensional time and space into a seemingly flat surface. Consequently the capacity to create an illusion of perspective that was believed to be one of the most enduring features of photography was reversed. In Hockney's montages he painted pictures with photographs that severely compressed the picture plane. He described the image making process as a way to make a "photograph without perspective" (1993, p. 100), and this inverted a prime characteristic seen to be a magical part of the mechanical picturing process. This is what it is for artists to think in a medium in a way that extends discipline knowledge through the mindful use of media. It further demonstrates that the interpretation of artefacts created during the process of studio-based research is undertaken from multiple vantage points.

Interpretive Contexts

Art researchers whose studio-based inquiry can be described as having an interest 'in' and 'with' art that pursues a collective or communicative intent invokes a somewhat different set of informing contexts. There is acknowledges that art practice is not only a personal pursuit but also a public process. Consequently, the ideas expressed and communicated have an interpretive utility that assumes different textual, evidential and artefactual forms. The linguistic turn of postmodernism has done much to disrupt the easy equation that presumes an artefact and its 'reading' by viewers is a simple matter of encoding and decoding visual forms. Artists whose work explores conceptual issues that seek to set up a dialectical exchange tend to do their artistic 'thinking in a language.' Interpretive contexts

build on the rich conceptual traditions associated with image making, which initiate dialogue between the artist and viewer, and among an interpretive community. Interpretive contexts open up the space among the artist, artwork, and the setting as different interests and perspectives are embraced. New understandings result as they are filtered through the interpretive community of art writers, theorists and educators.

In exploring the research perspectives and inquiry practices that surround the interpretive contexts of artefacts the work of David Hockney again proves helpful. As a conceptualist, Hockney's art practice has, at times, opened up an interpretive space that relies on the participation of others to complete the aesthetic process. Yet this interactive element has the capacity to disrupt accepted practices for "new ideas often seem to go against common sense" (1993, p. 104). Hockney's notion of photography and mechanical reproduction described in the section above uses the medium in a way that is somewhat different to common discourse (Benjamin, 1968). Although a photograph of a painting cannot exist unless an artist creates an original in the first place, Hockney maintains that even if the quality of a reproduction is poor, a picture retains the capacity to give "immense pleasure." In acknowledging that a reproduction cannot hope to capture evidence of the artist's use of the "spirit" of media to represent forms, he does concede that a photograph of it has the capacity to give enjoyment "in strange ways that go on and on" (1981, p. 8).

Hockney's aesthetic and conceptual interest makes use of the capacity of artworks to withstand continual re-visiting and clearly illustrates how artefacts can be interpreted in multiple ways. Despite the rhetoric of the 'death of the author' whereby the artist or author's purpose is rendered mute by the interpretive license of the viewer or reader, there is a necessary connection between an image source and the evidence it presents as a basis for interpretation. Making meaning from an encounter with a painting is not a Rorschach inkblot test. Rather, within the hermeneutic tradition of Habermas (1971) and Paul Ricoeur (1981), interpretation can be seen to be a uniquely human process of making meaning. Research practice itself is a site for creating and constructing interpretations as meaning is made during the inquiry process. From Ricoeur's notion of textual interpretation comes the idea that when a written text is read it takes on a level of autonomy and "what the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author means" (p. 139). As Arthur Danto (1981) notes, "in art, every new interpretation is a Copernican revolution, in the sense that each new interpretation constitutes a new work" (p. 125). However, he reminds us "you can call a painting anything that you choose, but you cannot interpret in any way you choose, not if the argument holds that the limits of knowledge are the limits of interpretation" (p. 131).

In his explorations using photographic images Hockney required others to be involved in the process, both technically and aesthetically. He used mechanical reproduction techniques much like a photocopying machine, which merely re-creates flat images. This is precisely the kind of image that most viewers see when they learn about art. Only a relatively small proportion of the population regularly visit museums or galleries to view artworks 'in the flesh.' For many, it is through the printed reproduction that is the most pervasive way that we see for "most people know about painting now through printing of some kind, some reproductive process." Hockney continues:

Even with a printed thing on a page each of us sees something different because each brings a different memory to it...Images on a printed page evoke different memories. Even in a reproduction there's nothing that is objective. (1993, p. 114).

Using his extensive knowledge of printmaking that involved making composite images built up in layers, what Hockney did in the mid 1980s was to create photographic collages, which he then photographed and made colour copies scaled to a different size. These were made using a photocopying machine and he created prints that were not reproductions at all. Hockney made photocopies in layers where each could be re-copied several times to build up surfaces and forms. He called these “home made prints” and they were made without the use of a pre-existing image. Today we would scan an image and manipulate it in Photoshop© to achieve that same thing Hockney did as he made prints on his photocopying machine. What Hockney was doing was painting and printing with photographic images and not merely copying things as was widely assumed at the time. As such, these home made prints, which mostly showed still life images, domestic scenes, or landscapes, carried an intriguing conceptual and aesthetic problem. They not only questioned ideas about artistic (re)production, but also sharpened his expectations of the responsibility of the viewer to re-make art experiences.

Critical Contexts

The final area shown in Figure 1 is the critical tradition that has always been part of the history of art. There is an enactive or 'doing' element here for critical action implies both a reactive and proactive stance. Art has long been used as an instrument of social and political action, yet artists are sometimes hard pressed to show what their actions actually achieve. Powerful visual artefacts may serve as provocative political and rhetorical devices, however if any artistic appeal is to go beyond iconic status it requires profound theoretical support and sound interdisciplinary or systemic back up. But even in a time of muted critical public discourse, the responsibility to invoke a critical social consciousness remains high for many practitioners in the arts. Maxine Greene (2003) is fond of saying that art cannot change the world, but it can change someone who can. She talks of the “social imagination” as a site where what is possible can take flight, and where incompleteness and uncertainty are relished as habits of mind that offer opportunities to think and act in ways that resist all that is fixed and finite.

For an artist-researcher inspired by a call to critical action, inquiry is undertaken 'in' and 'through' art practice. Art practice in this sense is a means and an end. This suggests that any quest for change has both personal and public relevance and therefore there is a dual focus. On the one hand there is an aesthetic interest as the outcomes of any imaginative inquiry can lead to self-realization and understanding, and on the other hand there is an educational purpose that has a social utility. As a site for the embodiment of the social imagination, artefacts created within critical contexts respond to meaningful cultural issues. A questioning attitude that is socially and culturally directed readily maps onto methods of inquiry and research protocols that are responsive and exploratory. Yet the most crucial element within this inquiry process is the need to be able to create artefacts from which critical options can be more clearly assessed and addressed. Consequently it is the creation of new opportunities to see beyond what is known that has the potential to lead to the creation of new knowledge.

Disrupting privileged knowledge or challenging accepted practices is a critical outlook shared by many artists. Again, the art practice of David Hockney provides a useful example. In his text, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* (2001), Hockney makes the provocative claim that many of the European master painters most likely used lenses and mirroring devices to map and draft many of their paintings. What is crucial to appreciate is that this controversial assertion arose for Hockney as a consequence of his art making. For many artists, an enduring quest is to

understand how other artists create the things they do. This is partly based on admiration, but more often than not it is propelled by a desire to fully understand how particular visual effects are achieved so as to continue to forge ahead and create new ways of seeing and doing.

Artists look very closely at artefacts in a way that others do not. It was as a result of looking intensely at the line work in sketches done by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres in the 19th century, and some traced drawings done by Andy Warhol in the mid 20th century, that Hockney noticed a distinct similarity. The quick and confident lines that captured an uncanny representational accuracy and clarity in Ingres' quick sketches bore the same quality as the bold and deft line work created by Andy Warhol. But Hockney also knew that Warhol used an overhead projector to create his images. Maybe, he surmised, Ingres also used some kind of mechanical device to quickly capture the scenes he drew.

Hockney's text, *Secret Knowledge*, documents in depth his relentless quest to support his hypothesis that many European masters used lenses and other mechanical devices for reproducing images. As a fellow painter, he directed his research at the artefacts themselves, convinced that the visual images held the necessary evidence. It is not surprising that Hockney's claims raised the ire of historians and critics who had their own, less secret knowledge base upon which to ground their counter arguments. A common response was to question Hockney's motives and to dismiss his claims for an artist with less skill than a European master may have good reason to suggest that such artistic fluency could only be achieved using a visual trick. The late Susan Sontag was reported as saying, "if David Hockney's thesis is correct, it would be a bit like finding out that all the great lovers of history have been using Viagra." 3

That art historians did not notice what Hockney did is not surprising as in this case they did not draw on the same kind of knowledge, and probably did not know what to look for because practice-based understanding is not normally part of the curatorial skill set. Hockney observed these things because he was able to create connections based on experience and accumulated evidence, and this is at the heart of what research is about. For Hockney, however, the significance of his observations, borne in the first instance from a creative insight, will remain moot unless further evidence from independent sources is obtained to confirm his findings. Irrespective of the research method used, be it creative inquiry that opens up possibilities, logical methods that yields probabilities, or grounded approaches that offer plausibilities, any research strategy has to be as systematic and rigorous as it is imaginative.

The Dynamics of Context

The argument presented here can best be described in a short animated sequence that describes the simple, yet complex articulation that takes place when an artefact, which is created during art practice, is contextualised and interpreted as evidence for some phenomenon. When these contexts are seen as areas of inquiry that the studio researcher explores, the potential for creative and critical insights increases considerably. If the quest is to move beyond the boundaries of disciplines and the barriers of traditional research methods and to see them as places to explore rather than objects of received knowledge, then there is a need to consider how artworks, as research artefacts, might be seen as forms that are interpreted within ever-changing contexts. The structure of the figure shown at the beginning of the paper (Figure 1) that describes the contexts informing research practice has two properties. The first is that it is non-hierarchical. This is not a form under

which lies various sub-strata; nor is it a foundation structure that supports more complex systems. Rather, this is a structure that has no scale at all. Whether viewed on a micro (local), macro (continental), or mega (global) scale, the basic structure stays the same. This feature is called “self-similarity” (Mandelbrot, 1983), and the form stays basically the same across scale (see Figure 2). Elsewhere I explain self-similarity thus:

Reductionism and Euclidean notions of space are powerful systems that guide inquiry in both the sciences and the arts. The assumption is that a change in scale brings about new kinds of information so that the more things can be reduced to their basic essence, the better the chance of figuring out how they work. But nature and humans resist such simplistic design. (2005, p. 106)

Contexts can also be viewed as braided structures where the various interpretive strands appear to be neatly fitted together—much like four strands of rope viewed end-on. In this sense, theories, forms, ideas and actions that are drawn upon to situate the evidential base are readily compatible as they nicely fit together. However, if the braided 'rope' is unravelled, separated and twisted, what initially appeared to be in close proximity can be seen to be far apart; what was congruent in content may now be irreconcilable, and vice versa. This has more than metaphorical interest as it reflects the fluid capacity of knowledge to mean different things in different contexts. Meaning, therefore, is not static but open to multiple views. Consequently, studio research practice is independent of scale, and would have a similar structure if undertaken in the studio, in the community, within cultures, or within the virtual space of the Internet.

The sequence shown in Figure 3 suggests that an artefact that is the focus of inquiry will resist reductive analysis—there is no simple, underlying form to be found. Instead, under the scrutiny of creative and critical investigation, the interpretive contexts that might surround the ideas being investigated will involve a series of fracturing, entwining, and re-positioning processes. And the outcome is new insight and new knowledge, which is the goal of any form of research.

Conclusion

This article took its cue from the theoretical richness of Richard Jochum's cautionary visual statements and his dis-positive installations of discourse about art. The role of the artists as a theorist and researcher was developed to help argue that art practice as research is based on the assumption that the outcomes of inquiry are focused and open-ended; conclusive and open to conjecture; beyond doubt and open to question. This does not contradict the accepted notion that research is supposed to come up with unequivocal results. On the contrary, the task of any rigorous intellectual and imaginative inquiry is not only to produce new insight, but also to realize how this can transform our knowledge of things we assume we already understand. Within fields such as the visual arts this research approach involves a creative and critical process whereby imaginative leaps are made into what we don't know as this can lead to crucial insights that can change what we do know. To create and to critique in this way captures the contextual complexity that Richard Jochum alludes to as his artwork. As an artist-researcher, he creates a critical insight that is germane and current, and the viewer creates meaning within the various contexts that inform the artistic encounter. The research practice Jochum explores subscribes to the view that the task of artistic inquiry is to create new knowledge that

critiques existing explanations and understandings and this is a practice that artist-researchers do very well.

Endnotes

1 Richard Jochum, From Playground exhibition, by Richard Jochum. El Sawy Center, Zamalek, Egypt, February 11-19, 2005. See <http://richardjochum.net/playground-e.html> [retrieved May 16, 2006].

2 See <http://www.dis-positiv.org/welcome/dispositiv-e.html> [retrieved May 6, 2006].

3 See <http://www.koopfilms.com/hockney/articles.html> [retrieved January 18, 2004].

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