

What is practice research?

- Practice is the methodology
 - Practice is a valid mode of research.
 - Challenges in accessing practice research outputs.
 - Can lead to high quality research outputs
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- Practice Research Advisory Group (PRAG) reports:
<https://bl.iro.bl.uk/concern/reports/b51c0f52-9801-49d9-9f00-cca89741091b>

Co-production, participatory research, co-creation, co-design

- In the arts (dance), the borders between the research community and professional practice community and audiences are very porous.
- Researchers often (also) identify as artist practitioners
- Relationships can be very productive; built on existing awareness of different working methods and on trust.
- Researchers can have easier access to a particular community or setting, as the researcher is already 'part of' that community.
- Closeness means establishing ground rules.
- Expectations need to be clear and transparent: work should be carried out **responsibly and respectfully**.

Working respectfully in participatory research

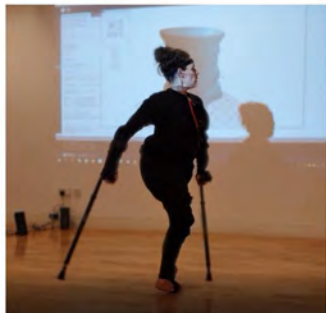
- Artists/arts organisations and the realities of precarity.
- Artists' labour needs to be paid for.
- Identify and discuss mutual benefit.
- Mutual benefit may mean learning more about working processes, gaining new skills, new insights, building new audiences.
- Advocacy – making the case to funders and stakeholders.

Participatory research in practice

- Research that is conducted 'with' and not 'on' people/participants.
- It is qualitative in focus (e.g. participant observation, group discussions, journal/diary notes etc).
- Rooted in the real needs of those who participate and not dictated/determined by the researcher.
- Participants should not be seen as subjects or (worse) 'objects of study' but as co-researchers.
- Effective as method when it involves those who are seldom heard or marginalised in other research processes.
- May not arrive at concrete outcomes and recommendations: should not be forced or exaggerated.
- Can be stimulating for everyone – leading to further partnership working and lay the ground for some more extended research

Ethical Matters

- Awareness of individual needs and particularly if working with vulnerable participants, so avoiding 'extractive' methods for collecting research data.
- Awareness of difference in economical structures and timeframes.
- Build in flexibility and responsiveness.
- A long-term commitment to a study can be challenging.
- Clarity about where IP lies and what happens to the research.
- Different modes of dissemination.



Dancers: Tanja Erhart and Welly O'Brien

Co-production and participatory research in practice

- Ensure understanding and agreement.
- Make a democratic or 'safe' space. Awareness of power relations; organise time and space appropriately.
- Allow the participant to lead the discussions: asking questions that are open-ended
- Rethink modes and methods of user testing, working protocols and settings.
- Acknowledge their lived experience.
- The importance of language.
- Shared decision-making: participants as co-researchers.
- Co-presenting and co-authoring where appropriate.
- Paying them proper (artist) rates.

What the research revealed through the method:

- Traditional design and technology methods do not often consider the lived experience of those who are 'testing' equipment etc.
- The research challenged some of the orthodoxies of methods that focus on data capture.
- Reconsidered the role of the prosthesis for those who use them and implications for 3D modelling (and printing).
- Dancers had an opportunity to think about their relationship with their prosthesis in a different way – as a creative partner, expanding their creative processes, and provided some agency in their relationship with prosthetists and other health professionals.
- Normative methods and traditional power structures in the dance/technology interface might need to be challenged and rethought.
- Promotes a greater commitment to diversity in different research environments.



Whatley, S., Benford, S., Marsh, K., Zhou, F., Ashcroft, I., Tennent, P., O'Brien, W. and Erhart, T., 2023. Personalising prosthetics: digital interventions in disability and dance. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, pp.1-16.

Zhou, F., Benford, S.D., Whatley, S., Marsh, K., Ashcroft, I., Erhart, T., O'Brien, W. and Tennent, P., 2023, April. Beyond Skin Deep: Generative Co-Design for Aesthetic Prosthetics. In *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-19).

<https://candoco.co.uk/work/cuckoo-film/>