

## Why Pursue an Artistic Research PhD?

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*I learnt to think differently, I learnt to think more holistically. (Miriam Phillips, PhD student, 2020)*

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If your interests lie in a combination of artistic practice, scholarly activity, and the creative process, an artistic doctorate may be the right step for you. Artistic Research PhDs vary from traditional ones in that they are situated across art and research. They attract both established artists and recent graduates with a strong portfolio who aim to deepen their practice in dialogue with written sources. An Artistic Research doctorate offers your project and career a specific set of approaches:

- **Engaging with knowledge emergent from the creative process.**

Look closely at your research question, area of concern, or field of enquiry. Can it be addressed through practice? How can the creative process contribute to answer your research question? An Artistic doctorate often engages in creative practice and processes to explore an area of enquiry in close dialogue with historical, theoretical and philosophical thinking and writing.

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*The creative process really offers knowledge and information that you couldn't get just by watching or reading. (...) I was able to make certain connections by the dancing in the studio, and by the designing and working on the process that I wouldn't have gotten if I read something. (Miriam, Phillips, PhD student, 2020)*

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- **Producing distinctive forms of knowledge.**

Some Artistic Research questions 'necessarily demand artistic practice, artistic know-how and the making of artistic outputs' (De Assis, 2020). Working with research questions which can only be addressed in practice allows you to explore distinct forms of knowledge which cannot be solely explored in words – such as embodied knowledge. As Tríona Ní Shíocháin says, 'there are knowledges of the body that go far beyond what the written word would ever

tell us' (2020). Paulo de Assis' lecture outlines different types of questions and how they may be answered in / through / by practice:

Paulo de Assis, On Research Questions

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*There is just no way to really answer a PhD research question in embodied knowledge without doing something that is embodied, without doing some form of practice. That was the real value of it for me, I'm dealing with affect knowledge. It's got to be performed, it's got to be live. (PhD student, 2020)*

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- **Developing professional artistic skills.**

An artistic doctorate enables you to develop professional skills in your field. Most candidates enter the programme with a strong existing practice, either as professional artists or as recent graduates with a very good portfolio. Whilst you will be expected to have some artistic expertise in your area, there is also scope to enhance your professional skills.

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*I wanted to work on electronic music before, but I never had anyone to teach me or never attended a university that had a strong focus on it. This degree has allowed me to pursue a separate interest [electronic music] that I think will help with my professional development. If I had just done a regular PhD it wouldn't have allowed as much flexibility in what I wanted to include in the research. It wouldn't have been as practical. It wouldn't have helped develop my professional skills as much. (PhD student, 2020)*

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- **Advancing experimental approaches.**

An Artistic Research PhD allows space for experimentation that the professional arts world does not always provide scope for. The artistic doctorate offers freedom from commissioning / funding requirements, as well as schedule and logistic constraints, which allows the student to engage in experimental explorations in a critical and analytical way.

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*Now because of the funding situation and the development of the art world there is a rush of experimental artists to do PhDs for doctorates because that's*

*the heaven where you can do experimental work. (...) That's the one possibility for Artistic Research, is really to do research that is not possible in the professional context. (Annette Arlander, Principles of Artistic Research in Performance Doctorates, Visioning the Future Seminar, 2020)*

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These are some examples of what an Artistic Research degree offers that is distinctive from traditional doctorates. Consider your artistic practice, your project proposal or idea, and the career directions you want to take in making an informed decision of whether an artistic doctorate is the right step for you. See [What is Artistic Research?](#) for more information and [Applying for an Artistic Research PhD](#) for strategies on finding the right programme.