

# Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
A Glossary of Terms	viii
Introduction	xi
<b>Part One: Theories and Histories</b>	<b>1</b>
1: James Elkins, "Six Cultures of the PhD Around the World"	3
2: James Elkins, "List of PhD Programs Around the World"	17
3: Judith Mottram, "Researching the PhD in Art and Design: What Is It, And Why Do a PhD in Art and Design?"	35
4: Charles Harrison, "When Management Speaks..."	71
5: Victor Burgin, "Thoughts on 'Research' Degrees in Visual Arts Departments"	85
6: Timothy Emlyn Jones, "The PhD in Studio Art Revisited"	97
7: George Smith, "The Artist-Philosopher and the New Philosophy"	129
8: Iain Biggs, "Singing Across Thresholds"	159
9: Timothy Emlyn Jones, "The Studio Art Doctorate in America"	169
10: Mick Wilson, "Four Theses Attempting to Revise the Terms of a Debate"	179
11: Henk Slager, "Experimental Aesthetics"	197
12: Hilde Van Gelder and Jan Baetens, "The Future of the Doctorate in the Arts"	211
13: James Elkins, "Fourteen Reasons to Mistrust the PhD"	227

14: Judith Mottram, "Notes in Response to the Fourteen Reasons"	279
15: James Elkins, "Positive Ideas for PhD Programs"	303
16: Jonathan Dronsfield, "Writing as Practice: Notes on Materiality of Theory for Practice-Based PhDs"	325
17: Mick Wilson, "Between Apparatus and Ethos: On Building a Research Pedagogy in the Arts"	341
<b>Part Two: Examples</b>	361
18: Fritha Langerman (University of Cape Town, South Africa)	363
19: Ruth Waller (School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra; MA)	383
20: Kyoko Nakamura (Tokyo Geidai)	399
21: Yuki Matsueda (Tokyo Geidai)	413
22: María Mencía (Chelsea College of Art and Design / University of the Arts, London)	419
23: Uriel Orlow (University of the Arts, London)	429
24: Phoebe von Held (University College London / Slade School of Art)	439
25: Marcela Quiroga Garza (Universidad de las Américas Puebla, Mexico)	453
26: Qi Zhen (Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing)	463
Envoi	469
Photo Credits	475

# Introduction

If you're a young artist, and you are wondering about how to land a secure teaching job, there is an interesting—I should really say frightening—new possibility. It appears that before too long, employers will be looking for artists with PhDs rather than Masters or college degrees. For the best jobs, it may no longer be enough to have an MA or an MFA. The best universities and art schools will increasingly be looking for candidates with one of the new, PhD-level degrees, sometimes called “creative-art doctorates” or “practice-based doctorates.” It may even happen that the PhD degrees become the standard minimum requirement for teaching jobs at the college level.

That may seem unlikely, but consider what happened in the United States after the Second World War: returning soldiers signed on for the new Master's in Fine Arts degrees, and by the 1960s those degrees had become standard across the country. At first the MFA provoked resistance. It was said that it would lead to the academization of fine art, turning artists into scholars, and requiring that they produce impossible amounts of writing. Now, at the start of the twenty-first century, MFAs are ubiquitous and effectively devalued. A recent survey reveals that there are over 1,800,000 people with BFA or MFA degrees in North America alone. Plum jobs in North American institutions that require the MFA can attract more than 700 applicants. Critics such as Dave Hickey and Jerry Saltz have been inveighing against the MFA, and a whole spectrum of unaccredited, sometimes free art schools have grown up in the US, the UK, and elsewhere. The MFA degree, by itself, has come to be little more than a requirement for competition on the job market, somewhat akin to the requirement of a high school or

college diploma. To compete, job candidates need to have the MFA and something else, such as an exhibition record or a second field of expertise.

If history has a lesson to teach here, and I think it does, then the PhD in studio art will spread the way the MFA did a half-century ago. The resistance to it will subside, and in a generation it will become the baseline requirement for a competitive job teaching studio art. The MFA will continue, and will still be sufficient for jobs in secondary schools and smaller colleges, but the PhD will increasingly be a necessity for competition at the highest levels.

In fall 2003 there was a conference session in Los Angeles on the subject of PhDs in studio art. I gave a paper there, along with Timothy Emlyn Jones, two of whose essays also appear in this book. The audience, comprised of deans and presidents of North American art schools and art departments, was by turns astonished, unconvinced, dismissive, and paranoid.

“How can you expect art students to write 50,000-word dissertations, when my students can barely write a short Master’s thesis?” one asked.

“This is a horrible idea,” another person said, “it makes art into a hothouse flower. It makes it into philosophy, or literary criticism.”

“Why should artists do research like scientists?” a third wanted to know. “That is simply not how art is made.” Others asked how students would pay for such degrees, and who would be qualified to assess them (surely instructors with MFAs could not supervise PhD theses).

The audience in Los Angeles could afford to be skeptical, because the United States has no consistent history of PhDs in studio art. Since the 1970s there have been a handful of universities that offer such degrees, and at the moment there are five. I have heard it said that they are just extensions of the MFA—two or three more years in the studio, to no clear purpose. (One person in the Los Angeles meeting said she thought the PhD would be a waste of time, a way of “hanging around” in school after the Masters is complete.)

But the crowd in that conference in 2003 was unsettled, especially when they heard Tim Jones say that there were currently two thousand students in the UK enrolled in programs that could result in the PhD. Another panelist, David Williams, said that within two

years, Australia would have ten universities that offer the PhD degree. (That turns out to have been an underestimate; there are now over twenty.) Since then I have heard that in Malaysia art teachers at college level are required to have PhDs, and in several other countries including Poland, Kenya, and Uganda, instructors are asked to take leaves of absence to get the PhD. Clearly, in the UK and in countries influenced by their university system, the PhD is fast becoming a standard.

It's a salient fact about the studio-art PhD degree that no single person has knowledge of the ways it is taught around the world. Given that there are over two hundred institutions that grant the degree, it is likely that no one has visited even half of the total number of institutions. (See the listing in chapter 2.) The literature on the studio-art PhD degree has been growing rapidly. I think that 2011 was the last year any one person could read all of the literature. In my experience, people have stopped trying. (I made an effort for this book, but I know at least eight full-length books I haven't read, and any number of essays.) This is significant because it means that no one person can be sure of not rehearsing ideas that have been proposed elsewhere, and no one can speak as an authority on the field.

Putting aside for the moment the scattered administrative literature on the degree produced in the UK and Japan since the early 1970s, the current explosion of literature can be traced to the twenty-first century. The first ten books were, in order:

- 1) An Irish publication I edited called *Printed Project* (2004) from which this book grew.
- 2) A collection called *Artistic Research* (2004), edited by Annette Balkema and Henk Slager.
- 3) Carol Gray, *Visualizing Research: A Guide To The Research Process In Art And Design* (2004). (I thank Susan Halvey for pointing this book out to me.)
- 4) Graeme Sullivan's *Art Practice as Research* (2005).
- 5) *Thinking Through Art* (2006), another edited volume.
- 6) A collection of essays on PhDs in Finland (2006).
- 7) Henk Borgdorff's *The Debate on Research in the Arts*.
- 8) An e-book called *Thinking Through Practice: Art as Research in the Academy* (2007).

9) Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (2008).

10) The first edition of this book (2009).

(This list is only books; there is also the online journal *Art and Research*; Jonathan Dronsfield pointed out to me that its first issue is dated 2006-7.)

In the five years between the first edition of this book and now (spring 2014), the literature has become inaccessibly vast. This edition is substantially a new book in comparison to the first edition. Instead of 11 essays on the new degree, there are 17, and 10 of them are new. The second part now has excerpts from dissertations written in Japan, South Africa, and Mexico. Henk Slager's journal *MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research* (2006– ) continued to appear; it is the first journal that consistently addresses research and the doctorate. The year 2010 saw the appearance of *Kunst und künstlerische Forschung / Art and Artistic Research*; the *Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*; and e-flux's A Prior magazine on "Art as Research," with essays by Victor Burgin and others. The *Journal of Artistic Research* (2011– ) is an online journal edited by Michael Schwab, which represents much of the Anglophone European scene. The year 2011 also saw the publication of Martin Tröndle and Julia Warmers's *Kunstforschung als ästhetische Wissenschaft: Beiträge zur transdisziplinären Hybridisierung von Wissenschaft und Kunst*; and Henk Slager's *Pleasure of Research*; a special issue of *Texte zur Kunst* on "Artistic Research." The next year Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, Michael Schwab published their *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*. The same year, 2011, there was also José Queresma's edited volume *Investigação em Arte e Design: Fendas no Método e na Criação* (Lisbon: CIEBA). As I write this, January 2014, the most recent book is Henk Borgdorff's *Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (2013).

It is also no longer clear what literature belongs to this subject. *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)*, edited by Steven Henry Madoff, contains mainly contributions by artists, and seems unaware of the administrative and art education literature even in the United States. But the positions taken by Dennis Adams, Thierry

de Duve, Shirin Neshat, Hans Haacke, Boris Groys, Liam Gillick, Saskia Bos, Steven Henry Madoff, Ernesto Pujol, Ute Meta Bauer, Paul Ramirez Jonas, Jeffrey Schnapp, Anton Vidokle, Matthew Higgs, Charles Renfro, Dana Schutz, and Brian Sholis can hardly be irrelevant to the development of the PhD. My own book *Art Critiques: A Guide* (2011) was originally an attempt to cover critiques at the BFA, MFA, and PhD levels, but it became apparent that different kinds of conversations count as critiques in the PhD, and those conversations have only a tenuous connection to what art students know as “crits.” The second edition of that book (2012) sequestered the PhD as a separate topic, making a distinction that I think is crucial but problematic. Liora Bresler’s *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education* (2007) contains some material pertinent to the visual arts degree. So do Elke Bippus’s *Kunst des Forschens: Praxis eines ästhetischen Denkens* (2009); Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt’s *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2006); J. Knowles and Ardra Cole’s *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (2007); and *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, edited by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009). Once the net is widened to include the world of the doctorate in design, the literature is effectively endless. (The Design PhD has its own history and its own vast literature. Several of the books I’ve mentioned, and several of the chapters in this book, are partly about design, but if that is your interest then I’d recommend the separate literature. Among the important differences between the design PhD and the studio-art or practice-led PhD are that research is practical and indispensable in design, because clients will have their own demands and concerns. There is, as Cameron Tonkinwise pointed out to me, a feedback loop in the design PhD, from research to product to manufacture and use, and back again to research. That’s among several fundamentally different concerns in the design PhD. Good starting points are Ilpo Koskinen’s *Design Research Through Practice: From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*, and the long-running design listserv PhD-design.)

The disarray of the bibliography is easily demonstrated by the lack of overlap in bibliographies and invited authors. Groups and disciplinary interests are emerging, which is natural in any expanding subject: in this case it is possible to distinguish North American

art education from European art education; theorists of “research” in the studio context from theorists of “research” in other university contexts; art historians from artists; administrators from philosophers. Those overlapping disciplinary allegiances aren’t surprising: what concerns me is that the subject is divided principally because the literature is too large for anyone to assess what groups, positions, and interests might be out there to be included.

In the first edition of this book I had predicted, based on the previous decade’s growth, that there would be 127 programs in North America by 2012. Now it’s 2014 and there are only 12. But there are nearly 200 such programs in the world, and no sign of slowing down.

The philosophy of this book is simply that it is best to try to understand something that is coming, rather than inveighing against it. The PhD in studio art has many problems, and if the MFA is an indication they won’t all be solved before many more programs are in place. (Or, if you’re cynical, the problems will never be solved, and the programs will be put in place anyway.) Students will have to pay more, and they will stay in school longer, and they’ll be asked to write more. There will be new pressures on the job market. Some kinds of art will probably be influenced by the new degree, and art as a whole may even become more academic and intellectual—more involved with theory, possibly even more alienated from skill and technique. But it is best to consider the new degree as a potential feature on the academic landscape, and try to understand it, rather than writing polemics against it.

In this book, I offer several tools to promote discussion of the new degree.

Part One sets the stage and gives relevant facts; Part Two offers excerpts from studio-art PhD dissertations to show the kind of work that has been done.

I begin with surveys. Chapter 1 is a first attempt to see if the PhD has different flavors in different parts of the world. As the programs proliferate, I think these regional “cultures” may become more pronounced, so if you’re choosing a program, you might choose by the part of the world it’s in. Chapter 2 is a listing of all the PhD-granting institutions in the world. The list is in continual flux, and if you know an institution that’s not on the list (or one that



has suspended admissions) please let me know.

Judith Mottram's essay, Chapter 3, is a compilation of quantitative information that will help you see the shape of things in the UK, which is one of the places the new degrees got started. (It also began, independently and at roughly the same time, in Japan.) Mottram's contribution may seem long and detailed if you are new to the subject, but it is the most accurate history of the degree in the UK: skim it, at least, if you're coming at this subject for the first time.

(Note there are no Contributors' bios in this book. That information is generally easy to find on the internet, and space in a book is better given to content. If you would like to contact any of the authors in this book, and you can't find their emails online, please write me via my webpage, [jameselkins.com](http://jameselkins.com).)

The next chapter, by Charles Harrison, is one of the "classics" of this field (if a field so young can be said to have classics). It presents a polemical position with exemplary clarity.

Victor Burgin's essay, Chapter 5, is strong and succinct on the problems of invoking research to justify the new programs. I wholly agree with the first three-quarters of the essay. His proposals for three kinds of PhD programs are brief but cogent. As he says, the real issue is how to assess the new programs: a problem no one knows how to solve. Chapters 6 and 9 are by Timothy Emlyn Jones of the Burren College of Art in Ballyvaughan, Ireland and one of the more prolific authors on the subject of the PhD. Tim's first essay regards the practice-led PhD from the point of view of an artist; Tim has had an inquiry- or research-based practice since 1979. The essay has a rich range of sources bearing on the difference between the experience of making and that of studying, "knowing how" and "knowing that" (Gilbert Ryle's expressions), thinking "through art" and thinking "about art." Tim's second essay, Chapter 9, gives hints and instructions to US institutions interested in learning from the UK example. It's an unusual essay, since it's directed to a hypothetical audience rather than to the actually existing programs: it could be read in reverse, I think, as advice for people starting PhD-granting programs in the EU.

Chapter 7 was written by George Smith, who started the first PhD program in the United States influenced by international de-

velopments. (As with all firsts, this one is contentious. It could be said that Virginia Commonwealth's program, begun the year before, is the first that was made with awareness of developments in the UK and elsewhere.) Smith has taken an unusual step, which is unique, I think, in the entire world: he has decided not to teach studio art in his program. Instead he wants to provide the theoretical instruction that he finds missing at the MFA level, and in universities. (It could be argued that Smith's program, the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, IDSVA, is not a studio-art PhD at all, because it does not involve studio instruction.)

Another prolific writer on this subject is Iain Biggs (chapter 8). His essay is a plea for the UK educational system to "recognize the educational, cultural and social value of the 'marginal culture' to which the arts-led doctorate has contributed so much," and he provides fifteen examples of interesting work.

Writing about the studio-art PhD tends to draw on a shallow sense of its own history; it shares that historical amnesia, to some degree, with the sometimes allied field of visual studies. Mick Wilson's first contribution, Chapter 10, is a reminder that some central terms in the subject, such as the idea of research and the idea of the PhD, have deeper histories. Wilson draws on the history of European universities to remind would-be innovators that their apparent innovations spring from unseen roots.

Henk Slager, who directs the first PhD-granting institution in the Netherlands, contributed chapter 11, "Experimental Aesthetics." Slager draws on various poststructural paradigms to argue for a sense of art research that is transdisciplinary, post-humanistic, mobile, and unquantitative. Of the contributions to this book, his is the most unconstrained sense of "artistic research," the one most linked to poststructural critiques of knowledge and disciplinarity. Chapter 12, by two scholars working in Leuven, reports on the collaboration of Belgian universities in practice-based PhDs. The essay is a wide-ranging, theoretically- and historically informed article, and it includes a speculative section on the possibility of PhDs for creative writers (which already exist in the United States) and even art critics.

From there things get more polemical. I am not a neutral editor here, and I will not hide the fact that I think a great deal of theo-

ricing about the PhD—and especially the key terms “art research” and the production of “new knowledge” in visual art—is nonsense. I just don’t think it makes enough sense to say that art research is “mobile,” “dialogic,” “contextual,” “topical,” “unquantitative,” “between zones,” “nomadic,” or “implicated in poststructural paradigms” — to quote a few authors who have written on the subject. This kind of theorizing, I think, either tortures the concepts of research and knowledge to make them answer to fine art practice, or abandons them for an uncertain celebration of complexity. Dialogic, Deleuzian, postcolonial, and other poststructural approaches could make the kind of sense that would allow the PhD in studio art to be accepted throughout the university, but at the moment they don’t, and I don’t think it helps the visual arts to be packaging their initiative in this way. Nor does it help to continue tweaking the UK ideas of research and new knowledge so they can continue to make sense. What is needed, I think—and Burgin says as much in Chapter 5, and Jones in Chapter 6—is a ground-up rethinking of the possible conceptualizations of the PhD in studio art that does not need to rely on notions of research or the production of new knowledge.

Chapter 13 is a list I have been keeping of objections people have raised to the practice-led or studio-art PhD; it includes some long entries on research and new knowledge. None of the fourteen are my own objections, but the exposition is mine. The idea was to round up all the major reservations and see which ones might have weight. When she read a draft of this essay, Judith Mottram decided to write a response, and in the interests of discussion I have included her entire text here (chapter 14). Chapter 15 is a counterbalance: a list of reasons to be interested in the PhD, and possibilities for future programs.

I’m delighted to be able to publish the two essays that close Part One. Chapter 16 is essay by Jonathan Dronsfield, who teaches at Reading University; it is a thoughtful contribution to part of what I think of as the most radical and interesting possibility of the PhD—the case where the student’s dissertation is presented as art. This possibility, it seems to me, is a logical endpoint of all the conversations on research and knowledge, and it is also an inevitable result of poststructuralism. I introduce the possibility at the end

of Chapter 15 without elaborating it. Dronsfield's essay concerns philosophers who have attempted to fuse practice with theory in their work, providing models for half of the question (the other half would be the visual art presented as research dissertation). And finally Chapter 17, Mick Wilson's second contribution, is a logical and lucid exposition of the ways that the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media in Dublin have conceptualized research, institution, and interdisciplinarity.

If you've thumbed through the book, you'll have noticed the cartoons. They were an afterthought: I was corresponding with a droll observer of the PhD scene, Shaun Belcher, and he showed me some faux-infographics he had made of different people's positions. That ended up as a collaboration, in which he provided graphics for many of the arguments in this book. I thought a subject as full of stultifying writing as this one really needed some relief. (And I'm hoping the contributors have a sense of humor, because I haven't told them about the cartoons. I'm neutral about his take on the chapters—as evidence I cite the lovely cartoon he provided for the opening of chapter 15.)

The chapters of this book that I wrote are partly crowd sourced. Starting in 2011, I posted drafts on Facebook, LinkedIn, academia.edu, researchgate, and Twitter. My 14,000 or so "friends" offered hundreds of corrections, additions, and often very cogent and interesting arguments. Four chapters from this book (Chapters 1, 2, 13, and 15) will remain online at [www.jameselkins.com/yy](http://www.jameselkins.com/yy), so if you're interested in breaking news—like improved listings of the programs worldwide—you can consult that site, and also add more comments and suggestions. The site has a wonderful text editing engine that permits comments on individual paragraphs, rather than on entire posts or pages, so you can make very specific comments. (There won't be another printed edition of this book, however: that's just too much work!)

That's Part One. Then the book changes direction, and in Part Two, I have excerpted some examples of PhD dissertations and PhD-level artwork, to show what can be accomplished. It isn't possible to display either the art or the full dissertations in a book, but I think it's important to keep in mind that these are programs about artists, art, and scholarship, and not just art theory, art history, and

art education, as in Part One. (Iain Biggs's essay, Chapter 8, also has examples of what recent PhDs have produced.) The samples in Part Two are deliberately and diverse as I could make them. Some of the newer participants in these conversations, such as the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, or Tokyo Geidai (although it has been granting PhDs for a long time), may strike readers as parts of other senses of the degree, other formations. That, I think, is exactly as it should be.

The book ends with some brief conclusions and a challenge.

*Navan, Co Meath, Ireland—Ithaca, New York—Chicago, Illinois—  
Navan*

*April 2004—January 2014*