



Assessing the exhibition and
the exegesis in visual arts
higher degrees: perspectives
of examiners

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volume 3 content
journal home pag
conference home pag
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to cite this journal article

Dally, K. et al (2004) Assessing th
exhibition and the exegesis in visual art
higher degrees: perspectives o
examiners. *Working Papers in Art and*

Design :

Retrieved <date> from URI
[http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research
papers/wpades
vol3/kdfull.htm](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research_papers/wpades_vol3/kdfull.htm)

ISSN 1466-491'

The merger of art schools into academic institutions and the subsequent proliferation of higher degree courses in the visual arts has created pressure for these courses to justify that their research content 'measures up' to more traditional research practices. There has been vigorous debate within the Visual Arts field about the place held by research and the characteristics of artefacts as doctoral outcomes alongside the written thesis in traditional disciplines. There are concerns that in an attempt to attain academic legitimacy, artistic research may be manipulated to adhere to the traditional and dominant models of established research in science and social science. The study reported in this paper reports some preliminary findings from telephone interviews conducted with 15 Visual Arts examiners from 10 Australian institutions providing higher degrees in the Fine or Visual Arts. These interviews aimed to investigate how examiners approach and reconcile the dual demands of assessing a Visual Arts thesis, which typically is comprised of both a written and an exhibition component. This perspective gives an insight into the qualities that the written and practical components contribute to the creation of a Visual Arts thesis as well as identifying the outcomes and standards that examiners expect to find at post-graduate levels of study.