

# What is Research in Art?

## Broad View of Research in Art

While creating art can be a form of research, not all art is research-based. To qualify as a research project, the artist must extend the work's focus beyond the creation of the piece to include its contributions to the field of art, human thought, society, or other forms of knowledge. Additionally, research must be grounded in previous work or findings. In other words, what techniques have been used previously that you are building on? What is the current political climate that you are trying to expose? Finally, research must be disseminated to other professionals in your field. Dissemination in the visual arts often includes exhibiting the work. To frame your work as research, the exhibition should include an artist or project statement that contextualizes the piece, including its contribution to society, how previous artists informed the work, the experimental aspects of the research, and more. An additional form of dissemination could be an Artist Talk.

## Examples of Art Research

- Creation of a visual art piece in response to Art History (including Contemporary Art)
- Focus on an experimental process, such as trying a new technique, materials, or media.
- Creation of visual art piece(s) to expose a current political climate, societal bias, environmental degradation, or something else.

## Guidelines and Recommendations

- Consider the project's central research goals.
- What scholarly or research context will your work be grounded in? For example, your influences and inspirations, established artists, referenced or inspirational movements, political, cultural, or social issues the work responds to, personal growth events, or other factors.
- Significance. How does your work contribute to broader conversations in the field? In what ways does your project build on or respond to existing artistic practices or ideas?
- Methods. What techniques will you use? Are you experimenting with a new technique or materials, or using a "tried and true" approach and materials?
- Preparation. How well prepared are you to undertake the research project? What formal and informal training or mentoring have you had? Are there additional types of training you will need to complete the research? How will your previous experiences inform and ensure the success of this project?
- Dissemination plan. How will you share the work and your research? How will these pieces fit into your portfolio or future works? Both the research and the created works should be disseminated or shared.

## Mentoring in Visual Art Research

A key part of undergraduate research is mentorship by a faculty member, which elevates a project from art to research. When discussing your project, plan for ongoing interaction with your mentor. Consider how their expertise supports your work and how often you'll meet. Regular meetings provide feedback and guidance from proposal to dissemination. Faculty help develop plans, create timelines, and tackle challenges. Engaging with your mentor fosters critical thinking, improves your project, and models professional responses to obstacles, aiding your professional growth.