

SciArt Project – The Summer School



The last decades have seen an international movement of growing collaboration between science and art. What started as single pioneering initiatives like the *Zentrum für Medientechnologien und Kunst (ZKM)*, established in 1989 in Karlsruhe, gathered speed in the 90s and expanded since the beginning of the new century. Since then, a host of initiatives combining Science and Art with different approaches has flowered. These comprise initiatives at MIT, the Google Creative Lab, *Le Laboratoire*¹, the Science Gallery in Dublin, grants of the Wellcome Trust, up to the growing interest of, e.g., CERN in the noughties. CERN's interest resulted in its own official international programme Arts@CERN, which includes the Collide residency awards, started in 2011/2012, complete with an artist in residence. Initiatives, both artistic and scientific, are so many that an author like Arthur I. Miller speaks of a new avant-garde². On a par with these evolutions, there is a growing consciousness, in scientific as well as artistic circles, of the unprecedented crisis provoked by global warming. Artists, philosophers, scientists, politicians, poets, writers and critics converge with a new sense of urgency, that the changes required to meet the challenges of global warming should provoke a change in society. These movements are fueled by a growing sense of the limits of knowledge, expressed either in a dismissal of classical science (with words as *crisis, limits of knowledge, post-Cartesian science*, etc.), either an understanding that known paradigms are changing (with references to *pluralities of knowledge, systems science, holistic science, new episteme*, etc.).

Understanding these changes – and their intricate convergences – is vital for the JRC, with its mission of support to policy making. For this reason, it has established the SciArt project for the years 2016-2017.

1 An innovation lab in Paris, established by Dave Edwards, later extended to Cambridge)

2 Arthur I. Miller, *Colliding Worlds*, 2014.

3 For a scientific example, see e.g. (one among many), Bruno Latour, *Has Critique run out of Steam*, 2004. For a scientific/activist point of view, see e.g. John Jordan, *The Work of Art (and Activism) in the Age of the Anthropocene*, 2015. While the latter is more activist, Latour's vision refers much more to highly generalized, high-level politics 'for the good of humankind'. This is the concept used in this note.

The SciArt Project intends to map these changes on a philosophical, scientific and artistic plane, with a dual philosophy of, on the one hand, developing a fertile niche for the JRC, and founding it on sound epistemological insights and current SciArt practices; and, on the other, a ‘Do, don’t talk’ attitude towards the collaboration of science, art and society. In this, the project follows the philosophy of the Sciences Po SPEAP initiative⁴, where interventions must be viewed as an ongoing (sociological) experiment, tackling these issues with the greatest determination to understand, follow and steer these changes. As an experiment, it must give rise to evidence-based conclusions on the eventual benefits of really blending science with art and humanities, with the objective, in case of positive conclusions, of extending these collaborations as common practices within the JRC. It is clear that the direction chosen here is the one expressed by the idea of ‘pluralities of knowledge’: that a solution will only come through a re-composition of knowledge, capable of embracing science, art, politics, religion, ... if we are to find a solution to the global crisis.

The JRC SciArt programme intends to investigate these changes and create the conditions, for the JRC, to participate to this movement. It is the direct result of the 2015 Resonances festival, organised by volunteer scientists and other staff of the JRC during the 2015 EXPO in Milan. Loosely centred around the theme of food, it implemented the ‘Do, don’t talk’ philosophy, where scientists met with artists in order to conceive artistic works and/or installations blending science and art – from better communication of scientific results to real SciArt experiments exemplifying scientific principles.

The SciArt programme is contemplating a new festival in 2017, with the same philosophy. To that end, an event called ‘Summer School’ will be organised at the JRC premises in Ispra, at the Lago Maggiore in the province of Varese, from 29 August to 2 September 2016. It consists of a Round table on Policy, followed by an Art/Science Fair in the middle of the week (20 to 31 August), and a Workshop for preparing the Resonances 2017 edition (1 and 2 September).

⁴ Science Po – *Programme d’Expérimentation en Arts et Politique*, see <http://blogs.sciences-po.fr/speap/>

What effective and fruitful policy can the JRC develop in this field where art and science meet? This question will be posed to a Round Table of policy makers, museum curators working on the border between Art and Science, scientists and artists active in the field. These experts will bring their expertise to hands-on meetings, discussing and developing policy proposals for the JRC, together with JRC and EC policy makers, from the Directorates General RTD and CNECT. The SciArt Project Team is still working to have the best – to put them together, to have them discuss, talk and lecture, waving and weaving together, resonating and clashing, to find the way in which the JRC can contribute to this field and better fulfil its mission. For all participants, it is an excellent occasion to weigh on EC policy. Major experts will also be asked to give a lecture to all JRC staff on their own experience, as an introduction for the day's proceedings.

Following the Round Table, the SciArt project will then bring together volunteer scientists with interested artists in a summer workshop. Volunteer scientists and interested artists will meet, present their projects, discuss their work, and see if they can develop, in close collaboration, artistic works and/or installations exemplifying scientific work *or* artistic knowledge. Starting point is the loose theme chosen for the 2017 edition of the Resonances Festival, 'Fairness', in concomitance with the JRC report on Fairness to be published in October 2016. Society will and must be present, as the Resonances Festival wants to bring, a real, hands-on contribution to the integration of art, science and society.

One day of loose events, under the form of a 'Science and Arts Fair' will link the two events on Wednesday, 31 August, and give the occasion for all participants who desire to linger and/or arrive early, an occasion to mingle and discuss.