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Ariane Berthoin Antal

Institutions: Social Science Research Center Berlin

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Berthoin Antal, Ariane

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When Arts Enter Organizational Spaces: Implications for Organizational Learning

Ariane Berthoin Antal[1]

Abstract: This chapter addresses a new approach to organizational learning, namely, artistic interventions, which encompass a variety of ways that people, products, and practices from the world of the arts enter the world of organizations. Although the field has grown rapidly, little empirical research has been conducted on what actually happens inside organizations during and after artistic interventions. The author argues that, to close gaps and correct for biases in existing work, future research will need to engage multiple stakeholders (employees, artists, managers, intermediaries, and policy-makers), address multiple ways of knowing, especially the neglected bodily senses, and draw on concepts and methods from diverse disciplines.

The need for organizations to learn is undisputed: The speed of technological change, the severity of problems in societies and the natural environment, and the pressure from competitors imply that organizations cannot simply continue doing the same things in the same way and expect to flourish in a sustainable system. The challenge is not limited to the private sector; public sector and civil society organizations are experiencing similar pressures to learn, intensified by shrinking budgets. Although the need is evident, how to address it is not. Of course, numerous techniques to stimulate and sustain organizational learning already exist (Dierkes, Berthoin Antal, Child, & Nonaka, 2001), but the size and scope of problems require experimentation with fresh approaches. A new type of experimentation is "artistic interventions," which bring people, products, and practices from the world of the arts into organizations, with a more or less clearly defined learning orientation.

At first glance this entrance of the world of the arts into the world of organizations may appear either very obvious or very surprising. Different logics underpin these two possibilities, which coexist in practice.

1. The "obvious" connection is that creativity generates new ideas. The arts are associated with creativity, so bringing employees into contact with the arts should develop their creativity. This is an attractively simple solution, based on the assumption that once the creativity of employees is stimulated, it will then automatically be at the service of the organization.
2. The idea is surprising because "to multitudes art seems to be an importation into experience from a foreign country" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 11). The world of arts has its own codes, behaviors, and values, and these are usually[2] perceived to be very different, even diametrically opposed to, those that operate in organizations like companies, hospitals, or municipal authorities. The logic behind the "surprising" idea of bringing the "foreign" world of the arts into organizational spaces is that the discovery of different possible ways of seeing and dealing with the world should permit the organization to learn by expanding its repertoire of potential interpretations and responses (Huber, 1991; Swidler, 1986). New knowledge can emerge from the combination of, or clash between, different bodies and forms of knowledge (Abel, 2008; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Stark, 2009). Clashes between the presumably very different cultures can reveal and challenge the assumptions and routines engrained in the organizational culture and thereby trigger double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Both lines of reasoning have potential, and in combination they may even drive artistic interventions into becoming a new management fad. It is therefore important from the outset to recognize that they also both raise questions. Is it really so obvious that bringing the arts into organizations can stimulate individual creativity and thereby trigger organizational learning? Years of research in organizations, specifically with the power of organizational cultures and the barriers to organizational learning, make the last link in the chain particularly questionable (Berthoin Antal, Lenhardt, & Rosenbrock, 2001). The established ways of

seeing and doing things are embedded in routines and power relations that make it difficult or even dangerous for employees to express new possibilities that challenge existing procedures, structures, and beliefs (Schein, 1993). Psychologists have shown that individual and collective creativity can indeed be stimulated (e.g., Amabile, 1996; Funke, 2009), and interactions with the arts can play an important part in that process (Barry, 1994; KEA, 2009). But under what conditions does the introduction of the arts into organizations make of that space a milieu of creativity in which cultural change is possible (Meusburger, 2009; Meusburger, Funke, & Wunder, 2009)? Similarly, the "surprising" logic that artistic interventions can stimulate organizational learning through the clash of cultures is appealing, but how realistic is it? Research on individual learning from exposure to different cultures suggests that the outcome is far from predictable (Adler, 2002; Friedman & Berthoin Antal, 2005). Confrontations between different people with world views may contribute to strengthening rather than dismantling stereotypes, and they may trigger defensiveness rather than encourage engagement. If mechanistic models that imply an instrumentalization of the arts in organizations are misleading, what kinds of models are appropriate?

The literature in this field is growing rapidly enough to generate curiosity about these questions. In the past decade an increasing number of scholars, consultants, and artists have written about ways of bringing ideas and practices from the world of the arts into organizations (e.g., Adler, 2006; Anderson, Reckhenrich, & Kupp, 2011; Barry & Hansen, 2008; Barry & Meisiek, 2004; Biehl-Missal, 2011b; Brellochs & Schrat, 2005; Chodzinski, 2007; Seifter & Buswick, 2005; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). But too little empirical research has been conducted to provide answers to such questions at this time (Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Berthoin Antal, 2009; Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the phenomenon of artistic interventions in organizations from the perspective of organizational learning, knowledge, and space in order to formulate a research agenda. I start

by illustrating the multiplicity of ways that arts are being brought into organizational spaces, then present some conceptual maps and models that structure the field, highlighting aspects that are relevant for organizational learning. This review shows the need to expand the theoretical framework in future research on organizational learning because artistic interventions have put issues of space and the diverse human senses, to which little attention has been paid to date, squarely on the agenda.

Artistic Interventions in Organizations: A Multifacetted Phenomenon

Artistic interventions, which I define broadly and neutrally[3] as processes in which people, practices, and/or[4] products from the world of the arts enter into the world of organizations, vary greatly along several dimensions, such as time, purpose, and connection to other organizational processes.[5] Some artistic interventions are long term (several months, even years), use multiple art forms, and are embedded in the organizational culture and strategy; however, most are short, lasting hours or days, and use one art form. Many interventions are launched to develop people or to develop the organization (Berthoin Antal, Taylor, & Ladkin, in press); some are intended to develop new ideas for products and services. Interventions are often brought in by a senior manager (e.g., CEO, director of a business unit, head of HR or marketing) who wants to try a new idea and has heard about or experienced an artistic intervention in another context (e.g., conference, business school). Many artistic interventions also come in projects with consultants who draw on artists and artistic processes to complement their approach. The idea of trying an intervention is often introduced by intermediary organizations, which have recently emerged in several countries to bridge between the world of the arts and the world of organizations in various ways. They help organizations define a need and select an artist, they generate funding and provide

guidance during the intervention; some also train artists to enter the workplace (Berthoin Antal, 2011b; Grzelec & Prata, 2013).

There is no complete overview over the past and current artistic interventions that are burgeoning around the world. The intention in this chapter is to start by illustrating the wide variety of possibilities that have been tried in three broad categories—products, people, and practices—as suggested in my working definition of artistic interventions and by Barry and Meisiek's (2010) review of the field of "workarts." In the following pages I focus on artistic interventions at the workplace; however many interesting experiments are underway in schools and communities to address societal issues such as unemployment and peace-building.[6]

Product-based Artistic Interventions

Art collections are the longest lasting (and probably also the oldest) type of artistic intervention in organizations. They are traditionally associated more with impressing stakeholders than with stimulating learning, although there are important exceptions, such as the collection of American magnate Albert C. Barnes, who wanted to edify his employees through art in the first quarter of the 20th century.[7] Many organizations' art collections may still just be about "personal aggrandizement, organizational prestige, and long-term investment and the decoration of the work environment," but a number of collectors are coming to view their art collections as a possible resource for learning to see and think differently in the organization (Barry & Meisiek, 2010, p. 1511). Far from simply decorating the workplace in a pleasing manner, some collections (e.g., EA Generali in Austria and Novo Nordisk in Denmark) are intended to provoke and irritate, thereby generating "creative unrest" and signaling to employees that unusual ideas and projects are welcome in the organization (p. 1512).

I consider an art collection to be an intervention in an organization because it brings products from the world of art into the work space. Artworks are either a presence or an absence on the walls, in the air, and on the ground in an organization. Their presence has the potential to break the routine of the use of organizational space, activate the senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell), and stimulate sense-making, for example by stimulating individual or collective questioning of the purpose, value, and relevance of this art and of art at work in general. When an artwork enters the space, employees may feel it is beautiful, sad, funny, or grotesque, and when objects are replaced or removed, they may feel the space is empty, clear, peaceful, or boring, to name just a few possible responses. In between the arrival and departure of the art, people may welcome it, or they may find it irritating each and every day, and for most the presence may make itself felt entirely subliminally. Employees are most likely to be aware of the art if they engage personally with the collection. For example, Würth, a German company that started its fortunes by making screws and is now a world leader in its field (http://www.wuerth.com), has built a substantial art collection from which employees can choose works to put in their offices. Reinhold Würth and his curator have noticed a development in the way employees select artworks, from having at first wanted pieces from well-known artists to discovering and expressing their own tastes. The implications for organizational learning have yet to be studied.[8]

Artist-led Interventions

Barry and Meisiek (2010) identify a significant shift that occurred in the field "when managers brought artists, rather than artworks, into the workplace to catalyze new perspectives" (p. 1513). This category includes the multitude of activities with musicians, actors, photographers, dancers, and any other potentially interested artists who enter the workplace to interact with employees. The artists draw out the similarities and differences between ways of working and knowing in the world of art and the world of organizations,

show employees how to apply artistic skills to their work, or develop their ability to create artworks. Artist-led interventions vary in the degree of employee participation. For example, some theater-based interventions entail actors putting on a play to illustrate issues in the organization and stimulate discussion about them, whereas others involve employees in acting out a play they create together.[9]

Probably the most wide-ranging and frequently cited example of experimenting with artist-led interventions is the Catalyst program that the multinational company Unilever has in the United Kingdom (Darsø, 2004; Schiuma, 2009). Since its launch in 1999, the program has addressed business issues such as reframing the market, developing feedback and coaching, and stimulating entrepreneurship through almost all conceivable arts, including visual arts, poetry, photography, playwriting, circus performance, and jazz. The activities have taken many forms, ranging from lunchtime activities to evening events in London to arts courses (Boyle & Ottensmeyer, 2004; Buswick, Creamer, & Pinard, 2004, p. 4).

Although few, if any, organizations have worked with artistic interventions as extensively as Unilever, there are many other long-term projects in different countries. In Sweden, for example, an intermediary organization (TILLT) has been placing dancers, actors, writers and other artists in companies, hospitals, and municipal agencies since 2002 to address organizational issues such as improving cooperation across functions or interpreting and applying core values. Over a period of ten months the artist comes into the organization on a part-time basis to work with a team of employees interested in addressing the issue at hand (Styhre & Erikson, 2008). In Spain other intermediary organizations (disonancias and connexiones improbables) have run about thirty placements since 2005 in which international artists help small and medium-sized companies as well as larger organizations to explore new business ideas and new business models over nine months (Berthoin Antal, 2011b; Grzelec & Prata, 2013).

Unlike artist-led interventions in which management defines a relatively clear organizational learning objective, some projects start out with a very open learning brief, namely, "to see what happens" when employees are exposed to artists at work. The earliest example commonly cited is the Artist Placement Group in the UK, which started in 1970 to seek organizations willing to engage in residency projects that would make the organization, its work, and its people the focus of art (Ferro-Thomsen, 2005; Velthuis, 2005). A recent case is Eurogroup Consulting in France, which launched a four-part residency program over two and a half years, during which a conceptual artist or artist collective was invited to spend four to five months creating inside the organization. The program was based on an assumption, not a goal: that the interaction between the artists and the employees during the artistic residency would stimulate fresh ways of seeing the organization, its way of working, and the environment surrounding it (Berthoin Antal, 2011a). A French business school, too, has been experimenting with residencies of this kind for several years, and the project leader has noticed that some members of the staff (but not the professors) have started becoming aware of aesthetic aspects in their work setting and have begun changing the criteria for taking some decisions.

Many companies try out an artistic intervention as a one-off activity from which they hope to get ideas or stimulate new behaviors, whereas others embed them in other programs and processes in the organization. For example, Cornelsen, a German publishing house, agreed to, so to speak, pose as a model in the nude for some sixteen artists and artists groups, who then presented their works to the company as a kind of organizational analysis. One output of the project is an interesting book from which readers can learn a great deal (Brellochs & Schrat, 2005). But the learning effect in the organization appears to be disappointing to the organizers, artistic as well as corporate, as Strauß (2012) discovered when she conducted interviews for her doctoral thesis several years later. Another example of

a one-off intervention with ambiguous learning outcomes is in a medium-sized German company that prides itself on experimenting with diverse forms of management development.[10] The CEO invited a team of artists to help address problems in the leadership style. The team worked with graffiti art to get the managers to express their perception of current leadership issues and their image of a desirable organizational culture on large panels the height of the former Berlin Wall. The managers were fired up by the experience and returned to work intending to implement changes, but a survey a few months later revealed too little improvement, so the CEO decided to expand the intervention to include all the employees. An external consultant who had worked for several years with the company accompanied the project, but because the visual and oral expressions from the artistic intervention were experienced by some managers as "too critical," the management put the relationship with consultant on hold, leaving managers and employees to figure out on their own how to take things forward (or not).

In contrast to the many one-off experiments are artistic interventions that are embedded into an overall arts-based program or into an organizational culture with values closely related to the arts. Some organizations, such as Deutsche Bahn AG (the German national railroad corporation), bring different kinds of artists into many training and development programs and corporate conferences in order to develop various skills and to explore and express corporate values. Few organizations are as comprehensive and consistent in integrating the arts into the organization and its processes as the German drugstore chain dm-drogerie markt, which has a corporate culture based on anthroposophical values. In 2000, for example, it introduced a theater module in its apprenticeship program, in keeping with the organizational cultural emphasis on developing the whole person (Weller, 2009). The company, consciously using the concepts of the artist Joseph Beuys, also draws on the arts for management development and in some strategic workshops because the owner considers

management to be a "social-artistic process" and an organization to be a "social sculpture" (Chodzinski, 2007, p. 265).

Practice-based Artistic Interventions

Artistic practices are, of course, part of artist-led interventions, but another form of artistic intervention is emerging, which Barry and Meisiek (2010) call "artistic experimentation" when members of organizations try to "forego formal artworks and artists and foster mindfulness through artistic experimentation in their everyday worklife" (p. 1517).[11] They cite a few examples, such as the Imagination Lab in Switzerland that uses Lego blocks for "serious play" in strategy workshops with clients (Statler, Roos, & Victor, 2009) and a Norwegian aluminum smelting company whose new CEO surprised the employees by spending a large sum to repaint the factory white when the company was facing bankruptcy. Cost-cutting measures were also taken, but the artful intervention created "a deliberate break with the prevailing corporate rationality" that contributed to a rapid turnaround (Barry & Meisiek, 2010, p. 1518). This approach moves away from treating artistic work as "a mysterious property of the privileged few, but is something that can be learned and nurtured within organizational environments" although such practices are not easily or quickly acquired (p. 1517). For organizational learning, this category of artistic intervention differs significantly from the first two because it aims to embed artistic practices in organizations rather than being a "foreign import" from the world of the arts that disrupts routine ways of thinking and doing things.

Mapping Learning from Artistic Interventions

Having introduced these three broad categories to illustrate the wide variety of ways in which the arts have been intervening in organizational spaces, I now offer two kinds of conceptual maps that provide different perspectives on organizational-learning dimensions of

the phenomenon. The first focuses on one part of the field—interventions by artists in business organizations—and it shows how the mapping process shifted the understanding of the learning processes involved (Darsø, 2004). The second map zooms in to look inside organizations, revealing the differences and connections between individual-, group-, and organizational-level learning in artistic interventions (Berthoin Antal, 2009; Schiuma, 2009).

Learning Trajectories: The Heart of Artistic Interventions. At Artlab in Denmark, Darsø (2004) undertook the first review that started defining the field of "arts-in-business" (p. 14). She noted that business uses the arts for decoration and entertainment, it applies them as instruments for team-building, communication training, leadership development, and innovation, and it integrates the arts in strategic processes of transformation (p. 14). There are also other relationships between business and the arts, such as the long-standing tradition of corporate philanthropy, the relatively new marketing related field of sponsoring, and the collection of art for investment purposes, but she does not include them under the label of arts-in-business.[12] Her focus (and mine) is on the arts-based activities that are embarked upon with the intention of stimulating some form of learning in the organization.

To map the field, Darsø (2004) started with a matrix distinguishing between the artist's degrees of involvement with the organization and degrees of ambiguity associated with the intervention. Over the course of her study, she revised the matrix model in several significant ways. I present both her models here (see Figures 1 and 2) because they build on each other and reveal a shift in thinking about organizational learning possibilities through artistic interventions.

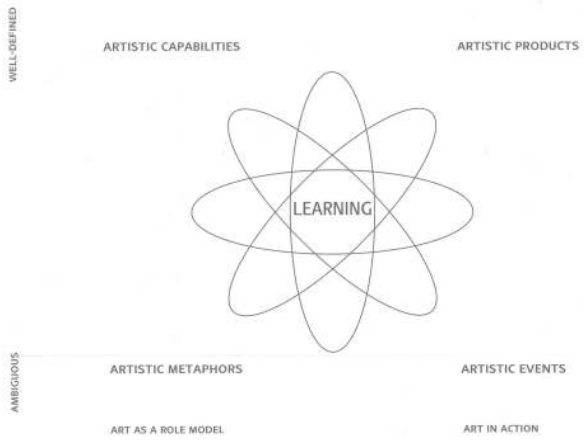

Figure 1: The arts-in-business matrix

Source: Lotte Darsø (2004) *Artful Creation. Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business* (p. 41). Samfundslitteratur, Fredriksberg, Denmark. Copyright 2004 by Lotte Darsø and Samfundslitteratur. Reprinted with permission.

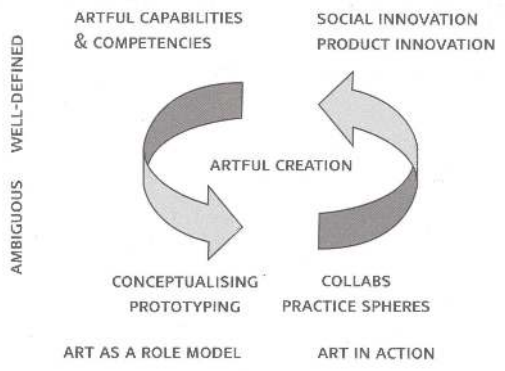

Figure 2: The new model of artful creation

Source: Lotte Darsø (2004) *Artful Creation. Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business* (p. 150). Samfundslitteratur, Fredriksberg, Denmark. Copyright 2004 by Lotte Darsø and Samfundslitteratur. Reprinted with permission.

The original categories (Figure 1) are helpful for distinguishing between types of artistic interventions; the new categories are more useful for exploring how these interventions can contribute to organizational learning. The revised model (Figure 2) replaces the role-modeling function of "metaphors" with "conceptualizing and prototyping" to specify the processes that artistic interventions can support in the early stage of learning new ways of seeing and doing things. She amended the category "artistic capabilities" to "artful capabilities and competences" because she discovered that when arts enter organizational spaces, the learning is not only around specific capabilities but also around intangible, elusive qualities, especially "energy" (Darsø, 2004, p. 152). The art-in-action categories of "artistic events" and "artistic products" are replaced by "collabs [collaborative laboratories], practice spheres" and "social innovation, product innovation," respectively. Collaborative and practice spheres are the "socially safe spaces" created to enable people to explore, experiment with, and apply the ideas that arts bring into organizations (p. 153). The fourth field of the new

matrix describes possible outcomes of artistic interventions in terms of social innovations and product innovations, which can encompass new services and organizational changes as well.

Possibly the most significant change between the two models is in the heart: the new model revolves around "artful creation." The term highlights that when arts enter organizational spaces it is not just about transferring the ideas from one realm to another, which is what is usually associated with "learning from the arts," but also about an interaction between different forms of knowing, from which new ways of knowing and doing can emerge.

Darsø's groundbreaking work is still valuable today as a way of sorting through the multifaceted field and highlighting features that are relevant for learning and creating knowledge when arts enter organizational spaces. Although her focus was on arts in business, what she discovered is equally relevant to other kinds of organizations. Her map is not about fitting activities into categories but rather tracing processes, and the model explicitly refers to space by recognizing the need for safe spaces in which to try out new ideas, features that are emphasized in the literature on organizational learning (e.g., Friedman, Lipshitz, & Overmeer, 2001; Schein, 1993).

Mapping Learning Flows in Organizations. Having mapped the field of artistic interventions, I now turn to the organizational spaces where their effects make themselves felt. In a report for Arts and Business in the UK, Schiuma (2009) proposed a concentric model of the organization in its environment. At the center he placed effects on individuals, which spill over to the intermediate circle of effects on interactions between people and then to the outer circle of effects on organizational strategy, performance, and culture (p. 9). But this concentric model is flawed because it implies that individuals are completely engulfed by their organizational context. I therefore developed a different model (see Figure 3) that recognizes "the fact that individuals are not just employees encircled by an organization; they

are citizens who spend a considerable amount of time at work but who also have activities and relationships in the surrounding socio-economic and natural environment" (Berthoin Antal, 2009, p. 31). Despite the role differentiation that distinguishes work life from other spheres of life, people bring in ideas, expectations, and values from their lives outside the organization, and they take what they get from experiences in the organization back into the society in which they are embedded.

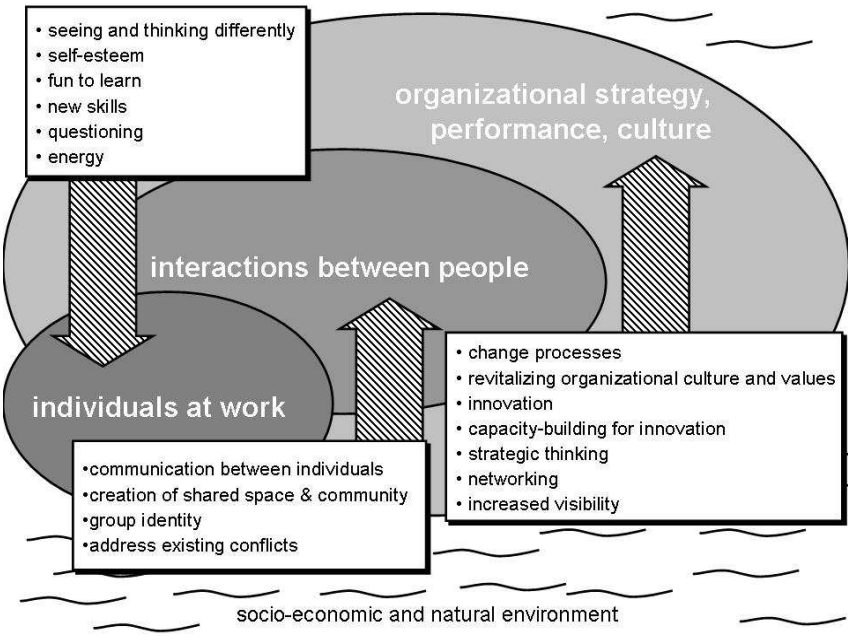

Figure 3: Where to look for the values that artistic interventions can add in organizations
From *Transforming Organizations with the Arts. Research Report: A Research Framework for Evaluating the Effects of Artistic Interventions in Organizations*, by A. Berthoin Antal 2009 (p. 45). TILLT Europe, Göteborg, Sweden.

My research confirms the centrality of effects at the individual level and their *potential* outward flow through levels of the organization. Just as individuals are agents of organizational learning (Friedman, 2001; Kim, 1993), so are they the ones who can experience an artistic intervention and learn from it, and they are more likely to engage if they see personal value in doing so than if they see no such value. If people choose not to engage (for example, because of lack of interest in or discomfort with artistic expression in

general or at work in particular[13]), the artistic intervention is unlikely to generate much value for the organization. Participants in artistic interventions have reported that the benefits from individual learning have flowed outwards from the individual level to groups in the organization, for example, enabling people to discover how their work relates to others and to develop ideas and activities together. Individual learning shared with others *may* then lead to organizational change by challenging engrained assumptions about how things are done in the organization or by rejecting old routines and developing new approaches, for example (Berthoin Antal, 2011a, 2013a; Berthoin Antal et al., in press). Such changes *can*, in turn, improve the organization's competitiveness and innovation (Berthoin Antal & Strauss, 2013). The research so far suggests that these effects cannot be targeted directly; they may be more likely to emerge as "uncontrolled by-products" of individual and collective learning experiences in an artistic intervention than from ever more refined management instruments (Berthoin Antal, 2009, 2011a; Schiuma, 2009).

So How Do Organizations Learn from Artistic Interventions?

This review indicates that far more is currently known about the kinds of learning objectives associated with bringing the arts into organizations than about whether or how those outcomes are achieved. Overall, the expectations are high, diverse, and generally positive (Berthoin Antal, 2009). But actually very little is known about *how* the arts "work"[14] in organizations and how organizations learn from artistic interventions. A mix of reasons is probably responsible for this black-box state of affairs. The relatively new phenomenon first needed to be discovered by researchers as worthy of study, but there is no single discipline into whose purview the topic falls, so there is no body of theory and established methodology that fits the task. Research access to cases has been limited not only by the still small number of cases but also by skepticism about research. In numerous conversations I have found that managers and artists who have experience with artistic interventions have been concerned

that the dominant research methods applied to analyzing organizational processes would not be able to do justice to the nature of artistic interventions (Berthoin Antal 2013a; Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013).

The lack of research in the field is problematic because not only do we organizational researchers know little, what we think we know is quite biased toward a positive view of the phenomenon and toward managerial interests. Much of the published material to date has been generated by people close to the project (managers, artists, and consultants), a state of knowledge that is a double-edged sword. They have insider knowledge of processes that external researchers have difficulty obtaining, but they understandably also have a stake in publishing success stories. Divergent and critical views have less of a chance of being expressed and recorded. Researchers, too, have contributed to this problem. The literature they have produced documents primarily the intentions of managers and the hopes of academics who tend to share the aspiration that "the application of artistic and artful processes can move business forward to make better business in two interdependent ways: one towards innovation and profit, the other towards more humane and energetic organizations" (Darsø, 2004, p. 155). Very little has been written from the perspective of employees; unfortunately, their voices are often reduced to providing supportive quotations about positive experiences. Nor has there been much research on the intentions of the artists. Initial work shows that artists engage in artistic interventions for very different reasons. Some see in organizational settings the materials and space needed to create their art, others want to earn a living that will allow them to practice their art, and some seek the opportunity to influence the workplace "for the better" with their skills, energy, and values (Berthoin Antal, 2008; Berthoin Antal, 2013a; Brellochs & Schrat, 2005; Ferro-Thomsen, 2005). No research has yet been conducted on how the different intentions of artists might affect organizational learning.

The implications of these biases are significant. The paucity of articles addressing potential problems that could arise from artistic interventions in organizations may be closely related to the fact that very little has been written from the perspective of the employees. In this sense the field of artistic interventions suffers from a drawback similar to that in the field of organizational learning: a naïve assumption that learning (or art) is good, and more is better. That idea leaves unattended the possibility that people and organizations can learn to do "bad" things (e.g., damaging the natural environment or human beings) and experiencing arts in a work context might have negative consequences for the individuals involved or beyond. Little attention is paid to the potential dangers of making work-related decisions "under the influence of" exciting artistic experiences, when people's enthusiasm may override their critical faculties. Questions of power, too, are rarely raised in the literature on artistic interventions, although the exercise and distribution of power are inherent aspects of relations and processes in organizations. The need for such work is illustrated by Clark and Mangham's (2004) study on the use of Forum Theater[15] in a company in the United Kingdom. Their analysis revealed how the potential of the arts to address underlying issues in an organization can unwittingly be subverted in an intervention, so that the existing problems are masked or even reinforced (see also Berthoin Antal et al., in press; Gibb, 2004; Hüttler, 2005; Nissley, Taylor, & Houden, 2004; Strauß. 2012; for a broader critique, see Pelzer, 2006).

New Research Opportunities Require New Research Agendas

Bob Dylan's song "The Times They Are a-Changin'" comes to mind because three significant developments are offering additional opportunities to conduct potentially really interesting research on artistic interventions.

1. More interventions: The number of interventions has expanded considerably and is likely to keep expanding in the coming years as a result of several factors. The trend toward including artistic interventions in business school programs and the rising number of publications about these experiences (e.g., *Economist,* 2011; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) will probably give more managers the confidence to try bringing artists into their organizations. Even though decision-makers cannot know precisely what will happen there, the fact that they have seen or heard about arts entering the business school space will probably make them more likely to "trust the process" (McNiff, 1998b) in their own organizational space. The growth of intermediary organizations that are actively seeking to build bridges between the world of the arts and the world of organizations is another factor that will stimulate an increase in the use of artistic interventions (Berthoin Antal, 2011b; Grzelec & Prata, 2013). The concomitant discovery by more artists that such engagements are not only financially but also artistically rewarding and the inclusion of courses in arts schools to prepare artists for such activities will support the trend as well.
2. More demand for research: There is a greater demand for research on artistic interventions than was the case a few years ago. Policy-makers in Europe are calling for evidence of the impacts of artistic interventions to provide a basis for funding decisions and to give a justification for decision-makers in organizations to invest in this type of activity (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013). Artists are expressing curiosity in working with researchers to help them understand what they have been doing. Intermediary organizations, too, are looking for research partners to study their projects and are opening the doors of organizations they have worked with.
3. More researchers: The academic community (at least the Academy of Management) is signaling a need for reorienting research to "reclaim unconventional research contexts and samples in organizational scholarship" (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010, p. 665). Artistic

> interventions are still "unconventional," as is listening to the voices of employees and artists in organizational learning. The call to conduct more research in this area will also be welcomed because a mounting number of scholars have developed a very personal interest in the arts and its potential connections to their work on and in organizations.[16]

The time is therefore ripe for developing a meaningful research agenda. The agenda will require appropriate research methodologies for understanding the processes and effects of artistic interventions in organizations. My sense, coming from a research background in organizational culture and learning, both of which are multidisciplinary ventures, is that the agenda and the methodologies must draw on multiple disciplines and engage diverse stakeholders in order to overcome the biases and gaps that characterize the field so far. Given this stance on research and learning, an agenda-setting process is obviously subjective. In formulating a research agenda on artistic interventions in organizations, I outline below the topics I believe are worth studying and the questions that puzzle me as an invitation for others to connect with and expand upon.

Puzzle 1

The artist Robert Irwin and the physicist Ed Wortz conducted an experiment in May 1970 in the National Symposium on Habitability (Wechsler, 1982, pp. 131–133) whose outcome resonates with aspects of research on artistic interventions that puzzle me. They brought together an interdisciplinary mix of experts to explore the topic of habitability, for which they created very unusual meeting spaces. (One of them consisted of a pristine white room without chairs and accessible only through a hole in a brick wall at the end of a dirty alley. On the third day the room opened at one end so that people drifted in from the street. The five breakout rooms were different, too, one being a reverberating room that forced people to move their chairs closer together in order to hear each other.) The organizers observed how the different spaces affected the behavior of the participants, but when the

organizers asked these experts at the end what effects they had noticed, the experts said they had not noticed any. One might have expected the topic of the symposium to prime the experts to notice the effects that the extreme differences in spaces had had on their own behavior over three days. But it did not. Why?

Several possible explanations come to mind, each pointing to two gaps that research needs to address: lack of attention to bodies in knowing, especially to one's own body; and limited attention to spaces in organizational learning theory.

Bodily knowing. An engagement with the arts entails forms of knowing to which little attention has been paid in the field of organizational learning so far: the bodily senses. Strati (2000) has repeatedly warned that researchers continue making the "cognitive and rational error of ignoring the bodies of the people involved in the decision process and only considering their minds" (p. 20). Organizational learning occurs through the individuals who participate in experiences, and these individuals have bodies: undeniable but overlooked. Throughout the literature on organizational learning, knowing is usually reduced to what takes place in and is retained by the brain. It is as though the rest of the body were not present, with its ability to touch, hear, smell, see, and taste—and its concomitant ability to experience and express affects. Artistic interventions bring these dimensions of the learning experience explicitly into the organizational space and therefore put them onto the research agenda (Hansen, 2005; McNiff, in this volume; Pässilä & Oikarinen, in this volume).

Taking the body seriously in studying the effects of artistic interventions will be a challenge because it entails noticing and expressing things of which people may be only subliminally aware or to which they are unaccustomed to attributing an effect. Taylor (2002) has characterized the problem aptly as "aesthetic muteness." The challenge for researchers is a double one because they need to elicit knowledge from others that they are not well-equipped to elicit from themselves. The fact that the experts in the Habitability symposium

did not notice the effects of changing spaces on their behavior is probably also a reflection of how little many scientific experts attend to their bodily experience of the world. The papers the participants had prepared for the symposium contained all the knowledge they believed was worth considering at the event. The limited approaches to knowing that are characteristic of the social sciences contrast sharply with those of artists who take their bodily experience as a source of knowledge. Lehrer (2007) shows that the results of such artists' ways of knowing "what reality *feels* like" predate findings neuroscience is now arriving at (p. viii, italics original). Experiments to partner with artists in research processes could therefore help social scientists develop new methodologies in this area (see, for example, Berthoin Antal, 2013b; Brattström, 2012; McNiff, 1998a).

Theoretical approaches with appropriate terminology to address this issue are also needed. Some of them may well come from the domain of the arts. For example, Biehl-Missal (2011a) has productively applied theater theory to analyze perceptions of management performances "through atmospheric, bodily sensations, which are influenced by the interplay of aesthetic elements, by the whole behavioral, temporal and spatial situation" (p. 622). Another possible theoretical avenue is actor–network theory, with its concept of actants, but it would need to be adapted from its scientific origins to interactions with art and aesthetics in organizations. Göbel's (2012) doctoral research on "atmospheric network theory" is a promising exploration of such an adaptation.

Space matters. Understanding what happens when arts enter organizational spaces also requires better conceptualizations of space than have been generated so far in the literature on organizational learning. Although there has been talk of a "spatial turn" in the social sciences since the 1990s (Kivinen, 2006, p. 4), too little empirical work has been done. There are a few promising elements to work with. Ikujiro Nonaka and his colleagues introduced the idea of different kinds of space for knowledge creation with the Japanese

concept of *ba* (Nonaka & Konno, 1998), and Grefe (2010) developed the empirical usefulness of Nonaka's categories by differentiating between "hot" and "cold" *ba* (see also Bounfour & Grefe in this volume). The need for safe spaces has been addressed by various scholars of organizational learning (e.g., Friedman et al., 2001, p. 762) and for learning with the arts (Gayá Wicks & Rippin, 2010). Scholars are exploring the relevance of the concept of liminal space for studying the betwixt-and-between of the world of the arts and the world of organizations (e.g., Biehl-Missal, 2011b; see also McNiff in this volume). Artistic interventions seem to create temporary "interspaces" in which participants experience possible ways of thinking, doing, and being that they may then want to try to apply in their organizational settings (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013, p. 32). Reflection and active support from management are essential for the learning in the ephemeral interspaces to be sustained as organizational learning (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013, pp. 34–35; see also Pässila et al., in this volume).

Researchers in other disciplines, such as geography, have attended more to space than have organizational scholars, but it will not be enough just to import their terms and findings. This limited strategy risks misusing those concepts, as geographers have criticized (e.g., May & Thrift, 2001). Furthermore, despite geographers' research on action settings (Weichhart, 1996, 1999, 2003), action theory (Werlen, 1993, 1998) and the role of places, spaces, and milieus (Harvey, 2005; Massey, 1985, 1999, 2005), the field of geography has not yet dealt sufficiently well with bodies in organizational spaces to provide the answers organizational scholars need.[17] Collaborative ventures across disciplinary boundaries will therefore be required to strengthen research in this area.

Puzzle 2

Public policy-makers and decision-makers in organizations who have not tried artistic interventions are asking for "hard evidence" to document the effects of these activities on

competitiveness and innovation, for example. When I interview the people who are best placed to provide the answers, namely, their peers in organizations that have experience with artistic interventions, the questions are rebuffed as inappropriate for this topic. These people are accustomed to measuring and accounting for their time and investments. Why not here?

One possibility is that "perhaps this lack of clarity is a form of complicity" between managers and artists, who recognize that "for art to 'work' its results cannot be pinned down in advance" (Barry & Meisiek, 2010, p. 1515). Even when managers and artists agree in advance on "a well-defined task[,] . . . the company will use the time needed to help the artist understand the aim and purpose, but, of course, the artist will still often surprise the company in the solution to the task—and that is, in fact, why they asked an artist to do it" (Darsø, 2004, p. 46). In this logic, measuring effects of past artistic interventions with traditional business measures might interfere with the capacity of future artistic interventions to work. Such a line of thought rings mysterious—and in fact the word "mystery" has cropped up surprisingly often in my interviews with managers about artistic interventions. This concept does not belong to the traditional management vocabulary, but it is used positively in these interviews. Might the very fact of not understanding how the arts work be part of their attraction? A related possibility is that the people I have interviewed might be protecting a last reserve of organizational space against the curse of "accountability overload" that has penetrated almost every facet of organizational activity in societies (Bovens, Schillemans, & 'T Hart, 2008, p. 227). Despite the fact that it is tantamount to heresy in the world of organizations to challenge the need for ever more precise measurements to account for the transformation of inputs to outputs to outcomes, research could dare to tread on the path of understanding this puzzling situation.

Such an unorthodox research project will not, however, excuse researchers from participating in the search for useful indicators for the effects of artistic interventions in

organizations. Without solid indicators, there is a great risk that policy-makers will base decisions on wishful thinking and superstitious learning (March & Olsen, 1975), possibly leading to the trap of "great expectations" experienced in other policy domains (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). The challenges entailed in developing appropriate indicators for social value creation and achieving an appropriate balance between pursuing project goals and responding to evaluation demands are being addressed but have not yet been satisfactorily resolved (e.g., Jennings & Baldwin, 2010; Tuan, 2008; Wood & Leighton, 2010). Artistic interventions are often part of larger planned change processes, so obviously many other things happen in and around organizations during projects. The introduction of people, products, or practices from the world of the arts make it is impossible to isolate effects directly. Rather than specifying single factors, the research should identify constellations of elements associated with constellations of effects in and across cases under study (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010). Among the elements to explore in such constellations are the degree of embeddedness of arts in the organization, the duration of the intervention, the features of the spaces, the nature of the media (for useful suggestions see Taylor & Stattler, 2009), the kind of engagement offered and used by participants, the roles of intermediaries, and the power relations. The indicators are likely to come in multiple and, for management research, unusual shapes and sizes. For example, a striking pattern in my interviews so far is that managers reject my attempts to get them to specify traditional kinds of indicators, but they refer (unprompted) to bodily indicators of changes they notice in their organizations after people have participated in artistic interventions. The managers speak, for example, of "the light in the eye," "standing taller," and "not turning away when managers walk by." These responses bring me back to the first puzzle and the need to attend to bodily ways of knowing in organizations.

Puzzle 3

My last puzzle (for the time being) is rooted in academia. The past few years have seen a flurry of publications in the field of management relating to "beauty," research that has overridden the "'taboo' associated with discussing beauty in contemporary times" (Ladkin, 2008, p. 40). Why? Scholars in management who have delved into aesthetics (e.g., Gagliardi, 2006; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Guillet de Monthoux, Gustafsson, & Sjöstrand, 2007; Strati, 1999, 2000) have highlighted that there are numerous aesthetic categories, but their work has not yet been integrated into the general discussion, which tends to equate aesthetics with beauty. This reduction to a single aesthetic category is problematic because the narrow emphasis on beauty suggests that the arts should simply decorate organizations and that artistic interventions should please people. Such a perspective severely curtails learning possibilities and risks instrumentalizing the arts to mask problems in the organization. An understanding of how artistic interventions may trigger, sustain, or block organizational learning would be deepened significantly by applying additional aesthetic categories (Strati, 2000, pp. 21–25) such as the grotesque, the comic, the sublime, the ugly, the sacred, and the agogic (i.e., relating to rhythm). Exploring artistic interventions with multiple aesthetic categories would also help reveal the potential dark sides of artistic interventions, which have received almost no attention. The roles of the important, but misused, category of beauty in organizations would thereby probably also become clearer than they currently are. Such research might also throw light on resistance to efforts at demystifying the way art works by measuring it with profane management indicators noted in my second puzzle.

How should such research be undertaken? First and foremost in my mind, research that seeks to understand what is happening when the arts enter organizational spaces must enable employees and artists to bring in their experiences, perspectives, and interests. Actors who see no value in the research or feel it is confined to satisfying managerial or academic

interests are likely to limit their contribution to the process and thereby affect the quality of the data and the analysis. In order to appreciate the different ways of knowing and doing, the different logics and values, and the different expectations and experiences of these stakeholders, appropriate ways of involving them in designing and conducting the research are needed. Participative inquiry, and action research evaluation in particular, offer ways of involving stakeholders in generating and appreciating multiple understandings of how artistic interventions in organizations work by making the underlying espoused theories and the theories in use explicit and testable (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Friedman & Rogers, 2009; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). This research will need to be flanked by other research methods, including more "classical" case studies and surveys[18] (Berthoin Antal, 2009; Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013). Experimental forms of research may be designed in future to benefit from the relatively recent emergence of interest in performative social science and from experiments with the use of the arts in qualitative research (Brydon-Miller, Berthoin Antal, Friedman, & Gayá Wicks, 2011b; Knowles & Cole, 2008).

Scholars of organizational learning have been encouraged to move out of their comfort zones in order to improve their understanding of processes in diverse contexts (Berthoin Antal, Dierkes, Child, & Nonaka, 2001, pp. 933–934). The kind of research I advocate in this chapter to generate a sound understanding of what happens when arts intervene in organizational spaces is likely stretch researchers and managers out of their comfort zone for several reasons. First, it is premised on the view that the knowledge, ways of knowing, and values of the diverse stakeholders are essential, so the research questions and methods cannot be set, as is traditionally the case, just by academics and managers. Second, the research is likely to generate insights about problems associated with arts in organizations—insights that some stakeholders will not welcome, given the currently dominant discourse about the arts bringing beauty and creativity to the workplace to stimulate

productivity and competitiveness. These types of discomforts will be manageable because some researchers and managers have experience with such difficulties.

The greatest discomfort, I expect, stems from the unresolvable tension between the emphasis on knowing and controlling that are inherent to management and much mainstream research on the one hand and the unpredictability of artistic processes and the "unknowing" that underlies their unfolding on the other. Indeed, it appears that one of the most important qualities that artistic interventions may contribute to organizational learning is the capacity to work with not-knowing (Berthoin Antal, 2013b). In order to discover what artistic interventions can offer in organizations, managers and researchers will need to enter the uncomfortable, but essential, "messy area" (Cook, 2009, p. 285) together, let go of their knowing-stance, and accompany employees through the unaccustomed uncertainty of not being expected to know. And all the stakeholders will have to avoid the temptation to delegate to the artists the responsibility for control and for knowing.

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[2] Some scholars have noted that "new management" has absorbed many terms from the world of the arts and blurred the boundaries (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Chiapello, 1998), but overall, people still tend to see these worlds as distinct.

[3] Artistic interventions are not neutral, as this paper demonstrates in many ways, but the term itself is used neutrally here, drawing on the Latin root, inter-venire, to come between, to involve someone or something in a situation so as to alter or hinder an action or development (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000). I emphasize this reasoning because some British participants at an "artful research" workshop I conducted in 2009 were concerned that the term *intervention* is associated with military activities, and they suggested instead that we refer to artistic collaborations. However, I consider "collaboration" to be

problematically loaded with associations (either very negative, as in "collaborating with the enemy," or very positive, as in "working closely and well together").

[4] As will be seen later in this chapter, an intervention sometimes involves just one of these three elements. But it often involves two or even all three, and in these cases the boundaries become somewhat blurred.

[5] I draw on examples from the literature as well as from my own research interviews, which have not been published. In some cases the organizations choose to remain anonymous.

[6] For example, a special issue of the *Action Research* journal (Brydon-Miller, Berthoin Antal, Friedman, & Gayá Wicks, 2011a), which explores the arts and action research, contains articles relating to unemployment, schools, and homelessness. An issue of the online journal *Music and Arts in Action* focused on artistic interventions in conflict transformation (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010).

[7] "Combining his educational concepts and his compassion for the working man with his burgeoning interest in the arts, Barnes initiated educational seminars and hung paintings by William Glackens, Ernest Lawson, and Maurice Prendergast in his Argyrol factory to be studied and discussed by his workers. His first formal classes in art appreciation were held at the factory for the benefit of his employees" (Barnes Foundation, 2010, retrieved from http://www.barnesfoundation.org/h_main.html).

[8] An early, but unfortunately unpublished, study in this direction is Nissley (1999).

[9] Theater-based interventions are probably the most frequently documented art form. For critical reviews see especially Clark (2008) and Biehl-Missal (2010).

[10] The information provided here is drawn from interviews I conducted with diverse stakeholders in the project in 2009 and 2010.

[11] Barry and Meisiek (2010) point out quite logically that working without an artist can increase the sense of ownership for ideas generated through artistic experimentation. Artists I have interviewed, however, have often mentioned (with a mix of satisfaction and resentment) that employees quickly take such pride and ownership in a project that they seem to forget the artist's contribution!

[12] Philanthropic and sponsoring relations with the arts may be at opposite ends of the spectrum, one being "dis-interested, very arm's length" and the other being very instrumental. However, philanthropic and sponsorship relations may be precursors, outgrowths, or complementary or parallel activities to the kind of artistic interventions described in this chapter. The boundaries between these kinds of activities are distinct but permeable. Learning-oriented activities may grow out of an interaction of a different kind, such as when an

organization brings into a developmental workshop a musician from an orchestra that it has supported philanthropically.

[13] Little has been written to date about unwillingness to participate, but my interviews with artists show that they often have to start an intervention by getting people to overcome anxieties. My interviews with participants indicate that some of them held back and others regretted having had to reveal more of themselves via artistic expression than they felt was appropriate in the work context.

[14] Not only do we researchers know little about how the arts "work" in organizations, we know surprisingly little about how the arts work for individuals. Fine-grained research, such as that conducted by DeNora (2000) about music in everyday life, shows that the relationship between people and music is reflexive and contextual. It entails sense-making categories that differ significantly from those used by musicologists in traditional "music appreciation" mode.

[15] The importation of the idea of Forum Theater, which Augosto Boal developed in the streets of Brazil to help poor people change their lot in life, into the corporate setting is an interesting phenomenon. It is telling that the name has been changed in the process: "Theater of the oppressed" is not a label that lends itself to adoption in the new setting. The "taming" of this form of theater to a management technique is troubling.

[16] Recent Annual Conferences of the Academy of Management have included well-attended tango sessions related to leadership, art exhibits by members of the Academy, and jazz sessions connected to team working. Books and articles by members of the Academy include references to personal experiences with various art forms (e.g., Adler, 2006, 2010; Hatch, 1999; Shrivastava & Cooper, 2008).

[17] Geographers at the Ninth Symposium on Knowledge and Space (Heidelberg, June 2010) commented that their discipline has not addressed the body in space, especially organizational space, much yet.

[18] My initial experiments in 2012 and 2013 with web-based survey instruments in France and the Basque country to collect the thoughts and feelings of employees, managers, and artists before and after participating in artistic interventions generated rich data. A preliminary analysis that includes the use of a software package for lexical analysis (Alceste) will be presented at EGOS 2013 in Montreal with Gervaise Debucquet.