



## Towards a definition of studio documentation: working tool and transparent record

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abstract ° full paper

Practice based research in art and design is so designated when creative practice constitutes a vital part of the research methodology. This paper proposes that documentation of studio practice is the core issue for a better understanding and articulation of practice based research. It examines a range of recent student documentary activity in relation to studio practice and comments on the potential of this methodology to function as the location within which theoretical and practical concerns can be negotiated.

Postgraduate programmes in art and design are currently evolving explicit approaches to research in the creative fields. It is now widely accepted that there are some fundamental differences between the research orientations of studio-based artists/designers and other academic researchers. These differences do not mean that the research activities have less value or are inherently less accessible. However, the evidence of this practice based analytical and critical thinking has not been well articulated in the past. More so than in other academic fields, the relationship between theory and practice can be complex and sometimes problematic. When ideas that inform practice are artificially disconnected from the theoretical concerns, the result can be fragmented scholarship in relation to the making of the work. This dilemma leaves the research field vulnerable to misunderstanding from outside.

The framework within which artists and designers create and refine their work can reveal much about the work itself and about the core issues of importance to the artist. These insights allow the process to become more accessible to others and in this way open the work to critique. Appropriate forms of practice documentation are the best hybrid tools for critique, strategic planning, decision-making and writing up an exegesis.

There is a critical need now for art and design researchers to address this issue and in particular, to work towards a common vocabulary and well articulated methodologies.

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