

Master of Film – Artistic Research in and through Cinema

Study Guide 2020 - 2021

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 2019 - 2020'. No rights can be derived from the text in this Study Guide.

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 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, last but not least, 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, the mentoring 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 focusses more on your individual research project and therefore has fewer workshops.

The mentoring system

You will be supported throughout your research process by a team of mentors, who will mentor and tutor you both individually and collectively in small research groups. We conceive of mentoring as a continuous professional dialogue, for which you also need to take responsibility. Mentoring sessions are aimed at strengthening your research abilities through systematic reflection on your practice.

At the end of the first year you're stimulated 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.

All mentors and most, if not all external advisors are artist-researchers themselves.

The peer group

Every year we select no more than ten researchers on the basis of 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 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

After careful consideration the Master of Film-team has decided to postpone the start of the new group Master of Film-researchers for a year, until September 2021. The ongoing Corona situation and the uncertainty that goes with it, led us to this decision. This means there we will only be teaching semesters 3 and 4 to our second year master students.

SEMESTER 3: EXPLORATION AND EXPERIMENTATION (September – January 2021; programme is subject to change)

Focus, structure, goals, final qualifications

The *focus* of the third semester is on further exploring your research theme or project in an experimental manner, open to surprises, detours and unexpected encounters. Tracing, documenting and communicating that subjective process of exploration is part and parcel of the experimental attitude.

The *structure* of the semester is such that the focus is on your individual research project. The introduction to the semester took place before the summer – see under semester 2 – as we assume that you'll be working on your research project through (part of) the summer and the first month of the new term. The semester itself only has a few workshops, reflecting on the 'outcomes' of your research thus far and thinking about the relation between form, content and presentation of your research project. These workshops, as usual, combine practice and reflection. Although you will work on your research with external advisors (of your choosing), there will also be mentor meetings, feedback sessions and public lectures.

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

- set up and organize a process of creative experimental research
- produce and execute research plans
- implement acquired knowledge and gained experimental practice into subsequent production process

- evaluate, communicate and discuss the process and the results of the production/ experiments conducted
- creatively express him- or herself

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

3a. The graduate is able to explore by creative experimentation

3b. The graduate can open up possibilities of innovation through experimentation

Workshops

Research update presentations

After your working period over the summer the research update days offer you the possibility to share the current state of your findings with the other researchers; what did you experience working by yourself these months, what territory did you explore, what expertise did you gain? It is an active work format that you can design yourself based on your own research outcomes and the type of input you need. The outcome of these research updates is a working plan for semester 3, possible collaborations within the group based on common grounds and a plan how to make use of the research support (external advisors, experts and mentors).

Retreat (Albert Elings and Eugenie Jansen)

An intensive working period of a week spent together in a location outside of the academy, either abroad or in the Netherlands together with your peers and externals. The aim of the retreat is to conceptualise your research, develop a working plan for semester 4 and to get you in a ‘making’ mode.

Forms and Formats (Rada Sestic)

The focus of the workshop is on raising awareness and understanding the importance of re-thinking where you are in the process and finding the most suitable form and format to communicate your research/project.

Experiment - Experience - Expertise (Sabine Groenewegen, Stanisław Liguziński)

A 3-day workshop combining mapping and one-on-one sessions towards sharing experiential evidence. Towards the end of the third semester, we work on the formulation of experience-based epistemology. You experiment and gain experience, which in turns becomes the source of your expertise; knowledge validated by the evidence of practice. It isn’t the conceptual framework, but the context of practice-based research, that produces the body of work/evidence validating your practice.

Recurring programme elements

Mentor days

In between the different workshops there will be sessions with the mentors 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 consist 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.

Master Lecture Series (online)

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 3

The purpose of this exam is to decide whether or not your research project has developed enough for you to start preparing for the final exam and the public presentation during the Artistic Research Week in June 2020. Discussing and assessing (the update of) your research process during the semester in light of the theme of the semester (exploration and experimentation), the exam also looks forward to how you intend to continue with your research project and what ideas you have for presenting both process and project at the end of the next semester. Like in earlier semesters, 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 the head of the department and two external examiners from the professional field and one of the mentors. The different criteria of assessment, for each of the exam parts, relate to the two final qualifications mentioned before:

3a. The graduate is able to explore by creative experimentation

3b. The graduate can open up possibilities of innovation through experimentation

SEMESTER 4: CONCEPTUALISATION AND COMMUNICATION (January – August 2021; programme is subject to change)

Focus, structure, goals, final qualifications

The *focus* of the fourth semester is on zooming out from the particularities of your research project to see a bigger picture or a wider context in which the research figures or can be meaningful.

Conceptualisation is at the core of artistic research as it enables insights, produces knowledge and gives rise to new questions. How to communicate these insights and new questions to others is an integral part of conceptualisation.

The *structure* of the semester continues the focus on your individual research project. Like in semester 3 there will only be a few workshops – focusing on the conceptualization of your process and project and on how to choose appropriate forms to communicate both to a diversity of audiences. Aside from working with your external advisors, there will be mentor meetings, feedback sessions and public lectures. You will publicly present your research project during the Artistic Research Week at the end of June in the EYE Film Museum. The final exam takes place some 3 weeks before, to give you time to incorporate the examiners' observations in your public presentation. During this last period, you will be supported, not just by mentors and external advisors but also by the curatorial team of the Artistic Research Week.

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

- accomplish his/her research and creative project
- conceptualise and creatively present his/her project or project proposal
- conceptualise and contextualise the research (outcome)
- present the research outcome in an appropriate and original form
- demonstrate a subjective understanding of the relation between research and project
- communicate the research process
- creatively express him- or herself

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

- 4a. The graduate can reflect on and present his/her process and outcome(s)
- 4b. The graduate has the ability to conceptualise his/her point of view

Workshops

Conceptualisation (Eliane Esther Bots and Francesco Ragazzi)

Now that the finalisation of your artistic research journey is nearing its end, it is time to step a bit aside, and reflect on how your specific research is part of a larger frame. Thus, again to reflect on your artistic practices *In and Through Cinema*. This workshop will give you the opportunity for such a reflection, and also focus on how to include the broader perspective in your research outputs.

Visual abstract (Patrick Minks)

For your graduation you will also be presenting a visual abstract, a trailer summarizing your research. Editor and filmmaker Patrick Minks will guide you through this process.

Communication (Rada Sestic)

The focus of this workshop is helping you explore and define how you will present your project and your research outcome in the final stage of your MA trajectory. You will get to know the film industry standard communication models and terminology; explore if and how do they apply or could be transformed and customized to your own project and research presentation; explore and try out alternative methods and ways of communication and presentation.

Retreat (optional)

A retreat with your peers to focus on the final outcomes for both exam 4 and the Artistic research week. This will be the moment to come up with a common theme and a group plan on what and how to present together.

Presentation of your research project

Regular meetings with the curator(s) of the graduation presentations to talk about possible ways to present your research.

Recurring programme elements

Mentor days

In between the different workshops there will be sessions with the mentors 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 consist 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.

Master 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 4

The purpose of this exam is to decide whether you have sufficiently acquired the qualifications of the Master's programme in order to graduate. The exam is meant to discuss and assess the overall process and outcomes of the two years of your research and your concrete plans for the public presentation of it during the Artistic Research Week in June. As the exam takes place some 3 weeks before the Artistic Research Week, you can take on board the comments and suggestions of the examiners while preparing for that public presentation.

Like in earlier semesters, 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 the head of the department and three external examiners from the international professional field. And one of the mentors will also be present. The different criteria of assessment, for each of the exam parts, relate to the two final qualifications mentioned before:

- 4a. The graduate can reflect on and present his/her process and outcome(s)
- 4b. The graduate has the ability to conceptualize his/her point of view