

# Artist Roles in Art and Research Projects



## Abstract

There has been a recent and exciting shift in academic research landscapes: researchers are increasingly interested in integrating art into their projects.

This resource was created to outline the many ways in which artists might lead, support, or become involved in research projects. It also considers some of the tensions and benefits that artists might experience while engaging in research.

Clear understandings of artists' roles and contributions in arts-research projects can guide choices about adequate and appropriate recognition and compensation for artists, and funding for arts-research projects. A separate resource – Centre[4]'s Art and Research Compensation Guidelines – may also be helpful in planning fair compensation for artists.

## Administrative Details

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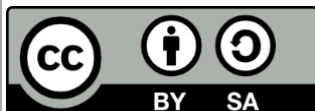
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Centre[4] Art and Research

It is important to note that the term ‘research’ can be understood and interpreted differently depending on context. In a project where the artist is the lead, for example, processes of inquiry may be understood and referred to differently than they are within academic contexts. They may not be called research at all.

Projects that happen at the intersection of art and research often involve community participation at a variety of different levels. For example, if an artist has a role in a community-based participatory research project (CBPR), they could be making decisions alongside community members as well as researchers.

In this document we outline a range of ways artists might be involved in research projects, as well as considerations for and examples of each of these roles. The artist roles that we have identified are:

- As the project lead
- As a co-investigator with a university-based researcher
- As a consultant
- As an arts facilitator, generating research data
- As an analyst of research data
- As a translator or mobilizer of research knowledge

In practice, these roles often overlap or happen sequentially.

We hope this is useful to you for conceptualizing your project that integrates art and research together. Having concrete descriptions and examples of the various ways that artists may be involved in the research process may aid in project planning, budgeting, and more.

*Centre[4] is currently undertaking a study to learn more about the perspectives and practices of artists whose art projects and/or practices involve research in some way. This study will inform the development of further resources that outline the ways in which art and research intertwine, such as a document /resource about the “Roles of Research in Artistic Projects and Practices”.*

## Artist as Lead

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| Aspects of Role                 | The artist is driving the direction of the research and makes all major decisions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Considerations                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic ways of knowing and doing can provide unique access to layered, challenging and/or nuanced ideas and concepts.</li> <li>• Artists may shape/ create approaches to research that open up transformative possibilities: making research more inclusive; disrupting oppressive and colonial research practices; and expanding understandings of what research can be.</li> <li>• Artists may face difficulties in securing funding and resources for research projects</li> <li>• There can be challenges in gaining recognition and validation for artistic contributions within academic research communities</li> </ul>                  |
| When this role might make sense | An artist integrates or actualizes research or modes of inquiry within the context of their practice and would like to deepen or extend their work through collaboration with academic researchers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Examples                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Cracked on Dementia</a>, a play and film that follow persons with dementia and their families.</li> <li>• <a href="#">The Resemblage Project</a>, a multimedia “text” that uses digital storytelling to animate the intergenerational fabric of the lives of people living in Scarborough.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Transforming Stories, Driving Change</a>, a research and performance initiative that used performance to explore, and then show, how social exclusion affected particular communities in Hamilton, and how these communities were responding. The project was led by Catherine Graham, theatre director.</li> </ul> |

## Artist as Co-Investigator

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| Aspects of Role                 | The artist is working in equal collaboration with a researcher to drive the direction of the research and make major decisions about the research.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Considerations                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As artists and researchers work together, each may learn from the other's skills and expertise and benefit from each other's ways of thinking and doing.</li> <br/> <li>For example, each may bring different:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ skills and expertise,</li> <li>○ access to tools, technologies, spaces,</li> <li>○ involvement with and access to communities,</li> <li>○ lived experiences,</li> <li>○ ways of knowing and doing.</li> </ul> </li> <br/> <li>● Frameworks for integrating art and research (such as arts-based research methods) tend to orient towards infusing research with art as opposed to the other way around or something in the middle. This default framework creates imbalances in power and resources.</li> <br/> <li>● Lack of funding frameworks for equal roles in a project. If a salaried academic works with a freelance artist, for example, finding ways for artist to be paid equitably may be challenging.</li> </ul> |
| When this role might make sense | This role works well when artist and researcher goals and/or intentions align, and they share understandings (or are willing to work towards shared understandings) about equitable collaboration (See C[4]'s <a href="#">Art and Research Partnership Agreement Template</a> ).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Examples                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Sari-Sari Xchange</a>, a community-building research and creation project using Extended Reality to foster new works by artists from the Asian diaspora.</li> <br/> <li>● <a href="#">Standing Ovation</a>, a study about metastatic breast cancer and prostate cancer in which the integration of art was originally conceptualized to facilitate knowledge translation. Once working with the artist, however, this evolved into an equitable collaboration between artists and researchers.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Artist as Consultant            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Aspects of Role                 | The artist offers professional services as an expert in their art practice and/or artistic theory.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Considerations                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For projects in which ongoing collaboration between artist and researcher is not a good fit, the consultant role can provide a more time-limited opportunity for sharing of artistic expertise and/or theoretical knowledge.</li> <li>● There are relatively few funding frameworks and sources for artists to be hired as consultants on research projects.</li> </ul> |
| When this role might make sense | This role has potential to benefit a project where university-based researchers are using or integrating artistic practices without artistic know-how or skill.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Examples                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Making Space for Intimate Citizenship</a>, a three-day workshop that aimed to share knowledge, experiences, and insight about intimate citizenship and people labelled with intellectual disabilities. Artists were consulted in the design and facilitation of arts-based activities for the workshops.</li> </ul>                                         |

| Artist as Arts Facilitator (for data generation) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aspects of Role                                  | The artist creates and/or delivers arts programming as a way of generating research data and/or insight. Data can include many things such as: stories, transcripts, artwork, sound recordings, observations, or reflections.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Considerations                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Artist facilitation can provide different (and potentially more accessible, more engaging, and less oppressive) ways of including research participants.</li> <li>● There are relatively few funding frameworks or sources for this kind of role – though the more limited involvement, if it works for both parties, may not require as much funding as other forms of collaboration.</li> <li>● Although the role of the artist and the expectations of them are centered around data, artists are often left out of discussions and decisions pertaining to data management. This has ethical implications i.e. what counts as data and who owns it? (See also, C[4]'s <a href="#">Art and Research Data Management Plan Template</a>)</li> </ul> |
| When this role might make sense                  | This role may be a good fit for artists with an interest in working with research participants/ community members (but for whom engagement in other parts of the research design/development does not make sense/ work).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Examples                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Arts Etobicoke</a> focused on artist-led data collection to better map and evaluate arts needs and program delivery in Etobicoke.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### Artist as Assistant, Collaborator, or Lead in Data Analysis

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| Aspects of Role                 | The artist is involved in the analysis of the research data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Considerations                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Involving different ways of understanding and working with information can create access for more diverse communities, audiences, knowledge mobilizers, and funders.</li><li>● There are relatively few funding frameworks and sources for this kind of role.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                   |
| When this role might make sense | <p>This role may benefit a project in which the choice to integrate the arts has been made at a later stage in the project.</p> <p>This role may also be beneficial to projects in which researchers are working to find new pathways into understanding their data or utilize alternatives to traditional methods of data analysis. The artist may also benefit from applying their arts practice and theory to a new 'material' or context.</p> |
| Examples                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <a href="#">Arts Etobicoke</a> focused on artist-led data analysis to better map and evaluate arts needs and program delivery in Etobicoke.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Artist as Knowledge Sharer/Mobilizer

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Aspects of Role                 | <p>The artist is involved in either designing and creating ways of sharing research knowledge (this could include arts programming) or providing knowledge sharing tools. Both often happen after the research project has been completed, though ideally knowledge mobilization plans and collaborations are considered from the outset.</p> <p>It is important to specify that for this role, we are describing a context in which an artist's product is used to share knowledge. This differs from a role in which the artist uses their artistic practice or process to generate or share knowledge.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Considerations                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highlights the work of the artist with various audiences/ the artists' expertise at reaching a range of audiences.</li> <li>● Artistic ways of conveying information (potentially) create wider reach and more diverse audiences for the research (i.e. a sensorial representation of data as opposed to a report or article provides different access to the information).</li> <li>● Funding frameworks for this type of work are more accessible and more known to academic funders.</li> <li>● Virtual interactions between researcher and artist are often sufficient in this role.</li> <li>● This role may be considered more transactional and require a lower time investment from the artist than in other roles.</li> <li>● Artistic ways of knowing and doing are not usually integrated into this setup.</li> <li>● Artist's values may bump up against the research/researcher's intentions and/or impacts.</li> </ul> |
| When this role might make sense | <p>This role may be beneficial to projects in which an artist is interested in generating income via their artistic product (as opposed to their artistic process).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Examples                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Thriving Together</a>, a research program that explores the mental health of newcomer children and families in Hamilton. Knowledge about the project was shared in an arts exhibition.</li> <li>● <a href="#">Bodies in Translation</a>, a university-community project that aims to cultivate and research activist art. This video was created to share information about the project and involves the role of a Graphic Recorder. The project as a whole involves artists in many roles.</li> <li>● <a href="#">Wading Through the Weeds</a>, a participatory and arts-based research project that aimed to support pregnant and breast/chest feeding people who consume cannabis. An artist was hired to develop the research report.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     |