



The functions of the written text in practice-based PhD submissions

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The paper will draw on an on-going, empirical study of practice-based MPhil/PhDs in Fine Art, (Macleod,1995-). The study includes interviews, studio visits and correspondence with 22 MPhil/PhD students and 12 supervisors from 18 different institutions in the UK. Interview questions were designed to find out how students establish and maintain a method of research and how they deal with the dual submission requirement of art work and written text. The interview questions were straightforward, viz: what are the intentions of your research? What is your research proposition? Describe your process of research: what is your research methodology?, and so on. Questions include, describe the process of writing and the student is invited to consider any observed relationship between the processes of writing and making or realising art work.

This paper will address the question: what is the function of a text/thesis in practice-based submissions? The paper will provide appropriate examples of MPhil and PhD submissions and on-going research practices. It will address issues raised by student experience of coping with the dual submission of written text and art work. Based on evidence of student experience, the paper will provide insights into possibilities for the development of research methods courses for practice-based research degree students. It will also provide a typography of practice-based research degree work and seek to open out for discussion the strengths and weaknesses of the different types, specifically in relation to both satisfying the requirements of a dual submission,(of art objects and written text) and to flagging up the particular and potential strengths of practice-based research degrees in Fine Art.