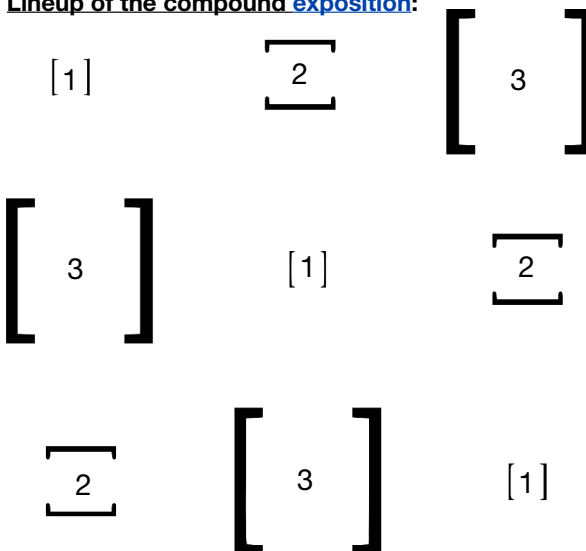


- The artistic doctoral result must be an independent artistic research project that meets international standards with regard to the level and ethical requirements in the research field
- The artistic practice, which forms the core of the doctoral result, is to be accompanied by an explicit reflection, which grants others access into the working methods and insights that emerge from the artistic research.
- The artistic doctoral result should be at a level that enables it to contribute to development of new knowledge, insight and experience within the subject area.
- The artistic doctoral result may consist of one or several parts which comprise a whole. If the doctoral result consists of several parts, an explanation of how these are interrelated must be included.

Question asked in this handout: do the bullet-points handed out to PhD committees by the institution (KHIO)—by extension—stand in the way of the artistic reception of PhD work?

After having recently read an evaluation report on a PhD work in artistic research—featuring the rejection by the committee of this work—I was left to ponder on the *redacted* nature of this sort of text. The term *redacted* is used here to reflect the process of reducing a text of *this kind*, down to the essentials that are such that they can be circulated to the institution hosting this sort of PhD, and to the PhD candidate. While editing determines the work which is done on a text prior to its publication, or circulation, the term ‘redacted’ determines removal *prior* to a restricted circulation. The text queried here is of the latter category. It is the buckle that is part of/closes a *loop* containing three steps: **a)** the evaluation of the artistic work; **b)** the reading of a reflective piece/s; **c)** writing the evaluation report. In this particular evaluation report, a contrast runs between the ultimate reduction in a series of *4 bullet-points*, and the evaluation *leading up to* these concluding bullet-points. Though the body-text and the final round-up are cast in similar terms, the *differences* between them are of a nature to draw attention. While the body-text proposes an argument, the roundup is written from a *template* (with a different *provenance* [from peer-to-peer evaluations]). The evaluation report becomes *redacted* inasmuch it is tethered to this template.

Lineup of the compound exposition:



The template comes with a baggage of its own: it has been discussed in a separately in [DIAGRAMS](#). It is not discussed here since it connects in broader terms to the buffer-zone of peer-to-peer bureaucracy used in the evaluation of project-proposals, scientific reviews, and as here, in a PhD-evaluation. In line with Edward Tufte’s critical essay [The 2 1 3 cognitive style of power-point. Pitching without corrupts within](#): redacting refers to the *effects* on the body text when it is written aimed at pitching out. But the body-text features the content which is specifically addressed to the *candidate*, while also taking *responsibility* for artistic research as a field: and presumably the ability of *responding* to it. The question presently asked is whether the delivery to the final pitch has subordinated the artistic prerogative of the committee. Not as a critique of the committee but rather of the institutional framing of the committee’s work by the *host* (KHIO). On the one hand, the institution clearly emphasises the importance of the balance between artistic and scientific competence in the committee, balancing to the *artistic* competence (to which we

In this lineup of *Level up!* 1-1-1 determines the 3 works *Peacock cabinet*, *Taweret* and *Selvskap*. 2-2-2 determines the magazine-series (reflection) and 3-3-3 the shifters/deictic markers of the project: the *Kardashian-Dawkins* stela (space-marker, the project’s “*geography*”), the *testicle cabinet* (time-marker, the project’s pre/“*history*”) and the *labels* (text markers as for [alchemical emblems](#)). The matrix features one take on the relation between parts and whole in *Level up!*

generally concur). On the other hand, the evaluation-report does *not* balance in favour of artistic competence. It is a pseudo-scientific hybrid: in the sense of an artistic evaluation reaching for scientific [precisions](#).

Building up to a bullet-point pitch moves the attention away from building up the evaluation based on an *artistic reception* of the work that has been submitted. For instance, when the candidate's work features a frontal attack on designer Ettore Sottsass, it is scarcely equivocal that the reflection submitted in the wake—and context—of the exhibition was designed in the form of *magazines* (rather than book-volumes). The *materiality* of the submitted format used in the reflection escapes the attention of the committee (with an artistic competence in the field). This is striking.

Their attention must have been drawn elsewhere when allowing this to happen. It is *not* a minor point, however, since notwithstanding the candidate's tortured relation to the design-field, he still chooses to remain tethered to it: in an attempt at materialising an institutional critique (both argued and demonstrated) where craft is used to *inquire* into some *basic assumptions* of modern design, while also remaining *truthful* to the domain of artistic research: as type of commissioned 3rd cycle research, that is unsegmented in nature (there is no PhD in furniture). *It picks a quarrel*.

What also strikes the eye is that the committee has been oblivious to the role of the *models* (sculptural wood-carved elements) as elements *placeholders* of the syntheses the committee are looking for in the *reflection*. But this constitutive relation between *magazines* and *models* is quite common in design, and the candidate uses this relationship as a metaphor to make his point: that is, the 'points in the making' in two senses (the making of the models, and *leading up to* the models in the magazines). In the committee's sense of 'reflecting upon' moves in a different direction.

In the evaluation-report the art-practice is focussed on the pieces exhibited, rather than considering these as *agents* in the reflective work: since it is quite clear that the candidate did *not* opt for a reflective process-log, or discussing the work in the light of his references. Rather they are *agents in intra-action* with these works. Which means that he proceeds in the opposite direction of a general tendency, of expanding research to art: instead, he aims at including artistic methods into the reflection itself. If this is a valid intervention at this juncture, we are challenged to intercept it.

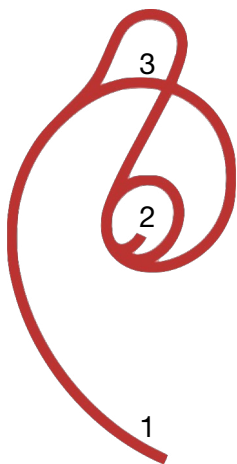
In sum, we may ask: is the work of *artistic reception* included into the present set of premises for how a PhD committee in artistic research—who are selected on the basis of *artistic* competence—should proceed, according to the instructions from the institution (KHIO)? Next question: would it help to underscore the importance of building on the artistic reception of submitted PhD work, by working one's way through this sequence of questions: **1**) what have we here? (answered descriptively); **2**) where does the work move?; **3**) how far come in terms of what is actually achieved?

In other words, what is at debate here is *not* the acceptance/rejection of this particular PhD project, but how a foundation based on *artistic reception* can be used to develop the concluding verdict. Fragments of what is asked in the points 1-3 above, do appear in the evaluation report, but they come quite late, after the fundamental objections have already been raised, and are used as *illustrations* to make these points, rather than leading up to them. The present discussion

therefore does not aim at disqualifying the committee, but calls to level up our *standard* of evaluation. That is, the *artistic reception* as the platform for all PhD-evaluations at KHIO.

These paragraphs have been developed in view of establishing a dialogue on the requirements of artistic reception that would appear to be *de rigueur* to evaluate a project based on the premise of *artistic* competence in the committee, rather than being redacted in reaching for the objective of responding to the final bullet-points. What is suggested is that the 3 questions in the above series, would result in *less* redacted and *more* edited evaluation points. From my scientific vantage point from the social humanities, the problem taken on by the candidate has too many similarities to Benjamin's (rejected) habilitation [The origin of the German tragic drama](#) to be ignored.

Likewise Benjamin's work with on [Negative dialectics](#) with Adorno: featuring the impossibility of synthesis and, in its stead, explores *mediation*. However, in the kind of mediation traversing the *Level up!*-project, the committee rightly wonders where we are. Which is why the work's extension to Giorgio Agamben's conversation piece [What is the contemporary?](#) is of essence. However, the committee is arguably limited—by the institution (KHIO)—by the agenda featuring in the template. In essence, tasking a kind of bureaucratic work.



A model of artistic reception. This diagram features the relations between the three questions: **1**) what have we here? **2**) where does it move? **3**) how far come in terms already achieved?