



Research as a mode of  
construction; engaging with  
the artefact in art and design  
research

Dr Naren Barfield  
& Dr Malcolm Quinn

Glasgow School of Art, Scotland and  
Wimbledon School of Art, England  
<n.barfield@gsa.ac.uk>

volume 3 content  
journal home pag  
conference home pag  
copyright

abstract ° full page

**to cite this journal article**

Barfield, N. & M. Quinn (2004) Research  
as a mode of construction; engaging with  
the artefact in art and design research  
*Working Papers in Art and Design* :  
Retrieved <date> from URI  
[http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes\\_research\\_papers/wpades\\_vol3/nbfull.htm](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research_papers/wpades_vol3/nbfull.htm)

ISSN 1466-4917

In this paper, we examine the concept of construction insofar as it applies to, and can be taken to determine, the production of the artefact in the art and design research process. These modes of construction, we argue, are specific to the research process, and can also be defined using disciplinary and socio-economic criteria. The work of artefact construction according to a plan of research is what distinguishes the process of art and design research from the analysis or interpretation of artefacts in disciplines such as material culture studies, design history or anthropology. Secondly, the causal chains determining construction in art and design research are distinct from those that apply to the production of design artefacts for industry, or the manufacture of artworks for gallery display and sales. For these reasons, research in art and design can be seen to establish a specific mode of production, taking its place alongside those traditionally associated with studio practice (to which it is complementary, but distinct), or product development. This ethic of artefact production requires the development of systematic, replicable and transparent procedures and systems that are reflected in both the final form of the artefact and any associated documentation. We conclude that the development of these core research values for the activity of making art and design artefacts is also congruent with current examples of best practice in generic research training that is applicable in diverse disciplinary contexts.