

PhD research in the arts

Call for proposals 2009

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Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

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1 Introduction

In partnership with the Humanities Division of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Art, Design and Architecture (Fonds BKVB) wishes to stimulate new research and reflection on artists and art. The aim is to reinforce the link between art and science, and to properly reflect up-and-coming, innovative research and art practices in a changing artistic and academic landscape. It is the aim of NWO to further excellent research in the Netherlands.

Herewith, the Fonds BKVB and NWO announce the availability of two PhD research positions, available to artists in order to obtain their PhD degrees. The projects will be monitored closely and will be assessed at several points: both during the projects and upon their completion. Besides PhD research, the projects may also form the basis for further development and finetuning of the guidelines and criteria, from both an artistic and a scientific perspective.

This Call for Proposals presents information about submitting subsidy applications, the conditions that subsidy applications must meet and the procedure for assessing the subsidy applications. It also includes a brief description of the background of this programme and on how PhD research in the arts comes about.

2 Objective

A work of art comprises a form of knowledge that is the result of a visual research process. Giving artists an opportunity to conduct PhD research will allow them to expand the scope of their work and will make it possible to clarify and present research and knowledge in a different fashion. A PhD programme also offers viewers a broader perspective of the artist's work.

A PhD programme for research into the arts is nothing new internationally: in various European countries (the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium) and in the United States obtaining a PhD degree in the arts has been possible for a considerable time (e.g. in England for more than fifteen years). Despite the differences in the embedding, structure and final results of PhD programmes in the various countries, all of these various programmes emphasise an exciting and original relationship between the artistic and discursive elements of the research. Since in the Netherlands only universities have the right to confer PhD degrees, the PhD research in the arts will be conducted at a Dutch university. Owing to its unusual nature, a PhD programme in the arts has a twofold basis: at the normal university and at the academy (*hogeschool*: university of applied sciences). As research within the complex of disciplines at the university, this is a new and previously undefined field, since the research will commence in the domain of the arts, in the practice of research into the arts.

The results of the arts research belong to the field of culture, and as such are related to research in the humanities. In its approach, it corresponds to the field of Cultural Science, in that its aim is to seek out and push back the existing limits and explicitly includes other fields of knowledge in the research. Like other scientific research, research in the arts focuses primarily on the forum of colleagues. The research includes an artistic component, with a scope that goes beyond the circle of academic initiates. As such, the final presentation of the artistic research must meet two requirements: the results must offer something to the academic community, while at the same time being important in the world of art and culture and appealing to a broader audience. Reflection on this twofold requirement should be an element of the research.

3 Instructions for applying

3.1 Who may apply?

The application should be submitted by the applicant, and be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a professor (prospective PhD supervisor) with a position at a Dutch University and a co-applicant with a position at an arts programme.

Applicants must have completed a Master's degree programme in the discipline in which they place their research, or must have a demonstrably equivalent level. In the latter situation, an exception may be made to the requirement of possessing a Master's degree, and the applicant's portfolio and a description of the artistic and theoretical assumptions will be assessed on an individual basis by the steering committee.

Applicants will be admitted to the PhD research programme in the arts based on the level of their artistry and the research proposal.

3.2 What may the application cover?

The available budget for this pilot call is €450,000, which can be used to finance two PhD positions.

The maximum subsidised time for a PhD position is 4 years, with the option of conducting the research in part-time, with a time limit of 5 years.

Costs for which subsidies may be requested

A maximum of €225,000 may be requested per application.

Salary costs:	€200,013
Bench fee:	€5,000
Costs of materials:	€19,987

The bench fee serves to cover such costs as PhD-related expenses and attending conferences in the Netherlands and abroad.

Costs of materials are intended for costs related to the research.

3.3 When can applications be submitted?

The closing date for submitting applications is 12 o'clock mid-day on 4 March 2010. This deadline is only for preliminary applications. After that deadline, no improvements or additions may be made to the applications.

3.4 Drawing up the application

Each application must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation written jointly by a professor (prospective PhD supervisor) and the co-applicant.

3.5 Specific conditions for subsidies

This Call for Proposals is subject to NWO's General Subsidy Conditions. Financing will be provided based on the employment assignment contract (*contract overlaten werkgeverschap*) between NWO and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands.

Subsidised applications must commence no later than 6 months after the subsidy is granted. The steering committee reserves the right to withdraw the subsidy for any projects that have not commenced at that time.

3.6 Submitting the application

Applications should be submitted using Iris, NWO's digital subsidy application system. You will find a description of how IRIS works, plus instructions for its use, at <https://www.iris.nwo.nl/>.

Applicants must submit their applications to NWO in electronic form no later than 4 March 2010 (at 12 o'clock midday). Applications should include the following elements:

- the applicant's curriculum vitae (CV);
- a concise, clear description of a single idea for research (no more than 1000 words), using the guidelines set out in Section 6, Annex;
- a signed letter of recommendation from a professor and supervisor (PDF);
- a digital portfolio. Alternatively, the portfolio may be sent by postal mail.

4 Assessment procedure

4.1 Procedure

A committee with diverse backgrounds is responsible for assessing research proposals, based on the assessment criteria described in section 4.2. The committee is composed of representatives from universities and arts programmes and artists with generally acknowledged practices.

If necessary, the assessment committee may engage external experts, both from the academic world and from the artistic practice.

4.1.1 Assessments of preliminary applications

The assessment committee discusses the applications in comparison to one another. The committee will assign their preferences by feasibility, based on the applicant's qualities. Both the curriculum vitae and the concise research plan serve as indications for the applicant's qualities, and both components are included in the assessment (see also the assessment criteria listed in section 4.2). If enough applications of sufficient quality are submitted, 6 applicants may be selected for the workshops. All applicants will be notified early in April.

4.1.2 Workshops

Participation in the workshops is obligatory for the applicants selected. The workshops are scheduled for 20 April 2010. Presentations and discussions will be held to assist the applicants in the various steps of progressing from their rough ideas for research to detailed research proposals. The workshops are intended for both the researchers and the supervisors.

4.1.3 Assessment of detailed research proposals (interview, possibly with site visit)

The detailed research proposal should be submitted on 1 June 2010 (by 12 o'clock midday). The assessment committee discusses the applications by comparing them with one another, based on the applications and the portfolios containing the artistic works. The procedure will include an interview with both supervisors and the PhD applicant, at the artist's studio if so requested. The assessment committee then assigns their preferences by feasibility, based on the applications, portfolios and interviews.

4.1.4 Decision

The steering committee will conduct a marginal evaluation of the assessment and then decide on the final order of preference, based on the recommendations put forward by the assessment committee. That order of preference is then used as the basis for determining which research proposals will be subsidised.

4.1.5 Finalisation

Subsidised applications must commence no later than 6 months after the subsidy is granted. Arrangements will be made with the Fonds BKVB and NWO about progress and interim evaluation of the research.

4.1.6 Timeline

4 March 2010:	deadline for submitting preliminary applications
Early April at the latest:	results of selection for workshops
20 April:	workshop
1 June:	deadline for submitting full applications
Mid-June:	interviews between the applicants and the assessment committee
Early July:	decision by the steering committee
September 2010 onward:	start of projects

4.2 Criteria

The assessment of research proposals is based on the following aspects: points of departure, approach/methodology, relevance and the applicant.

Points of departure:

- importance of the proposal within the context of artistic and possibly scientific developments;
- originality/innovative character of the research plan;
- clarity of the research question.

Approach/methodology:

- reasoned substantiation of the relationship between the artistic and discursive elements of the research;
- suitability of the approach/methodology proposed;
- feasibility/practicability;
- soundness and phases of the work plan.

Relevance of the research:

- knowledge production and transfer, with both concepts being interpreted in relation to the artistic and academic discourse to which the research pertains;
- topicality of the subject;
- societal, cultural and artistic relevance.

Applicant:

- the applicant's prior results (in the shape of exhibitions, performances, publications, portfolio, research projects);
- any prior results in relation to the research proposal;
- the feasibility of the research in terms of the applicant's experience.

4.3 Composition of the committee

The responsibility for the substance of the pilot for PhD programmes in the arts lies with the steering committee, which is made up of representatives from the university and the art world.

The research proposals will be assessed by an ad hoc assessment committee. The compositions of the steering committee and the assessment committee will be published on the website. Secretarial work will be performed by NWO.

5 Other information

5.1 Contact

Questions about the information set out above may be addressed to NWO or the Fonds BKVB:

NWO, Humanities Division

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6 Annex

Instructions for structuring preliminary applications for PhD positions in the arts

Applications should be submitted in accordance with the following instructions. Always read the Call for Proposals first.

Submitting brief applications

Applications (as PDF files only) should be in the possession of NWO by 4 March 2010, 12 o'clock mid-day. You should use IRIS, NWO's system for electronic subsidy applications, which can be found at <https://www.iris.nwo.nl/>. You will also find a description of how IRIS works, plus instructions for its use. You will need a user name to use IRIS. Information about how to obtain a user name is also available on the website. IRIS will send you an E-mail confirming that NWO has received your electronic application.

Applications consist of four elements: a fact sheet, the application, the letter of recommendation from the professor and the co-supervisor and a portfolio with the applicant's artistic work.

You use the fact sheet to set out the factual details relating to your application (title, principal applicant, etc.).

The application should be submitted in PDF format. The file may not be protected in any manner, to ensure that the application details in the PDF file can be properly processed.

The portfolio should be submitted separately, either by E-mail (e.gerritsen@nwo.nl) or by postal mail.

Applications should be written using a standard font (at least 11 pt, except for literature references, for which 9 pt may be used).

IRIS factsheet

- the title of the research;
- a brief summary of the research topic;
- the applicant's details;
- the details of the PhD supervisor and co-supervisor.

Application

- the applicant's curriculum, showing information about his or her educational background and experience as it relates to the application, references and other qualifications.
- a concise, clear description of a single idea for research (no more than 1000 words) that addresses the following elements:
 - the title and a description of the subject;
 - the positioning of the research within the discipline and the field of artistic research;
 - a brief description of the artistic and theoretical assumptions, hypotheses and research questions;
 - a description of the envisioned results;
 - a substantiation of the subject in relation to the applicant's artistic practice;
 - a substantiation of the need for the research;
 - a reasoned description of the method to be adopted, including a substantiation of the relationship between the artistic and discursive results of the research;

- a description of the steps already taken to prepare for the PhD research.