This paper is concerned with what can be approached as a specific historic moment, the moment in which we have recognised that the dualism of arts versus science or arts versus research is of a thoroughly historical and constructed nature. In the paper I will explore the existence of this dualism, as a historical construct, in a specific project I am studying, which is called Sex(y) art. Sex(y) art, was initiated by Christel Sverre, an artist teaching at the Bergen College of Arts in collaboration with Wencke Mühleisen, who is a gender and media researcher based at the University of Oslo. I am myself one of the participants of Sex(y) art, so I am thoroughly part of that which I study. Sex(y) art started up only a few months ago, in May 2003. The project is focused on gender and sexuality, and an important objective is to explore the modes of production and communication in the fields of research and arts respectively. It is based at the Bergen College of Arts, the participants are students of this arts college as well as working artists and researchers. Central among its activities is a seminar series that will lead to the production of artistic and research based works and, pending funding, eventually an exhibition and text based catalogue. So, my paper then, will explore the life and times of the dualism arts and science and some of its relatives in this specific project, as based materials from the first seminar.

This paper is part of my doctoral project, the topic of which is modes of working in social and cultural research, the question of how we in quite practical terms go about doing our research. It is a project informed particularly by feminist and post colonial science studies and allied approaches, especially approaches that are concerned not just to critique positivisms and universalisms in different forms, but also to explore alternative research practices.

There are many ways in which I could contextualise what I'm going to say, but on this occasion I would like to evoke one of the informing intuitions behind my project, which is that questions of how we actually go about doing our research have proved remarkably resilient in response to the various anti-positivisms that has developed at least since the 1960s and onwards.
There are surely numerous examples of anti-positivist changes in our practices, not least in feminist work, but there seems still to be a significant resilience the practical regimes for how we go about our production of research materials, our theorizing, our writing, our modes of communication in relation to our work. This resilience is of a complex nature, but a notion that I would like to hold up relating to it, is the idea of practices existing "under erasure". This term, "under erasure", I take from George Marcus (2001). He applies it to the concept of "rapport", referring in (US) social anthropology to the building of good personal relationships with people in your research location, in order to facilitate access to information and events. Rapport is an example of a regulative ideal put "under erasure" by the reflexive turn in social research. Other examples are "the informant", "gathering data" and "explanation". These terms are still with us, but more often than not, in more uneasy or even contradictory terms. A notion such as the divide between arts and science has broken down in ways, but still, we live with or, to evoke yet another notion, in the ruins, of this dualism. This is to say we can still not ignore the dualism, it is there in our institutions, it is embodied in our work practices, it is part of our imageries and so on.

So, I'm interested in looking at some emergent practices across the arts – science divide, and the ways in which we at this specific historical time live – often uneasily – with certain binary differences, dualisms that in ways are marked by failure – arts and science have not been kept successfully apart, but that are at the same time very much a reality.

This movement in certain kinds of research towards attending to anti-positivist practices and styles of working, towards aesthetics, that I am concerned with, is of course also one of the contexts feeding into Sex(y) art. But Sex(y) art is of course also informed by a parallel but different discussion and movement within the field of arts that opens up arts towards science, or research. In Norway, where this project is based, there is currently a debate relating to a big study reform that affects the entire higher education sector, including the arts colleges, requiring that these colleges develop study programs that have a similar form to the programs in other parts of higher education, with Bachelor and Masters degrees. Also, a new form of arts scholarships were launched this summer, scholarships that will lead to a similar qualification in the field of arts as the doctorate in the field of research. Associated with these important institutional changes runs a debate within arts education on what arts based research might be, and how the changes might affect arts as a field. There are other things here to, but the point is, there are parallel openings, then on the part of the fields of arts and research towards each other, and this situation of blurring boundaries between arts and research constitute an important part of the rationale of Sex(y) art.
Dualist imagery in Sex(y) art's first seminar

Now to the first seminar, then, which took place at the Arts College in Bergen, in order to see what happens to the arts versus research difference there. Christel, the arts teacher, is giving a short opening talk. She says she has talked for some time of wanting to "do something on art and gender" at the college, and "this is the start". She refers to the invitation to the seminar, circulated at the school, where she among other things wrote the following:

The intention of the project [Sex(y) art] is to create a "laboratory" for theory and practice, where students, professional artists and researchers work alongside each other, and in direct cooperation and dialogue. In particular, it is an aim to contribute to the debate around gender and sexuality and to explore the interface between artistic and research based forms of production and communication.

Towards the end of the talk she gives some comments relevant to the introduction of the researchers present, most of whom are new to the school and the students present: "We do mostly practical work here at the school," she says. "But we are used to listening to, used to discussing theory." She then introduces the four researchers, one of them being me, concluding, perhaps with a hint of benevolent irony: "These are the theorists, to put it like that."

So, in the very framing of the seminar, there is the difference between theory and practice. It is first evoked as something to be explored, but next it is stuck to researchers and artists respectively. Art students and teachers at the College of Art do "practical work", theory is something that seems to come from outside the school, in this case brought in by researchers.

Towards the end of the seminar a further difference was evoked, that of the academic versus personal. This was during an exchange about the relationship between artists and researchers within the context of Sex(y) art:

Researcher K: […] Researchers are very verbal. […]

Student F: You talk in a way that is hard to intervene in; you talk in a very academic way, while we talk in a way that is more personal, based on our own experience.

Student G: The choice of words, to start with. I can follow it, but it is hard to break into the conversation when there are many people who would like to talk. The conversation is not on our usual terms. But it will not be like this in the long run, it is nothing to worry about.
The arts teacher: Perhaps we talk in more chaotic ways, the researchers have more order.

Researcher L: It is something about learning of each other's vocabularies, let the two get closer to each other. It is like a shared archive.

Another difference evoked, then, and again mapped onto artists and researchers respectively. Note that care is taken to stress the equality between the two types of difference: there were different legitimate ways of talking operative in that room, not just one way of talking and different levels of skill. The confidence with which the two students here are commenting upon the terms of the conversation serves to prove their own point. The researcher here picks up on this point, stresses that these different ways of talking constitute resources.

There is another difference evoked as well: The teacher introduces yet another dichotomy to the discussion, this time proposing the words chaos and order as labels for how artists and researchers, respectively, talk.

**Reflexivity, or: getting it mixed up**

So, there are clearly ways in which the meeting reproduces the arts – science divide, mapping these binary differences onto researchers and artists respectively. This reproduces the kinds of differences evoked in modern conceptions of arts and science, arts being seen as relating to the personal, intuitive, emanating from some inner essence of a free and independent self, and research being seen as fundamentally of a systematic and affirmative nature.

But then, there was also something else going on at the seminar. At some point a student presented two series of photographs, both portrait series, the first of friends and family in black and white, the other in colour, of people she didn't know beforehand. This latter series gave rise to a discussion on queer theory, sexuality, difference. The student presented the series as explicitly inspired by queer theory. She commented: "I first thought that this isn't queer, but if queer is what isn't defined, then perhaps it is queer." Consider the following:

Researcher L: It is something about the difference between these and the first pictures. These have a very self conscious façade. I'm actually a little offended by them.

Student G: But this doesn't have to be negative.
Researcher L: No, absolutely not.

[...]

Researcher K: Well, you have this tension in the homosexual population, you have those who gladly see themselves as queer, strange, and so on, and those who want to be conform: "I'm like you and want the same rights". But what is it that causes offence?

Researcher L: It is a form of façade that is different from the first pictures, which are more open. I feel that these pictures want something from me, they make claims on me. It isn't negative, but different, and this makes me reflect over my reaction.

Student G: It is something about the material, not just that it is black and white and colour, it is different qualities. Perhaps this is to do with the nature of the material.

Researcher L: That is interesting. [...]

So, what do we have here. Not only do we have a researcher who gets "a little offended". Who "feel". And who wants to reflect around her own emotional reaction, her experience of seeing those pictures. Experience, feeling. Reflecting upon them. Is this practical or theoretical work? It certainly must be personal?

Not only that. There is also an arts student who, inspired by academic theory, makes a series of photographs that together with her presentation of them, spurs a discussion of quite theoretical themes. Can this intervention reasonably be seen as all of a "practical" nature? It is clearly a matter of "applying" theory. Surely a lot of researchers do the same thing? But I wonder, could not her pictures be seen as adding something to the body of work that is that theory? As a new instance of that theory? And what of the reference to the quality of the material in the photos, the suggestion that that is part of its content, part of what is producing the reaction. Can theory be developed in other materials than language?

So there is dualism, and there is blurring of dualism.
Towards a feminist topography: dealing with ambivalence

Though there were ways in which arts and research were positioned as equal, and also examples of how the difference between the two possibly is dissolving, there are also expressions of how there is an underlying sense of the hierarchy between some of the binaries evoked and associated with the two fields, the theoretical being privileged in relation to the practical, the academic being privileged in relation to the personal. In relation to the arts context, specifically, the danger of privileging theory is real. This has also been communicated explicitly by both my colleagues here, though there is not room for these quotes here. In addition further research should address ambivalences to do with how these binaries might be gendered in this specific context.

The response to these quite problematical binary differences, then, is not to devise a project that has nothing to do with theory, to build spaces not contaminated by theory, nor, in the context of the seminar, to uphold such things as personal or chaotic modes of talking or working as in any way more important to attend to. Rather, what takes place here, is that those who hold the theoretical privilege are invited in, and then the binary differences are proposed as something to reflect upon. The dualism is applied, but to quite some extent this happens in a questioning or explorative mode. Though there are ambivalences inherent in the situation, to do with the hierarchical nature of the terms, the strategy is to acknowledge the existing asymmetries, presenting them as something to work on. It remains to be seen how this space that has been set up will develop. Researchers and artists may end up looking at each other, confirming their own self-images. But then, as they go along, there is always the possibility that those binary images might be put to some other use, or that they simply dissolve and that other kinds of differences, non-dichotomous differences, will appear as a result.

My concluding proposal, then, is that it is not sufficient for a feminist topography of the relationship of arts and science, or research, just to critique the processes of power living on through the various binary concepts and practices that we are stuck with, so to speak, and thus dismiss them. Rather a feminist topography needs to attend to such dualisms, being critically aware of their historical affiliations, and the hierarchies that might go with them, but respond by exploring them from within, being aware all along that we are working with the fragments and ruins of modernist concepts, but being open to the possibility that in subverted form, they may even turn out to be useful tools. I think this must be the meaning of Donna Haraway's proposal, that we should be working "in the belly of the beast".
References

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Notes
1 My sincere thanks to Christel Sverre and Wencke Mühleisen for including me in their collaborative project. This paper relies fundamentally on what I learnt from engaging with the two of them. Thanks also to Wencke Mühleisen and Kari Nyheim Solbrække for discussing early thoughts towards this paper with me and for reading and commenting on an earlier version.
2 I am a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture at the University of Oslo and the working title of my thesis is "Making knowledge: Gender and sexuality in research". The project commenced in September 2002. My doctoral work is informed by feminist and post colonial science studies and allied approaches. Its topic is modes of working in cultural research and the empirical materials are drawn from two different research locations where ways of working, methodologies and epistemologies, are addressed as one of their central concerns. My role in researching these locations I see as trying to think, talk, write, act with – and sometimes against – the ongoings of those locations, in order to contribute both to the wider thinking about and development of research practice in feminist science studies, and to the efforts of the people I engage with in those locations towards finding ways of working appropriate to their needs.
3 The contradictory existence of such terms can be seen, for instance, in the rare occurrence of a book on methods in Norwegian gender research a few years ago, Kjønn og fortolkende metode [Gender and interpretive method], edited by Hanne Haavind (2000). Curiously, the first chapter of this book spells out a linear conception and visualization of the research process, as consisting of a number of apparently chronological steps from formulating the research questions via production of materials, analysis, presentation of results, and the revision of the state of knowledge in the wider research community. At the same time, the book situates itself within a view of research as a meaning making practice. Indeed, the interpretive nature of research is central to the very idea of the book, as is clear from its title. However, if research is meaning making, does this have no implications for how the relationship between research and other practices of knowing, such as that of the people consulted in the production of materials, or with the wider social and cultural context, should be envisaged? Research is here envisaged as a neat and tidy process, answering only to criteria within the research community, presenting its "results" as a one-way act, an act aimed exclusively at revising the knowledge situation in the wider research community. Clearly this imagery appears very contradictory within a book attempting to account for the interpretive nature of research.
4 In the vernacular, the dualism was "faglig – personlig". "Faglig" literally means what pertains to your field of expertise or skill, and is often translated as professional or technical. The field in question being research, it seems fair to translate with "academic".
5 Many of the quotations in this paper are from notes made during the seminar in Bergen. For ease of note taking, repetitions, pauses, interjections and similar characteristic traits of speech were left out. Also, in exchanges such as this one here, some sentences will be abbreviated or even left out entirely.