



Dogma Film and Ceramic art: The Case of 'Blue Collar – White Collar'

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Abstract

In this project, Dogma film and ceramic art were developed into interdependent art objects, exhibitions, and short films. The art project *Blue Collar – White Collar* started with the artists' interest in the global concern about the fourth industrial revolution, often referred to as 'the rise of the robots', where old professions seem to disappear, and central tasks are robotised. However, there seems to be signs of a new role for the skills of handicraft in society. The short film *Rhythm of the Hands* documented parts of this development through the artists' reflections on the role of their contemporary ceramic practice. The materialised results of ceramic art and Dogma film explain in a complementary way the development of the new roles of craft in society and of Dogma used as production principle in a craft context. Through an

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intersubjective documentation of insiders' perspectives in a collaborative art project the case shows a basic understanding of being an artist where a diversity of art practices can expand into new fields in continuously new ways. This can contribute to new ways of co-creation and collaboration in working life.

Keywords: creativity, Dogma film, ceramic art, artistic research, New European Bauhaus, Craft Hub

Exposing a part of reality

In a few minutes he goes through the creative process, everything is chaos at first; anarchy, darkness. Of course, there is a script, a plan, some actors, a landscape, but nothing really exists until the picture exists. Once taken, Tarkovskij sighs and looks like the epitome of the seventh day. My God, finally rest for a while. (Tarkovskij & Lövgren, 1993)

The state of mind of the great filmmaker Tarkovskij is described in the foreword by Erlend Josefsson in the book *Sculpting in Time* (Tarkovskij & Lövgren, 1993). The unique approach of Tarkovskij's creative mind is worth learning from when studying and exploring creativity and interdisciplinary artistic methods in a complex filmmaking process. Communication through a combination of artistic media may demonstrate an epistemological position in views on knowledge and methodical approaches. This is relevant to exploring methods of artistic research where the aim often is to show something, to create an exposition.

An exposition includes both a physical and a conceptual premise. According to the art philosopher Varto, the conceptual and physical perspectives of artworks can be identified and documented from unique artistic events (Varto, 2009, p. 133). To be more conscious of these perspectives, Varto believes it is essential to reflect on a variety of qualities of an artistic research project. He emphasises: 1) the view of man, 2) the view of the world in artistic practice, 3) ideology, 4) standardisation: what questions are allowed to be asked, and what questions are not allowed to be asked?, 5) imprinting: are there theories or methods from connecting research areas that can be used in the art project?, and 6) self-realisation (Varto, 2009, p. 160).

In this study, these perspectives will be examined through 'Blue Collar – White Collar', an art project that emerged from the art group AvArt's discussions about

robotisation of work life actualised in the World Economic Forum in 2016.⁶ The global forum facilitated a diversity of views about the emerging new work life. The method of documentation through Dogma film can capture the essence of practice in new ways. The Dogma approach can capture here and now practices and can contribute to documentation forms in research. This can be connected to the role of the artist, what methods artists represent, and it can enhance views on management and self-management. This is relevant because human capital can be seen as an essential value in future work life (Eriksen, Gad, Martinsen, & Thompson, 2003), as well as economical perspectives of leadership in the cultural sector (Wennes, 2006). The discussion enhances creative collaboration and possible methods of artistic collaboration; how artistic methods can contribute to future working life. From an interdisciplinary working life perspective, it is relevant to document how creative processes can contribute to new ways of collaboration, new ways of thinking and innovative approaches, crossing traditional professional boundaries. In the European Union, such aims are promoted in the programme New European Bauhaus⁷. Furthermore, the project contributes to the Creative Europe project Craft Hub, where the aim is to put craft on the agenda in new ways⁸.

The rules of the Dogma film

An example of an innovative and artistic collaborative method that has been acclaimed internationally is found in the Dogma film genre, where a set of Dogma rules inspired the film director and the participants. Lars von Trier explained the 10 rules⁹ as follows:

1. *Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in.*
2. *The sound must never be produced apart from the image or vice-versa.*
3. *The camera must be handheld. Any movement or mobility attainable in the hand is permitted.*
4. *The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable.*
5. *Optical work and filters are forbidden.*

⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/what-is-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>

⁷ https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en

⁸ <https://www.crafthub.eu/>

⁹ <https://www.indiewire.com/2015/04/watch-lars-von-trier-explains-the-rules-of-dogma-95-187806/>

6. *The film must not contain superficial action.*
7. *Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden.*
8. *Genre movies are not acceptable.*
9. *The film format must be Academy 35 mm.*
10. *The director must not be credited.*

On the one hand, these 10 rules of the Dogma film can be seen as a personal manifestation of von Trier's aesthetics built on strong artistic traditions of experimental film and early performative video art. On the other hand, the method became a general protest movement against the commercialisation of film, a reaction against enormous film productions budgets, the need to pay for movie stars, film settings in extraordinary landscapes and buildings as well as exclusive costumes and advanced make up effects.

The Dogma film movement wanted to find back to the simplicity of film, 'the story itself', and to highlight the poetic potential in the everyday context. The 10 rules have spread around the world, inspiring many new film creators. They can also inspire documentation of everyday artistic practice, processes and methods used before artwork is shown in a gallery or is completed. This also relates to craft practice in a variety of ways. In craft practice, such Dogma rules can have specific relevance, such as the first shooting must be done on location, and documentation can be suitable in workshop practices where improvisation happens regularly. The rules say that 'props and sets must not be brought in', and in craft and a variety of artistic methods there are many remedies that can become a natural part of the dramaturgy in a documentary process. That the camera must be handheld allows for a craft-based approach to filming yourself and the activity using a GoPro camera or getting a friend or colleague help with filming elements of the artistic process.

Creativity: an essential 21st-century skill

Such film documentation is a process about creative processes in the shaping of artworks. Creativity is highly relevant for many disciplines, listed as one of the essential skills of the 21st century (Kerr & Lloyd, 2008). An emerging creative method that has become highly valuable in interdisciplinary settings is *design thinking* (Cross, 2011; Frith, 2020), the ability to embrace diversity, complexity, and paradox and eventually to come up with a new, surprising solution, user-friendly with interesting aesthetics. Similarly, in the contemporary arts it can be valuable to make visible and document tacit knowledge and the diversity of methods used by artists. Artistic

practice can to some extent be seen as not isolated from the artwork itself, it can be seen as an inherent part of the artwork if you, for example, view it from a performance perspective (Christensen-Scheel, Lindgren, & Pettersen, 2013). There is a need for new introspective perspectives on creativity within many art practices because traditionally there has been a master–apprentice relationship in how to learn, learning by copying and learning by doing. By documenting artistic practices, one can share experiences and discuss with others what it means to do an artistic project, and through artistic research reflect on several levels what it is to be an artist (Varto, 2009).

Documentation of artistic practices can also render more visible how artists' reflections and professional methods are linked to their networks and contexts (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018). New artistic research practices that include self-documentation and self-reflection thus contribute to new ways of understanding the world, the arts and oneself, which is valuable in the process of finding your own way as an artist and in developing individual, and sometimes collaborative, ways of working as an artist. In a world of change towards a more sustainable society, it is important to think about artistic practice in new ways, to find new methods and to reflect on alternative ways forward (Kagan, 2011).

The imperfection of the process as a result

It is therefore worthwhile exploring how artistic inspiration can arise at the intersection of artistic methods. A specific focus area in this study was how Dogma film practice in ceramic art practice can contribute to new perspectives of artistic practices. This was of particular interest because both the method of Dogma filming and the making of ceramic art are related to handicrafts, such as handheld cameras, hand-building, and approaches where the imperfection of the process is often visible in the result. There are traces of the process in the result.

The research method chosen was to conduct a case study (Yin, 2009) of Dogma film on ceramic art practice because it was possible to study an art project, 'Blue Collar – White Collar', in a real-life context. The guiding theoretical approach included a set of propositions as recommended in qualitative research (Postholm, 2010), exploring in practice how the theories unfold in a real-life context. The guiding theoretical propositions in this case study were inspired by Varto (2009), Krauss (1979) and Taussig (2009) because they can all be part of a relevant methodical approach in artistic practice and artistic research: you can learn new things from unique art

experiences (Varto, 2009). You can unfold creativity in new ways through making sculptures in the expanded field (Krauss, 1979). You can explore the world in new ways through aesthetic performance (Taussig, 2009). The reason for choosing these theoretical propositions was their complementary methodical approach, which grounds a basic understanding of being an artist where a diversity of art practices can expand into new fields in continuously new ways.

The artistic research method was inspired by practice-led research in the arts (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018) and included mutual documentation by the participants in the project through film, visual self-reflections using GoPro cameras, dialogues and interviews with each other. Reflection in practice is a valuable research approach to learn from (Schön, 1983), and the introspective documentation of research projects has also been encouraged in design- and technology-oriented projects (Xue & Desmet, 2019). The aim was to create an intersubjective documentation of insiders' perspectives in a collaborative art project. The case study also includes external views on the project from art critics. As recommended by Yin (2009), the empirical data from the case study have been presented as a narrative, closely connected to the research question and the methodological choices.

Culture in the age of robotisation

The project 'Blue Collar – White Collar' travelled from 2017 to 2022 with regional, national and international exhibitions. It was nominated and selected for the Korean International Ceramic Biennale¹⁰ in 2019 (Choi, 2019). The biennale was held both online and on-site, and invited to an artistic scene that should lead the future of ceramic art with various networks connected. The 'convergence through connection' would be expanded gradually even after the biennale, to create a paradigm for continuous exchanges. The conference was also relevant from the perspective of new methods in the arts because there is a need to see the art of ceramics in new contexts in a changing world.

One such perspective in the project 'Blue Collar – White Collar' was that new values and new business models may occur in the consumer society in a robotised community. The art group AvArt's aim was to question this development through artistic reflections on the theme with artworks, text and film, showing perspectives

¹⁰ <http://2019.kicb.co.kr/>

from craft and handicraft-based processes. A conceptual approach in the project was to make ceramics in blue and white as a reflection on the theme; drawing lines, from the fourth industrial revolution of robotisation back to the first industrial revolution of mass production and industrialisation, where blue and white porcelain (Figure 1) was an example of the new mass-produced goods, transformed from being available exclusively to high society to being available to all, but was also an example of a development where handicraft was replaced by industrial processes.



Figure 1. 'Blue Willow'. Traditional mass-produced blue and white ceramics. Photo from Linda J. Lothe's studio Photo: Linda J. Lothe.

New ways of working with ceramics emerge all the time, and a relevant question is therefore: what does it mean to be a ceramic artist? What do ceramic artists do? What kind of knowledge is needed in future work life? It is of specific interest to go beyond the established traditions and look for new interdisciplinary use of ceramics, because the skill in making ceramics has proved to be highly flexible in history, with use spanning from everyday kitchenware via spaceship surfaces to contemporary art installations. This study is a contribution to identifying what kind of knowledge about methods is generated in an interdisciplinary project of Dogma filmmaking and ceramic practice.

Perspectives of art in the expanded field

Documentary filmmaker Mona J. Hoel developed a short film about the project, 'Blue Collar – White Collar', initiated by the art group AvArt, comprising ceramic artists Linda J. Lothe, Mimi Swang, Elise Kielland and Arild Berg. The title of the short film was *Rhythm of the hands*. Exhibitions of the project were staged at several galleries and art events, such as at Gallery Nääs Crafts in Gothenburg, Sweden in the summer of 2017, Buskerud Art Centre and the National Exhibition of Crafts in Norway in 2018 (Reiten & Holt, 2018), as well as showing the film at Kunstnernes hus with a panel discussion with the artists from AvArt and the philosopher and researcher in artificial intelligence Einar Duengen Bøhn, with Mona Hoel as moderator (Hoel & AvArt, 2018). The exhibition was further shown at Det gule huset in 2020. An exhibition in 2021 at Kraft gallery Bergen was cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Finally, there was an exhibition 'Out of the Blue' in Gallery FORMAT Oslo in 2022. The art group AvArt and the Dogma filmmaker made installations and tableaux with blue and white art objects in different ways to explore space, three-dimensionality, and activation of the viewer. The Dogma film was usually a part of the installation and illustrated how the slow process of creativity in ceramic art was applied to the process of storytelling, showing the courage of storytelling from multiple perspectives; how the processes of the artists became a part of the art objects, and how the art objects become part of the film.



Figure 2. From the ceramic studio in the basement in the filmmakers apartment building.
Photo: Arild Berg.

A Dogma film perspective

The filmmaker Mona J. Hoel had been travelling worldwide with her certified Dogma 19 film *Cabin fever*, in which she developed an artistic concept she included in all her film works, a variation of the Dogma rules. After a period spent travelling around the world sharing her film with international festival audiences, she found herself stuck at

her home for a long time recovering from a severe illness. She gradually noticed voices, sounds and activities in the basement below her apartment and grew curious (Figure 2). She got to know the ceramic studio of AvArt and the artists there, and slowly began constructing a documentary work about the ceramic processes happening below her own living room. The documentation process emerged during her recovery period, when for short visits she would document happenings in the workshop, and she felt that the artistic process influenced her condition.

The film gives short presentations of the four craftspeople and how their work found their expression in the studio and in the public sphere in a variety of ways such as exhibitions, dissemination activities, making public art for a hospital, organising workshops, teaching groups, and working at an activity centre in ceramics, jewellery, glass, and in collaboration with other artists.

Focused on the artistic process, the filmmaker captured everyday situations, the passing of time, the changing of the seasons, and workplace dramas. The film had a visual emphasis on hand skills and rhythm in unison with the individual artistic signatures and workflows. She documented the ways in which the artists worked in practice to show craft practice as a contrast to the robotisation of a society, where craft can be seen as an important counterforce, like how the dogma film movement was a counterforce to trends in the film industry. She asked the artists about their feelings and thoughts during the creative process of making. During these meetings in the workshop, the participants reflected on the need for art, on personal stories of becoming artists, and on how to connect art to the lives of everyone in different ways, both in childhood and in everyday life. The film director's questions prompted the participants to reflect on their backgrounds, the reasons why they work with materials and how their artistic approach might differ from that of other generations. In this way the film expanded the understanding of the materialised art objects and explained some of the drivers behind the creative process, a background which with the film became an integrated part of the artwork.

The filmmaker explained how her approach to and method in Dogma film goes back to the political protest movements of the 1960s. The French Wave was a protest movement. She said: 'Methodologically in the Dogma approach, I also use the intuitive, the bodily approach, capture the different physicalities of each artist's approach to the ceramic process. I try to find traces of each individual process'. She explained how as a Dogma film director she tries to transform projects that are

usually made with significant resources and facilitate them with simpler technical means, humanising the technique, handheld light-sensitive and less heavy cameras, less perfection, more presence, authenticity and confidence, all crucial elements in a creative process.

I approach my projects and process with a more intuitively oriented method after following the Dogma manifest. I come much closer to where I started my storytelling in film, using a Super 8 camera. Analysing the psychology of the light, of the object/subject. What is your eye perceiving in the situation you arrange, what are your emotions drawn to? Intuition and craft guide these processes. What experience lies within each human being as a sounding board can also lead the way. It is the use of me. my hand, and my body when creating something that makes this method so exciting. This specific project also has something to do with the fact that I lived in the same building as the ceramic workshop, the physical room was nearby, in the basement, so I used the opportunity not to make a glossy report, but to be inspired by that there had been seen rats in the studio in the basement where the ceramic studio was situated ... that's fine because it is real life. It has also been healing for me, a process that opened a new path. The method is both political and curative; like getting rid of something one has been dependent on. In this project I approach a free process: it gives power, and the process brings the value of the Dogma method back into the light, with a technical approach like that of the ceramic artists and their hands. It is the power of thought and craft collaborating that is conveyed. When a ceramic artist hand-cuts layers of clay (Figure 3), my eye triggers the camera, positioning my body intuitively, seeking the best light for the lens, the microphone. My questions were shaped by the connection between the two parallel artistic processes. I recognise the similarity in artistic methods between Dogma film and ceramics. This has been the most intriguing part of this process for me. (Mona J. Hoel)

Four ceramic art practices as seen by the artists



Figure 3. 'She documented the way we worked in practice. She asked questions about our feelings and thoughts during the creative process of making.' Photo: Mona Hoel, screenshot from film¹¹.

Some extracts and citations from the short film are illustrated below. Links to the short films about each artist are provided in the footnotes to the respective screenshots. First a citation from Arild Berg:

I am making ceramic tiles for outdoor sculptures at a hospital institution for elderly, seriously ill people. It can be difficult to talk about something else than the illness so the art, with abstract and figurative motifs, can create alternative topics to talk about. It feels very meaningful to create something to talk about in a hospital. Hospitals often have a technical expression; art creates a new dimension. Methodologically, it requires a lot of thinking, and also thinking with your hands in a way, because you must be in dialogue with the material. These drawings must be angular and square to be in dialogue with geometric buildings, but must also lean towards organic forms to be in dialogue with nature around the buildings. This methodical approach gives me an extra joy in life, a joy of shape,

¹¹ http://2019.kicb.co.kr/board/online/list?id=performance&search_flag=subject&keywords=aril

colour, nature, seed pods, something close to nature. It feels like a great dialogue between what you think and what the hand does, but often also to use speed, to allow the hand to do something in its own way and not think at the same time. Then it can sometimes be even better (Arild Berg) (Figure 3). (Hoel & AvArt, 2019a)



Figure 4. During these meetings in the workshop, we reflected on the need for art, our personal stories of becoming artists, and on how we connected the art to our lives in different ways, both in childhood and in everyday life. Photo: Mona Hoel, screenshot from film¹².

Citation from Linda Lothe: In the Blue Collar project, I think of a kind of method in taking the things that are produced in the factory towards the handmade. It should show that it has been made by hand. What has previously been done in the industry is taken to the manual, because that was how it started, in the Blue Willow project (Figure 1), prints and decals were used. Now it has become a fusion of processes from hand-painted to industrial to hand-painted, not necessarily nice, but something that gives a sense of the work of the hand. We have all worked for many years with ceramics, we know where to apply weight when throwing on the

¹² <http://2019.kicb.co.kr/board/online/view?no=178>

pottery wheel or when making something. The memory is in the body.
(Linda Lothe) (Figure 4). (Hoel & AvArt, 2019c)

Another of the artists, Mimi Swang, had been exploring the Nerikomi method, which is an ancient Japanese technique for producing ceramic art. The clay is coloured with pigment and put in layered or pattern blocks or rolls. Then a time-consuming process follows of cutting and slicing the pieces of the block and reassembling them to form a specific pattern. The technique can be used more or less precisely and can form anything from detailed patterns to a more liquid marbled appearance. Nerikomi is a time-consuming and painstaking technique, in contrast to the mass-produced objects that do not even come into contact with the hand. Inspired by such techniques, Mimi developed a concept of knitting recycled, cut blue jeans (Figure 5) into the ceramic through patterns of holes. This gave her a feeling of being able to make an unlikely choice, not to be programmed in advance, like a robot, but to do the unexpected. (Hoel & AvArt, 2019d)

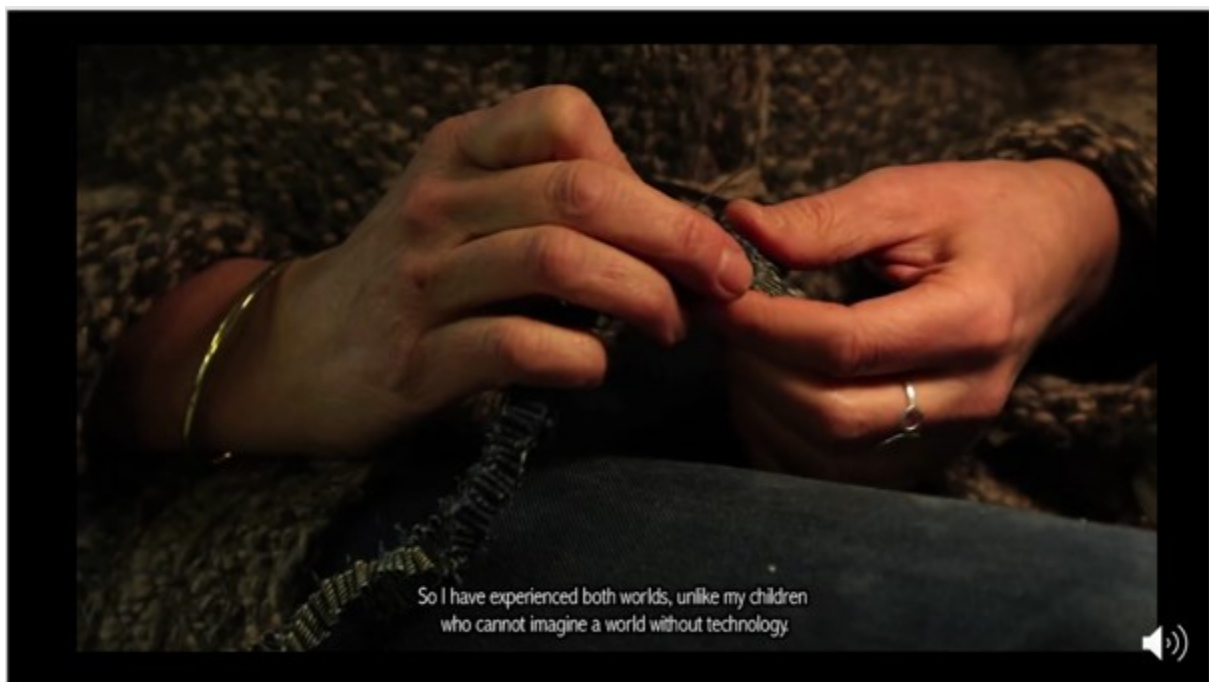


Figure 5. The documentation process made us reflect on our backgrounds, the reasons why we work with materials as an artistic expression and how our approach might differ from that of other generations. Photo: Mona Hoel, screenshot from film¹³.

¹³ <http://2019.kicb.co.kr/board/online/view?no=179>



Figure 6: Recording worries and happy experiences also outside the ceramic studio. Photo: Mona Hoel, screenshot from film¹⁴.

Armed with a GoPro camera, the artists were encouraged by the film director to record worries and happy experiences also outside the ceramic studio, to demonstrate how they connected their artistic practice to everyday life (Figure 6). Artist Elise Kielland reflected on how her work with colour connected to shades of blue in nature:

I have had a theoretical superstructure related to my method; a process that is basically related to robotisation where I also have looked at some economic perspectives so that it has become a method that is a mixture of theory and practice in the workshop, a theme seen from the ceramic world. I have been particularly concerned with efficiency. We, who methodically work so slowly, how can it be a value? What kind of value could it be? The method is linked to values in the physically and embodied work, the physical, the hands, the use of the whole body. (Elise Kielland) (Hoel & AvArt, 2019b)

¹⁴ <http://2019.kicb.co.kr/board/online/view?no=180>

Art critics perspectives on 'Blue Collar – White Collar'

In this case study the sources of information come from other perspectives on the artworks. Some of the results of the projects are shown here, with comments from art critics.



Figure 7. 'Movement' (2018), objects in porcelain and steel, by Elise Kielland. Photo Arild Berg.

[Elise Kielland's] work process, based on the shades of blue and white between sky and land on the horizon, has resulted in a soft pastel-toned palette. These tones have since been given free play in designs inspired by older medallion traditions during a long production period with painting layers on layers. Although not two plates are similar, with fine instinct they have been paired two and two into moulded table positions. (Figure 7) (Boel Ulfsdotter, 2017)

Arild Berg's non-pictorial surfaces are visually the opposite of [Elise Kielland] and seem to have gained their intensity and movement because of a fast and spontaneous work process [Figure 8]. His choice of almost deep shades of blue and broken white gives the tiles an intense, on the verge of three-dimensional, expression, which is in stark contrast to their clear geometric shape, in a way that I find very appealing. (Boel Ulfsdotter, 2017)



Figure 8. Blue Cosmos (2017), porcelain tile, by Arild Berg. Photo: Arild Berg



Figure 9. 'Blue Wave' (2017), stoneware ceramic, recycled blue jeans, by Mimi Swang. Photo Mimi Swang.

[Mimi Swang's] bold combination of denim fabrics combined with porcelain clay is exciting and innovative. She has worked with simple, both cylindrical and wave-shaped vessel walls

that have been crocheted in one or two different denim fabrics. The combination is unexpected, in a sense a free choice, and is also varied across ten different works. Clearly, her imagination sits in the front seat, even though the technical execution is of the highest class. (Figure 9) (Boel Ulfsdotter, 2017)



Figure 10. Blue Willow series/Boat and fishing rod (Lothe, 2020), from wall installation. Photo Linda J. Lothe.

The art critic Boel Ulfsdotter wrote about Linda Lothes works at the Nääs exhibition in continuation of describing Mimi Swang:

In my opinion, Linda Lothe's work is characterised by the same experimental desire and creative flow. Her desire for colour and 'extra everything' has got to take a step back in 'Blue Collar – White Collar'. Instead, she now shows several bowls and wall pieces... almost minutely disciplined and – at least in my eyes – slightly cuddly...After seeing pictures of several works by this artist, I find that precisely the need and ability to tell and dramatise runs like an exciting red thread through her work. (Ulfsdotter, 2017)

The art critic Joakim Borda-Pedreira also wrote about Linda Lothes works and her reference to the Blue Willow traditions (Figure 10):

Linda Lothe plays with this ceramic heritage, as her plates retain the classic 18th century scallop shapes, though roughly press-molded, and at times warped as if wanting to escape from the constraints of serialization...By allowing the red clay to boldly show, Lothe dispels any attempts of creating illusions: her dishes do not

pretend to be porcelain, or rational industrial productions, their irregularities and material honesty are ostentatiously handcrafted and 'authentic'. (Borda-Pedreira, 2020)

The art critic Gjertrud Steinsvåg wrote about the room installation 'Blue Collar – White Collar' (Steinsvåg, 2018), with art objects and the short film included, at the annual craft exhibition in Norway in 2018 (Reiten & Holt, 2018): She wrote that despite many fine contributions, there were two works that made her pulse race a bit faster than normal: one of them was the project 'Blue Collar – White Collar' (Figures 11, 12):



Figure 11. Installation 'Blue Collar – White Collar', Craft 2018. Photo: Arild Berg



Figure 12. 'Blue Collar – White Collar'. Art installation with film, Craft 2018. Photo: Arild Berg

The four ceramic artists work with a common interest in the correlation between the 'return' of the craft and the fact that a robotised workforce makes manual work outdated. The artists work directly with the traditional blue and white ceramics to draw parallels between today's discussion and the first industrial revolution, where the arts and crafts movement formed a counterforce to industrialisation. The filmmaker has followed the four artists for more than a year and has made a great short film, where we get insight into thoughts and reflections about making, immediately as we can see just that: making. I find that the art group's mini exhibit room installation has a form of thematic superstructure and dissemination that could be a very interesting starting point for everyone in an annual exhibition of crafts. (Steinsvåg, 2018)

Out of the Blue

The Blue Collar – White Collar project had an exhibition ‘Out of the Blue’ in 2022 in the project room at the gallery Format in Oslo¹⁵. The gallery’s goal is to challenge established norms while highlighting key values in the field by actively bringing a wider spectrum of artistic practices in material-based art to the fore. Like a symphony that can be played several times, Blue Collar – White Collar theme about robotization and craft has shown to be relevant at both regional and international exhibition spaces for several years since the start in 2017. A conceptual framework for the project has been to work with blue and white colors, as this has deep roots in the history of ceramics. The artworks and texts at the ‘Out of the Blue’ exhibition reflect a development since the start.



Figure 13. ‘A new language’ detail (Berg, 2022). left), Wall sculptures (right). Photos: Arild Berg

In the exhibition Arild Berg showed stripe patterns in three wall sculptures casted in porcelain. This artistic research was based on an article he wrote with Karen Disen, (Disen, Berg, 2018); Stripes - in light of Schiller’s concepts of human foundations in form. The works refers to the role of being an artist-researcher, combining craft and analyses in qualitative research, in the artworks with the titles ‘Signs’, ‘A New Language’ and ‘Contradictions’.

Elise Kielland have been working in a time-consuming manual process where she builds layer upon layer, burning her surfaces many times. The ceramic works have a personal touch that incorporates elements from painting, while at the same time

¹⁵ <https://www.format.no/about>

drawing parallels to ceramic traditions. The motifs are for the most part stylized elements from nature put together in a rhythmic, ornamental expression. Her work unfolds manually over time, subject to something uncontrollable. Time is needed to make the most of the unexpected. Time to make room for the unexpected and time to do the right thing at the right time.



Figure 14. As long as it takes (Kielland, 2022) wall installation (left), detail (right). Photos: Arild Berg



Figure 15. Blue Fall (Lothe, 2022). Front side (left), back side (right). Photo: Anders Bergersen.

Linda Lothe is interested in the narrative; the story that is encapsulated in things. Legends, myths and fairy tales often serve as inspiration. For several years she has explored the iconic Willow motif, which originated in Stoke on Trent in England in 1780. The pattern, originally used on tableware, is fragmentized and put together in new constellations. To be open to what might occur during the process is paramount. 'Blue Fall' was acquired to the National Museum in 2022.

Mimi Swang has combined porcelain/stoneware with different textiles, such as blue jeans and white shirts, used as symbols of the industrial- and the technological eras. What is the value of manual craftsmanship in the age of efficiency? Mimi Swang explores the possibilities of the materials in combination with traditional textile techniques. In her works she plays with the idea of the brain's ability to independently and spontaneously determine or change an overall plan during the process of creating, in contrast to automation of labor.



Figure 16. Little Blue Wave (left), White Creatures (right) (Swang, 2022). Photos: Mimi Swang

Discussion: Dogma film and ceramic art

A part of this artistic research study – which also is a part of the art project ‘Blue Collar – White Collar’ – was to explore new approaches identified from such an interdisciplinary approach of Dogma film in ceramic art. The guiding propositions in the case study (Yin, 2009) were inspired by the art philosopher Varto (2009), who believes that through artistic research you can learn new things from unique art experiences, and by Krauss (1979), who has inspired many artists with her groundbreaking essay about how sculpture can be made in an expanded field. Finally, the social anthropologist Taussig (2009) has criticised the neutral or objective approach often used as an ideal approach in ethnography, and thinks that it would be more interesting to take up some of the more subjective, performative approaches adopted by some of the first anthropologists. In this approach there is a potential for a new artistic research approach where expositions contribute to exploring cultures in new ways. The preliminary propositions as a theoretically founded basis for an artistic research method were therefore as follows: You can learn new things from unique art experiences. You can unfold creativity in new ways through making sculpture in the

expanded field. You can explore the world in new ways through aesthetic performance.

Exploring the unique

This theoretical position can be illustrated as a possible methodical approach in artistic research, where a diversity of art practices can expand into new fields in continuously new ways (Figure 17).

To present this approach in a bold way, it can be described in the Dogma format: 1) you will learn new things from making unique art experiences; 2) unfold your creativity in new ways through making art in the expanded field; and 3) explore the world in new ways through your aesthetic performance. These three qualities of an artistic research approach unfold in various ways in practice in the 'Blue Collar – White Collar' project.

Documentary films can show what an artistic practice really is, and in some situations Dogma films may be particularly suitable for this. The film creator came in with new perspectives about the ceramic practice, asked questions that others would not ask, focused on stories, transformed the artists' everyday life into something new. The artists have thus come closer to their own process, processed it, and carried it on, and this has been a shared experience for the filmmaker and the artists. The filmmaker focused on the artistic concept and the physical artwork, and the interplay between art and artist, as also happens in fiction: to find the man beneath the man, to identify another individual in the person, someone who has not been seen before.

Methodologically, one can also say that the filmmaker paints with a camera, and that the body is allowed to lead. It can be like approaching a phenomenon with larger lenses, inspired by a more a subjective, qualitative approach which has been used in artistic research (Mäkela & Nimkulrat, 2018), which is just as close to the process and intuition as in the Dogma approach, and to some extent takes it further. The method can create a higher level of consciousness that can grow like a seed in the project participants. Some of the issues that emerged in the project were related to doing things according to a fixed recipe versus improvisation, to let yourself into the core, to appreciate the value of time, to identify with counterforces, to experience the efficiency of parallel leadership and equal self-realisation in collaborative artworks.

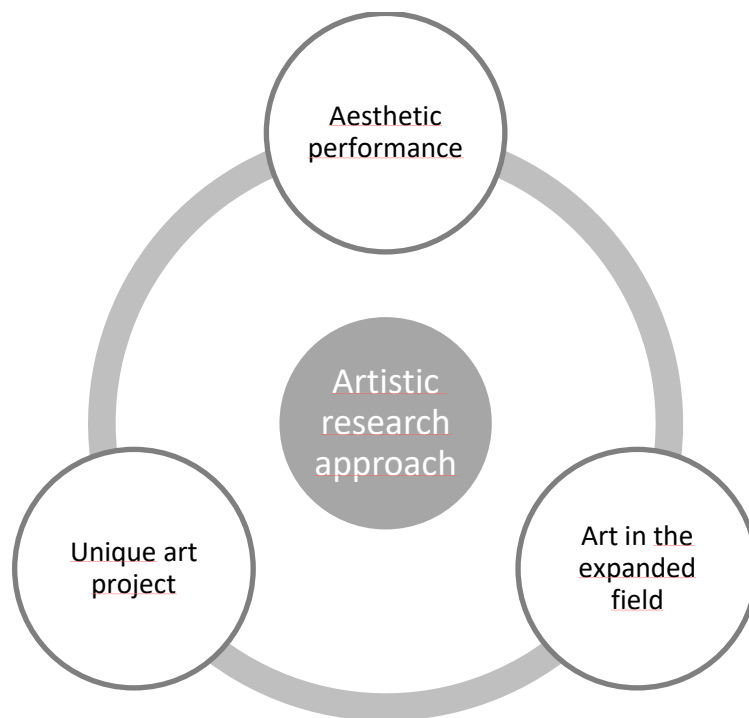


Figure 17. Three interconnected concepts in an artistic research approach. Figure: A. Berg.

If there is dust, use it!

In art research projects, it is worth reflecting on the view of man in art education according to Varto (2009). This includes the role of the artist – what can be learned and what can be done as a performing artist – and that this should be constantly explored with a variety of methodological approaches and thus be constantly reinvented.

‘Blue Collar – White Collar’ specifically explores what it is to be a filmmaker who wants to document how to make ceramic art. In this case, it was not desirable to make a clinical format for documenting practice, which may resemble a rigid recipe for a portrait interview with ‘talking heads’. Instead, inspired by filmmakers like Tarkovskij, the filmmaker wanted to be more part of the process, to be in the process, an approach that could be different every time. Such a creative method is something that changes every time, each project develops its own method, a method that creates itself in the process, and the filmmaker and the participants hang on by being responsive to what is happening.

This can be related to how Tarkovskij worked in, for example, the film *Mirror* from 1975, which is a portrayal of his childhood. It seemed to be his attempt to recreate

the innocence of childhood. He used his father's experiences; when the mother runs in slow motion, he uses all the elements in the locations of the place. He uses a ruined roof, where the roof falls down, where pieces of the roof, plaster and painted parts, rain down in slow motion. This creates a movement that can be seen as similar to a feeling of panic and to the mother running. As a technical performer, he works hand in hand with the vision, he casts the actors, finds the location and listens to what is going on there: if there is dust, use it.

Being at the location means that the vision can be realised on another level. This is a technique used in the documentation of ceramics in the project: the knife with which the artist cuts the clay, the voice, the hesitation, everything that adds more to the picture. The filmmaker can thus always be open to the process while running. The Dogma rules serve as a tool that stimulates openness to what is happening, there are 10 rules that open for improvisation and presence. The filmmaker used some of these rules in 'Blue Collar – White Collar' and made it her own, more like an exploration than a recipe.

Von Trier's Dogma approach can be seen as rules that take the artist deeper into the process: one must put away all technical aids, and not try to imitate or recreate anything afterwards. The filmmaker is not allowed to decorate the scene, 'blood' should not be poured on in scenes in a violent film, for example, you must instead go deep into what is happening, what you are about to convey. The actors are not allowed to wear costumes, only their own clothes. In a similar way, the 'Blue Collar – White Collar' artists followed the ideologies of the Dogma rules in the way that unique processes were established by the artists themselves. One such example was when one of the artists, Linda J. Lothe, stands with an infinite number of lines to be created on an object; an aesthetic system is established to be implemented, one chooses in a way to be a slave to the process. It can be useful to experience being a slave in the process, a process you have established yourself because you learn to follow your own process, make your own rules, which requires that you are close to yourself and listen to your own original voice. A recipe, on the other hand, allows you to reproduce something that has already been done. Something like something else. The Dogma rules promote the unique, they force each mediator into their own process. It highlights the individual and distinctive uniqueness of each process. This is a role that the artist may have; to have a vision and then creatively examine how it can be realised with the techniques one has learned.

A dialogue can be created between the handheld camera and the artist's activities and thoughts. The understanding of what a camera is, the optical variation was, in this case, an essential element, where technology became an extension of the senses. In the project, a telephoto lens was used that went from wide to telephoto, where it sets a choice that is reasoned through what is said. As an example, it can capture how the artist knows when the porcelain is perfect for processing; not when it is too dry or too wet, but just right; physical things and practical knowledge that partly disappear in the digital age. In this way, the boundaries between human senses are blurred, between what is technology and what is environment; they all flow together to form a whole. In such a whole, where there is an interplay between filmmaker, art and activity, where choosing the location is included: choosing backgrounds is like creating a location, creating a scenography.

An awareness of this location creates the difference between creating reality as a scene and simply documenting it at random. The one who films creates the angle, in the context and in the encounter with the individual. It is from this relationship that the film arises in this case. It can be seen almost like fiction, depending on location, and this can create dynamics on different levels. To achieve this, it was often important to create trust between the person filming and the person being filmed. What can create such trust can be to make people forget as soon as possible that there is a camera and to think instead that the person filming is the camera itself. One feature of a small handheld camera is that it creates a sense of closeness. It can be seen as a method not to use a large camera, which can be experienced as an armour - a barrier between the filmmaker and the participants - and instead choose a light-footed technique that allows the filmmaker to get closer.

One way to get even closer in such a situation is the interactive dynamics that emerge in how to ask questions. When the artist says something, the train of thought can start. It is in this interaction between the camera, the clay and the participants that a kind of a dance can emerge, a choreography that also becomes words. It can be seen like entering a situation that is based on exactly what the camera sees and on what the artists are working on, and in that moment the question is shaped. It comes out of what the filmmaker sees while filming. The filmmaker can be in there for a long time once they have let themselves into the core.

Being good technically in one's profession can at the same time allow the filmmaker to be open to what is happening. It can be connected with the questions that come in

the process of filming, so that the reflection process can enter the filmmaker's thought and vision, and where for example patience can be an essential element. This can be seen as Tarkovskij's mastery, once he sat for four days waiting for the fog, and then let the house burn in the fog. He believed that this was 'God's touch', something greater than himself which he only evokes when it happens. Tarkovskij discovered that the camera had failed while filming the house on fire. But he did it again. Such strong inner emotions can drive something forward, the belief in what one wants, an example of a filmmaker's vision and patience.

Many artists work with such resistance, often without resources. Such endurance can be experienced as part of an artistic work method.

The value of time

Traces of ideology can be found in an art project (Varto, 2009). An ideological perspective in this project was about introducing different perspectives into the problem of robotising the workforce, and how working with handicrafts has its own value in a context where much is robotised. It can be a value to take care of handicrafts traditions, even if something from a purely pragmatic viewpoint can be robotised. From a philosophical point of view, this is also about time, and the time it takes to do something, and about the question of what efficiency is. Is it more efficient to do something quickly, or can it also mean that what takes a long time to do has another dimension that is about getting in touch with something in processes that take time? Sennett promoted the idea that it is valuable with a craft, and craft experience, to go deep into a topic, and to be connected to a process based on skills (Sennett, 2008).

Such craft competence was developed in this case through taking time to develop collaboration between people. People could not just be put together technically in the hope that they would work well together. In this case there was an interaction between the artists from individual ceramic processes and a filmmaker, the project progressed slowly over time from the multidisciplinary, with parallel processes in interaction, into something more transdisciplinary, where the subjects merged in new ways by mutual influence. Trust grew between the participants. The knowledge expanded mutually. This interaction was something more valuable than the individual parts. The Dogma film had a direct cinematic expression and brought to light some of the direct qualities in ceramic processes. This created some extra dimensions in the experience, which arose in the way the project was presented with art objects and

film in interaction in a room installation and in online presentations. The ideology was based on a belief that the rhythm of the hands, and the time it takes to do things with the hands, had its own value, which was important to emphasise in a society where much should be robotised.

Creating a variety of counterforces towards mainstream ideas also has a value of its own. In a world which to a large extent is governed by economics, art can also be reduced to a value set only by being measured against turnover, and importance is reflected in relation to the size of a film budget. In film, this was especially a problem before digitisation, because making a film required large budgets for epic dramas, there were high costs for technology. However, new digital techniques allow a filmmaker to make feature films at home. It was this timing that gave momentum to the Dogma rules. It showed how it was possible to establish new artistic methods to help storytellers realize films even with lower budgets. Contemporary art can suffer the same fate as contemporary films did at one time, so it can be a strength for contemporary artists to find new ways to be less dependent on economics, and to not be restricted by various kinds of regulations. There can be endless bureaucratic regulations, professional techniques, and traditions. In contrast there are for example only 10 Dogma rules, which can be experienced as liberating, because it is a technique that makes it possible to make, for example, a short film on a small budget. The digital age can therefore also be seen as a kind of democratisation, where techniques that used to be expensive suddenly are more widely accessible.

Parallel leadership

The art philosopher Varto encourage to explore whether there are theories or methods from related research areas that can be used in an art project (Varto, 2009). This art project originated in a discussion at the World Economic Forum on the threats and potential of the robotisation of work life. Where an artistic process often builds on inspiration, business often builds on efficiency.

This can be seen as a paradox because many people experience art and capital as contradictory concepts. The project can therefore also be seen from a different perspective, such as art management, about management of and in artistic enterprises (Wennes, 2006, p. 80). Wennes emphasises that there can be great and many differences between artists and leaders, from basic ideas at a higher level to how actors in the two worlds behave. Where the artist often acts as an autonomous person, the leader often works in collaboration with many, and often with a focus on

efficiency. The management in 'Blue Collar – White Collar' was characterised by a flat profile, with five managers, where efficiency was seen as producing art objects and a film working together for an overall aim. There was no appointed leader but rather the opposite: a parallel race, with its own leaders. The project was to consider the individual's own artistic integrity and at the same time to merge into a common project, such as a common exhibition. This is a perspective that can become clearer by looking at the concept from another methodological angle, such as art management, and at what efficiency could mean in this project, keeping in mind each participant's individual motivation and how group dynamics can work efficiently.

Art management in the project was thus closely linked to self-management, and this is a trait that has been seen as important human capital in the new working life (Eriksen, Gad, Martinsen, & Thompson, 2003, p. 67). Eriksen et al. argue that in addition to the pure management perspective, the self-management system can be seen as an interesting method of personal development. Self-management has a strong aspect of self-realisation which is relevant in artistic research methods (Varto, 2009, p. 160). As an artist, you manage yourself every day, both in individual artistic work and in collaborations. It is therefore important to establish an individual structure for making art, to establish working methods to achieve artistic results. Working life can be tough, all professions have challenges, and an artist must deal with rejection. There is often no established system for reward, no fixed salary, and artists often must work outside all established schemes. In self-management, one may sometimes need to have methods for quality assurance, and one possible approach can be as shown in this case, through filming what is usually more personal and individual work, to create a meta perspective on own practice. It can be constructive in self-management to create such situations consciously, to see oneself from an outsider's perspective. In such interaction, a mutual interest in the interactive approach between participants can be valuable, where not just one, but all the participants - including the audience - experience some form of self-realisation.

Strengthening a mutual poetic self-realisation

There is much to be learned from studying unique processes in the arts (Varto, 2009). In this project, the Dogma film method enabled participatory observation of artists in practice in both formal and informal contexts. The various artistic methods were documented in accordance with the thoughts and associations of the artists. The filmmaker's questions also meant that the artists had to look for and put into

words what they do not usually say out loud while practising their art, enhancing reflection in action (Schön, 1983) and thus sharing their methods.

Tarkovskij's shared some of his thoughts on his artistic practice in film, a way of thinking that can strengthen the relationship between artist and audience:

The method that the artist uses to get the audience involved in sharing and thinking further beyond what was literally exposed, is the only one that makes the audience and artist equal in the interpretation of the film. And as far as mutual respect is concerned, it is the only relationship worthy of artistic pursuit. (Tarkovskij & Løvgren, 1993, p. 29)¹⁶

Through reflecting in different ways about methods a meta level of practice can be formed in the artists that in this case was influenced by the filmmaker's questions and directives and vice versa. Such a level of reflection can inspire the participants to start reflecting on why they were asked about a topic, to wonder about what was the intention and meaning of a specific action. People can perhaps experience a sense of resistance in the process of developing a relationship between a filmmaker and being the filmed person, for example it can emerge a feeling that what is documented is not what they are doing. When artists see such a film, they might realise that the filmmaker is working on a film project, with another logic about their practice, different from what they would imagine themselves. A filmmaker can thus paint a picture with a camera showing some aspects and undercurrents of the artist's practice and methods never realised before. Such resistance should be sought for, because it can be the door opener to something unknown.

An issue that emerged from this approach of making Dogma film and ceramic art was to identify the creative moment of being human in the span from making objects for use to making objects for reflection. Other issues described were how film could document how to feel connected to the physical world through ceramic practice. Further the project demonstrated how to enable an experience of the dialectic process of making a physical object and making a film, and how this can be an integrated part of the artistic work. The project documented how to explore identity in a digitised society through the tactile experience of craft. The project exemplified how

¹⁶ Author's translation from Swedish.

one through the film media can better understand a physical artwork and how to better understand a film through a physical artwork.

However, there are still many more case studies to explore in the interdisciplinary field of art practices and other professional fields. This case study contributed to identify some of the new knowledge that can be relevant in the future work life, such as in the aims for interdisciplinary collaboration in the New European Bauhaus. In that context artistic methods can be relevant such as shown in the intersection of methods between Dogma film and ceramic art. New artistic practices can rise that can be mutually enlightening for all involved, enabling the participants to understand the world, to see the art and themselves in new ways. Viewing is related to perspectives and understanding from the spectator, what Duchamp called 'the creative act'. This happens also where artists constantly work to refine their methods of expression, trying to bridge the gap between what an artist wants to say and what they manage to express through their medium. Such understanding is valuable because there is a need for art in society where you can understand the world through unique experiences of the aesthetics through a variety of artistic practices. A kind of mutual poetic self-realisation can be enabled by sharing such reflections on new interdisciplinary processes. Through exploring artistic research approaches that combine unique art projects and aesthetic performance (Figure 17), a diversity of art practices can expand into new fields in continuously new ways.

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Linda J. Lothe works in the space between 'high' and 'low' culture, between kitsch, camp and art, between modernity and nostalgia. Her work is included in National and international collections. Info: <https://www.lindalothe.no/>

Mimi Swang works with objects for use and/or exhibitions, in an interplay of form and ornaments, often combining materials, clay, textiles and reused materials. She also works as a department leader at Aurora Verksted. The workshop is a working community of artists with and without disabilities who work on ceramics, and other crafts. Info: <https://norskekunsthåndverkere.no/users/mimi-swang>

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