I have a number of interests and curiosities about the notion of material thinking especially in relation to its application in universities through PhD programs and the ways in which academics engage with it as artists both within and outside the institution.

According to the UK academics Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge, who have undertaken considerable research into the practice-led PhD, “thinking through art leads to new thought.”¹ The idea that art as a physical and material activity, through which the artist by engaging with materials and processes, can generate new knowledge, is currently provoking much interest and is at the heart of the pedagogy of research programs in the School of Art at RMIT University.

Practice-led research in the creative arts is now commonplace throughout Australia and most universities with creative arts Schools and Departments are increasingly offering PhD programs. However there are currently as many variations in the requirements for and assessment of the PhD as there are programs. The majority of them consist of two parts – a practical outcome usually in the form of an exhibition accompanied by a written text, varying in length. Some institutions emphasise the creative project as the research while others privilege the text, tagging the creative project on as an illustration of the ‘real’ research.

In *Printed project issue 04*, ‘the new PhD in studio art’ James Elkins illuminates 3 models of combining PhD level scholarship with creative work. Each model is broken down into several possibilities, in all 9 different ways of considering research at the highest level in the creative arts. With so many variations and interpretations it is virtually impossible to apply the same assessment criteria across the field and each university in Australia has its own definitions of what constitutes research in the creative arts at this level. As the Art Schools and Departments struggle to produce legitimate research outcomes they are pressured internally to mold and shape what they do to fit the university ideal and with so much variation it is challenging to consider creative practice-led research seriously in such a competitive environment.

Without an agreement about what practice-led research is or is not, how can a PhD be assessed and evaluated?

Artist-academics are being pushed into producing more acceptable research outputs by writing book chapters, journal articles and conference papers to legitimise their

---

research. Most have already done the equivalent of 2 PhDs through a substantial creative project supported by an extensive thesis and now are being asked to not only continue having outputs (exhibitions) as artists but to also write as academics – double the research without double the research time.

I am interested in the conceptual and practical questions and issues of the practice-led PhD in relation to assessment and evaluation from my personal viewpoint as an academic who is a supervisor and examiner of PhD projects and as a graduate of a practice-led PhD program.

I am also curious about the dual role of artist-academics and why we do it – why we as academics are compelled to pursue our arts practice as research to comply with the academy and also in what ways the research that ensues can be different from the work produced as professional practice. How does the work produced by academics in their pursuit of a PhD differ from that of their peers outside an educational institution, if at all? Do we concoct topics that have no agency beyond the institution walls or do the resulting artifacts – images, objects, videos and sound products – actually generate new knowledge and contribute to and benefit the community through exhibitions? Does having a PhD improve the art and/or the artist?

Other disciplines have a strong relationship and connection to their industries through research and innovation but does this apply in the artworld? What role can the University Gallery play in promoting and disseminating art as research?

Lesley Duxbury is Associate Professor and Postgraduate Research Coordinator in the School of Art, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. She completed a practice-led PhD in 2004. Lesley currently supervises research candidates and promotes postgraduate research through art practice. She has acted as an examiner for practice-based doctorates for other institutions. As an artist she exhibits regularly and is represented in the national and most state public collections in Australia. She uses both traditional and contemporary print media, photography and printmaking to make artworks that question perceptions of the natural environment, especially the atmosphere and its phenomena.
The Climatic Research Unit (CRU) is a component of the University of East Anglia and is one of the leading institutions concerned with the study of natural and anthropogenic climate change. With a staff of some thirty research scientists and students, the CRU has contributed to the development of a number of the data sets widely used in climate research, including one of the global temperature records used to monitor the state of the climate system, as well as statistical software packages and climate change and ecological destruction affect all parts of life including what we need or value the most, such as water, food, ecosystems, wildlife, safety, shelter, energy, transportation, health, communities and the economy. The basic human needs of many, in particular those who are the most vulnerable, are already in jeopardy. Through the voices of Greta Thunberg, the School Strikes for Climate and the Fridays For Future, youth everywhere are loud and clear in calling for societies to change. Inspired by our youth, we call on university executives, board members, academic and non-academic staff as well as students to declare an ecological and climate emergency. Fixing Climate: What Past Climate Changes Reveal About the Current Threat and How to Counter It (Hill and Wang, 2008). The Great Ocean Conveyor: Discovering the Trigger for Abrupt Climate Change (Princeton University Press, 2010). In 2002, he returned to the US as a Visiting Researcher with Princeton Universityâ€™s program in Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences. Manabe is currently Senior Meteorologist at Princeton University. In part, it has meant research on climate signal detection and the improvement of coupled ocean-atmosphere modeling. And partly, it has meant the assessment and refinement of statistical methods such as time-series data analysis, and the comparison of modelling results against data. School climate is a leading factor in explaining student learning and achievement. Less work has explored the impact of both staff and student perceptions of school climate raising interesting questions about whether staff school climate experiences can add value to students' achievement. In the current research, multiple sources were integrated into a multilevel model, including staff self-reports, student self-reports, objective school records of academic achievement, and socio-economic demographics. The authors tested the effect of students' perceptions of school climate on mean school achievement in three samples of racially diverse elementary schools.