

Creative Practice

In an Artistic Research doctorate, sustained practice is the foundation of your journey. But what does it actually mean ‘to practice’?

The practice is a process that you develop, and the performance takes a photo in time of where your process has got to. And that photo of your performance, you can always refer back to that but that generates new practice material into the future. (PhD student, 2020)

Most Artistic Research PhD students find that their artistic practice becomes more sustained and rigorous throughout the doctorate. Depending on the nature of your project, you may focus your attention more closely on the practice itself, on the process, on the learnings from your outputs, or on other aspects you are exploring. Creative practice can lead a theoretical enquiry, focus on the production of a significant body of work, become a ground for examining an artistic process, or for developing new artistic methodologies. Either way, practicing becomes a sustained process of enquiry, of delving into your subject matter:

*Practice has really changed for me. I come from a classical background, practicing was very much about perfecting things and having one ideal performance that I would work towards. But now I’m reflecting on things and I’m writing about my process and I’m exploring more for the Artistic Research than I would have in the past. Practice has become a process of exploration that it was never really before for me. It has become the main part of my research. Performances are the outcomes that people need to see **but the practice is where everything happens**. And if I did the writing and performance without the practice the writing wouldn’t have any substance. (PhD student, 2020, emphasis added)*

Normally, this process becomes much more refined as your degree progresses. It is often circular: you will notice that there are certain activities you return too, whether they are watching

a video recording of a rehearsal to reflect and take notes, analysing an edited sequence, filming the same situation several times, brainstorming and sketching some ideas out in paper, or improvising. And what that practicing looks like, changes over time:

*If I'm learning a new piece its very much like I work through a score. Sometimes because I'm adding electronics to pieces, sometimes practice may be like only playing for one minute to record something, and then spend another hour to develop electronic sounds. Sometimes practice isn't really playing. Sometimes practicing is where I record myself and then I watch myself back. And then I play again based on what I saw. Kind of do that recording cycle. I think because I'm doing electronic stuff now, it's not just about the *instrument* anymore. For me, having a notebook nearby is now part of my practice which was not necessarily what I would have done in my undergrad. That's what practice looks like for me. (PhD student, 2020)*

Proposals for Action: Developing Awareness of Your Practice

Thinking about how you may deepen your practice, take a moment to reflect:

- How do you prepare for your practice? Do you warm up / have a cup of tea / go to a studio / review yesterday's work?
- What activities do you engage in when you practice? Write all of them down and note whether you perform them in a particular order.

At the end of a practice session, challenge yourself to do one of the following:

- Use coloured pencils to draw for two minutes in response to your session.
- Map the sensorial experience of your practice session.
- Write creatively for a timed two minutes.
- Photograph three key elements that emerged during the session (this may involve photographing the workspace, a piece of paper with notes, taking screenshots if you work digitally, everything goes!)

- Make a 2-minutes video on your phone saying what you did, why, and what you are going to do next. Watch it at the start of the next session as you prepare for your practice.

Resources

The following resource developed by [Artistic Doctorates in Europe](#) contains FAQs on developing your artistic practice. See pages 37–48 for more on talking about and representing practice, how much practice to submit and many more questions on the artistic doctorate.

Bacon, J., and Middelw V., (2019) *Reconsidering Research and Supervision as Creative Embodied Practice: Reflections from the Field*, Artistic Doctorates in Europe: Third-cycle provision in Dance and Performance. Online at < https://d20l276f4e8gmb.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/01162830/ADiE-Research-and-Supervision_Lo-Res.pdf>