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Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of 'Practice as Research'

Why research?

People engage in research from a variety of motives but, ultimately, the rigours of sustained academic research are driven by a desire to address a problem, find things out, establish new insights.[1] This drive is apparent in the arts throughout history, but it is relatively recently that it has been necessary to posit the notion of arts 'Practice as Research'. Time was when there were arts practices, on the one hand, and 'academic' research on the other.[2] Artists engaging in inquiry through their practices may not have thought of what they did as 'research', even though they were aware of an exploratory dynamic to address issues and achieve insights.[3] The term arts 'Practice as Research' would probably not have been coined had artists not got involved with modern higher education institutions in respect of programmes of learning, particularly at PhD level.[4] The emphasis on studio practice in art schools or academies has found itself in tension with university protocols in respect of degree-awarding powers and the question of what constitutes knowledge in research.

Among the arts, literature, music and the visual arts have historically been nominated as figuring more in respect of academies, whereas conservatory schools for dance or theatre have been more typically associated with vocational training (and perhaps with entertainment, as Carlson suggests below) than knowledge-production.[5] While the scope of this book embraces all the arts, the emphasis is on the performing arts, in part because less has been published on them in respect of 'Practice as Research' (hereafter PaR) than the Visual Arts. Also the ephemerality of the performing arts poses particular challenges to their inclusion in an already contested site of knowledge-production.

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Numerous instabilities in the diversity and ephemerality of performing arts practices pose particular challenges to ideas of fixed, measurable and recordable 'knowledge'. At the same time, however, the concept of 'performance' has contributed a new conceptual map – and mode of knowing – to the academy and to research. In McKenzie's formulation, 'performance' 'will be to the twentieth and twenty-first century what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge'.[6] Indeed, 'performance' and 'the performative' have become influential concepts in a number of academic disciplines.[7]

Once artists of all kinds entered today's HEIs, and it was possible – at least in principle – for arts, media, and other practices to be recognised as knowledge-producing and submitted as research for PhDs and professional research audits (RAE, REF, RQF), a complex web of questions about processes and protocols began to be woven.[8] Even now, however – after much debate over two decades, several conferences and two AHRC-funded investigations of the phenomenon in the UK and equivalent initiatives in some other places – PaR remains for some either elusive (in that they are unclear how to go about it) or incomprehensible (in that arts approaches are thought not to be readily reconciled with established conceptions of 'academic research').[9] For a range of very different reasons, different constituencies prefer to dismiss the idea. For some arts practitioners, the requirement to do a little more to articulate their research inquiry is an unwarranted imposition from beyond their culture. For some established arts scholars, PaR is not accepted as a respectable methodology and is seen perhaps to tarnish newly-established arts and media subdisciplines.[10] For academics in non-arts disciplines with established methodologies and (quantitative and qualitative) methods, PaR is at once both a challenge to some of the fundamental assumptions about 'research' and 'knowledge', and another competitor for a limited pot of research funding. Confronted with this complexity, some find it convenient permanently to defer understanding in a world where everything is deemed to be fragmented, relative and undecidable.

There is, however, a burgeoning literature (see the Bibliography) on PaR to reflect 'an international and spreading phenomenon, with strong established or emergent movements of postdoctoral and postgraduate practitioner-researchers'.[11] The literature is dominated by the presentation of case studies which do not always bring out clearly what constitutes research (as subtly distinct from professional practice). Furthermore, case studies do not typically aim to illuminate a generic

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methodology distinguishing the approach of practitioner-researchers nor offer an exemplary pedagogy to support the development of new practitioner-researchers. An agglomeration of case studies does emphasize that very richness and diversity of PaR enquiries which has made it difficult to establish the commensurability between projects required, for good or ill, in institutionalized research culture. Indeed, Kershaw's summary remark, that PaR 'thrives on a proliferation of types of creative and investigative difference that always-already will tend to resist the incorporation into meta-schemes or systems of knowledge', retains an attractive radical sonority in this context.[12] But it might not best serve students and tutors struggling to get PaR accepted within their project, institution or territory. Limited attention has been paid to the institutional constraints that in some instances have hindered the development of PaR.[13] These range from strong academic traditions which privilege theory, to divisions between theory and practice in the very structures of education (university vs. art school/conservatoire), and regulatory frameworks which in some instances effectively exclude PaR by inscribing 'the scientific method' into research regulations.

The literature also includes some complex conceptual work on the problematics of PaR. This book resonates with much of what has been written, in particular the common aim to challenge the schism in the Western intellectual tradition between theory and practice and to valorize what I shall call 'praxis' (theory imbricated within practice – see Chapter 3), or what some call intelligent practice or material thinking.[14] Though this book explores new modes of knowing, it notes and puts aside ('parks' in the philosophical sense of marking an aporia) some of the limit paradoxes which propose that practitioner-researchers may well 'have no coherent epistemology upon which to ground their multifarious activities'.[15] In an elegant and sophisticated essay, Simon Jones has teased out the many conceptual paradoxes of PaR and suggested that it

> moves outwards in two opposing directions simultaneously, towards two limit cases – the interior void of the soul and the exterior void of absolute possibility, rather than inwards toward a common ground or sense of knowing.[16]

Piccini and Rye have in parallel concluded that, unless praxis can be directly experienced, assessment is typically made by way of documentation that always inevitably (re)constructs the practice such that the thing itself remains elusive.[17]

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These are compelling reservations about the PaR initiative and would seem at first sight to militate against it on principled grounds. But, informed by these insights, it is possible to make a significant distinction between documentation (by way of translation) of a practice and documentation of a research inquiry based in practice. Where, typically, the visual arts, including screen media, produce (relatively) stable objects, literature produces book-based publications and music frequently has scores, the practices of the other performing arts leave only traces. Where some form of durable record is institutionally required of research findings, the documentation of practice may at worst displace the thing itself (see Chapter 4). Indeed, Kershaw notes, 'in practice-as-research communities of the twenty-first century "documentation" has been conflated with 'evidence" and "document" with audiovisual material'.[18]

In the context of arts peer review in the UK, however, an understanding has developed such that few now mistake the audio-visual document for the performance itself. Indeed Piccini and Rye recount fresh approaches to documentation which afford a 'telling otherwise' and keep alive 'a sense of "what might be", rather than a fixity of what was' (see Chapter 4).[19] Documentation of a product serves as just one kind of evidence (with an indexical aspect, albeit reconstructed) in the multi-mode approach advocated in this book in which different kinds of evidence serve to confirm the findings of a consciously articulated research inquiry. Moreover, in rigorously critiquing PaR methodology, we should recognize – as argued in Chapter 3 – that in the twenty-first century no methodology or epistemology can be taken to yield an unmediated, self-evident truth.

While it revisits some key debates, this book takes a more pragmatic approach, aiming to extend the acceptance of PaR within 'the academy'. It offers examples of particular challenges and opportunities in specific aspects of projects rather than general case studies. Though it does not aspire to a meta-scheme, it develops a model in which a diverse range of enquiries conducted by means of arts and performance practices might be framed. It has four additional purposes:

- first, to afford (quite directly in Chapter 2) a 'how to' approach to PaR;
- second, to propose a distinctive pedagogy for PaR, operable at all levels of heuristic learning and leading into a methodology of research – fleshing out the paradigm of 'performative research' posited by Haseman;[20]

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- third, to consider a range of institutional constraints through reflection on undergraduate as well as postgraduate arts education contexts; and
- fourth, through a dialogic engagement with different 'territories' to try to understand why and how PaR has variously burgeoned or been met with resistance in different parts of the world.

While the book will take on the complexity of things – and indeed show some advantages to PaR of the contemporary intellectual context at the 'performance turn' – the aim is to be as clear and direct as possible. A direct approach is taken to articulating what 'Practice as Research' is, how the concept came about and how working practices have now established a number of protocols.

The directness is achieved in Part I by a single-authored account drawing from, rather than explicating, actual examples in my own experience, substantially in the performing arts and screen media (though also embracing visual arts and writing projects), and mainly in the UK. Though the effect of this approach is to have a UK-centric – if not a Nelson-centric – bias, I call upon a range of voices to assist in making the case. By the single-authored means in Part I, however, it is possible to be less broadly illustrative and more reductive about what has been proven to work and what has proved difficult, if not disastrous, for some students in the domain. It is in this sense that the book in part constitutes a practical 'how to' guide. The writing of the book is prompted by participants in the many seminars on 'Practice as Research in the Arts and Media' to which I have contributed in the UK and abroad, who have proposed that I should write up what I have articulated. Repeatedly, colleagues have been encouraging in saying that my presentations and my model for PaR are exceptionally clear and persuasive. The approach taken here, though in writing rather than performed, aims to sustain that clarity.

It must be said, however, that I do not claim my model to be the only one with all the answers. Stressing the plural, Jones has proposed that, '[o]ur greatest challenge is to find ways . . . of *housing the mix* of performative and textual practices alongside each other'.[21] Emphasizing the *dialogical* relation between elements yielding *resonances* by way of affirmation (the italics are used to emphasize key terms), my model affords one way of 'housing the mix'. Those colleagues who take the view that a practice alone is sufficient without a written complement may well resist it (see Chapter 8), and there certainly has been a UK tradition in

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Music for composition alone to be submitted as a research outcome.[22] However, I share Schippers's view that

> [a]lthough much music making involves research, the latter does not necessarily qualify all music making as research. Not every rehearsal is a research project and not all performances are research outcomes . . . Much of what musicians do may certainly be high-level professional practice, but all does not necessarily constitute research.[23]

Those who are deeply sceptical about the viability of PaR as a scholarly practice may not be persuaded by the arguments rehearsed here, though I hope they will approach the proposed methodology with as open a mind as possible. The model does require a shift in established thinking about what constitutes research and knowledge, but it has proven to work for a considerable number of colleagues and students. My approach owes a debt to those students with whom it has been developed and also to numerous other symposia contributors – some of whom I am unable to acknowledge personally in what follows – for what I have learned in the process of engagement and debate. To offset an inevitable partiality in Part I, the second part of this book comprises contributions from colleagues in different parts of the world where PaR is well established, emergent or resisted.

Part II, in dialogic engagement with Part I, thickens the description of the overall account. Contributors are drawn from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, (continental) Europe, the Nordic countries, South Africa, and the US. The choices are not intended to give world coverage but to reflect different aspects of the debate about PaR and how different inflections of meaning and practice operate in different 'territories'. In some substantial territories, continental Europe and the US for example, postgraduate programmes in universities have not emerged as quickly as might have been expected given the now substantial provision in the UK and elsewhere. Indeed, there are significant pockets of entrenched resistance. Each contributor to Part II of the book responds to aspects of Part I, affording an overview of their 'territory' and marking any differences of approach and cultural specificities from their perspective. Thus, besides a direct 'how to' approach, the book will additionally afford an overview of developments in research based in a range of arts and cultural practices.

What is 'Practice as Research'?

Let me be clear at the outset what I mean by PaR. PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and

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where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry. In contrast to those sceptical scholars who dismiss, or look down upon, PaR as insubstantial and lacking in rigour, I recognize that PaR projects require more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research inquiry than more traditional research processes and, when done well, demonstrate an equivalent rigour. I have been known to steer prospective PhD students towards more traditional approaches since a PaR process is tough. Indeed, to take on a PaR PhD student, I would need to be convinced that the proposed inquiry necessarily entailed practical knowledge which might primarily be demonstrated in practice – that is, knowledge which is a matter of doing rather than abstractly conceived and thus able to be articulated by way of a traditional thesis in words alone.

A simple example of practical knowledge is that of 'knowing' how to ride a bicycle. To know how to ride a bike is to ride it. Following Heidegger's sense of material thinking, philosopher David Pears remarks:

> I know how to ride a bicycle, but I cannot say how I balance because I have no method. I may know that certain muscles are involved, but that factual knowledge comes later, if at all, and it could hardly be used in instruction.[24]

I shall return to this example because its simplicity masks the complexity of the issue of what counts as knowledge, particularly in 'the academy'.[25] I shall take up also the crucial question of how arts practices which constitute research differ from those which do not. This is one of the issues that the literature to date has teased out but does not fully address. But, for now, the example of bicycle riding evidences a kind of practical knowing-in-doing which is at the heart of PaR. In my taxonomy, PaR arises only where an insightful practice is submitted as a substantial part of the evidence of a research inquiry. Moreover, PaR is not just a matter for arts practitioner-researchers; educational, ethnographic and many other disciplinary practices might equally follow the PaR model to be proposed.

Other commentators use other terms besides PaR.[26] Following the seminal work of Carole Gray (1996), 'practice-led research' is commonly used in Australia to indicate something very similar to my conception of PaR.[27] As Brad Haseman summarizes, 'practice-led research'

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> describes what practitioner-researchers do, captures the nuances and subtleties of their research processes and accurately reflects the process to research funding bodies. Above all it asserts the primacy of practice and insists that because creative practice is both on-going and persistent; practitioner-researchers do not merely 'think' their way through or out of a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution.[28]

I do not wish to unsettle a workable usage, but 'practice-led' may bear a residual sense that knowledge follows after, is secondary to, the practice which I know some of its users do not mean to imply.[29] I am not precious about terminology but I recognize that words matter. An acknowledgement that arts innovation cannot be ignored in the academy accompanied by a reluctance to recognize that arts practices might constitute 'research' has led in some quarters to a semantic wriggling which sustains the sense that the arts do not quite meet established criteria.[30] It must be understood that here we are talking about a category in which knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it, whatever term is used.

To offer an example from a relatively traditional PaR practice, in John Irving's research into Mozart's music by playing the historic Hass clavichord, insights into qualities of the music and its playing are derived from the 'feel' of the action of the instrument.[31] They are manifest in the performance which evidences the inquiry even though, as is typically the case, the framing of the inquiry in (written or spoken) words assists dissemination and the understanding of the non-specialist.[32] 'Practice-based' research is also used by some to indicate what I understand by PaR.[33] But I reserve this last term for research which draws from, or is about, practice but which is articulated in traditional word-based forms (books or articles).[34] 'Artistic research' is quite commonly used in the visual arts.

Artworks, and other material practices, are often very complex, resonant and multi-layered, while the articulation of a research inquiry needs to be as clear as possible. Particularly in the context of PaR examination or audit, it is helpful for the assessor to be given in writing a 'clue' ('clew') as to the research inquiry. In the modern form of the word, a 'clue' in writing is useful in PaR since the research inquiry is not identical to the practice, though it is evidenced by it. The old form of the word, 'clew', literally denotes a thread, and students have found it to be a productive metaphor for holding on to the line of the research inquiry as it weaves through the overall process.[35] If the processes of

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PaR are as richly labyrinthine as many accounts suggest, 'clew' is subtly distinct from 'clue' in specifically drawing attention to the *thread of the researcher's doing-thinking* articulated in complementary documentation and writings, and I use it occasionally with this accent throughout the book.

As will be elaborated below, the suggestion that writing may be helpful is not to demand a verbal account of the practice, and certainly not to require a transposition of the practice into words. Bolt remarks that 'the exegesis provides a vehicle through which the work of art can find a discursive form',[36] but my approach looks rather for a *resonance* between complementary writing and the praxis itself.[37] A typical balance between practice and complementary writings in UK PhDs is 50:50 – the thesis constitutes a substantial practice together with 30,000 to 40,000 words (see Chapter 5). But, in presenting research in other contexts, a simple verbal articulation of the research inquiry – such as might be achieved in as few as 300 words – proves useful in almost all cases. In most instances, further elaboration and documentation afford additional ways of *articulating and evidencing the research inquiry*.

Where and when did PaR emerge?

The PaR initiative, as I have come to call it, has a history spanning at least two decades, though research in the arts and arts practices have, of course, a much longer history. PaR may have originated in Finland in the mid 1980s and was emergent in the UK about that time.[38] Australia has become a significant force in developing PaR and there are strong pockets of activity in Nordic countries, South Africa, France and (particularly francophone) Canada.[39] In some parts of (continental) Europe PaR has met with resistance (see Chapter 8)[40] and in the US development has been much stronger in the visual than the performing arts (see below and Chapter 11). My timescale marks the period in which arts practices have increasingly been submitted as evidence of findings in modern institutional research contexts. In the UK the initiative was mobilized in part when formerly autonomous arts schools and music, theatre and dance conservatoires became largely subsumed by universities. But the former schism in arts higher education, reflecting an entrenched binary between theory and practice, is not peculiar to the UK. In Van Gelder and Baetens's summary of the situation in continental Europe, '[a]rt history and theory as well as musicology [were] hosted by university faculties . . . training in the practice of concrete arts and music, however, is located in specialised schools, which are separated from the

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theoretical environment'.[41] Where they had previously established their own procedures and protocols for evaluating practices, largely dependent upon peer review within the respective professional communities, the conservatoires were confronted by a broader set of 'academic' standards and regulatory frameworks which, being essentially word-based (through publication in journal articles or books) did not readily accommodate studio practice.

The timing of the emergence of PaR varies between the arts domains and in different geographical territories. The full detail of such histories is beyond the scope of this book but selective illustration serves to indicate what is at stake.[42] Music, having been a curriculum subject since the formation of the medieval university has a distinct history of practice in the academy, with PhD and DMus degrees awarded latterly. As we shall see, Music has been regarded slightly differently from the other arts as PaR has developed but, in the UK at least, a broadly common approach is now taken across the performing arts, focusing upon the research inquiry.[43] The Visual Arts engaged more explicitly in PaR debates a little ahead of the Performing Arts, though later in some countries than others. From the US, Elkins reports on a Los Angeles conference session in 2003 at which the audience response to the idea of PaR brought from elsewhere was 'by turns astonished, unconvinced, dismissive and paranoid'.[44] The LA conference was informed of 2000 art students in the UK enrolled on arts PhD programmes and of ten universities in Australia which would imminently offer practice-based PhDs. After 2003, studio art PhD programmes developed significantly in the US,[45] while, interestingly, equivalent programmes in the Performing Arts still remain almost non-existent (see Chapter 11). Though not himself without serious reservations, Elkins foresaw that 'the PhD in studio art will spread the way the MFA did half a century ago',[46] and he took the view that, 'it is best to try to understand something that is coming, rather than inveighing against it'.[47] This anecdote illustrates a not untypical trajectory from initial resistance to PaR through to measured scepticism and perhaps to ultimate acceptance.

It is worth exploring further the American response to the arrival of PaR from abroad, notably from the UK. The discursive position of Elkins's edited volume is antagonistic – indeed hostile at times – to the idea of the new doctoral degree in studio art. Elkins's choice of contributors includes a number of sceptical voices (some from the UK) which, though I have heard them on occasion, are not typical of my experience of the PaR debate over the past decade. Elkins openly asserts that he thinks 'a great deal of theorizing about research and the

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production of new knowledge is nonsense'.[48] The volume is particularly negative about developments in the UK where he alleges 'threadbare concepts' are employed,[49] although the models ultimately expounded and favoured by Elkins seem to map on to current UK practices. It is perhaps not surprising that American colleagues were shocked and disturbed by the arrival in the States of the practice-based doctorate since it unsettles the art school environment where the MFA had been firmly established as the 'terminal degree' for arts practitioners.[50] As Emlyn Jones notes, the doctorate 'has been a long time coming to art and design and to other creative and performing arts. No wonder it might seem strange'.[51]

Elkins's hostility, like that of other contributors, is aimed partly at the audit context in the UK (RAE), which is seen as an instrumental imposition responsible for particular approaches to research and knowledge.[52] Moreover, the new doctorates are seen to make unwarrantable demands by drawing upon research paradigms (ranging from arts and humanities through to aspects of the sciences) thought to be incompatible with an arts culture. Elkins speaks in part from within an art school tradition but, situated within a university arts department he speaks also in terms of established disciplines. Even when he recognizes the advantages of links between the arts and other disciplines, he views things from a disciplinary perspective with a strong sense of the requirements of the specialist scholarly traditions of subdisciplines such as art history and art theory. From this perspective, the multi-modal approaches of PaR and the inclusion of a substantial practice seem to entail an erosion or dilution of established knowledge because it is not possible within the time frame of a PaR PhD to pay as much detailed attention to art history or art theory as it would be in a traditional PhD based in those subdisciplines. There is accordingly an imputation that practice-based doctorates must in some sense inevitably be superficial.

But I argue that the comparison is inappropriate and that, because he looks from a particular standpoint, Elkins is disposed to see only the losses and not the very substantial gains to be made through positive models of interdisciplinary, practice-based approaches. My standpoint lies elsewhere since I have always been disposed to be interdisciplinary. Following some time at theatre school, I chose an avowedly inter-disciplinary new university to study philosophy and literature in a Humanities context which also required the study of history and a foreign language. Much of my time – as throughout the first half of my career – was taken up with theatre practice (acting and directing) alongside teaching and research. My Masters research degree is

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in Renaissance Theatre while my (traditional) PhD is concerned with Television Drama and Postmodern Aesthetics. For much of my university teaching career I ran a practice-based inter-disciplinary BA (Hons) Creative Arts programme in which students combined two disciplines (from Dance, Drama, Music ,Visual Arts and Writing) but followed a core of practical inter-disciplinary workshops and a lecture-seminar programme on 'arts and ideas', developing what I now call 'conceptual frameworks'. Subsequently, I developed an MA Contemporary Arts on a similar pedagogic basis of praxis as a taught preparation for the PaR PhD. My standpoint on PaR, significantly different from Elkins's more specialist ground, has no doubt evolved through my own educational history, which is less troubled by a sense of disciplinary specialism and its necessary conditions. My approach might be seen to be more consonant with a postmodern relational and rhizomatic model and Elkins's with a modernist surface-depth model.[53] Both approaches are in my view valuable but they are different and I do not share Elkins's (and others') construction of practice-based doctorates as the negative 'other' of traditional doctorates.

Emlyn Jones suggests that

> [t]he case against PhDs in studio art in America has rested more on the anxiety of academics worrying that they might need to go back to art school to regain credentials as teachers than on any academic grounds.[54]

In MFA programmes, broader contextual study and substantial writing are not required. Part of the resistance to the introduction of PaR PhDs lay also in the unwillingness, or perceived inability, of arts students to undertake in addition a more traditional mode of study. However, in Emlyn Jones's view, 'it was apparent [by the mid-noughties] that the status of the MFA as a terminal degree was already in doubt in many US universities, where it was well understood that the different academic requirements of these two degrees [MFA and PhD] sets them distinctively apart'.[55] He proposes that arts HE institutions, 'should nest the MFA and doctorate together in a 1+2 combination, just like the conventional PhD in non-art disciplines worldwide'.[56]

Similar tensions were experienced in the UK in the early 1990s, when polytechnics – with a disposition towards vocational education and consequently towards practice-based first-degree programmes of all kinds – were redesignated universities. Several formerly independent art schools, having been quite comfortably subsumed into the polytechnic

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sector, found themselves departments or faculties in universities.[57] The polytechnic arts sector offered masters programmes which, like the MFA in the States, had been conceived as a terminal award substantially based in studio practice. Under accreditation by the CNAA, however, the 'post-1992' universities were able to offer PhDs but found themselves exposed to more traditional 'academic' requirements.[58] Lecturers in the new universities were encouraged to engage in research, not least to inform teaching through the promotion of a sense of critical inquiry. Affirming the traditional binary between theory and practice, however, a perception lingered from the mid-1980s, as Judith Mottram relates, that undertaking a doctorate would take artists away from studio practice.[59]

The ways a research inquiry might be undertaken through a practice were not much understood even as practice-based PhDs were emerging. Indeed, a statement in 1989 of the CNAA Art and Design Committee denied that creative practice might be a legitimate scholarly activity.[60] This reflected a dominant international view derived from the 1979 exclusion of the arts from the United Nations categorization of fields of science and technology which might engage in research.[61] Indeed, as late as 2002, the *Frascati Manual* affirmed such a prejudice, particularly in continental Europe, by specifically 'excluding artistic 'research' of any kind' from institutional recognition and support.[62] However, the volume and success of the Art and Design, and Dance, Drama and Performing, arts submissions to the national research audit, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1992 in the UK, invited a re-evaluation on the one hand but clouded some key issues on the other. As Mottram reports, the formerly clear CNAA distinction made between research activity and creative professional activity was effectively collapsed.[63] Subsequently, in the UK over the 1990s decade, a tangle was gradually fabricated of not always consistent approaches to, and criteria for, practice-based knowledge production, including PhDs.

Throughout Europe, the 'Bologna Process' aimed by 2010 to transform higher education and mark the European Union as the world's biggest knowledge economy.[64] The process in summary sought

> [e]asily readable and comparable degrees organised in a three-cycle structure (e.g. bachelor–master–doctorate): Countries are currently setting up national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and define learning outcomes for each of the three cycles.[65]

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Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the (now) 47 European signatory countries thus became committed to 'the academy' in implementing the Bologna Process. Higher arts education thus took on an obligation to become 'academic' in respect of achieving the accredited standards at a time when some arts HEIs were engaged in developing pedagogies – involving distinctive modes of learning and teaching on the studio practice side of the theory/practice divide – which were intended to be less 'academic' (see Chapter 7). The Bologna Process has thus contributed to (in some instances enforced) the need for an accommodation between practice-based learning and the more book-based, abstract modes of traditional academic arts and humanities programmes.[66]

In some parts of the world circumstances such as those above which might mobilize PaR have not arisen. In some very mature educational cultures, notably the US and parts of continental Europe, PaR PhD programmes in the performing arts are either inadmissible or have scarcely emerged. If, as I have suggested, PaR becomes an issue mainly when the arts world meets the institutional academic world, the sense of 'Practice as Research' will be different in these territories. That is not to say, of course, that artists are not engaging in inquiry through their practices but simply that the notion of PaR may not be so fully wrought in the educational culture. Nor is the instrumental approach to research audit – which in the UK, Australia and New Zealand has been a significant factor in formalizing arts research – universal, though it is spreading rapidly across the globe. Thus, following on from the brief historical sketches above, it is instructive to broaden the debate a little and consider pedagogy in respect of the US in theatre schools as distinct from departments of theatre studies in universities.

To sum up this section, I do share a viewpoint with Elkins on a number of matters, indeed on some of the questions that matter. Elkins asks:

> *Can* [the practice-based doctorate] *contribute to new ways of thinking about interdisciplinarity? Can it help reconfigure the conventional ways of conceptualizing the difference between making something and studying it? Can it help justify the presence of art departments in universities? Can it provide models for bridging history, theory, criticism, and practice – models that might have meaning beyond the humanities?* (Elkins's italics)[67]

A number of such key issues need to be addressed. The historical and institutionalized division between theory and practice needs to be unpacked. A means is needed to distinguish between those creative,

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cultural and material practices which are knowledge-producing (and thus constitute research) and those which are not.[68] A pedagogy in preparation for PaR doctorates requires development, and supervisors need to be educated in the processes entailed. Models must be established which not only suit arts practitioner-researchers but which also are accepted by the broader academy and applicable in cognate domains. We need to be critically reflective on the range of possible models for PaR PhDs in order to establish a rigour equivalent to that in other HE domains. Elkins rightly notes that 'the question is not whether the new programs are coming, but how rigorously they will be conceptualized'.[69] This book aims to convince by articulating a conceptual model and fresh approaches to rigour in PaR. It may even be that the rhizomatic model affords a new research approach appropriate to new ways of thinking in the twenty-first century. Crucially at stake is the relation between theoretical knowledge and practical knowing and the distinction between professional practice and research (see Chapter 3).

Pedagogy: the 'how to' of PaR

Given the extraordinary diversity of PaR projects, as manifest in the numerous published case studies to date, questions have been raised about how such projects at PhD level might be supervised. It might equally be asked if PaR can be taught. This section posits that a praxis approach might be taken, from undergraduate taught programmes through to professional research, balancing arts practices with a deliberate engagement in a range of challenging ideas. The approach is ultimately the basis of my model for PaR expounded in Chapter 2. But institutional constraints might need to be addressed and overcome for it to be implemented as pedagogy.

In a recent article in *Theatre Survey*, Professor Marvin Carlson reflects on the summary closure of two 'distinguished and long-established' theatre studies programmes in New York State.[70] He bemoans 'the antitheatrical prejudice' in the US, and the fact that 'in American culture theatre has rarely been considered a "serious" art, as music or painting are' (2011: 118). Carlson reflects also on the place of theatre in the higher education system, recalling that

> When [he] entered the profession in the 1950s, the general model of theatre in higher education, then most notably advocated by the large Midwestern universities and influenced on the one hand by German *Theaterwissenschaft* and on the other by the pedagogical theories of

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> John Dewey, sought to produce theatre scholar practitioners, equally at home in the archives or onstage, and equally adept at writing a scholarly article or directing or designing a production.[71]

A move to specialization both within the profession and in the academy in the 1960s and 1970s, however, challenged the above model and effected a split between the practical and the 'academic' study of theatre. As Carlson summarizes:

> Theatre historians, it was argued, would be taken more 'seriously' by 'real historians' if they devoted themselves to research and did not spend their energy 'putting on plays.' Similarly university theatre productions would be taken more 'seriously' by the 'real theatre' if their artists, like 'real artists,' were not burdened by research obligations.[72]

One result of the subsequent 'professionalization' of university theatre training was the rapid growth of MFA programmes across America at the expense perhaps of the PaR PhD – though Carlson's account reveals other resistances in a complex situation. At the same time access for 'academic' undergraduate students to expensive theatre buildings on US university campuses was diminished as they were given over to semi-professional productions.

In looking to the future, Carlson suggests that 'academic' theatre and performance education, uninformed by practice, is not desirable. He suggests that one possibility might be 'the development of an American version of the performance as research model now booming in England and elsewhere but so far having gained little traction in this country'.[73] Carlson concludes that 'whatever their future course, American university theatre programs must no longer allow themselves to be drawn into the ongoing antagonism between those who study the theatre and those who create it, an antagonism that is so widespread and so debilitating within the general American culture'.[74]

Implicit in the kind of approach favoured by Carlson is a pedagogy in which 'professional practice' and 'academic theory' are not separated. In his 1950s experience a 'both-and' approach operated at undergraduate level and, in the performance as research model, he glimpses how it might function at postgraduate level, right up to PhD. Reflections on part of my own experience of working in a post-1992 UK university map onto Carlson's account though the context is very different. Large numbers of students whose interest is primarily in the practice of

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theatre were enrolled in UK Drama or Theatre Studies programmes in post-1992 UK universities on BA (Hons) programmes. The established training of professional actors remained separate, however, the province of accredited drama schools, or conservatoires (many of which subsequently became drawn, mainly for financial reasons into the university sector, as noted).[75] Most drama and theatre studies programmes were not, however, funded to provide intensive practical workshops and thus the challenge for such programmes was to develop a practice-based pedagogy, different from the intensive voice and bodywork of the conservatoires but attractive to students, while at the same time achieving 'academic' respectability.

It was in my years at Manchester Metropolitan University that, with colleagues, I established the interdisciplinary BA (Hons) and MA programmes noted above which, while they no doubt differ in detail from the US programmes in Carlson's experience, map onto his preference for an approach which renders porous the historical and institutionalized divide between theory and practice.[76] It may even be, as his article hints, that theatre departments in the US might gain strength by establishing their identity through the distinction of a pedagogy based in praxis. While it remains necessary to establish what precisely is involved in academic research at PhD level and beyond, in my work the pedagogic approach remains essentially similar from undergraduate to postdoctoral tuition. Rendering porous the firm institutionalized binary between theory and practice, it involves an iterative, dialogic engagement of doing-thinking, as this book will recount. It is also my conviction, incidentally, that some of the most innovative practice arises from such an approach while it also mobilizes the potential for the 'substantial new insights' or 'new knowledge' required of the PhD.

Scope of the book

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 takes the perspective of an established practitioner entering 'the academy' and outlines what adjustments she needs to make to become a practitioner-researcher. This strategy does not imply that the route from professional artist to practitioner is the only way; indeed it addresses all those engaged in practices who might be drawn to present their work as research, whether they be undergraduates progressing to postgraduate study, faculty members who wish to extend their range of research approaches, or, indeed, professional artists entering the academy. The chapter explains how the *articulation of a research inquiry* might be through an arts practice but this

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does not mean that all practices constitute research. In most instances, it is proposed, additional material – documentation and complementary writings – enhance the *articulation and evidencing of a research inquiry*, the work itself constituting substantial evidence but not the only evidence. The chapter proceeds to formulate a model in which different types of evidence arising from a multi-mode research inquiry can be effectively mobilized. It shows how 'know-how' combined with 'know-what' in relation to 'know-that' maximizes the potential of that contribution to knowledge which 'academic' research entails.

Chapter 3 takes on more abstractly the problem of practical knowledge and sketches an intellectual context in which significant shifts have taken place in conceptions of what and how we know – including the performative paradigm and the performance turn. Since PaR involves praxis (in my formulation the imbrications of theory within practice), a discussion about PaR – like the process itself – entails a conceptual framework such as Chapter 3 affords. A key issue is whether insightful thought might be engaged materially as well as abstractly 'in the mind'. A number of the key shifts in today's intellectual context open up opportunities for the kinds of knowledge – or knowing, as I ultimately prefer – produced by arts praxis. The noun 'knowledge' might suggest a clearly bounded object of knowledge separate, and at a distance from, an observing subject and available to be seen–known across time and space by other viewing subjects. The verb (present participle) 'knowing', in contrast acknowledges a subject engaged in the act indicated and perhaps engaged in a processual relationship spatially more proximal to the object to be understood.[77] As we will see in Chapter 2, the attempt to make tacit knowledge more explicit involves a process of dynamic movement from the closeness of subjectivity to a greater distance, if not quite achieving objectivity as traditionally conceived.

Though modes alternative to the 'scientific method' have a history spanning at least a century, they have not become fully accepted across the academy, despite the strides taken exploring subject–object relations through research undertaken in a range of domains by qualitative methods (such as the participant–observer or action researcher) as well as by the PaR initiative in the arts. Chapter 3, then, serves also to explain some of the conceptual resistances practitioner-researchers continue to encounter within institutional contexts and serves to promote understanding, hopefully on all sides. Aiming to collapse binaries, the book addresses both those who are committed to PaR (seeking to facilitate understanding and good practice) and those who are opposed to it (seeking to persuade). It affords the ammunition, necessary in some

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instances, to defend the PaR position but, more positively, it opens up opportunities to make a creative contribution. Along with Smith and Dean, I 'do not see practice-led research and research-led practice as separate processes, but as interwoven in an iterative cyclic web'.[78]

Chapter 4 offers some examples of praxis, not in the form of full case studies but by selecting aspects of projects which illuminate specific issues which have arisen in my experience of PaR, in practice and in the supervision, examining and auditing of projects. Attention is paid particularly to the role of documentation. Chapter 5 turns to advice specifically aimed at PaR PhDs but nevertheless relevant to most projects. It deals briefly with lessons learned from the history of the PaR initiative and with protocols and regulatory frameworks. It refines the guidelines published following research undertaken in the 1990s which, by many reports, have proved useful to students and tutors alike.

Part I draws, as noted, largely on experience in the UK where PaR is substantially developed, while Part II draws on other territorial perspectives to broaden the book's scope and redress any unhelpful partiality. It is hoped that, collectively, the chapters will provide an overview of the extent to which PaR in a variety of forms has been established (or resisted) alongside a direct account of PaR – how to go about it, how to avoid the snares which have entrapped others, and how to make the best of great opportunities. If it assists particularly the arts and media communities at one end of the spectrum to abandon the lament that 'nobody understands PaR', and, at the other end, to abandon entirely the very term 'PaR' because the methodology has become established in 'the academy', it will have achieved its aim.

Vision

I ended an earlier publication claiming that 'it is time to speak less of "practice as research" and to speak instead of arts research (a significant methodology of which just happens to be based in practices)'.[79] Though this wish has not fully come true, I fervently hope 'the academy' worldwide is close to full acceptance of PaR and that the general economic retrenchment in higher education does not lead universities to fall back entirely on the refereed journal article as the gold standard of research outcomes. I share Haseman's optimism that a PaR methodology not only enhances the academy but also has particular relevance to a widespread political concern on the part of governments for research to be seen to be of broader social benefit. While some aspects of the 'impact' agenda seem contrived, PaR, if fully understood and embraced, might

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genuinely[80] 'have applications far beyond the creative arts, design and related creative disciplines. For performative research is aligned with the processes of testing and prototyping so common in user-led and end-user research'.[81] Research through doing-thinking is important on a number fronts.

As I explain in Chapter 3, I am by no means opposed to words but, having recognized their slipperiness, we should give up the pretence that they are transparent and convey knowledge immediately. Though I have striven in my use of words here to be direct, even didactic, I acknowledge that they are inevitably coloured by my passions and interests, among which is a desire to see practical knowledge properly credited where, in the deep history of the Western intellectual tradition it has all too often been constructed as the negative 'other' of privileged theory.[82] I look in this book to bear out another contention of Brad Haseman, who proposes that

> [t]here is evidence enough to recognise that we stand at a pivotal moment in the history and development of research. Practice-led researchers are formulating a third species of research, one that stands in alignment with, but separate to, the established quantitative and qualitative research traditions.[83]

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