

Disciplinary/ Interdisciplinarity/ Transdisciplinarity – Who Cares?

RESISTANCE, shit and discomfort. I do not want to think nor write on this. Rage grows within me, bearing witness to bureaucratic injustices suffered earlier in my life. I promote what is interdisciplinary because my work presupposes collaboration with other fields of knowledge and I know the transdisciplinary as a good outcome of rewarding interdisciplinary work where my specific disciplinary skill is a necessary element. So obvious and yet so difficult!

The term interdisciplinary is most often used about artists from different disciplines who pool their approaches and modify them so that they are better suited to the problem at hand. Transdisciplinarity on the other hand, is a term used to signify a unity of knowledge beyond disciplines and connotes a strategy that crosses many disciplinary boundaries to create a holistic approach. This terminology is seldom used by artists. As artists and/or artistic researchers, we constantly cooperate with other disciplines as well as with other fields of knowledge in our quest for what we would like to achieve. To define that as interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary is just a way of labelling the work from an outside perspective.

As an artist and researcher I have a constant desire to reach deeper into what is specific to my discipline, to engage in disciplinarity. I need that understanding and knowledge within the discipline of choreography to engage in interdisciplinarity. I therefore seek opportunities to deepen my understanding of choreographic practice, compositional techniques, analysis of movement, aesthetics, philosophy and other knowledge of importance to the desired goal. I achieve this by discussing and exchanging experience with other choreographers, other artists, other researchers, but also by teaching. I gain better tools for my artistic process and for collaboration with other disciplines and fields of knowledge that I depend on. It is of no significance how my works are labelled. As dance, as choreography or simply as art.

When bureaucrats deal with culture, distribution of financial support, research policy etc, a great deal of emphasis is put on genres of art and specific disciplines. Everything is sorted up and divided into categories. The result is used as a statistic base for funding or other activities with a specific aim, for instance increased availability. There is an endless flow of forms, which demand that you check the right genre or discipline. Over and over again...

It is often said that interdisciplinarity is desirable. I see it as a natural occurrence in the activities of most artists and researchers, but not an aim in itself. Out of necessity we identify each other. Our needs make us discover and take part in the work and knowledge of others. As an artist working within choreography, dance, poetry... I seek those opportunities for collaboration that best suit my ultimate goal.

Efva Lilja

Professor of Choreography and the Vice-Chancellor of DOCH, University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm. www.efvalilja.se