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## **Bursting paradigms: A colour wheel of practice-research**

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## **Abstract**

In this article I question practice as a research paradigm by exploring its position in relation to non-positivist qualitative methodologies. Frayling's (1994) distinctions between research *into*, *through* and *as (for)* practice are expanded to explore overlaps between these approaches. I argue for the need to understand the nuances of different epistemologies and ontologies that underpin diverse disciplinary approaches to practice-research. This is done through an analysis of a selection of AHRC-funded projects to find out how they are using and/or embedding practice in the research process. The resulting Colour Wheel of Practice-Research illustrates a spectrum of positions of practice in relation to research, suggesting existing research paradigms are bursting at the seams and that the 'disciplinary matrix' of practice might offers other ways of knowing. The reason I have chosen to focus primarily on AHRC funded projects, is because it explicitly states its support of 'practice-led research' and that it 'remains dedicated to this area of research'. This article aims to add to knowledge of how and why practice-research is of continuing interest to research councils, universities and those identifying as practice-based/led researchers.

Keywords: practice-based/led research; research paradigms; mixed methods; cultural value; AHRC

Figure: Colour Wheel of Practice-Research

## Introduction

Debates have taken place for over twenty years on the definitions, positions and relevance of art as a form of research. This article focuses on the UK context to question arts practice as a research paradigm drawing on examples from a selection of Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded projects in the UK which cover a broad spectrum of ‘uses’ of artists and artistic methods. The aim is to update Christopher Frayling’s terms research *into* art and design, research *through* art and design and research *for* art and design (Frayling 1994) by creating a more nuanced approach to practice-research using the metaphor of the colour wheel.

Research *into* art was, in the mid-1990s, considered the most prevalent in arts research and involved art historical research dealing with theoretical and aesthetic questions. Research *through* art involved “getting at a problem through the practices and media of art” (Macleod and Holdridge, 2011). Frayling describes this as material research (for example ‘titanium sputtering’ or ‘colourisation of metals’), development work (customising a piece of technology to do something different with it), and action research (where a research diary tells of a practical experiment in the studio and the resulting report contextualises it in order to communicate the results). His third category, research *for* art, is the most enigmatic, resulting in an end product as an artwork where “thinking is embodied in the artifact” (ibid., p.4). Similarly to Frayling, Katy Macleod refers to three types of higher degree practice research: “type A which is defined as positioning a practice; type B defined as theorising a practice and type C which has been given the in-progress definition of revealing a practice.” (Macleod, 2000).

This article explores Frayling’s categories and also the practices happening in between these definitions by introducing a new Colour Wheel of Practice-Research. If Frayling’s research *into* (yellow), *through* (red) and *for/as* (blue) practice are the primary colours, secondary colours come from mixing these approaches. It is in these shades of oranges, greens and purples that I suggest the nuances of practice-research might be found. The examples I draw on incorporate disciplinary differences of performance, socially engaged art, film and curating, for example. Each form of practice brings its own unique challenge to understanding it as research, therefore leading to multiple research paradigms rather than assuming all forms of practice fit under one research umbrella.

Since the time of Frayling writing there are increasing numbers of PhDs being carried out by practice and artists employed by universities are having to find ways of validating their practice through the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This has led to further confusion between

Frayling's categories and a pressure to understand, locate and justify what precisely happens when research and practice come together in the framework of an academic institution. There is a request for 'practice' to be pinned down. Rachel Hann, for example, has recently called for a second wave of practice research that focuses on quality and accessibility: "We need to share our findings more openly and we need to point to a clear narrative of excellence" (Hann, 2015). This relates to her proposal for a peer-reviewed archive of Practice Research. Her term Practice Research replaces "the micro-politics of practice as/through/based/led" and "focuses on the wider issues related to how researchers share, apply and critique knowledge borne of practice" (ibid.). While the first wave of practice as research focused on winning a place in the academy by becoming administratively legitimate, Hann points to the ongoing lack of knowledge and understanding of what it entails because the evidence is rarely made public (ibid.). While I agree there is an urgent need to share practices publicly I argue that we still need to look closely at the micro-politics of practice as it is constructed and framed in/by the academy. It is important not to lose this focus so as to engage critically with ways in which narratives of excellence are funded, produced, performed and distributed more broadly, rather than a given that researchers must collectively strive for.

The position of arts research in university contexts stretches back to the amalgamation of many independent art colleges into polytechnics in the 1960s, which then became universities in 1992 following the Further and Higher Education Act. This shift saw artists having to comply with research agendas of universities. Artists who teach also became artists who research, as their 'outputs' started to be included in the RAE and REF. This incorporation of practice into the academy has not been a fluid transition without resistance. Daniel Jewesbury, for example, remarks how "Artists whose teaching skills and dedication were never in doubt have been forced to find new ways of justifying their practice, and defining it, somehow – anyhow – as research" (Jewesbury 2009). This becomes about justifying process rather than producing 'good art'. Something happens to practice when it is framed as research that sits alongside and sometimes intertwines with other philosophies and methodologies of knowing. If artists want/have to play the game of academic knowledge production (through research posts and PhD projects), then it is not surprising that emerging discourses that prop-up practice, legitimise it and clarify it as research are becoming more prevalent.

### **Defining practice**

Practice is a noun identified with the arts which encompasses distinct disciplinary fields such as performance, fine arts, digital media, music, design and curating. For example, a project I did as part of my PhD research was Performative Interviews (Hope, 2011). This involved interviewing and

filming a series of one to one interviews with artists and curators about socially engaged art projects that had gone wrong, been cancelled or had been censored in some way. It was an experiment in evaluating the boundaries of artists' contracts by conducting interviews where the protagonists were disguised in animal masks or their words were read back to camera by actors. This method of interviewing, performing and editing involved testing the possibilities of going public with potentially reputation-damaging narratives whilst drawing attention to the fallibility of the interview as a research method through which to garner truth. The results were a series of filmed 'performative interviews' where sensitive and revealing stories of art commissioning are spoken through absurd animal masks that invite the viewer to question how stories are told and relayed through research and evaluation processes. This was my attempt at trying a different method of evaluation which captured and dwelt on unceremonious, unglamorous and embarrassing aspects of socially engaged practice, an art form which, due to the public funding that underwrites it, is often presented in a positive light to validate the funding and efficacy of the process itself. I applied a practice of interviewing and performing (drawing on disciplines of social science, visual and performing arts) to investigate epistemological questions of how/if we know (putting the interview as a fact-finding method into question) and how other people articulate and explain mistakes and misfortunes in their own practices and the details of these moments. I described this as both an art and research process in the context of my PhD. Deciding to frame the work in this way involved a process of justifying and validating decisions in a way that convinces other people that it can be these things simultaneously and indeed, that they needed each other in this particular approach to research.

When framing practice as research there is a tendency to foreground the process. How and why am I going about this and how does it relate to other processes of trying things out in a similar way? Haseman (2010) calls this an 'artistic audit' - an alternative to the literature review for practice-led researchers for whom it is essential to "reach beyond their own labours to connect with both earlier and contemporaneous productions which contribute to the overall research context of their work" (p.8). Disciplinary contexts from which research emerges expect particular definitions and epistemologies of practice. One of the challenges facing researchers in academic contexts, where the magnetic pull of a discipline is so strong, is how a 'practice' might draw on these different fields of knowledge whilst avoiding falling into the gaps where it is misunderstood or ignored. Whether it is a practice of ethnography or of painting, the process has to be justified, even if that process is reliant on improvisation or intuition. For example, it might be common for artists framing their work as research in an academic context to argue for their approach to be intuitive; of getting to a "place you don't know" (artist Ryan Gander cited in Fisher and Fortnum, 2013, p.77). As Rebecca

Fortnum states: ‘artists knowingly use ‘not knowing’ (ibid., p.84). This ‘not knowing’ approach might also be shared in experimental practices by scientists and social scientists. A common thread that perhaps running through practice-research is one where methodologies emerge because of the practice, rather than prior to it. A non-practice-research project might start with a defined research question, a methodology and set of methods to find answers. Research that starts with practice can often complicate these dynamics as the questions and methodology emerge through making, doing and testing things out. Searching might therefore be iterative, improvised and intuitive resulting in cyclical or reciprocal research dynamics rather than always focusing on searching for the answers to a predefined question.

In research that privileges practice the researcher does not necessarily know what they are going to do before they do it and this may rub up against other research approaches which place theory and methodology before practice. Haseman (2010) states that “practice-led researchers do not commence a research project with a sense of ‘a problem’” (p.3); they tend to ‘dive-in’, to commence practicing to see what emerges (p.4) This does not mean the process is any less rigorous, rather that the theory and analysis come at different points within the practice and it is not always easy to separate them out. Intuition and improvisation stem from tacit practices that have been practised over time. The researcher-practitioner is able to draw on knowledge of previous iterations of practice to intuitively follow the next steps. This involves a process of acknowledging the subjective, embodied knowledge this requires whilst also attempting a reflexive interrogation of one’s own relationship to the research being carried out.

### **Defining a research paradigm**

A research paradigm underlies the ontology, epistemology and methodology that a researcher might sign up to. It gives clues as to where, philosophically, the researcher is coming from, defined as a shared set of “beliefs and values, laws, and practices which govern a community of practitioners” (quoted in Rolling, 2010, p.103). This community of practitioners might share a common intellectual framework which Thomas Kuhn called a ‘disciplinary matrix’ (Naughton, 2012). Existing research paradigms include a positivist worldview which implies research is scientifically verifiable and can be proved or disproved, a non-positivist understanding, implying situated knowledge that acknowledges subjectivity of the researcher and the significance of context and critical-theoretical paradigm which critically engages with ideologies which restrict human freedoms (Dash, 2005). How a researcher relates to these different ways of viewing the world will depend on the discipline they are coming from and the focus of their research. Practice-research is often aligned to a non-positivist tradition that uses a qualitative methodology, and this is something

the majority of AHRC examples below hold in common. Andersson (2009), however, writes of a 'reciprocal ignorance' between the social sciences and fine arts where "scientists are criticized of being too analytical, elitist and objectivistic, and artists are ascribed subjectivity, irrationality and sublime rapture as primary driving forces in their work" (p.1). For Andersson, the main question is how the relations between theory and practice are constructed and 'handled' in specific cases. He concludes that while fine art and social science might be *ontologically* different, there are overlaps in terms of epistemological and methodological principles. He writes: "There is no logical reason why artistic research could not be performed while adhering to the principle of transparency and openness as regards methods and values" (p.7). For him, art and science are not "equally valid forms of knowledge" as scientific knowledge "can never lie if it shall work effectively", whereas artistic research "must sometimes lie to work effectively" (p.8). These are fundamentally irreconcilable differences that cannot be overcome (not should they, according to Andersson). While ontologies might be distinct, approaches, discoveries and research questions might overlap and interweave.

Rolling (2010) has argued for an arts-based research methodology as an emerging paradigm occurring on a spectrum of scientific and artistic ways of comprehending the world, rather than an alternative paradigm (p.103). He reminds us that in a postmodern context there is no one research paradigm that dominates and describes arts-based research as 'post-paradigmatic practice' (p.109). He presents arts-based inquiry models as: poststructural, pre-structural and experimental, performative and improvisational, pluralistic, proliferative and iterative and post paradigmatic (p.106). Through all of this, he recognises the need for an arts-based research paradigm to "reconceptualise the criterion for establishing validity" through criteria of trustworthiness based on what he calls 'interpretive validity' involving multiple readings and 'iterative validity' which explores the variations of unpredictable art outcomes with other outcomes, over time (p.110). Haseman (2010) goes a step further than Rolling (2010) and argues for practice-led research to be understood within an 'entirely new paradigm' that is distinct from qualitative methodologies; something he calls performative research. He argues practice-led research strategies have overstretched the limits of the qualitative research category (p.5). Haseman is arguing for practice-led research to be understood as a new research methodology, rather than a paradigm as such. He distinguishes between practice-based (concerned with the "improvement of practice and new epistemologies of practice distilled from the insider's understandings of action in context" (p.3)) and practice-led research (which is intrinsically experimental and involves the creation of new artistic forms, p.3)). He focuses on the latter and describes its distinct qualities as constructing experimental starting points and that the research output is made through the form of the practice



itself as “symbolic data in the material forms of practice; forms of still and moving images; forms of music and sound; forms of live action and digital code” (p.5).

In Haseman’s performative research the practice *becomes the research itself*, rather than a description or illustration of the research, hence the importance of examiners and peer-reviewers engaging with the practice not just a writing-up of the practice. Debates over the relationship between practice and the written word have been present for some time. The 2001-6 AHRC funded Practice as Research in Performance project led by Baz Kershaw, for example, found there was “the need to negotiate the real risk that we all forget about the practice itself because of the need to translate the knowledges that we seek to create through practice into some other form that satisfies the criteria imposed on text-based research” (Piccini, 2002). In 2008 Michael Wilson’s summary on the ‘state of play’ in practice-led research pointed to the problem of documenting and storing practice-research for long-term use: “Indeed, many commentators see the research knowledge as embedded in the practice activity itself and the consequent tacit knowledge as incommunicable by written word.” (Wilson, 2008). This brings fundamental challenges as to how to capture and learn from the embedded research in ephemeral, performance, exhibition, or socially engaged practices which require direct experience of them in order to be understood. The dominant model, however, of demonstrating new knowledge derived into, through or as practice is often in the form of the written, peer-reviewed word, as seen in the range of AHRC funded projects explored below.

Frayling was making a case for practice to have a place at the table, but at what price? Rather than claiming a new territory for practice to be understood as research segregated from other approaches to research, I am more interested here in these bulging research paradigms that are struggling to accommodate increasingly large numbers of research-practitioners needing to be taken seriously by the academy, funders and excellence frameworks.

### **Practice-research and the AHRC**

In this section I look at a selection of AHRC-funded projects to try and locate where and how practice-research is operating. I look at a number of projects funded by the AHRC to explore the relationship research has to practice and the kinds of evidence that emerge from these approaches. I have chosen to look at 17 of the 43 AHRC Cultural Value projects<sup>1</sup> alongside three other programmes funded by the AHRC. They are: Co-producing Legacy: What is the role of artists within Connected Communities projects?, Performance Matters, a five-year creative research

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<sup>1</sup> I have based my selection on the projects listed here: <https://culturalvalueproject.wordpress.com/cultural-value-projects-external-websites-blogs-and-tweeter-feeds/>

project exploring the cultural value of performance and Encounters: Transforming Lives, an investigation into how young people transform their worlds through the arts. By mapping these approaches onto a Colour Wheel of Practice-Research, I hope to clarify the differences in meanings, motives and outcomes that the catch-all term practice-research implies.

A look at the blogs and reports of the Cultural Value projects reveals a variety of approaches but most describe their methodologies as qualitative, with the majority including plans to undertake a literature review (Cultural Value Project, n.d.). Only one project takes a more quantitative approach by doing large-scale harvesting and analysis of public data (*Online networks and the production of value in electronic music*). Two of the projects describe their approach as being Participatory Action Research (*The Experience and Value of Live Art: What can making and editing film tell us?* and *The Cultural Value of Architecture: A critical review with specific reference to UK homes and neighbourhoods*). One of the projects (*Cultural Values from the Subaltern Perspective: A Phenomenology of Refugees' Experience of British Cultural Values*) is described as using a feminist praxis epistemology where the researchers and participants carried out weekly activities and visits using life narrative and photography techniques in order to 'compose memorable journeys and create memorabilia through scrapbooking' (Life in the UK, 2016). Five of the projects involved interviewing (semi-structured in-depth, oral history and life history interviews). Three of the projects used online surveys and two used focus groups, one of which was virtual, held in Second Life with a group of 'machinimators'. Observation was a key part of the research process for many of these projects.

Many of these examples involve researchers as facilitators using creative methods to extract information from participants. While facilitation could be considered a form of practice through which research is performed, the researcher-practitioner as performer, maker, editor, film-maker is not necessarily foregrounded in these cases. These creative methods feed into more recognizable formats of social science research. People are observed, data is gathered, analysed and conclusions drawn. Looking at this selection of Cultural Value projects, 'practice', it seems, can be used by both artist-researchers or non-artist researchers working with artists, and is not always identified as practice-research. Exploring these projects in relation to Frayling's groupings reveals how complex the categorising of practice as research is and that multiple definitions and cross-overs in approaches might apply. The wheel provides a basis from which heuristic approaches to research are formed allowing the mixing of colours and new shades to appear. Asking where a research project might sit on the colour wheel might help to distinguish these different approaches and

acknowledge the multiple iterations and combinations of colours that can occur through the research process.

[insert colour wheel figure here]

### **ORANGE: research into and through practice**

In the yellow segment of the colour wheel researchers observe artists as illustrators, performers or facilitators in a process of research *into* art and artists. Haseman (2010) refers to the ways in which qualitative researchers position practice as an object of study rather than a method of research (p.2). Similarly, Rolling (2010) differentiates arts-based research from arts-informed research which remains ‘firmly rooted in qualitative methods’ while ‘merely dabbling in the arts for a brief period’ (p.105). In the yellow section researchers might employ artists to help carry out the research by using creative engagement methods, illustrate findings or present visual or performative outcomes. The Cultural Value project *Mark Making: The arts in dementia care*, for example, employed artist Keara Stewart to create a comic book explaining the project to the participants (Zeilig, n.d.). This is a creative way of presenting the information, with the artist employed as illustrator, and does not necessarily constitute practice-research. In these cases, artists might not consider their own work as research, rather their skills (in filmmaking, photography, live art) are employed or observed to further the researcher’s study *into* art. For example, the Cultural Value project *Participatory Arts and Active Citizenship* researched “*if and how* participatory arts contributes to a propensity to political engagement” by conducting empirical and desk research (Flinders & Cunningham, 2015). The project does not mention practice-research, rather the researchers gathered qualitative and quantitative data from a series of creative workshops carried out with young people by their project partner Ignite Imaginations. Their methods involved surveys, open-ended interviews, artist’s journals, a documentary of the process and a learning workshop (p.26). For the researchers, it was important to combine different methods for gathering data to ensure it is ‘robust and relevant’ (p.25). In this case, the researchers are observing and analysing the artists and young people to develop an understanding of how these participatory art processes have an effect on their political engagement. They acknowledge that while the workshop leader’s observations provide another perspective, it is subjective and biased (p.26). The research process is designed, monitored and analysed by researchers to retain objectivity which is equated with robust, believable outcomes.

Research *into* art, might combine with research *through* art by using practice to reveal more about a problem. The move clockwise around the colour wheel towards research *through* practice (and further around to research *for(as)* practice) involves a shift from researching practitioners towards

researchers *as* practitioners. Orange emerges where research *into* art, or a particular problem, gets at that problem through the practice of filmmaking, editing, photography, singing or painting, for example. In this section the research frame is still designed by social science researchers. They are in control of documenting, observing and analysing; informing the development of the research. The artist and the researcher are not the same person. For example, there is currently an AHRC Connected Communities funded project being carried out called *Co-producing legacy: What is the role of artists within Connected Communities projects?* which focuses on artists collaborating with, and/or being employed by universities.<sup>2</sup> The research outline states that: “Many academics have worked with artists to realise ideas and help with a community engaged approach to research. At the same time artists have framed, challenged and theoretically informed engaged research” (Pahl et al, n.d.). The researchers are combining “established research methods with an innovative, open-ended ‘studio’ form of enquiry” (ibid). In this orange segment of the colour wheel an artist’s practice might be strategically employed to help researchers, at others it might be embedded in the process in a way that informs the research. The researchers of *The Story of Lidice and Stoke-on-Trent: Towards Deeper Understandings of the Role of Arts and Culture*, for example, explain their methodology as using a “qualitative research design (including creative methods) and a highly inter-disciplinary and participatory approach” (Reynolds et al, 2015). They commissioned filmmakers to make a series of films *about* the research and also involved 28 artists and creative practitioners in focus groups and interviews. In their Summary Report, they explain how the filmmaking became a ‘vital part’ of their methodology, with the artists becoming actively involved in the research team. The focus groups and subsequent working group also actively involved artists in the discussions and development of the research. Photography played an important part of the research (leading to an exhibition and book) which ‘provided information that could not be captured through discussions and observation.’ As well as the films, photographs and exhibition, a series of ‘Caring Cards’ based on the research findings and designed by artist Nicola Winstanley were produced to support the design and evaluation of participatory arts work. While this project was not initiated by practice-researchers, it was leaning towards practice *through* research because of the active engagement of artists, filmmakers and a photographer in the research process in ways that impacted on the research itself. It is in this orange zone where particular ‘problems’ are explored through practice, often from a non-positivist paradigm using a qualitative research methodology.

### **PURPLE: research through and for (as) practice**

Moving further around the colour wheel, practice is becoming increasingly embedded in the research process to the extent that research *for (as)* art is focused on practice as an outcome, rather

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<sup>2</sup> At time of writing, a report on their findings has not been published.

than practice being a means to discover new communicable knowledge about dementia, sex work or refugees' life experiences, for example. Practice-researchers might employ their poetry, photography or sculpture, for example, to further understand and develop these practices. They are researching *for (as)* practice resulting in an outcome where 'thinking is embodied in the artifact'. This appears as blue on the colour wheel. Where they might also be getting at a problem *through* this practice, the project combines with red, creating purple. To understand this purple segment where research *through* practice mixes with research *for (as)* art, I turn to Frayling's reference to Constable's studies of clouds and Stubb's research into animal anatomy as examples of artists employing 'cognitive' (not just expressive) approaches to their work - they were "researching subjects which existed outside themselves and their own personalities" (Frayling, 1994, p.3). In researching *through* practice and also *for (as)* practice, the artist is having to stand outside the artifact (to communicate it) and within it (to make it) (p.5). For example, Performance Matters (2009-12) was a "creative research project exploring the challenges that contemporary performance presents to ideas of cultural value" (Performance Matters, n.d.). The strap line on their website reads: "rethinking why performance matters through the matter of performance" (ibid). It "embodied the possibilities of performance itself as a practice of knowledge" (Butt, Heathfield & Keidan, 2014). They used 'live and transactive' methods such as "creative dialogue projects, workshops with invited artists, symposia, public in-conversations, performances, a specially curated video archive of performance lectures, and a film programme" to do this (p.102).

Another 'purple' project which combines the blue of research *for (as)* practice and the red of research *through* practice, is Encounters: Transforming Lives (2010-2013). This was described as a practice-based research project by Paul Heritage (Professor of Drama and Heritage, Queen Mary University) in collaboration with digital artist Gary Stewart (Heritage, 2013). The project asked the question: "if we were to create a live and interactive installation illustrating and investigating how young people transform their world through art – what would it look, feel and sound like?" (ibid). They carried out workshops with young artists in the UK and Brazil to create live, interactive exhibitions using digital tools to explore "sampling, borrowing, exchanging, crossing, showing and sharing". The way the exhibitions were made and how audiences engaged aimed to "extend understanding of the ways that art makes a difference in young people's lives" (ibid). In each phase of the project, the installations build on the knowledge and experience of young people. They were understanding the subject through experimenting with the form of interactive exhibitions. Similarly, the Cultural Value project *The uses of poetry: measuring the value of engaging with poetry in lifelong learning and development* aimed to find new research methods for understanding, articulating and measuring the benefits of poetry at all stages of lifelong learning (AHRC, p.31).

These included interdisciplinary discussions, practical experiments and involved cross-disciplinary pairs to explore key issues relating to ‘the uses of poetry’. In this case, the medium of poetry itself was used as a method to understand the educative potential of poetry. Poetry was both the object of study, the method used to research that object and the result of the process.

In this purple section we can see projects which both reveal a practice through the practice where the end products are poems, films, exhibitions, in which thinking is embedded. Here artists/curators/designers, for example, draw on both researching through their practice and research as/for their practice to explore a set of questions. Methods for finding out are inextricably linked to the focus of the research. For example, with my Performative Interviews project I was experimenting with the form of the interview to reflect on epistemological and ontological questions, playing with the idea of the interview as a performative research device. The space of the interview became a series of mini-stages for confessions and reflections performed to camera. The interviewing, performing, filming and editing were not a means to an end, rather they were the research. Embedded in them was a research process which emerged because of an engagement with the practice itself. Research is intertwined through and for/as practice and not easily separated out.

### **GREEN: Research for (as) and into practice**

Another mixing of methodologies and colours occurs when researchers employ creative methods and practices to further develop the practice itself (blue) but also to further the research *into* (yellow) the art practice. Working clockwise around the colour wheel there is a shift from practice being used for research (yellow) towards research being used for practice (blue). In this connecting segment that completes the wheel, green emerges as new forms of practice emerge that also encapsulate research into that practice. Research into practice addresses a specific theoretical or practical problem *about* art practice. Research for/as practice focuses on the practice being produced. For example, through an ‘artistic audit’ (Haseman 2010), the practice is placed within a broader field and its development may impact on that field of practice. Artist Trinh-T Minh-ha, for example, explains how she is “interested in making films that further engage filmmaking, and contribute to the body of existing works that inspire and generate other works.” (Minh-ha, 1991, p.108). Similarly, Jean Pierre Greff (Director of Geneva Art School) describes the objective of art practice as research as engaging with the means of art to “develop the field of art and create new possibilities for the work” (Greff quoted in Douglas 2008, p.2). Artist and researcher Anne Douglas goes one step further, adding “new insights into how we live or might live in the world working alongside other disciplines and sectors.” (ibid.).

The Cultural Value project *Critical Mass: Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution*, for example, used online surveys, personal interviews and creative workshops to gather data on people's experiences of attending performances (British Theatre Consortium, 2014). The creative workshops could be understood as being an example of practice *for (as)* research. Facilitated by playwright and academic, Julie Wilkinson, these workshops involved small groups of spectators creating new scenes inspired by the plays they had seen, "imagining two characters inhabiting or entering that setting with a memory, a lack or a want", considering specific props and lines from the plays (p.114). This method of re-entering the plays triggered personal connections, expectations and experiences of the plays. They were devices which unlocked memories and reflections for discussion which perhaps surveys and/or interviews might not have been able to do. These workshops could be considered performative iterations of research *for (as)* theatre practice in amongst a broader research project *into* audience experience of theatre. Research *for/as* practice involves the creation of something new and in that process the researcher (and participants) learn something else about audience experiences of theatre. The practice gets at an issue through an embodiment of that practice whilst also resulting in a manifestation of that practice.

## **Conclusions**

Exploring the projects above using the metaphor of the colour wheel allows a more nuanced, expanded understanding of practice-research than Frayling's definitions. The secondary colours do not replace these primary definitions, rather they offer a way of seeing how practice might work across assumed positions of research happening either about practice, through practice or purely as practice. There are further gradations of colour the closer one looks into practice-research examples.

What is common amongst artists resident in the academy is perhaps the need to frame practice as an enquiry that is validated, trustworthy and 'useful' beyond the benefits of the practice/practitioner themselves. Drawing on Haseman's definition, practitioner-researchers 'do not merely 'think' their way through or out of a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution' (quoted in Nelson, 2013, p.10) and Estelle Barrett stresses the embedded, personally situated, tacit knowledge of the researcher (Barrett and Bolt, 2010). This approach shuns the objectivity of the researcher, rather, the art of enquiry is apparently about thinking *through* making (Ingold, 2013). Looking at the Colour Wheel, however, practice can take on different positions in relation to knowledge production with the artist finding themselves both close-up and at a distance from the process.

Positioning oneself as a researcher-practitioner within an intellectual tradition is part of the entrance requirements into the academy. It is not enough to practice; it requires justifying in order for it

needs to be considered rigorous. It seems from my exploration of a selection of AHRC funded projects that there is still some way to go in this regard. There remains a suspicion of practice as research in favour of more established paradigms incorporating arts based methodologies. Practice is not trusted, rather the majority of projects I looked at are led by social scientists who are applying creative methods. The call for mixed methods (of which artistic approaches might be one) is a step forward, but the dominant paradigms remain in tact with a polite nod to alternative ways of working. If practice is to be considered as valid research, then the researcher needs to be confident of the position and trajectory they are coming from whilst not being bound by existing paradigms and methodologies. Funders also need to recognise this and open up avenues for support that encompass all aspects of the spectrum. As the colour wheel demonstrates, there are multiple ways of going about practice-research, and, I would argue it is worth clarifying how one's practice sits in relation to research agendas at micro and macro political levels in order to avoid co-option and misrepresentation by dominant ways of knowing, validating and distributing research.

As qualitative research struggled to gain acceptance within academic contexts, so artists as researchers are slowly demonstrating their methods have rigour and quality while spaces for peer reviewing practice-based research beyond the written page are opening up.<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps too much to claim practice-research as a brand new paradigm as an artist may position themselves in amongst or on the outskirts of these existing paradigms. It is through the the colour wheel metaphor that I hoped to address some of these gaps and misunderstandings and look towards a way of articulating a spectrum of practice-research that might lead to emerging, interconnecting paradigms that can both cling on to existing underlying philosophies of knowledge and also break free from them.

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<sup>3</sup> These include the The Journal for Artistic Research (JAR), PARSE Journal and Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice (Intellect).



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