

Training Creative Acts and Action

Workshop on Artistic Research, hosted by GUI | IUG, Schwerin, Germany

September 18–September 21, 2025



Training Creative Acts and Action

Training Creative Acts and Action is an international, interdisciplinary project that is both an investigation of and powered by artistic research. Integrating innovative approaches from the fields of art historical and media theory, the project will explore the terms ‘training,’ ‘exercise,’ ‘praxis,’ ‘action,’ and ‘mediation’ and the physical factors linked to them. To pursue our aim of an interdisciplinary examination of the possibilities of artistic research in both the space between and the nexus of art and politics, research focused on “what we do when we are thinking” (Hannah Arendt) will be combined with body-centered practices used as means for gaining knowledge. Both the possibilities and limits of art will be critically discussed. We explore the question of immediacy in different fields of action and question the interplay of cause and effect within these fields. With the guidance and input of mentors, young researchers and artists from various institutions in Germany and abroad will, over the course of five modules, develop perspectives on current understandings of the boundary between the creative act and political action.

For the project, the GUI | IUG will be both host and guest in Schwerin, Germany and we will utilize the city and its environs as a concrete case study. We are planning actions with the potential to affect the urban structure itself as well as activities using the city as an object of reflection for our larger investigations.

Method

Though artistic research has arrived in the higher-education discourse in Germany and in much of the world, it is far from being an established field or course of study. And while examples of internationally-recognized artistic doctoral programs can be found as early as the 1970s, the proposition of artistic research as a potentially independent field of scholarship remains a controversial one. This leads to important questions: How can artistic research be methodologically and discursively situated? Often quite apart from the surrounding debates, methodologies and infrastructures are already being tested and implemented in this field that encompasses art and academic research in equal measure.

In our workshop, we will critically examine the assumption that artistic research is a methodological and stylistic approach to art, thus shifting the focus from the interplay of art and science to that of **art and art theory**. This means taking up one of the most pressing issues of our time, namely, how the transitional forms of artistic action interact within the political

field of **action**. The workshop is thus dedicated to, on the one hand, a central theme in art and, on the other, questions this as the possible methodological core of a new field.

Key participants:

Prof. Dr. T.J. Demos (Art historian/Cultural critic; UC Santa Cruz; USA)

Prof. Dr. Knut Ebeling (Media theorist; Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin)

Dr. Göze Saner (Scholarly researcher/Performer; London, UK)

Prof. Dr. Nora Sternfeld (Art mediator/Curator; HFBK Hamburg)

Prof. Georg Winter (Artist/Educator; HBK Saar, Germany and Hungary)

As well as ca. 12 young researchers/artists from across the globe

Program

September 17, 2025

- Arrival of participants and mentors

September 18

- **11:00–13:00:** Getting to know each other while taking a tour through Schwerin, along with an introduction to the workshop context and the specific topics of the event. The city will be used as a space for reflection on artistic and political action.
- **14:00–17:00: 1st module, Göze Saner**—An exploration of the concept of *training* in the context of artistic practice. Participants will discuss how technical skills can be connected to interdisciplinary research and critical engagement.
- **From 18:00:** (optional) Dinner together

September 19

- **10:00–13:00: 2nd module, Georg Winter**—Exploring the *exercise* aspect of an art practice. Participants will analyze how repetition and reflection can become acts both creative and critical.
- **14:00–17:00: 3rd module, Knut Ebeling**—Introduction to the theoretical framework of artistic research and the *praxes* that can emerge from it. Participants will evaluate corresponding exercises derived from these frameworks (such as meditation, body awareness, thought experiments, etc).
- **From 18:00:** (optional) Dinner together

September 20

- **10:00–13:00: 4th module, T.J. Demos**—Discussion and practical examination of the concept of *action* within political art practice. Addressing the role of art as political action as well as art’s limits, which can also be generative through a questioning of the immediacy of connection between motivations and effects. Participants will analyze how art can initiate social and political change.
- **14:00–17:00: 5th module, Nora Sternfeld**—Reflection on the concept of *mediation* as a response to social and political events. Special attention will be paid to art mediation as an emancipatory tool that can open up discourses on power relations and social norms.
- **From 18:00:** (optional) Dinner together

September 21

- **10:00–13:00: Closing Discussion and Farewells**

Modules:

[1] The concept of *training* is most often understood in artistic contexts as referring to the development of technical skills. This can entail, however, not only manual repetition, but also interdisciplinary methods of reflection on specific mediums or praxes. In **Göze Saner**’s practice, training is understood as something concerned with more than mere technique, as, rather, a process of profound cogitation. Saner, who in her work regularly addresses the interplay of body, space, and social dynamics, uses training not only as a methodological tool for teaching skills to solo performers (including actors, dancers, and artists), but also as a means of engaging with the social and political dimensions of embodied exploration.

[2] While the concept of *exercise* often simply refers to the necessary prerequisite for the development of physical ability, it can also be understood as a “thinking with the body.” In **Georg Winter**’s artworks, exercise is regarded as a transfer process of “thinking into form,” one that emphasizes, often in playfully provocative ways, both repetition and reflection on the artistic act itself. For Winter, exercise denotes more than just the possibility of optimal execution; rather, it becomes the very basis for a continuous dialogue between artist, work, and viewer, one in which the boundaries between participation and authorship oftentimes dissolve.

[3] The concept of *praxis* is generally understood as the opposite of theory—an understanding that, however, changes in artistic research, wherein theory and practice interpenetrate. Relationships of such epistemic interpenetration can currently be observed in artistic research, fields such as autotheory, and literary forms like autofiction. As a media theorist, **Knut Ebeling** analyzes these relationships of interpenetration—of theory into practice, of knowledge into experience—and applies them to himself in his own autotheoretical writing. In doing so, he disciplines, as it were, into himself the epistemic divisions and exclusions located between

experience and reflection while exploring new medial forms that exist between theory and practice. One such form is meditation as a body-centered praxis, one which at the same time offers a medium for the acquisition of knowledge.

[4] The concept of *action* in political theory as well as in art, denotes an active engagement with the world that can encompass both social and aesthetic dimensions. In his work, **T.J. Demos** addresses the role of art as political action against the backdrop of apocalyptic movements that strive for social change in both their form and praxis. He emphasizes the potential that art has to develop a transformative power through its resistance to existing power structures, while also recognizing and defining art's limits to do so. This view resonates with Hannah Arendt's concept of a "*vita activa*," with which she emphasizes the importance of active involvement for political life.

[5] The concept of *mediation* as a response to social and political events plays a central role in **Nora Sternfeld**'s work. She pays particular attention to art mediation as an emancipatory tool for initiating interrogative discourses on power relations and social norms, one which also facilitates, in a highly affective way, the negotiation and working through of topics and contradictions often lost in the imperative for immediacy.

Application

Workshop Goals:

"Training Creative Acts and Action" is an internationally-oriented, interdisciplinary project that presents—in the form of both content and methodology—innovative approaches to artistic research and media theory. Using the concepts of 'training,' 'exercise,' 'praxis,' 'action,' and 'mediation,' in their physical and social dimensions, invited mentors will collaborate with up-and-coming researchers and artists from various institutions in Germany and abroad to develop perspectives on the interface between the creative act and political action. The project will offer a forum for interdisciplinary exchange, one in which artistic practice and theoretical reflection merge.

The workshop offers graduates and postgraduates from the fields of visual art studies, art history, philosophy, media theory, and studio arts the opportunity to present their research and/or artistic projects and take part in an interdisciplinary exchange. Participants are not only given a platform to present their work, but also the opportunity to further develop their theoretical and practical approaches.

Submission Requirements:

Applicants are requested to submit the following documents via our online form by no later than February 28, 2025, 11:59 pm CET:

1. **Short CV**, in tabular form, providing information on education and relevant projects

2. **Abstract** on a topic/project dealing with the above-mentioned research modalities to be discussed during the workshop; maximum length of 2 standard type-written pages
3. **Choice of a mentor or module**—your own work is then, if possible, presented in the context of this module if possible

Funding:

Participation in the workshop, including travel expenses, accommodation costs, and *per diem* expenses, will be fully covered.

Event Language:

Workshop events will be held in English.

Publication:

Research findings produced during the workshop, visual documentation of group activities, as well as text contributions made by the participants, will be published.

Venue:

Much of the workshop will take place in the historic Säulengebäude in Schwerin's Altstadt. This location and other nearby, off-site destinations will be integrated into the discussion of artistic practices and our reflections on the social and political dimensions of artistic action.

Important Deadlines:

- **Submission deadline for applications:** February 18, 2025, 11:59 pm, CET
- **Notification of selected participants:** no later than March 15, 2025

Contact:

If you have any questions about the application or the workshop, please feel free to email us at info@guenther-uecker-institut.de