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To cite this article: Craig Batty & Arezou Zalipour (06 Aug 2024): Research, practice, knowledge: introducing the creative knowledges enabling framework, Media Practice and Education, DOI: [10.1080/25741136.2024.2384686](https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2024.2384686)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2024.2384686>




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Published online: 06 Aug 2024.



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# Research, practice, knowledge: introducing the creative knowledges enabling framework

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## ABSTRACT

Amongst a myriad of articles, chapters and books that argue for different ways to understand and conduct creative practice research – or as it is otherwise known, artistic research, arts-based research, practice-led research, practitioner-based research, and so on – this article goes to the heart of the affordances of creative practice research and offers what the authors believe is more generative model for this work, with more productive terminology. By focusing on a process of research *enabling*, as opposed to research being *led by*, *based on* or taken *through* practice (and vice versa), the article seeks clarity on the relationship between research questions, research design and methods; where a contribution to knowledge resides; how, accordingly, a research project might be written up; and who, indeed, creative practice researchers are. From our experience of undertaking, supervising and evaluating creative practice research, we have come to realise that some of the fundamental challenges of this work reside in a basic understanding of what, why, how and by whom. We believe that some of the definitions and models of creative practice research are a contributor to these challenges, hence a new model with alternative terminology to help untangle some of the intellectual complexities we have seen. The discussion uses screen practice as its disciplinary site, encompassing media/screen production and screenwriting.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 May 2024

Accepted 22 July 2024

## KEYWORDS

Creative research; methodology; methods; practice; knowledges; framework

## Introduction

This article is concerned with projects in which researchers (including doctoral students) with experience in and knowledge of creative practice employ the medium, tools and/or devices of that practice to create new knowledge. We use media/screen practice as our discipline area to explore questions of research design and knowledge outcomes, and provide a new model for creative practice research with what we believe is more productive ‘enabling’ terminology to differentiate between the two major ways of working. We call this the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework. We use composite

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case studies drawn from our experiences of creative practice research, alongside our critical reflections on the state of the field of creative practice research, to clarify the commonalities and differences in using creative practice as a mode of enquiry. The aim is to enable researchers, including industry-partnered research teams, and doctoral students and their supervisors, to gain a clearer grasp of what new knowledge looks like in and from creative practice, enabling innovative and insightful knowledge-making scenarios that matter.

The past two decades have seen the most remarkable trend in research activity coming from creative practice disciplines, across art, design, media, music, creative writing, journalism, theatre and performance, and dance, with media/screen practice research growing substantially over the past decade. This includes a corpus of literature on practice research in the arts (e.g. Candy and Edmonds 2018; Smith and Dean 2009), and screen practice/production research (Batty et al. 2019; Batty and Kerrigan 2018; Berkeley, Wood, and Glisovic 2016), and the rise of the screen/media practice doctorate, undertaken especially by those with careers in industry (Batty et al. 2017; Kerrigan et al. 2015).

In creative practice research, practitioners become practitioner-researchers and use their knowledge of and/or experience in practice as a way of knowing, expanding knowledge (theirs and/or others') in and across various disciplines using their art/craft to make discoveries. This kind of work can take multiple forms and produce multiple outcomes, which for those trying to design, articulate or evaluate research in academia is both a blessing and a curse. This is because of the various understandings of creative practice research circulating (Barrett and Bolt 2014; Skains 2018), the conflation of methodology and methods (Hope 2016), different conceptualisations of knowledge contribution (Batty and Holbrook 2017; Wellington 2013), and university policy and leadership not always in agreement on the purpose, shape and importance of this type of work (Wilson 2017).

Creative practice as a mode of enquiry is commonly termed 'practice-led research' or 'practice-based research', which clearly highlights the essential relationship between theory and practice, with praxis being the ultimate act of thinking-making. However, researchers and those supervising and evaluating creative practice research have become bound to the various terminologies offered in the literature. The fixation on terminologies in the realm of artistic research is a well-documented (e.g. Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes 2007; Sullivan 2005). Frayling's (1994) frustration on differentiating 'research into', 'research through', and 'research for' art and design, underscores the complexity and contentious nature of these terminological distinctions and confusion. As Biggs and Karlsson (2010, p. xiii) point out, researchers dealing with such terminological differences saw this as 'a new and problematic activity emerging in the creative and performing arts'.

From our observations, researchers are obsessed with where the practice/research hyphen is and what it denotes, which can lead to people tying themselves in knots about a creative method vs a creative methodology, where new knowledge resides, the importance of contextual literature vs the privileging of the reflective self, and so on. Further, there can often be confusion and sometimes argument about the semantics of the field, for example, different understandings of the word 'practice' (noun or a verb?), 'new knowledge' vs 'new insights' (to whom is this work significant?), and other aspects such as artefacts, data, craft, aesthetics, content, representation, materiality, subjectivity and objectivity (Bell 2006; Bell 2018; Chambers 2019). If these things mean different

things to people, is it any wonder that despite two decades of formalising this kind of work, we are still talking about how we define it?

Amongst the myriad of definitions and debates found across articles, chapters, books and blogs, we go to the heart of the affordances of creative practice research and offer a new model with what we believe is more generative terminology for creative practice researchers: *research-enabled practice* and *practice-enabled knowledge*. By focusing on a process of research-practice-knowledge enablement, as opposed to the more loaded terms of research being *led by*, *based on* or taken *through* practice (to name just a few), the article proposes clarity on the relationship between research questions, design and methods; wherein resides the contribution to knowledge; how a research project might be written up (especially in the doctoral degree); and ultimately, what it is that the creative practice researcher can bring to the scholarly table.

From our collective experience of undertaking, supervising, evaluating, studying and conducting creative practice research, we have come to realise that some of the fundamental challenges of this work reside in a basic understanding of what, why, how and by whom. We believe that some of the extant definitions and models of creative practice research are a contributor to these challenges, hence a new model with alternative terminology to help untangle some of the intellectual complexities we have seen. It is important to note that our model, the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework, does not dictate that researchers can only work in one of two ways; rather, we propose that our model helps to untangle the confusion that has emerged from what can be seen as competing terminology by showing how there are different ways *into* a creative research project, different foci *during* it, and different *end points*, *outputs* and *outcomes*. The Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework is about giving definition and clarity to the practitioner-researcher's thinking so they can navigate their way through creative practice research and articulate their work in ways that make sense to others.

## Background and context

Many valuable studies have discussed the history and emergence of creative practice research, especially stemming from practitioners entering academia, and the criteria for assessing quality research in the field (Barrett 2007; Simmons and Holbrook 2013; Wilson 2014). The literature drawing on the essence of practice-led research in various disciplines has referred to this type of work using several terminologies, including practice-based research, practice-led research, practice-oriented research, practice as research, and artistic research (e.g. Batty and Kerrigan 2018; Frayling 1994; Gibson 2010; Harper and Kroll 2008; Hope 2016; Nelson 2006; Skains 2018). The knowledge and contributions of creative practice research are demonstrated through creative outputs (artefacts) originating from the research process, such as image, music, design, film, digital media, creative writing, performance, and exhibitions, and/or more 'traditional' scholarly writing on the work's aims, background, context, process and/or outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The original creative work itself is part of the knowledge contribution in creative practice research, but as will be outlined below, what this looks like and how it is placed in the project differs depending on research question and research design.

The ongoing transformation of the research landscape in creative fields is evident in the large increase of creative doctorates internationally, and in most developed countries,

the formal acknowledgment of creative practice research within national research policy.<sup>2</sup> This systemic transformation has given rise to various terminologies that offer creative output as part of generating and disseminating knowledge. Creative practice research is an exciting modality for generating knowledge, driving innovation, and through critical reflection, undertaking an evaluation of already established and in-place practices. The possibilities of creative practice research have led to new research groups and networks, journals and book series, doctoral programmes, and an increase in interdisciplinary research, including that with industry and community. As a mode of enquiry that usefully bridges the often-separated worlds of creative practice and academic research, the increasing scholarship in this area is a testament to practice as a valid research endeavour that contributes to knowledge, and which can often have more visible forms of engagement towards impact (Nelson 2006; Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes 2007; Scrivener 2002).

Despite all of this, there is still non-agreement on various aspects of creative practice research, either because the literature on specific aspects is still emerging, or because some researchers and/or research organisations have firmly held beliefs. Below we lay out some key aspects of research that often come up in discussion (e.g. in the literature, at conferences, in university evaluation committees, through doctoral examination reports), and how they have different flavours in creative practice research. While some of these aspects can be said to have fundamental affordances across all types of research, at least definitionally, in creative practice research they are often the source of conversation and contestation.

### *Knowledge-research paradigms*

Research paradigms are foundational in guiding academic projects across disciplines such as the Sciences and Humanities. Paradigms such as positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory provide distinct lenses through which to view and engage with the world. Egon Gubba's (1990, 17) notable contributions in the 1990s delineated the core aspects of research paradigms into three basic questions:

1. *Ontological*: what is the nature of the 'knowable' (the thing we want to research)?
2. *Epistemological*: what is the nature of the relationship between the 'knower' (inquirer/researcher) and the 'knowable' or 'known'?
3. *Methodological*: how should the inquirer/researcher go about finding out?

Specifically, these questions address the nature of knowledge and the knowable, or the thing that we want to research; the relationship between the researcher and the knowable; and the methods for conducting research to explore or acquire knowledge. As also noted by other scholars (e.g. Blaikie and Priest 2017; Descartes 1955; Mackenzie and Knipe 2006), thinking of the research paradigm at the outset of any project and answering these three questions allow researchers to become aware of their belief systems, assumptions and values, their philosophical intent, and the underlying theoretical motivations that guide a researcher's approach to a study.

In the field of creative practice research, engaging with these foundational questions is crucial, yet it is often neglected or under-emphasised. This mode of research uniquely integrates the practitioner's values, worldview, and personal and professional experiences

with their creative processes, influencing both the methodological considerations and the nature of the knowledge produced. The ontological aspect of creative practice research is particularly dynamic, evolving through the act of creating and making itself.

Methodologically, the choice is not merely about tools or methods, but rather how to interact with the world and derive new understandings from the blend of practice and extant knowledge. The integration of extant knowledge and personal/professional practice is vital in creative practice research. While literature provides a contextual framework, personal experiences and practice offer fresh perspectives that challenge and expand the existing corpus of knowledge. This synthesis can lead to significant innovations within a discipline, reshaping how it is approached or conceptualised.

Creative practice research thus represents a distinct paradigm where knowledge is not only explored or examined but is also actively discovered or constructed through creative expression and reflexivity. This results in an embodied, emotive, and experiential understanding of knowledge. The significance of 'new insights' in contributing to 'new knowledge' depends on their ability to resonate with and influence the broader academic or professional community, potentially leading to a re-evaluation of existing knowledge and practice. This convergence of the subjective and the collective, the personal and the academic, and the unconscious and the conscious, extends the boundaries of what is known and how we come to know it.

### *The researcher*

Considering how personal and professional creative experience intertwine with academic enquiry in creative practice research, the position of the researcher with insider insights, whose distinct perspective shapes and drives both the process and the outcome of their work, should not be underestimated. While we certainly do not want to encourage naval gazing (having seen too much of this over the years), the identity of the researcher is pronounced in this field. While arguably all researcher backgrounds have a bearing on their disciplines, in creative practice research it invariably shapes the questions being asked (aims) and the way they are being answered (research design), and the extent to which knowledge derived from the study can influence the practice profession itself (engagement and impact) – if this is the intention. Who they are also determines the volume and (arguably) level of practice to be expected, affords different levels of access to industry (e.g. for interviews, focus groups, dissemination opportunities), and shapes their ability to reflect on and interpret the creative process in context.

Researchers might come to creative practice research based on, and sometimes because of, their industry experience; directly from Honours or other postgraduate study, with a strong grasp of theory to put into practice; or they might be invited to take part in a project because of their reputation in a creative field. In this way, both the position and the positioning of the researcher in creative practice research are important, and they should be consciously thought about from the outset. This positioning is not only about the professional identity of the practitioner-researcher, either, but also involves their backgrounds – cultural, social, personal, and theoretical – and accordingly their assumptions, biases, values, and belief systems. All these things can profoundly shape the research aims, process and outcomes. The researcher's positioning can also

have a bearing on the research subject matter – from social justice topics to industry policy matters – which again brings different flavours to how the work is undertaken.

The dual role of the practitioner-researcher – also in some circles known as the ‘pracademic’ (Posner 2009) – facilitates a somewhat unique ‘insider’ perspective, enabling the researcher to navigate and articulate the subtleties of creative practice that might be invisible or less apparent to a non-practitioner-researcher (see Gist 2021; Kerrigan 2016; Kerrigan et al. 2015). Consider, for example, a film practitioner-researcher researching expanded narrative techniques for the interactive documentary. Their positioning might involve a blend of their professional experience as a writer, producer and/or director; their academic interest in narrative theory; their cultural background and how that influences the types of stories they find compelling; and what types of documentaries they studied as part of their training. This positioning would inevitably guide their decisions not only about the creative work and its making, but also about research focus, underpinning literature and practice, and assumptions about the filmmaker vs the audience when it comes to making meaning through film.

### *Contribution, significance and impact*

Literature on the nature of contribution is growing, but even this does not always align or cohere. For example, Wellington (2013) explores what ‘doctorateness’ means and provides a list of the ways it might be represented in a thesis; Clarke and Lunt (2014) found that academics combine and nuance the words ‘significant’, ‘original’ and ‘contribution’ to distinguish between the quality of a doctorate; and Baptista et al. (2015) take this further to argue that contribution necessitates a relationship between originality, creativity and innovation. In creative research disciplines, the nature of contribution is still being agreed upon, particularly in terms of where it is evidenced – creative work, reflection on practice, or both?

In their article specific to the creative doctorate, Batty and Holbrook (2017) showed that doctoral examiners bring different expectations to the thesis and interpret examination criteria according to these expectations and their own ontologies, some of which are borne out of industry experience as well as academic training. From work such as this, it is possible to understand what sophisticated, doctoral-level thinking looks like in practice; and for the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework, how this level of contribution manifests in the creative work itself or if it resides in the reflection on practice, which usually takes place during the research project but sometimes also occurs after the creative work has been completed.

The type and level of contribution has a bearing on significance, namely, for whom is this research significant, and in what field(s)? As noted above, in some creative practice research scenarios new knowledge takes the form of insights into practice/process, experienced by the researcher as they reflect on their practice. This means that the research is significant to the researcher, but who else? As Ross Gibson (2018) notes in his ‘arc of a research project’, such research findings must be shared with others. In this way, insights gained are then abstracted and generalised for others, creating knowledge that extends beyond the researcher – though it is fair to say that some researchers do not fully achieve this, their insights remaining personal in nature. Either way, new insights and new knowledge ‘proper’ have different levels of significance, which can be traced back to

the research aims and questions, hence their inherent ability to speak to others – either via the creative artefact itself or written reflection on the process of making the work – and different impact potential.

Impact is a much longer game, and it can take many years after a research project has concluded before signs of impact are evident. Framed, as ‘The contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment and culture beyond the contribution to academic research’ (Australian Government 2017; see also Batty, Frankham, and Berry 2018), impact is about material change<sup>3</sup> (e.g. Zalipour 2019) – in thinking, policy, practice, and so on – and is distinct from (but often confused with) excellence and esteem measures. Not all research will have impact, and this is an important thing to consider. Impactful research may result from ‘blue skies’ discovery research, or it may be threaded into partnered research from the start (though impact will always be the aim – it cannot be guaranteed). For the creative practice researcher, potential or planned impact is informed by the research question and research design, the type and form of contribution, and as outlined above, can also be influenced by the researcher’s background and non-academic standing.

### *Craft and materiality*

Anecdotally, there are varying viewpoints across the sector about whether craft can be claimed as new knowledge. Are concepts and ideas in a work the only measure of research, or can research also include the way the work has been put together, or crafted? For example, can crafting a fictional character be evaluated as new knowledge? Is the craft of designing a theatre set a research outcome? ‘Art’ is typically a preferred term over ‘craft’, possessing a more academic – indeed, mysterious – quality over the *technique* of an industry or professional practice. But if we acknowledge the performative nature of crafting an artefact, does this division underplay the importance of craft?

Batty and Holbrook ask, ‘what forms do understandings of originality and contribution take in creative fields?’ (2017, 2). Where is the new knowledge in a creative work, and how are people articulating it? Can we acknowledge that the concepts and ideas in a work are, for some, what produces new knowledge, but for others, it is the craft/technique that has been developed through a research process and therefore enacted in practice, and manifested (in)visibly in the creative work?

Looking to the literature, we might consider Darren Newbury’s (1997) report on what new knowledge looks like in art and design; and Jerry Wellington’s (2013) article on what contribution looks like in the doctorate. In short, new knowledge can be a new method or process; a novel or innovative way of practicing; a new model; empirical novelty; a material outcome (as well as an academic outcome); or implications for practitioners, policy makers or theorists. From a screen practice perspective, Berkeley, Wood, and Glisovic (2016) have debated the need for accompanying text to evaluate knowledge within a creative work. This included a note on the potential danger of letting the creative work ‘speak for itself’ – which, like art vs craft, is often a point of contention in the academy. While art tends to invite interpretation, can or should research do the same? Or, like the nature of craft itself, does the new knowledge require careful articulation of what has been done – the materiality of the knowledge?

## The creative knowledges enabling framework

As the above section attests, there are many specific considerations and affordances of creative practice research which, when not considered together, can cause confusion within the research community. Further, research projects (including doctoral theses) can quickly become all things to all people because, out of fear of missing something, the researcher can throw everything at the project – and not necessarily in the right order. This can result in complex work to untangle – aims, questions, methods, outcomes, outputs, and so on. Research is complex, but its design, planning and articulation need not be.

A valid point of departure for delineating two major strands in this area is to examine the nature of the activities or processes that are undertaken as part of a creative practice research project. As above, these are all shaped by the researcher’s background, experiences and beliefs, and result in connected but different types of output (craft, materiality), contribution (forms of knowledge), significance and impact. A basic but useful way to think of the different streams – or *ways of researching* – is to consider *who* is doing the research (researcher position), *why* they are doing it (research purpose and question), and *how* creative practice is being conceived within the project (research design). This is not to say that a research plan will not change during the process, that the research question(s) will not change, or that the creative work and process will never change; however, we believe this is a fundamentally important starting point to designing and articulating the research endeavour, and the two ‘enabling’ streams we provide below seek to help clarify the structural architecture of a creative practice research project.

Our model, the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework (Figure 1), is informed by a pattern we have seen across the literature, and from undertaking, supervising, and evaluating creative practice research for two decades. We start by grouping together various

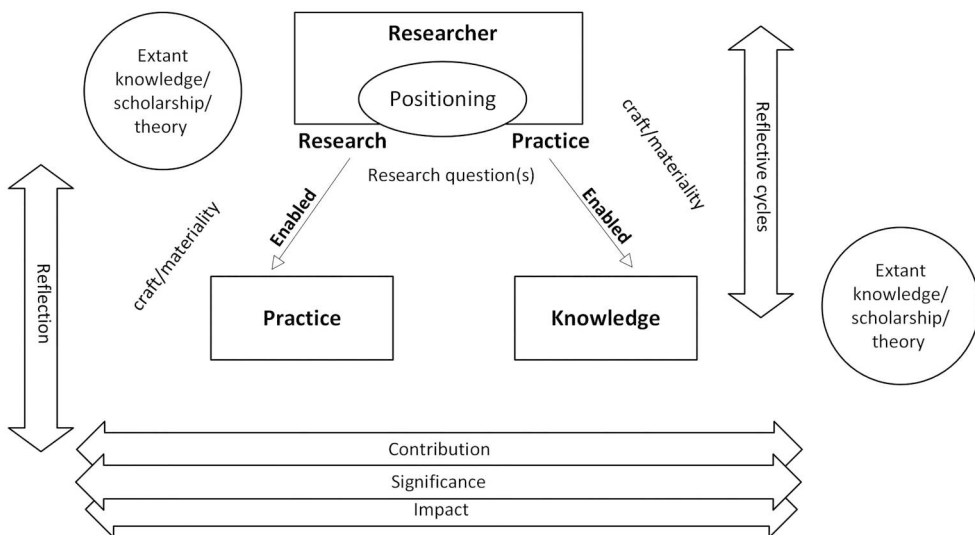


Figure 1. The creative knowledges enabling framework.

terminologies under two streams, each of which we see as sharing common research intentions, processes, and outcomes.

### 1.

*Terminology:* Research-led practice / Practice-based research

*Characteristics:* Creative work emerges from underpinning research; ideas, theories and research discoveries put into the action via the creative work; the work embodies or ‘performs’ research findings; typically, more traditional research methods are used (informing practice); write-up likely to be book-ended with, or result in a specific section on, reflection.

### 2.

*Terminology:* Practice-led research / Research through practice / Practice as research

*Characteristics:* Iterative and cyclical; focuses on reflection on the doing or the making; write-up (results, thesis) likely to highlight the various stages of development; privileges process as the contribution (new insights); practitioner very much at the centre (can be inward looking); common with established practitioners.

The focus of this terminology above tends to be on the directionality of the project – what is *leading* what, what is happening *through* what means, and so on. These semantics are where much of the knot tying happens for researchers, particularly in how they articulate their work before, during and after it has been conducted. With the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework we are keen to focus on the *generative* potential of creative practice research – its *discovery* nature, which is *enabled*. Taking our cue from the above groupings, we offer these two distinctive terms:

- 1) research-enabled practice
- 2) practice-enabled knowledge

‘Enabled’ speaks to the process of research – a fulcrum of knowledge-making – and we propose that unlike its antecedents *led*, *through*, *as*, and so on, which can put us into grammatical somersaults, it is more inclusive of the ways in which creative practice research operates.

Crucially, our model carves out an important distinction between the two dominant ways in which creative practice features in research: (1) as an outcome of research, embodying research findings in the materiality (craft) of the of the creative artefact; or (2) as a method or site of research, from which knowledge about practice/process is attained. While these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, they are distinctly dominant ways of structuring and/or writing up a creative practice research project, with differently flavoured research questions, methods, data, outputs, outcomes, and significance.

### 1. **Research-enabled practice.**

The creative artefact is only made possible through conducting underpinning research. Existing theories, ideas, practices and so on are tested and expanded through creative application. The creative work is thus an outcome of the research, and through its materiality/DNA presents (embodies) the research findings. The

creative artefact is a work that ‘knows’ – a thinking work. The creative work contributes to knowledge in and of itself.

## 2. Practice-enabled knowledge.

Knowledge is created through using practice as a method. Reflection on that practice creates insights that lead to a new understanding (usually about the process or the practitioner). The creative work does not necessarily contain a (final) contribution to knowledge.

Consider the following research questions and how they have specific affordances in relation to the two approaches. Each one can primarily only be answered through research-enabled practice or practice-enabled knowledge, respectively, because each has a different starting point, a different process, a different role played by the researcher, and different likely outputs and outcomes.

### Research-enabled practice:

- a) How might a screenplay represent the experience of family homelessness? (*Here the researcher will be looking at the content or the screenplay’s form/style/aesthetics for their answer.*)
- b) How can cinematographic techniques in fiction filmmaking enhance an audience’s perception of mental health struggles? (*This question focuses on the integration of specific cinematic techniques to authentically and/or represent mental health issues.*)

### Practice-enabled knowledge:

- c) How can a screenwriter navigate the script development process using theme as a collaborative tool? (*Here the researcher will document the process and iteratively reflect on the process for their answer. There may not be a final screenplay, but there will be drafts.*)
- d) How does a filmmaker ethically and sensitively collaborate with subjects and subject matter experts for a documentary about mental health issues? (*This question focuses on the (creative) non-fiction process, examining the challenges and opportunities of telling with and about sensitive personal and societal issues.*)

The concept of **research-enabled practice** posits that creative output, in its completed form, contributes new knowledge in and of itself. Its content, form, genre, style, and/or aesthetic – its research-enabled DNA – enhances our understanding of the topic under investigation. The creative output embodies research findings and invites others into the topic through an engagement with its material form – for example, understanding a complex social issue through a new representation or archival material, use of lighting, sound or editing, or a particular directing technique to draw emotions out of the subjects. The creative output is as a vessel for scholarly enquiry and knowledge dissemination; as Ross Gibson (2010) puts it, it is a work that thinks; it is a work that knows. By embedding research into the creative output, the creative output becomes a knowledge object: it both thinks and invites others to think, engaging with the research topic through its medium-specific materiality.

If we take the family homelessness research question above, screenplay that seeks to explore the experience of family homelessness would likely begin with rigorous research to portray the realities of this social issue with accuracy and/or nuance. This might involve reviewing sociological studies of the phenomenon, conducting interviews with affected families, or collaborating with organisations that assist homeless populations. Such research choices and methods ensure that the narrative is rooted in authentic experiences and reflects the complexities of homelessness, such as the cyclical nature of poverty, the impact on children's education and well-being, and the emotional and psychological toll on families. This kind of project might also involve ethnographic work, spending time with homeless families and coming to better understand the physical, emotional and psychological strains they are experiencing. Needless to say, this approach would need rigorous ethics approval.

In research-enabled practice, contextual literature and a review of practice in the field provides necessary foundational support. For example, the notion of 'thick description' from anthropological literature, which involves detailing not only behaviours but also the context and meaning behind those behaviours (see Geertz 1973), could significantly inform a screenplay about homelessness. This method would allow writers to craft scenes that convey not just the external circumstances of homeless families but also the internal worlds of the characters. This layered representation would then be compared with similar screen works, or perhaps even other media forms, to ensure that the screenplay in question is truly contributing something new to the field. Such a screenplay would stand as a confluence of artistic endeavour and academic research, offering viewers a comprehensive understanding of homelessness through a compelling original narrative form. The screenplay thus becomes a form of active or new knowledge that contributes to wider societal understandings and discussions about homelessness, which could have the potential to influence both public opinion and policy.

If we take the example of cinematography and an audience's perception of mental health issues, this practitioner-researcher begins to explore psychological theories of perception using insights from academic research to shape the creative decisions and to experiment with lighting and colours in filmmaking in the shoot and post-production. The knowledge in this model is largely dependent on existing research and scholarship, and the creative practice serves as a field for application and experimentation, thereby potentially validating or challenging the existing theories. It emphasises a deductive process where theory or pre-existing scholarly knowledge informs creative expression and practice. The result in this instance is the creative output, a film that embodies the choices of lighting and colours that can evoke specific responses from audiences.

The concept of **practice-enabled knowledge** represents a subtly different approach to research-enabled practice. In this mode, the act of creating itself – through iterative practice and reflection, akin to action research – is the primary method of generating new insights and understanding about practice, with a focus on process being the knowledge contribution. While output and process are not mutually exclusive, this mode emphasises the practitioner's process of doing the research, focusing less on end product and more on what is learned through the act of creation itself, through cycles of practice. There may not be a completed creative artefact in this model, rather a series of drafts/experiments/short works/prototypes that respond to the reflections and accumulate insights towards a contribution. This is the dominant approach in the field

of design, for example, but it is also seen across many other creative disciplines, including media/screen practice (e.g. through a series of script development document drafts, or a series of edits of a film).

If we take the above example of a screenwriter navigating the script development process using theme as a collaborative tool, consider how this approach shifts the focus from the screenplay as a vessel of research findings, to the screenplay – or more likely, script development documents and screenplay drafts – as a site of ongoing inquiry and discovery. In practice-enabled knowledge, the screenwriter uses theme not just as a narrative backbone but also as a dynamic, evolving element that guides the script development process from which reflections on process are made. Through writers' rooms, workshops, actor read-throughs, discussions with other writers, and various iterations of the script, theme serves as a reflective lens that helps all involved refine their understanding of the narrative and characters, and from this, new insights or knowledge about the script development process.

In practice-enabled knowledge, it is not essential that there be a screenplay that communicates a 'finalised' contribution to knowledge, or creatively, a fully resolved narrative. Instead, the screenplay and its associated development documents are part of a broader collaborative learning and knowledge-making process. Reflection on how theme was adapted, adjusted and used as a collaborative tool throughout script development, could lead to valuable new insights about the creative process, and potentially new knowledge about how the process can work for others.

Taking the example of a documentary filmmaker collaborating with mental health specialists and those with lived experience to explore this issue, the researcher aims to expand their knowledge of documentary filmmaking with a focus on the complex production processes of working with sensitive subjects. The filmmaker collaborates with mental health subjects and subject matter experts and learns about ethical filming practices, such as employing unobtrusive equipment and gaining informed consent from participants, and finding authentic and innovative ways to represent the lived experience. The filmmaker may face logistical, ethical and representational challenges that need to be overcome.

Throughout the project, the filmmaker documents their process, reflecting critically on how interactions with the community and guidance from mental health specialists shape the narrative and visual style of the documentary. These reflections provide insights into adapting filmmaking practices to complex and sensitive themes and environments, enhancing the filmmaker's ability to tell these stories. This approach not only deepens the filmmaker's understanding of the subject matter (new insights), but it also has the potential (if these insights are abstracted and shared) to contribute to existing knowledge in this field.

Practice-enabled knowledge aligns with theories and models of reflective practice often discussed in the fields of education (e.g. Dewey 1933), psychology, and the arts. Donald Schön's (1987) concepts of 'reflective practice' articulate how professionals can learn from their experiences by engaging deeply with the tasks at hand and reflecting on the process of undertaking them. In creative practice research, this often translates to iterative experimentations where each cycle is both an end in and of itself and a step in a continuous learning process – an iterative process.

Comparatively, while research-enabled practice uses the creative artefact as a medium to express original research findings, practice-enabled knowledge uses the creative process as a primary tool for generating insight and knowledge, particularly the practitioner's understanding about the process itself. While there may be a final artefact in the practice-enabled knowledge mode, it can be seen as an outcome of the learning journey whose inherent DNA is informed by the cycles of reflection on process, rather than its primary purpose being to embody an original contribution to knowledge, as discovered through various methods, from the very start (see Zalipour and Nicholson 2023). To reiterate, while these two modes are not mutually exclusive, they have different starting points, journeys, and outcomes and outputs. In the doctoral degree, it is a misnomer to combine both modes and try to do everything because there simply is not the space for both, conceptually and practically. A large-scale collaborate research project, on the other hand, might have the capacity for undertaking both modes at once, perhaps with two project leaders.

### Reflections on knowledge-making in and with creative practice

In creative practice research, understanding where knowledge resides can vary significantly depending on the mode of research being discussed – namely, *research-enabled practice* and *practice-enabled knowledge*. These two modes reflect different approaches to the integration of practice and theory in creative disciplines, and can influence how knowledge is conceptualised, generated, validated, and shared with others.

Research-enabled practice focuses on testing and expanding existing knowledge within practice, thereby expanding established theories, ideas and/or practices through creative application in the form of a new work (research output). In the mode of research-enabled practice, the primary locus of knowledge is in the creative work itself, which has been developed through the application of research to inform and guide a new work of practice (research findings). This approach starts with existing knowledge derived from academic research, theoretical frameworks, industry policy, and so on, which then acts as a catalyst or guide for creative practice. In other words, underpinning research (the field of practice) becomes the intellectual tools with which to create a new work. Here, extant knowledge resides in the academic/theoretical/industry underpinnings that inform the practice, but it is in the outcome of the research – the new work of practice (creative output, e.g. film, novel, exhibition, performance) – that new knowledge is found. For doctoral research, this is what makes the 'final' creative artefact examinable as a central research outcome – a research artefact or knowledge object.

Practice-enabled knowledge emphasises the generation of new knowledge from within the practice itself, about the practice itself, suggesting that creative activity or process can lead to unique insights that may not be reachable through traditional research methods alone. In practice-enabled knowledge, the knowledge primarily resides within the iterative development of the creative work, reflecting on the process to help shape the next cycle of development. This mode suggests that knowledge emerges directly or indirectly from the creative process, with creative cycles of reflexive practice leading to the generation of new insights and/or knowledge. In this mode, the practice is not a vessel for applying research discoveries but is rather a method of enquiry that leads to new creative and critical understandings about practice. The

series of iterative creative artefacts found in this approach (e.g. draft scripts, different edits of a scene, design prototypes), which are a distinguishing feature of doctoral theses in this mode of enquiry, function as research data from which new insights/knowledge can be drawn. They help to document and therefore understand the process, and while these iterations might be viewed as creative artefacts in their own right, they are not the final outcome of the research (new knowledge embodied in a creative output) as found in the mode of research-enabled practice.

Practitioner-researchers may find themselves navigating both modes, sometimes beginning with one and moving to the other as their work evolves. This is not uncommon, certainly not during doctoral candidature. Our framework represents a spectrum of reflective practice and creative processes within and across disciplines. For example, the field of creative writing tends to be a more artefact-oriented discipline, and while reflection does occur in action as the work is taking shape (i.e. craft/story decisions are being made in relation to research), it is more common to see the finished artefact (often published, produced or performed) analysed and contextualised 'after the fact'. Conversely, while the process-oriented research of the discipline of design tends to focus on iterating and reflecting on the choices made, which in the doctorate in particular is commonly represented in the 'journey' thesis model, designers also engage in reflection-on-action at the end of a project, even if there is no final artefact per se (e.g. co-design with community to provide stakeholder-driven solutions to a shared problem).

Needless to say, the fluidity of creative practice research shows the dynamic nature of knowledge-making, where the boundaries between generating and applying knowledge can be porous, allowing for a rich interplay between theory and practice. What does need to happen at some point, however, is research articulation – and this is where the Creative Knowledges Enabling Framework helps to see and craft the research narrative, and shape the research contribution, significance and impact.

## Conclusion

As we reflect on knowledge-making in and with creative practice, it becomes evident that the modes of research-enabled practice and practice-enabled knowledge offer distinct pathways for practitioner-researchers to design their projects and embark on their journeys. These frameworks not only highlight the diversity in approaches to knowledge-making within creative disciplines, but also reveal how the methods and findings differ in depth and breadth. Practice-enabled knowledge emphasises the iterative, reflexive nature of creative research work, where knowledge is shaped and reshaped through the act of creation itself. In contrast, research-enabled practice grounds creative efforts in existing theories and academic enquiry, allowing practitioner-researchers to expand upon and challenge these foundations through their creative endeavours, resulting in creative artefacts that 'know'.

Our experience underscores that knowledge in creative practice is not monolithic: there are myriad 'things to know' and equally varied ways to discover them. Consequently, the significance and impact of findings from these modes can vary greatly, influencing academia, industry and broader societal understandings. It is crucial to recognise that embracing the diversity of these knowledge-making processes enriches our comprehension and appreciation of creative practice, ultimately driving the evolution

of both theory and practical application in creative fields. This acknowledgment of varied insights and impacts not only enriches the discourse within creative fields, but also reinforces the value of interdisciplinary exploration in shaping future creative practice research. This, in turn, could drive forward and potentially re-shape the research landscape internationally, where creative practice is better understood as a legitimate and often powerful way of producing and disseminating knowledge, especially in an era of complex, 'wicked' challenges.

## Notes

1. The explanation, description, justification, significance and contextualisation of the creative artefact are described in written form for the exegesis and/or publication.
2. Most nations have a governing research policy, and in these policies in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK, Ireland, and many northern European countries, there is explicit mention of creative or artistic research.
3. Zalipour's research and advocacy work over a decade, as documented in several publications that include the book, *Migrant and Diasporic Film and Filmmaking in New Zealand* (2019), influenced the New Zealand Film Commission's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 'He Ara Whakaurunga Kanorau Diversity and Inclusion' (2022). This strategy commits to diversifying screen stories in New Zealand, and to making the New Zealand screen sector and practices more inclusive for groups that have historically been underrepresented on screen. This work exemplifies how scholarly research and findings can contribute to driving substantial industry policy advancements and change in practice. See: <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/sites/default/files/2022-05/NZFC%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategy%202022-2025.pdf>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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