

Master of Film – Artistic Research in and through Cinema

Study Guide

This Study Guide describes the educational vision of the Master of Film-programme and outlines its translation into the content of the programme. The study guide is complementary to the 'Teaching and Examination Regulations (2021-2022)'. No rights can be derived from the text in this Study Guide.

PREAMBLE

After careful consideration the Master of Film-team decided to postpone the start of the newgroup Master of Film-researchers for a year, until September 2021. This means that for the academic year 2021 /2022, we will only be teaching semesters 1 and 2 to our first-year master students

OUR VISION

The value of artistic research

We believe in the intrinsic value of art and its critical contribution to society. Research is an integral part of art. Grounded as it is in the practice of art, or, in our case, the practice of filmmaking, artistic research produces knowledge. Knowledge relevant to the worlds of art – all major movements in cinema were the result of artistic research – but also knowledge that extends beyond the arts or cinema. Thus, our Master's programme 'Artistic Research in and through Cinema' can be said to operate at the crossroads where art practice meets production of knowledge.

Our view on education

We believe that education is about creating 'conditions of possibility'. It is about creating a framework in which students (or 'researchers' as we prefer to call them) are given the space to shape their own development. This framework requires a focus on process rather than product, a non-hierarchical relation between teachers and researchers, an understanding of subjectivity as driving force, and an emphasis on the group as a context of support rather than competition.

We focus on process rather than product because we believe that researchers who learn how to steer their own processes are more flexible and therefore more capable of adapting to continuously changing circumstances and professional demands.

The emphasis on a democratic or non-hierarchical relation between teachers and researchers is born from our understanding that education is a space of learning, not just for the researchers but also for the teachers, mentors and all the others that are part of our 'learning community'.

Creating 'conditions of possibility' means taking seriously individual differences and individual needs and desires. Understanding them, 'owning' them and using them to carve out one's trajectory, makes subjectivity a driving force of the learning and research process.

Emphasising the group as a necessary support structure for development, doesn't stand in contradiction to the focus on subjectivity as a driving force. On the contrary: successful groups need individuals who recognize their responsibility towards their work and learning processes. This recognition will create respect for other voices and thus prevent a sense of competition.

Artistic Research in and through Cinema

Our practice driven MA-programme has a clear focus: artistic research in and through cinema. This focus sets it apart from other film programmes, both in film or art schools and in universities.

We define 'artistic research' as an open-ended trajectory in which thinking and making are one, and which privileges questions over answers, process over product, experimentation over mere execution and long-term effects over short term gain. 'Artistic research' is neither a discipline nor a methodology. Instead, it's a state of mind, a 'mentality' or an attitude.

'Artistic research in and through cinema' means thinking through images and sounds. It means starting from the practice, knowledge, and perspectives of filmmaking, and using its accompanying concepts and language.

Thus, researching 'in and through' cinema refers to research through the frame, notions and paradigm of the filmmaking practice. The research 'in' revolves around questions of the cinema practice itself – spectatorship, perception, storytelling, modes of production, ethics et cetera – while, in addition, research 'through' relates to the use of cinematic conditions and concepts to explore topics and fields beyond cinema – topics such as memory, trauma, archival practices, human relations or identity for example.

Programme structure

The 2-year full-time, English spoken MA-programme (120 EC) is divided into 4 semesters that each have their own focus. Together they create an ongoing research cycle of which the exams are an integral part. The programme uses three pedagogical 'tools' and provides a research budget. It is also closely linked to the Film Academy's Research Group.

The four terms and their focus

Semester 1. Subjectivity and positioning

To understand 'from where you speak' and to take responsibility for that 'point of view' is perhaps the most important precondition for artistic research and for any artistic practice. This is why our programme starts from this notion of 'subjectivity'. It determines what you do, how and why; it's a position towards yourself, your work and the world. This is not to say though that it's a given, on the contrary: subjectivity itself is a process and a space of research and exploration. Although it is related to questions of identity and psychology, 'subjectivity' cannot be reduced to autobiography. It is instead about authorship, about developing your singular vision and defending it.

This notion of subjectivity underlies all other semesters.

Semester 2. Method and methodology

Finding your own (working) method and (research) methodology is the focus of semester 2. We do not believe that there is, or should be, a predetermined or fixed methodology for artistic research in and through cinema. In line with our focus on subjectivity we believe that the methods of artistic research are individual, subjective, and singular. In fact, we believe that what makes your 'artistic signature' is your singular research and production methodology.

Semester 3. Exploration and experimentation

Semester 3 is devoted to further exploring your research theme or project in an experimental manner. Experimentation in art and artistic research has less to do with testing assumptions or checking working methods, technologies, or production strategies. Instead, artistic exploration and experimentation is about being open to surprises, detours, and unexpected encounters – with knowledge, materials, references,

technologies, and people. Tracing, documenting, and communicating that subjective process of exploration is part and parcel of the experimental attitude.

Semester 4. Conceptualisation and communication

The practice of art and artistic research organically leads to a desire or need of conceptualisation, of zooming out from the particularities to see a bigger picture, a wider context in which the research figures or can be meaningful. Like methodology and experimentation, conceptualisation starts from the researcher's subjective understanding of concepts and notions used. Conceptualisation is at the core of artistic research as it enables insights, produces knowledge, and gives rise to new questions. Part of the conceptualisation process is also, finally, how to share or communicate these insights and new questions with others.

Exams

Understanding the 4-semester programme as a dynamic process, the 'exams' that conclude every semester are considered milestones in that process: moments to take stock of what you have done, how you evaluate that and how you wish to go on. Even the last exam, at the end of the second year, and the subsequent public presentation of your research project during the Artistic Research Week is considered a moment in an ongoing process, albeit an important one. Each exam is dedicated to the theme of the semester and all exams, except for the first one, involve external examiners from the professional field.

Three pedagogical 'tools'

There are three integrated pedagogical 'tools' that are in place to enable your artistic research journey: the curriculum, core 'teaching' system and the group.

The curriculum

The curriculum is made up of workshops that take your research interests as its material to work with. All workshops combine practice and reflection and are taught or moderated by filmmakers and artists whose own practice can itself be described as invested with an artistic research ethos. Aside from these workshops, there are regular inspiring public lectures by filmmakers, artists, philosophers, or scientists, related to the theme of the semester.

Although it's a full-time programme, there's a distinction in the density of workshops between the first and second year. Whereas year 1 is primarily organised around workshops, year 2 focuses more on your individual research project and therefore has fewer workshops.

The Core Teachers Team

You will be supported throughout your research process by a team of four core teachers, including the Head of the Program, who will engage with your research, both individually and collectively in small research groups. We conceive of a research environment that is premised on peer learning and self-directed research anchored in continuous professional dialogue, for which you also need to take responsibility. Group and individual consultation sessions with the core teachers are aimed at strengthening your research abilities through systematic reflection on your practice.

As the designers of the curriculum, the core teachers will be able to help you in understanding what is expected of you in the particular stage of the semester, understanding the key notions and concepts (subjectivity, methodology, experimentation, conceptualization), exam requirements etc. All core and guest teachers and most, if not all external advisors are artist-researchers themselves.

The peer group

Every year we select no more than ten researchers based on their CV, portfolio, and research interests, aiming to create a group that is inclusive in terms of gender, race, nationality, origin and professional or artistic background. Because of its creative level and its diversity, the group will provide a stimulating and supportive environment for all.

Generally, we believe that the group is a very important, if not the most important learning tool. This is also why, particularly in the first year, there are many collective workshops, collaborative group research activities and why we place a great importance on peer feedback. For this we use a specific technique that understands feedback not as a tool to judge but as a tool to think.

Budget

You will have a research budget to your disposal of around €10.000, which you can use to pay for fees for people you work with – including your external advisors -, rental of equipment (if the equipment is not available at the school), travel and festival visits, et cetera. Part of the budget is kept aside to pay for the concluding public presentation of your research during the Artistic Research Week at the end of the second year.

As a researcher you're of course also entitled to use the Film Academy's equipment and facilities.

OUR PROGRAMME

Semester 1 SUBJECTIVITY AND POSITIONING (September – December; programme is subject to change)

Focus, structure, goals, final qualifications

The focus of the first semester is on 'subjectivity' and 'positioning', described as understanding from where you speak and taking responsibility for that point of view. Subjectivity determines what you do, how and why; it's the position or point of view you take, or rather: develop, towards yourself, your work, and the world. Positioning relates to an understanding of the fields or references that are of importance to you, your (previous and present) work and your research, and why.

The specific goals of the semester are described as follows. The student/researcher can:

- articulate his/her understanding of subjectivity in relation to his/her own present artistic research interests
- review his/her earlier practice and trajectory in relation to his/her present artistic research interests
- envision or project ways to further explore his artistic research interests
- articulate an understanding of the need to position oneself and one's practice in relation to one's earlier practice and interests, and within relevant fields
- develop a way to trace, document and archive his/her artistic research process
- creatively express him- or herself

The final qualifications (or most important intended learning outcomes) for this semester are:

1a. The graduate understands the importance of subjectivity for artistic research and can relate it to his/her own artistic research process and practice

1b. The graduate is aware of the need to contextualise and position his/her artistic research and practice

Input moments/weeks

- The first input week of semester 1- as of all semesters in the program, is the general introduction of the theme of the semester.
- Every input moment ends with an assignment (or set of assignments) to be worked on in the weeks until the next input moment.
- Every input moment lands in the beginning of the next one.
- Although every input moment takes a week, it doesn't need to be a single workshop, nor does it necessarily imply 5 straight days of teaching.

Group moments/weeks

- Group moments can be of different length, depending on the purpose of the group moment (the assignment following on from the input moment) & on the initiative of the group itself.
- Group moments can also be used for one-day workshops, proposed by the group (for example at the end of the introductory input at the beginning of a semester).

Individual working weeks-

- The researchers will have an opportunity to work on their research and professional development/obligations

Public lectures

- The Public Lectures are part and parcel of the curriculum; they are linked to the theme of the semester.
- The Public Lectures are held regularly (preferably during the 'group weeks' to reinforce their structure).
- The lecture can be followed up, the next day, with a meeting with the researchers.

Research consultations

- One-on- one's with two core teachers responsible for the semester are primarily focused on the theme and requirements of the semester programme.

External advice/mentoring

- You are encouraged to find external advisors who can support your research in a more specific or in-depth way. Depending on the nature of your research and your needs, it could be a single advisor or different ones at different moments of your process. You have a budget to pay them.

Festivals

- Festivals (IDFA, IFFR) are a good way for you to connect to the (Dutch) outside world.

Exams

- Exams are important milestones in the research trajectory – looking backwards and forwards, supported by evidence - but they are not where the semester lands; it lands after the exam, where you look back at the entire semester including the exam.

Workshops

Workshops are the key input format in which each researcher's teaching and learning trajectory is supported within the semester structure. The workshops are delivered by the core teachers and guest teachers. The content of the workshops is thematically related to the semester goals. The workshops consist of presentations and practice-based assignments or outputs for the student researchers.

Workshop 1: Subjectivity and Position – an introduction

Nduka Mntambo, belit sag, Diana Toucedo and Katarina Zdjelar

The Core Teaching Team consisting of belit sag, Diana Toucedo, Katarina Zdjelar and Nduka Mntambo will introduce, through their own artistic practices, notions of subjectivity and positioning. The workshop presentations will also be mobilised to introduce the Feedback Model which will be used in the MA program. The workshops will also introduce preliminary ideas of mapping, the initial stages of the researchers' questions in a collaborative fashion, teasing out conceptual affinities amongst the researchers and exploring ways of working as peers.

Workshop 2: - Writing Through Editing Workshop

Sabine Groenewegen

This workshop will explore editing as a tool for research, and a site for conversation, exploration, exchange, thinking writing. Through montage assignments the workshop invites you to explore working with archival material as a way to sit with questions and share them with peers and conduct and open up your research concerns through making and collective exchanges. Beyond a craft to consolidate and convey story and meaning during the final phase of a project, we consider editing not as a step-in storytelling but as a way to play, discover, take-apart and put back together, speculate, share, submerge, essay, confuse, clarify, rebel and question hierarchies and production circumstances. Editing experiments will function as sites of conversation and exchange. Apart from experimenting and collective work, the workshop focuses on case studies of subversive (collective) filmmaking practices.

Workshop 3: Tracing, documenting, and archiving research

Stanisław Liguziński

The workshop will introduce concepts of tracing, documenting, and archiving our research processes and reflect on how to render our immaterial experiences into *material witnesses* of what we're currently going through. Over the course of 3 consecutive days, through a combination of close reading exercises, individual and group assignments, and structured discussions/feedback we will revise the notion of the archive in relation to the artistic research process in general, and researchers' trajectories. Juxtaposing the reflection on archiving practices with practical exercises and design challenges, we will try to set up foundations for appropriate archiving models corresponding with researchers' goals, questions and methods.

Workshop 4: Film as Nomadic Collectivity

Kumjana Novakova

This two-day workshop that will look at the processes of designing conceptual structures in film research that will allow to comprehend the unity and the interdependence of the human, the bodily and its historical 'others' at the moment when these others reappear to disrupt the humanistic and anthropocentric worldview. Thus, we will search for the possibility of becoming of the (nonfiction) film, its possibility for growing a subjectivity – as a nomadic device of accountability and care – as a form of new thinking

Workshop 5: Encounters with Alumni of NFA Master of Film

Stefan Pavlovic: 16 November

Bogomir Doring: 17 November

Eliane Esther Bots – 17 November

These half-day encounters are conceived as space in which the Master of Film Alumni shares their research trajectories and creative work with the current cohort of student-researchers.

The encounters are designed to be a creative site of exchange between researchers in ways that are inspiring and generative.

In the first iteration, Stefan Pavlovic will present his film first feature length film *Looking for Horses*, a poetic documentary exploring the connection between language and friendship.

Bogomir Doringer will present two long research projects, FACELESS and Dance of Urgency. He established the term "dance of urgency" as a dance that rises in times of personal and collective crises, and such a dance aims to empower individuals and groups. Between 2012-2015 he curated an international series of exhibitions and events tackling the social meaning of the personal image under the title 'FACELESS'. His interest inspired the project in the recurring presence of hidden faces in contemporary society after September 11th and the ritual of masking.

Eliane Esther Bots will present her film *In the Flow of Words*, the documentary follows the narratives of three interpreters of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. They interpreted shocking testimonies from witnesses, victims and perpetrators, without ever allowing their own emotions, feelings and personal histories to be present. Contrary to their position at the tribunal, this film places their voices and experiences center stage.

Workshop 6: One is Always a Plural: moving together over distance

Yael Davids

Everything departs from and returns to the body. The body is as much my medium as it is my method. The body as a registrant of time, as a vessel of collective and singular memory, as an entity that occupies and traverses literal, cultural and political geographies. In its genesis and conclusion alike, the body and all that it houses — a private biography and an equally finite, unique voice — must necessarily rely on encounters with others. One is always plural. I have made it a daily practice to closely examine the meeting points — one could say the axis, the connection — between different sites of knowledge. That is to say: what the right foot is trying to announce to the left hand. The connection between seemingly distant entities, voices, places, histories.

Exam 1

The purpose or goal of the exam is to discuss and assess your process during the first semester considering the theme of the semester (subjectivity and positioning) and your research interests. The exam consists of material to be handed in before, an audio-visual presentation and a Q&A with the committee of examiners. The committee consists of one external examiners from the professional field, one internal examiner (core teacher) and the head of the department (chairperson of the exam committee). One of the core teachers and a critical friend (peer student-researcher) are present as well. The different criteria of assessment, for each of the exam parts, relate to the two final qualifications mentioned before:

- 1a. The graduate has the capacity to understand, develop and creatively express his/her subjective identity
- 1b. The graduate has developed an awareness of context and position

General framework

The exam procedure consists of two elements:

1. material that you hand in beforehand:

- a critical review + 'evidence'
- draft or sketch for a 'container' for the tracing and documenting of your process

2. an oral exam consisting of two parts

- a 10-minute visual presentation for the committee of examiners and your colleague students
- a 30-minute individual examination by the committee

SEMESTER 2: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY (January – July; programme is subject to change)

Focus, structure, goals, final qualifications

The *focus* of the second semester is on you finding your own (working) method and (research) methodology. There's no such thing as a given methodology for artistic research. Like in your work, it's your own voice that needs to resound in the methods you choose.

The *structure* of the semester is such that it allows you to experience and play with different approaches you can use to sharpen your research interest with, or against. These are of course but a selection of possible methods and you're invited to find or develop your own. After an introductory workshop on the theme of the semester, the second block or period consists of different workshops, together forming a range of possible ways to approach your research. Like in semester 1 workshops – combining practice and reflection - are interspersed with core teachers' consultations, feedback sessions and public lectures. The semester formally concludes with an exam, as a milestone, in which you look back at semester 2 in terms of methodology and look forward to year 2 and specifically to semester 3, exploration and experimentation.

The specific *goals* of the semester are described as follows. The student/researcher can:

- frame his/her field of research
- find and express his /her method (in view of other possible methods)
- undertake preliminary research & provide 'evidence' for it
- articulate a proposal for a research project
- defend the relevance of his /her research and research project
- critically review his/her ongoing process
- creatively express him- or herself

The *final qualifications* (or 'most important intended learning outcomes') for this semester are:

2a. The graduate has mastered his/her own method(s) after reviewing existing methods.

2b. The graduate can initiate and steer a process of research and production

Recurring programme elements

Workshops

Workshops are the key input format in which each researcher's teaching and learning trajectory is supported within the semester structure. The workshops are delivered by the core teachers and guest teachers, the content of the workshops is thematically related to the semester goals. The workshops consist of seminar type presentations and practice-based assignments or outputs for the student researchers.

Workshop 1: Method and methodology

The MA CORE Teachers team belit sag, Diana Toucendo, Katarina Zdjelar and Nduka Mntambo will introduce the Semester 2 Method and Methodology through a series of seminars, workshops, screenings, and an assignment in which the researchers will be invited to reflect on their individual methods of making work as entry points of exploring the themes of the semester.

Nduka Mntambo- Methodological abundance

What does artistic research offer us as a method, and why foreground the nature and procedures of this nascent 'discipline' as an antidote to established academic research processes and methodologies. The seminar in the first instance, invites the participants to explore their research methods (ways of working) and methodologies (rationale for adopting a particular ways of working), not as neutral academic/for

product exercise, but activities that has something at stake and occurs in a set of political, epistemological, and social conditions.

Workshop 2: Gigantic cinema- Writing as Method

Kate Briggs

In this sequence of two workshops and intervening activities participants will practice methods of writing the weather. The weather: an apparently shared condition, experienced in ways that are highly socialized, historicized, politicized, unequal and individuated. For the duration of our workshop, the huge category of the local weather will be the subject of our collective inquiry, exposing us to questions about the relations between the impersonal and the personal, the social (the cultural) and the biographical, as well as atmospheres and moods (how they are produced and changed), forces and energies, the responsivity of bodies and surfaces, narratives ('plots'), durations and interruptions.

Workshop 3: Lecture & workshop with Janis Rafa

Janis Rafa

"Janis Rafa's moving image work balances between an empirical perception of landscapes and events and an authentic representation of them. Her narratives are located at the margins of the urban, haunted by stray dogs, roadkills, hunted prey, forgotten ruins, abandonment, and dissipated death. Dead and living, human and non-human beings coexist in an accord of dream and sensuality forming a visual language that relies on muteness, physicality and the tactile. The cryptic and universal nature of these cinematic worlds is initiated by a certain realism that has very little to do with its usual representation, searching for the invisible, the mythical and the occult. Rituals of farewelling, burying, or unearthing, submitting or revenging form a circular pattern of narration in which the nonhuman agency is recognized to reveal political and ethical dimensions, as another kind of archaeology."

Janis Rafa will screen her first feature *Kala Azar* and give a lecture. The next day she will hold a daylong session with researchers on the observational as a cinematic method.

Workshop 4: Thinking through filming

Albert Elings and Eugenie Jansen

Understanding that the focus of the semester is on methodology, this workshop *offers a* practical look on how the very act of making film (be it shooting, preparing, or editing) can be a tool to find out more about your own way of working and seeing the world. From this practice we try to find possible personal methods with which you can engage your research question. Starting from the research questions where the participants are engaged in right now, we will try to find out new ways of exploring them by using the elements of the very medium the project will be realized in: Images, Sounds, Music, Texts, Graphics and Edits

Workshop 5: The Essayistic as a method

Stanisław Liguziński, Sabine Groenewegen

In the workshop, we explore 'the essayistic' as a method of engagement with cinematic material. We use the essayistic as a flexible, customizable frame of thinking through making, which allows for defamiliarization of your POV, objects and methods through experimentation. By watching and discussing examples, thinking through reading and through a series of exercises we explore devices and registers useful to research practices of the participants and work towards appropriating these devices into the researcher's ongoing research process.

Workshop 6: Encounters Workshop

Sabeth Buchmann, Stella Bruzzi

These workshops are conceived as day long encounters with different practitioners/thinkers who would offer the student researchers in the program insights into their work as a way of enhancing and stimulating the conceptual and methodological frameworks.

Workshop 7: Researchers Curated Workshop Week

Given the strong peer driven and non-hierarchical curriculum design ethos of our program, this week offers the student researchers an opportunity to conceptualize and curate the input workshop for the week.

Workshop 8: Expanded film practices

Carlos Casas

The work of Carlos Casas stands in the crossover of documentary film, sound, and visual arts, trying to extend the boundaries of contemporary visual experience, with the manners of an anthropologist and the goals of a visual artist, his works document with poetry and accuracy environments and people who can be found in the limits of our planet. A week-long workshop about expanded film practices and methodologies, touching upon cross discipline attitudes within film, experimental film, research film, art film, installation, and live cinema. An introduction and deep travel into new sensorial approach to audiovisual work, with special emphasis on sound and experiential technology within the senses. With a focus on Hybridity and interconnection within art, cinema, scientific and ethnographic practices processes and methods. A series of exercises and projects will be proposed to question conceptual approach as well as alternative modes of presentation within film and art contexts.

Group Assignments

Group assignments are planned in a way that will allow for each contributor to incorporate elements of his/her/their own research in the process. It does not have to necessarily become a part of any researcher's project, but it should always be relevant to his/her/their research. Each group assignment has its "landing moment" where the results are going to be reflected upon, so the experience can be salvaged and reapplied as a learning moment in the development of an individual research trajectory.

Research Consultations

In between the different workshops there will be sessions with the core teachers to recap and reflect on what you've taken from the workshops and subsequently what steps you will take in your own research.

Feedback sessions

An important part of the group as a learning tool consists of the use of a specific feedback method. This method sees giving and getting feedback not as a moment of judgement but as a moment of collective thinking and learning. Feedback sessions are a regular feature of the programme.

Public Lecture Series

Every three weeks the Master organizes public lectures, for which she invites filmmakers, visual artists, philosophers, or scientists to share their work, perspectives, and research. Where possible These lectures are connected to the theme(s) of the semester.

Exam 2

The purpose of this exam is to discuss and assess the progress you've made in the second semester of the master's course regarding your research project. The exam consists of material to be handed in before, a (public) audio-visual presentation and a Q&A with the committee of examiners. The committee consists of two external examiners from the professional field and the head of the department. One of the core teachers and a critical friend – one of your peers - are present as well. Like the semester as a whole, the focus of the exam is on 'methodology' and relates specifically to two of the four sets of final qualifications.

- 2a. the graduate has mastered his/her own artistic research method(s) after reviewing existing methods
- 2b. the graduate can initiate and steer a process of artistic research in and through cinema

General framework

The exam procedure consists of two elements:

1. material that you hand in beforehand:
 - a critical review including evidence (looking back)
 - a research project-dossier including evidence (looking forward)
 2. an oral exam consisting of two parts
 - a 10-minute visual presentation for the committee of examiners and your colleague students
 - a 30-minute individual examination by the committee
-