

Can artistic knowledge be objective?

Abstract of a research paper presentation

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Artistic research produces knowledge. Let us call this knowledge *artistic knowledge*. It is not clear if and how it differs from other forms of knowledge – for instance from the kind of everyday knowledge anyone can have, or from more systematically produced scientific knowledge (see Hansson forthcoming). As a result, it is also unclear how to evaluate it epistemically. Nevertheless, as for instance Esa Kirkkopelto (2007) notes, if artistic research is meant to differ from art, such evaluation should be possible; artistic research should even be in some sense objective.

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly common that artists or artistic researchers collaborate with scientists. At times the aim of such projects is to integrate artistic knowledge with scientific knowledge. The outcomes are not always easy to assess epistemically. One of the reasons for the difficulty is precisely the fact that it is not clear how artistic knowledge should be understood, and how it should be evaluated.

Clearly there are several good reasons for scrutinising artistic knowledge from the point of view of philosophy of science. In this paper we concentrate on two questions. First, we ask whether the well-known epistemological distinction between *propositional knowledge*, *knowledge how*, and *knowledge by acquaintance* is useful in the analysis of artistic knowledge (see Fantl 2014; Hasan & Fumerton 2014). Secondly, we ask whether the diverse senses of *objectivity* proposed in currently ongoing philosophical discussions can be applied in the assessment of artistic knowledge.

It is common in epistemology to distinguish between three types of knowledge. Propositional knowledge is the kind of knowledge that can be expressed in the form of (typically verbal) knowledge claims. Knowledge how is the kind of knowledge needed, for instance, when playing an instrument. As for knowledge by acquaintance, it is the kind of knowledge one has when one, for example, knows a person well: "We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths." (Russell 1912, 78.) Artistic knowledge is likely to be largely non-propositional (see e.g. Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2005). We suggest to analyse it as a combination of knowledge how and – especially – knowledge by acquaintance.

Objectivity is currently the theme of a lively discussion in philosophy of science. It has resulted in several diverse, though not necessarily incompatible, accounts of objectivity (e.g. Douglas 2009; Hacking 2015). *What* precisely should be objective also varies in these accounts: some focus on the objectivity of knowledge claims, and others on the process through which the claims are

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produced or the communities that produce them. We will pay attention especially to social accounts of objectivity, where the entity whose objectivity is to be assessed is the research community (e.g. Longino 1990, 2002). We suggest that ideas presented in the recent philosophical discussions of objectivity may be fruitful when trying to assess the objectivity of artistic knowledge.

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