

Creative Practice and Research-Creation at Screen Cultures and Curatorial Studies at Queen's

Artist-Researchers often produce new research methods, and/or novel forms of knowledge generation and dissemination, in a purposeful combination of creative production and research. This work expands traditional academic expectations, or in the words of Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean:

“We believe that any definition of knowledge needs to acknowledge these non-verbal forms of transmission. It also must include the idea that knowledge is itself often unstable, ambiguous, and multidimensional, can be emotionally or affectively charged, and cannot necessarily be conveyed with the precision of a mathematical proof.”

Arts have a capacity to offer experiential, visceral, somatic, and affective experiences of *knowing* and *learning*, and are often effective tools to sidestep ossified paradigms.

Queen's offers two options for conception and submission of a project: manuscript (linear thesis format) and portfolio (a container for multiple components). Most creative practice will likely fall under the portfolio category.

We recognize multiple types of projects involving creative practice that are worthy of an MA or a PhD:

1. Research for Creation - many artists do research in order to create their work. For instance, research into a topic X will inform the production of a play or an exhibition Y.
2. Practice led Research - an artist/researcher produces a film/artwork that is then analyzed (reception interviews, surveys; auto-ethnography, etc.)
3. Research - Creation – is based on the co-development and intertwined evolution of the creative production with the intellectual aspects of the project. Where the previous two categories offer relatively linear order, in R-C, the two aspects inform and alter each other, often in fresh (and sometimes un-expected) ways. Research-Creation is invested in process as much as product, is often experimental in both art methods and forms of writing, and projects are often participatory, have multiple authors, or are led by a community drive (rather than the initiation of the researcher-artist).

None of these options are akin to an MFA or an Arts PhD, where the creative project is the main object of production, and where writing, if exists, is restricted to description, an artist statement, or some reflection of process. In our MA and PhD program, both intellectual and creative components are integral and equally valued.

Research-Creation is an approach available to cultural producers with an active and professionally recognized practice and/or academic qualifications in relevant disciplines (music, theatre, creative writing, visual arts etc.) who choose to create a cultural product (work of art, performance, film, play, text, exhibit, etc.), and/or to become involved in community-based cultural work, in lieu of creating a traditional MA or PhD thesis. Research - Creation must meet

academic expectations and the standards of disciplinary or artistic rigour in the sphere in which the project is expected to be exhibited, screened, curated, presented, published, etc. In addition, Research-Creation practitioners are required to make apparent the ways their artistic work addresses research questions, showing awareness of theoretical frameworks or other methodologies it may engage (e.g. Community-based Research or CBR), its conditions of production and its implications for academic scholarship. That is, a Research-Creation PhD is not a Studio Art PhD.

It may be useful for students to consider the format of the [“Manuscript” or “Portfolio” thesis as defined by Queen’s SGSPA](#), that is, a Research-Creation project might consist of a cluster of interventions in varied formats or voices. On the other hand, it might be a single project. In either case, the required analytical element may be integrated or independent. If integrated, the student will explicitly situate the work in its relevant disciplinary and cultural contexts. If independent, the student will address the appropriate historical, theoretical, and disciplinary concerns as a parallel discourse which need not necessarily refer to the artistic or primary project directly.

Students and supervisors are encouraged to think about ways to honour and include Research-Creation methodologies at all research stages of the MA or PhD, from conception through qualifying exam and proposal defence, oral defence, and final output. Production components are not to be considered as over and above written components. The ratio and relation between the production and the critical/analytical component at all stages will be determined in consultation with the supervisory committee. Documentation and/or presentation of production should be taken into account at all stages.

In all cases, students should work closely with supervisors to determine what is required for the final presentation or documentation of the artworks or projects. The feasibility of project, the timeline and logistics of final presentation should be addressed at the proposal stage. It is possible to present the process of development or conceptual design of a project as the Research-Creation output.

Research-Creation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

The [definition of Research-Creation](#) offered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the point of reference for Queen’s Cultural Studies, but we recognize that some projects may not be included under its umbrella.

Applicants with interest in following Research-Creation paths which are not found in the SSHRC definition may work with their supervisor and advisors to develop a suitable methodology.

Research-Creation Definition from SSHRC

An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). Research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator's work, conventional works of technological development, or work that focuses on the creation of curricula. The research-creation process and the resulting artistic work are judged according to SSHRC's established merit review criteria.

Fields that may involve research-creation may include, but are not limited to: architecture, design, creative writing, visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, textiles), performing arts (e.g., dance, music, theatre), film, video, performance art, interdisciplinary arts, media and electronic arts, and new artistic practices.

([Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#), accessed 2024)

Resources

Unlike Creative Arts PhD or MFA programs, Cultural Studies at Queen's does not provide studio space or production facilities. Limited support may be available through the Film and Media, Fine Art, and the Dan School of Drama and Music. Some funding for production elements may be available through the [Dean's Award for Project and Portfolio PhD Research & Research-Creation/Community-based Research for MA](#).