

# Future (Re)view - Re-ing and (Re)reading “Future (Re)vision: A Few Reflections on Recollection, Reception and Response in Practice-Based Art Research or: Hindsight isn’t always 20/20”

MARSHA K. BRADFIELD

Central Saint Martins,  
Camberwell College of Arts  
and Chelsea College of Arts

University of the Arts London

[marsha.bradfield@arts.ac.uk](mailto:marsha.bradfield@arts.ac.uk)

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents *re-ing* as a critical and creative method for experience-based learning. In this reflective dialogue between an art researcher and an art historian, *re-ing* is considered vis-à-vis the conference themes of *Art of Research VIII* (2023): *re-placing*, *re-interpreting* and *re-visioning*. The holistic significance of research in art and design is also explored from the perspective of practice, and the journey from Ph.D. student to Ph.D. supervisor. The exchange draws on work by the artist featured in *The Art of Research II* (2012), a legacy publication in *The Art of Research* series.

**Alison Jones:** I would like to start this exchange by acknowledging that our dialogue today is saturated by what Marsha Bradfield and her collaborators in Future Reflections have come to call *re-ing*. In its simplest form, re-ing means recognizing and valuing our previous practice. The prefix *re* (as in *again*) is verbified to give pride of place to recursive encounter. This chimes with *re-imagining* as the main theme of *Art Research VIII*. Re-ing offers a method “for looking back, returning to take another look, or starting anew.” (Art of Research, 2023) We’ll consider this with reference to your peer-reviewed paper, Marsha, which features in *The Art of Research II* (2012), a legacy publication for the 2009 conference in *The Art of Research* series.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes, but we should introduce ourselves first. I typically describe what I do as *riding the hyphen*, which is to say that I am an artist-curator-educator-researcher-writer, and, and, and. Today, I’m approaching our topic of re-ing as an artist researcher specializing in dialogic art. Most immediately, I’m interested in how we can use dialogue in practice-based/led research to engage in multiple and simultaneous conversations, including with ourselves: past, present, and future.

**Allison Jones:** Our collaboration started when I became a critical friend on your Ph.D. journey. Your thesis includes a presentation I made in response to your doctoral preoccupation with the question: What is dialogic art? (Bradfield, 2013). I mention this because for as long as I’ve known you, Marsha, you’ve described yourself as a practitioner who works in explicit forms of collaboration. This often involves authorial experiments that explore interdependence, an interest I share.

My own approach is more art historical. Though I should clarify that I’m less interested in the history *of* art and more interested in history *in* art: how art reveals or even reifies the time and place – in a word, context – in which it is created and valued. I’ve been tracking this in Marsha’s practice, vis-à-vis her hyphenation and authorial experimentation – and the focus of today’s conversation, which is to say re-ing. Having introduced ourselves, could you introduce your text, Marsha, which will serve as the example to focus our discussion?

**Marsha Bradfield:** I’m afraid the title is a mouthful, which is a bit embarrassing, as I wrote it: “Future (re)vision: A few reflections on recollection, reception and response in practice-based art research or: Hindsight isn’t always 20/20”. The abstract reads as follows:

This experimental paper explores questions of recollection, reception and response in practice-based art research. Staged as a fictional dialogue set on a spacecraft in 2020, it uses time travel to speculate about the future of this emerging field of research. By contemplating the present as the past, this dialogue provides an alternative perspective from which to glimpse the developments in art research. [...] Recollections of Future Reflections Research Group’s experiences at *The Art of Research Seminar 2007* anchor this discussion. These retellings also model the discursive practice of “re-ing,” a collaborative research method developed by the group to support the auto-(re)interpretation of its practice. (Bradfield, 2012, p. 180)

**Allison Jones:** So, this is a fictional exchange set in the future that was presented at the third conference in *The Art of Research* series, which actually – which is to say, factually – took place in 2009.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes, I was there representing Future Reflections Research Group, which was composed of three Ph.D. students at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London: Katrine Hjelde, Catherine Maffioletti, and me. To date, we have realized ten projects. All have titles featuring the word *future* followed by a word composed of the prefix *re*; for instance, *Future Refrain* (Berlin, 2008) and *Future Resource* (London, 2014). This nomenclature nods towards re-ing as a pivotal method of our collaborative, creative practice research.

**Allison Jones:** How did that happen? How did re-ing become so central to your group?

**Marsha Bradfield:** In retrospect, I can recognize that it – that re-ing – was an attempt to make sense of our lived experience of both doing and disseminating our research. We had all worked abroad but none of us was prepared to attend international conferences in our field. We quickly realized that our local scene of Chelsea College of Arts (University of the Arts London),

which at the time was developing a reputation for doctoral research in socially engaged practice, was only one context amongst many. Each scene – each institution, each region – has its own ideas about *practice-based research* and *practice-led research* (Candy, 2006); and the catchalls, *art research* or *artistic research*; as well as my personal preference: *creative practice research*. We did not, of course, expect this to be the same everywhere. We assumed there would be diverse, even contradictory expressions in this emerging field. The challenge for us was understanding how they were distinct and overlapping when this was not explicit – or the conferences we attended offered insufficient time and space to grasp the contextual specificity of their host institutions.

**Allison Jones:** So you were learning from experience, through attending conferences like *The Art of Research* and immersing yourselves in the discourse. This approach differs from comparing program brochures or institutional websites.

**Marsha Bradfield:** These tended to be less branded, less differentiated, back in the noughties. And it's still the case that institutional and departmental histories of art research remain little studied. They're largely trapped in unpublished material: personal archives, oral histories and the like. There is still no guidebook, to my knowledge, offering thumbnail sketches of the values and specialisms of doctoral programs, or that documents how they've evolved. And so, it was up to us to ascertain their distinct qualities – including the forces that were shaping these scenes. This is where *re-placing*, the first subtheme of *The Art of Research VIII* (2023), comes into play.

**Allison Jones:** Right, the conference framed *re-placing* as about place, space and belonging as composed of complex contingencies, including social dynamics and personal perceptions. What did this mean for your work as Future Reflections?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Well, as early career researchers, Katrine, Catherine, and I were keen to locate – to *place* – our doctoral research in research communities beyond our university. As these are contextually distributed, it proved challenging. Hopefully, they'll become more *joined up* as the specialism matures, networks

evolve and stabilize, and the demand to chronicle this development reaches the critical mass required to fund it. In the interim, the best we can do is to cultivate and connect our situated scenes and help each other to appreciate what differentiates their unique cultures. This also highlights why conferences like *Art of Research* are so important: they help to map the field.

**Allison Jones:** Could you explain how re-ing works in practical terms?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Well, we'd attend a conference, symposium or seminar and then spend hours rehearsing our experience, reflecting on the context and considering how this might inform our respective research and our collaborative work. Our process always began informally as we co-narrated what happened. I reference this in my "Future (re)vision" paper when I write, "The yarns we tell ourselves to knit together the hisss-tories (slash) herstories or their (slash) there stories..." (Bradfield, 2012, p. 83). It's worth acknowledging that in the early days of *doing conferences*, I'd get nervous and forget what happened in our presentations. This stress response meant I literally needed help remembering. And so, through a play-by-play, we'd arrive at a story that we all agreed on, more or less. It was an accurate representation for posterity, albeit one that would necessarily shift through its retelling.

**Allison Jones:** Can you say how re-ing as a discursive process was important to your doctoral work on dialogic art and your collaborative work?

**Marsha Bradfield:** I recognized early on that co-authoring a shared account helped to cement more than memories. It was also good for our interpersonal relations: the collegiality, friendship, and shared understanding that propelled our work as Future Reflections.

**Allison Jones:** This makes re-ing sound like group bonding.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Sometimes we enjoyed an oxytocin high catalyzed by group flow. But often, the process was uncomfortable and emotionally charged. We were figuring out how to think, write, perform, and present *together*. We had to learn how to self-organize and resolve conflict as we created and disseminated our research

outputs. Nearly two decades later, I still work with Katrine on a regular basis, and we all remain in contact. It is striking to think that our formative work as Future Reflections – which was extracurricular and unpaid – has played such an important role in my development as a researcher.

**Allison Jones:** Can you say more about the difference that re-ing has made to your collegiate continuity?

**Marsha Bradfield:** To press the point, re-ing has been so much more in Future Reflections than a discursive, narrative-based approach to accounting for shared experience. Co-authoring narratives creates understanding and relationships among the people doing the re-ing, Catherine, Katrine and me, as well as our respective work. Re-ing helped us to sharpen our Ph.D. projects against each other by offering a space where we could put them in dialogue. I

was working on dialogic art (Bradfield, 2013); Katrine was working on reflection (Hjelde, 2012), and Catherine was working on feminist spatialization (Maffioletti, 2012). Our Ph.D.s created a prism that focused our engagement as Future Reflections but also expanded it, making the collaboration greater than the sum of its parts. This is not, in my experience, something we discuss – or value – nearly enough in doctoral culture or vis-à-vis the PhD journey: How we and our projects are produced by our contexts and cohorts. This is alluded to in a diagram (Figure 1) we developed for *Future Return*. I reference it here because we used it as a map to orientate our re-ing as we evolved our conference presentations, with each building on previous ones.

**Allison Jones:** You’ve described Figure 1 as a *map*, but it reminds me of a Ouija board.

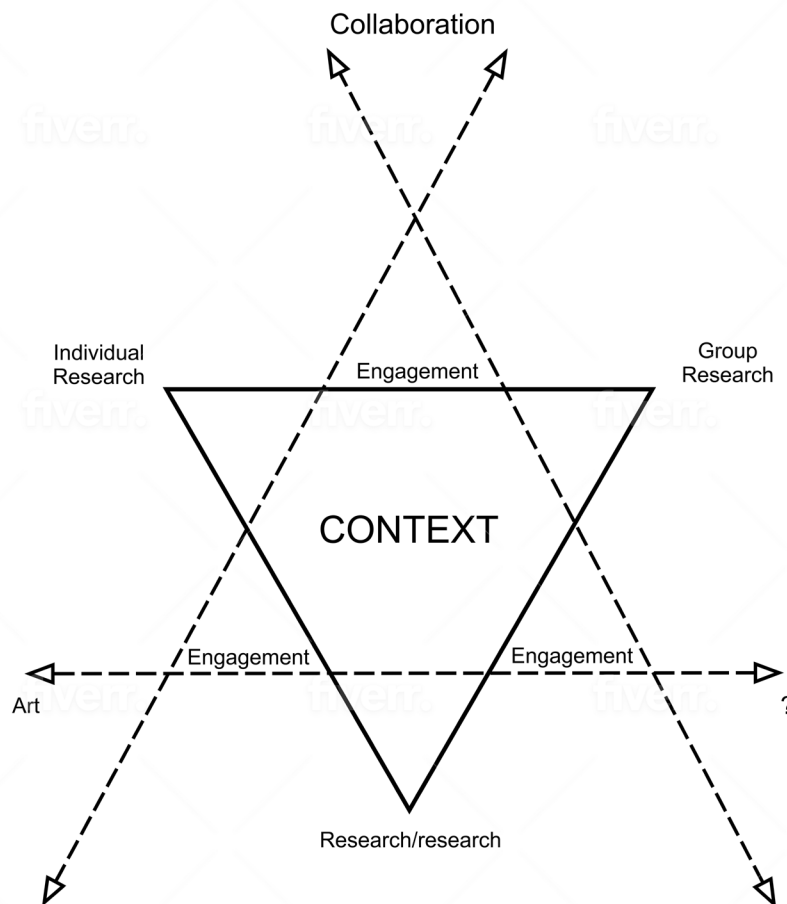


Figure 1. Diagram from *Future (Re)turn in Torres Vedras* (Bradfield, Hjelde, and Maffioletti, 2007)

**Marsha Bradfield:** Funny! For sure, re-ing is a *dark art*, in part because it's so preoccupied with *re-interpretation*, which brings us to another sub-theme of *The Art of Research VIII* (2023). We recognized every new opportunity as an invitation to reflect on our previous projects and consider what understanding had subsequently crystallized or what new insights had emerged. The opportunity and its context orientated our engagement. For instance, Katrine and I presented an explorative presentation at *The Art of Research VIII* (2023). For *Future Re-surrection/Future Re-Fraction*, we fed our conference abstract into ChatGPT to generate, among other things, ethical, epistemological, ontological, and teleological questions we might address in the open-ended process of archiving Future Reflections Research Group. As there's so much to say about this, let me simply observe ChatGPT's particular, mysterious and *plagiaristic* approach to re-ing. Citation in its current iteration (3.5) is dispensed with. ChatGPT becomes the author with an uber citation giving the chatbot absolute and total credit. This is bad news for researchers and others who've historically gained recognition through the citation economy. What, if anything, will replace this valorizing circulation remains to be seen.

**Allison Jones:** You seem to be describing a process marked by experience > reflection > conceptualization > experimentation that sounds a lot like David A. Kolb's (2014) learning cycle. This accords with your sense of re-ing as an expression of experience-based learning. There's also your collaborative quest to understand art research much more holistically and experientially. How do you think re-ing informed your sense of art research as a field?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Future Reflections collaborated on artistic research about artistic research (yes, you read that correctly). We overidentified with certain assumptions about Research with an uppercase R (viz. research resulting in new knowledge, a domain dominated by the sciences – at least from the perspective of higher education). For instance, the three researchers featured in my paper, “Future (re)vision” wear grey lab coats and mirror badges: our uniform in Future Reflections. These are playful references to the authority of Research when this is tantamount to objective and enduring *truth* fortified by epistemic hierarchies, among other things. We used re-ing to question this through

relentless re-interpretation. “Future (re)vision” enacts this as a fictional dialogue amongst three interlocutors: Alpha, Beta and Gamma, who are based on Catherine, Katrine, and me (Bradfield, 2012).

This also chimes with another subtheme of *Art of Research VIII* (2023): *re-visioning*. As the conference description explains, this focus is less about *seeing again* and more about vision in terms of possibility, so *envisioning* how things might be otherwise.

**Allison Jones:** Is it kismet that your 2012 paper is literally called, “Future (re)vision” (Bradfield)?

**Marsha Bradfield:** There is more at play here than language. For starters, my 2012 paper embodies revisioning when it reinterprets the conventions of the conference paper. This finds form as a script for a screenplay that unfolds through dialogue (Bradfield). Typically, Future Reflections has used institutional critique to understand the research conference as a context structured through conventions. My contribution to *The Art of Research II* compliments this with its immanent critique of the *conference paper* as presumably academic and nonfictional (Bradfield, 2012). It has been our conviction in Future Reflections that by challenging the mechanisms of art research, we could make it more *art* – and perhaps *artfully* so – to counterbalance the tendency to value Research as academic to a fault. We wanted to make our field more courageous, confident, and fun.

**Allison Jones:** Have you read Clair Bishop's recent publication in *ArtForum* (2023)? No? Well, Bishop offers some useful thinking for those working with research-based art – artists, of course, but also others like Bishop and myself who engage with this work for public exhibitions, making our research subject to institutional and other expectations.

**Marsha Bradfield:** In my experience, Bishop's scholarship often favors *case studies* and sharpens a *good* example against a *bad* one. Does this argument have a *baddie*?

**Allison Jones:** There is more than one, but Forensic Architecture tops the list. Founded in 2010, their research has been used in extra-artistic contexts for social justice. These include law courts and other tournaments of evaluation. We

could, with Bishop, debate the sensuous value of this work, especially for those encountering it in secondary contexts, including exhibitions and other archival expressions.

**Marsha Bradfield:** You mean because the work's primary usefulness is not as art or even art research to benefit art?

**Allison Jones:** Yes. Bishop commends some aspects of this interdisciplinary activity, including the academics' inventiveness. (Forensic Architecture is tethered to Goldsmiths, University of London.) But she seems irritated by this kind of practice, dissatisfied with research-based *art* in general. In her view, those encountering this type of work – the viewers or spectators – are discouraged from “formulating their own arguments” or “second-guessing the artist's connections”. They are instead “expected to follow the forensic method to its logical conclusion. There is no room for ambiguity and contestation” (Bishop, 2023). In other words, this so-called *art* is not especially open to interpretation. It may circulate amongst *art galleries* and museums nationally and internationally, but formally and conceptually, the work of Forensic Architecture looks a lot like design.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Ah yes. Design as art. It is a provocative trend that may be squeezing out critical and creative reflection like the kind we aspire to via re-ing. The emotional charge of Bishop's apparent irritation with research-based art is also striking. It takes me back to the affective experience of my work as an early-career researcher. You will recall my earlier comments on the confusion that gripped me – that gripped Future Reflections – when we were getting our bearings in the field of creative practice research.

Bishop's disdain also seems linked to something I discuss in “Future (re)vision” (Bradfield, 2012). This relates to the difference between *showing* and *telling*. (Although we tend to associate this with Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, some scholars trace this all the way back to Plato [Klauk and Köppe, 2014].) This comes onto my longstanding frustration with the research paper as a genre. Too often it's the boring equivalent of an academic *show* and *tell*.

**Allison Jones:** I'd say that on this point, you and Bishop agree.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Reflecting on the difference between *showing* and *telling*, “Future (re)vision” explores the tendency of art researchers to *tell* their research: to use tidy chains of cause and effect to say it is effectively doing X, Y and Z (Bradfield, 2012). Estelle Barrett captures this in a neat turn of phrase: the perils of “auto-connoisseurship” (2007, p. 135). Why is it that so many of us succumb to “undertaking [the] thinly veiled labor of valorizing what has been achieved in the creative work”? (Barrett, 2007, p. 135). As a doctoral student, I was flummoxed by the tendency of paper presentations at art research conferences to make overblown claims about the practice. Fortunately, there are signs this is changing. It was encouraging to see so many careful presentations at *Art of Research VIII* (2023). Back in 2007, when I attended my first conference, I was preoccupied with another question that Barrett ask: Why do so many of us generate descriptive or procedural reports that fail to provide meaningful access to our sensuous insights (2007)? I talk about this in “Future (re)vision” vis-à-vis foreclosing on interpretation. While thwarting the researcher's credibility, this didacticism often denies the audience an opportunity to interpret the research, to give it meaning (Bradfield, 2013, p. 196). This seems linked to Bishop's concerns.

**Allison Jones:** Yes, and it's also connected to her sense that art-based research could and should effectively – and productively – chafe against the strictures of academia. Bishop highlights two ways.

[F]irst, by allowing personal narrative and challenging an objective relationship to truth via fiction and fabulation (a tendency already present in academia via feminism and Black studies); and second, by presenting research in aesthetic forms that exceed the merely informative (the pleasure of a well-crafted story; connections and juxtapositions that surprise and delight). (Bishop, 2023, para. 39)

Implicit here is a critique of the academic-to-a-fault research paper. It seems, Marsha, that “Future (re)vision” anticipates both of Bishop's recommendations. It's decidedly unacademic while also fulfilling scholastic requirements like citation. The content and form are experimental in the paper's use of time travel to speculate

about the potential of art research (Bradfield, 2012).

To change track for a moment and return to an earlier point, you spoke about *placing* your doctoral project within the research community. In fact, “Future (re)vision” *displaces* your activity by setting it in outer space and fictionalizing it. It takes place on SpaceShip7, part of the mystical Virgin Galactic fleet dedicated to space as the final frontier (Bradfield, 2012).

**Marsha Bradfield:** Incidentally, Virgin has recently canceled its space launches for the foreseeable future. The company’s failure to get its rockets into *the final frontier* did not bode well for funding and investment. In my paper, the Virgin spaceship orbits Earth but has lost contact with the body supporting its mission (the High Commission for Excellence in Art Research). My fictional scenario and Virgin’s factual one both highlight what is at risk when breaking barriers and boundaries (Bradfield, 2012).

**Allison Jones:** The comparison between creative practice research and scientific innovation brings us to the crunchy question of what sets the former apart: What determines the work of creative practice research in the world? This makes me think of a distinction expressed in *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (2007) that I wanted to ask you about.

**Marsha Bradfield:** More informally known as the Chicago style manual by Kate L. Turabian.

**Allison Jones:** Correct. Turabian and her editors argue that most academic outputs can be defined as *conceptual* because they address the question: *What should we think?* Their task is to better understand something. This differs from the *practical* work that proliferates in the worlds beyond academia to answer the question: *What should we do?* (Turabian, 2007, p. 8) Could this be a nice way of differentiating the work I do as an art historian as *conceptual* and the work you do as an artist as *practical*?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Isn’t there a third option? A combination of both?

**Allison Jones:** Well, research that is *applied* grapples with the question: *What must we*

*understand before we know what to do?* This approach is especially useful in phased inquiry. The first phase prioritizes deeper understanding; the second, which depends on the first, is the problem-solving part. We can appreciate why applied approaches are popular in fields like business, engineering, and medicine (Turabian, 2007, p. 9) – sectors that depend on innovation because current products, techniques, services are no longer fit for purpose.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Re-ing involves a lot of repetition. With Future Reflections spiraling around practice-based/practice-led research, our engagement has been akin to action research as we move between understanding (e.g. when we in in the collaboration told ourselves stories about the conferences) and problem-solving (when we drew on prior experience and insight to prime future research).

**Allison Jones:** I’m sure both Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida would have interesting things to say about this repetition, but you’ve not referenced these sources.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Well, why not cite less recognized authors who have a track record for making meaningful contributions to creative practice research? If more of us did so, we could overcome the amnesia that is crippling our field. When we ignore its history by failing to recognize and reference its discourse, we end up reinventing the wheel. I want to quote what Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds have to say about frameworks in their paper for *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (2011). The authors posit several reasons why artist researchers evolve this kind of scaffolding to organize and pursue their investigations. Some of these structures create and evaluate artefacts; others are preoccupied with broader theoretical concerns. And some frameworks relate to themselves, making them reflexive. By now it should be clear that re-ing is a case in point. According to Candy and Edmonds, “Methodological steps are, therefore, quite often, significant outcomes of such doctoral research” (2011, p. 131). So, method is central, and that’s how I think of re-ing: as first and foremost a method for generating collaborative creative practice research.

**Allison Jones:** You and I have often discussed our shared suspicion of *methodology* in art - at

least when it's understood as the comprehensive study and evaluation of methods. We have been vocal about this in our respective areas of expertise. Instead of the body of knowledge like that enjoyed by the sciences, art's pursuit of meaning gives rise to different parameters (Bradfield, 2013, p. 273). These result in ways of working that I know for you are about the integrity of *methods*.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes, especially those evolved to meet the researcher's or researchers' needs *as practitioners*. This spans Candy and Edmond's interest in researcher-generated frameworks and Future Reflections' obsession with in re-ing. It also reminds me of Stephen Scrivener's conviction, which I share: art is where art research can and should be making an impact (2002). For sure, valuing methods in art research, and understanding art as the right and proper place for this research to contribute, are insights that have taken me a long time to fully appreciate. Looking back, I wish I'd grasped them sooner.

**Allison Jones:** In what ways would this have changed things?

**Marsha Bradfield:** You may recall the full title of my 2012 paper is "Future (re)vision: A few reflections on recollection, reception and response in practice-based art research or: Hindsight isn't always 20/20". True: hindsight isn't always perfect, but it often affords valuable perspective. Knowing what I do now, if I could go back, I'd differently conduct and communicate my scholarship in and on the field of art research. I'd make it less precious and proper and more accessible and experimental – closer to what we were doing in Future Reflections. We were not fearless, but we were brave. I would trust my artistic instincts and express more irreverence in the face of academic convention. I'd have spent more time exploring the potential of practice-based/practice-led research for institutional critique. I recognise these impulses in "Future (re)vision" (Bradfield, 2012). More than a decade later, I am prouder of this work than I was at the time of publication.

**Allison Jones:** Well, shouldn't artists aspire to practice that enjoys shifting significance?

**Marsha Bradfield:** I think so too. But there's something else. You know, formally, "Future (re)vision" trades argument for dialogue

(Bradfield, 2021). Recalling Turabian's sense that research outputs can be defined as *conceptual* because they address the question: *What should we think?* – and believing wholeheartedly that art – by definition – invites interpretation while refusing to answer this question (*What should we think?*) – I want to see more creative expressions and cultural production that put these values into dialogue and even play with the arising tension. That, to my mind, should be a meta-aspiration of the field, as it spans both art and research.

**Allison Jones:** So back to methodology—methods. I wonder if we can also understand re-ing as a process of unlearning? I get a whiff of this in footnote eight of "Future (re)vision" (Bradfield, 2012), where you talk about Harri Laakso's reading of Maurice Blanchot's theory of research and its influence on the work of Future Reflections.

**Marsha Bradfield:** I discuss Laakso's interest in research as *turning*, which I think exemplifies the third subtheme of *Art of Research VIII*: "*Re-visioning* addresses the challenge of re-examining one's way of thinking and envisioning things. It refers to reconsidering a particular attitude towards, or way of regarding something, as well as proposing alternative ways to manifest an idea" (2023). Blanchot likens research to a dog encircling its prey. Round and round it goes, assuming this recursive movement is enough to capture its quarry. But something else is going on. In Laakso's language, it's "a process of unworking" (Laakso in Bradfield, 2012, p. 188). In my paper I write, "Drawing on this idea," which is to say Laakso's reading of Blanchot:

Future Reflections Research Group aims to "unthink" and subsequently "rethink" its project, process, performance and presentations. Practiced recursively through public retellings of the group's herstories, this approach defers meaning. Positions slip and fix through time and space and among the individual collaborators as well as the group. (Bradfield, 2012, p. 188)

I then observe the resulting flux in re-ing is an apt foil to the knowledge that is captured in the Ph.D. thesis. It's fixed, necessarily and productively, as an artefactual expression to be shared with peers and others further afield. The same



goes for other research publications. But as we interact with these, we dialogize them. We activate them, as I have done here by referencing Laakso quoting Blanchot. This is another kind of re-ing and it reflects my conviction that good scholarship seeks to honor the original source on its own terms before using it to gain novel understanding as we *turn* the reference in the service of new outputs.

**Allison Jones:** Based on “Future (re)vision” (Bradfield, 2012), re-ing is also a method for relating to and reactivating our own work.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Good point. So many of us go through our professional lives working towards the next accomplishment, never really stopping to consider what we’ve already done and why it matters to us as people, to our practice or to our communities. Reading and rereading our own work and that of our peers and then re-ing about it has so much potential to plumb meaning that has been overlooked or underdeveloped.

**Allison Jones:** Our immediate conversation, the one readers are encountering here, has been occasioned by *Art of Research VIII*. As you know, the main theme was *re-imagining*. The callout talks about addressing gestures of return; *re-searching* as in taking another look. “It suggests that research in the context of artistic and creative practice could have a special relation to time; simultaneously attaching itself to a prior moment in time and from there propelling imagination to unforeseen futures” (Art of Research, 2023). “Future (re)vision”, the paper we’ve been referencing, was published in 2012, but it imagines the state of practice-based/led art research in 2020. What struck you when you reread this account in 2023 in preparation for today’s discussion?

**Marsha Bradfield:** The anxiety. “Future (re)vision” is first and foremost about finding critical and creative ways to work with the anxiety that seems a mainstay of practice-based/led art research (Bradfield, 2012). This was very confusing for me as a Ph.D. student. I mean, I expected some anxiety as a rite of passage - as something experienced by all new researchers. But this anxiety was something else.

**Allison Jones:** So, there was a disconnect between your expectations and your lived experience?

**Marsha Bradfield:** It took me years to get to grips with this. The normal anxiety my cohorts and I were feeling in the throes of doctoral study was mingling with a raft of institutional and other anxieties in art research.

**Allison Jones:** Has the anxiety changed at an institutional level, do you think?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes and no. I’ve already mentioned that I was impressed by the carefulness that was demonstrated by many of the papers at *Art of Research VIII*. Consideration of complex questions of rigor and relevance also guided our conference conversations in ways that felt more confident. It was encouraging to hear there were 170 submissions, and these were whittled down to the 68 presentations. Overall, it was a brilliant gathering at Aalto University in snowy Helsinki in November 2023. For sure, the conference was stimulating and affirming. And yet, it was also removed from the realities of day-to-day life – and our familiar research contexts. When conferences take us out of ourselves and our environs, they’re akin to intellectual and experiential minibreaks. Meanwhile, back at the proverbial ranch, most of the worries, insecurities, and other stressors that I experienced as a doctoral student are intensifying for a whole host of reasons.

**Allison Jones:** You’re hearing this from Ph.D. students?

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes, and among the art research papers I press into their hands is Fiona Candlin’s “A Proper Anxiety? Practice-based Ph.D.s and academic unease” (2000). By way of a trigger warning, the sheer act of encountering the different species of anxiety cataloged here will cause some readers stress. Nevertheless, we owe ourselves a comprehensive understanding of the apprehensions that are shaping our field(s) of expertise. For those working with practice-based/led research, these apprehensions help us to understand what is at stake and anticipate where the field is headed. My point? This awareness can foster belonging and support. My message? If you’re feeling anxious about art research, you’re not alone; the anxiety is systemic, outstripping creative practice research in art and design. These are, however, the overlapping fields where many of us work, so it’s here we may have agency. The sooner we as individuals and research cultures recognize

this, the sooner we can meaningfully address the types of anxiety that mark our local context as embedded in regional, national, and international ones.

**Allison Jones:** Thankfully, mental health issues – including work-based anxiety – are better understood and receiving more resources.

**Marsha Bradfield:** Yes, but to be clear, I am not calling for an apprehension-free specialism. The impossibility of this notwithstanding, *we need apprehension*. This is because *apprehension* as in anxiety can be a catalyst for *apprehension* as in understanding. And I believe practice-based/led research – especially in art – has a distinct role to play in this regard. The social role of art is to challenge and critique. The sensuous experience of art, as it reflexively calls into question our cherished beliefs, should distinguish research in this area from other knowledge enterprises. Instead of less anxiety, those of us in creative practice research should be asking how we can embrace a broader range of apprehensions and work with them more effectively to expand the frontiers of art. That seems to me the right and proper ambition for art research.

**Allison Jones:** Any final thoughts before we bring this conversation to a close?

**Marsha Bradfield:** I recognize the potential of re-ing for researchers of all stripes to reconnect with the lived experience of their work and to reactivate their archives. Re-ing could also support those of us who are mid-career as we take stock, determine next steps, and settle on the big question of legacy.

**Allison Jones:** This can be a challenging inflexion point for both personal and professional reasons. But I'm beginning to see how re-ing – especially as an informal, collaborative and dare I say *friendly* approach – could offer a gentle, intuitive, and supportive way forward.

**Marsha Bradfield:** On a related point, many of us are looking for alternatives to the hyperproduction that marks twenty-first-century practices in art, design, curating, performance, and other expressions of cultural production. It seems both obvious and urgent that instead of making more and more and more, we should instead *re-interpret*, *re-place* and *re-vision* what we have done.

In closing, I would like to thank all those involved in organizing and attending *The Art of Research* conference series. To date I have been part of some six gatherings and owe each an enormous intellectual, pedagogical, and professional debt. From first-year doctoral student to Ph.D. supervisor, I came of age through *The Art of Research*.

Something I have learned in the process – and there is so much value in sharing lessons like this across institutional contexts and dispersed cultures that are linked together through publications like *Research in Art and Education* – is that in addition to cultivating a practice that is tough and flexible, it behooves us creative practice researchers to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Saying this aloud again recalls Stephen Scrivener, specifically his conviction that research in the context of making art does not create original knowledge so much as generate “novel apprehensions” (2002). In the past, I have focused on these occurring in my practice. Rereading “Future (re)vision” (Bradfield, 2012), has helped me to identify the research practitioner – me, myself, and I – as another context for this destabilization. This enables the anxiety we have been discussing to be reframed – to be retrospectively repurposed as a novel apprehension, the kind required for making and remaking the researcher through their research.

## Endnotes

**1** The art historian Allison Jones is a heteronym. She first appeared in 2013 in the author's PhD, *Utterance and Authorship in Dialogic Art: or An Account of a Barcamp in Response to the Question, What is Dialogic Art?*

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