**NAFAE PhD Research Symposium University of Cumbria Friday 15th July 2016**

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“Continuous Project Altered Daily”* Can we put a frame around Fine Art PhD Research?

This paper is a provocation around first of all two related issues concerning PhDs in Fine Art Practice. These issues are grounded in genuine questions for research students and supervisors alike, but they are ‘good productive’ issues to have. The paper then connects these two issues with a problem for some students in terms of ‘where does my project end?’- ‘how do I circumscribe its reach?’

In the second edition of James Elkins’ “Artists with PhDs”** in his chapter ‘Fourteen Reasons to Mistrust the PhD’ two of those reasons arguably continue to impact upon our thoughts about the PhD, 1) The idea of “research” is still widely contested; 2) There is no consensus about the knowledge that is produced by artworks.

Judith Mottram’s reply ‘Notes in Response to the Fourteen Reasons’, in the same volume*** gives some assent to Elkins’ points but makes a good argument for how productive and positive that contested field can be in terms of shaping future understandings of the fertile ground of the Fine Art PhD. That said, the very potential openness of this ground can seem daunting for some students and the supervisor’s dilemma may be that of being caught between supporting new or further routes of enquiry and ‘reining in’ the project.

All three issues relate in distinct ways to ‘putting a frame around Fine Art PhD Research’ which is perhaps by now a well-worn topic, but it seems reluctant to go away. This paper goes through the issues raised by this topic and hopes to explore its persistence to positive ‘ends’!

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***Mottram, Judith ‘Notes in Response to The Fourteen Reasons’ in *Elkins op cit.*