



Erasmus Doctus

Framework for a practice-based arts
3rd cycle degree, equivalent to a PhD

–Intellectual Output 2

National Proposition of Vilnius Academy of Arts

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In this proposition the present Doctoral Programme in Fine Arts is referred to, but some statements might be also valid for a Doctoral Programme in Design.

Since our 3rd cycle programme for artists and designers is relatively new – running since 2011, every year is a pilot year.

The programme was launched in 2010/2011 after transforming the previously existing 2-years art licentiate programme. Back in 2010 the new law of education in Lithuania was passed which separated the doctoral studies into two strands: scientific and artistic. The new regulations for Doctoral Studies in Art were accepted. Based on them Vilnius Academy of Arts has passed internal regulations. At this moment they are being translated and available only in Lithuanian <https://www.vda.lt/lt/doktorantura/doktoranturos-studijos-/doktoranturos-dokumentai>

The first graduate with a degree of Doctor of Arts (DA) was dr. Žygimantas Augustinas in 2015. More about the graduates can be found on <https://www.vda.lt/en/doctoral-studies/postgraduate-studies/defended-doctoral-dissertationsart-projects>

Vilnius Academy of Arts (VAA) is the only institution in Lithuania granting 3rd cycle degrees (DA) for visual artists and designers. Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre is granting DA in music, theatre and cinema.

The programme successfully went through the first international evaluation organized by the Lithuanian Research Council in 2017.

Significant acknowledgments go to previous directors of the Doctoral Studies department dr. Algė Andriulytė and dr. Ieva Pleikienė who managed to launch new programmes together with Deans, Rectors and Vice-Rectors of Vilnius Academy of Arts.

Development of a Research environment

Vilnius Academy of Arts is a university level education organisation. The school has been independent from any other education institution offering a PhD degree in Art History and Theory since 1993. It is offered in collaboration with a separate research body – Lithuanian Culture Research Institute which has over 60 research fellows working in art theory and history, philosophy and culture heritage.

The Academy has an Art History & Theory department which offers BA, MA and PhD programmes in the humanities. Most of the staff (16 teachers) carry out scientific research in humanities and social sciences.

Next to this department there is also a separate research body devoted to research in visual art, design and architecture. There are 15 Research Fellows associated with the Institute of Art Research. Some of them supervise 3rd cycle students. The institute is actively organising conferences which are also open for artists-researchers participation. More information is to be found at www.vda.lt/en/institute-of-art-research

In total in the academy there are 42 staff members supervising 3rd cycle students, of whom 27 have doctoral degrees themselves. Most of them are from the humanities.

There are no fixed research strands/topics in the academy since it supports academic freedom and the topics are chosen by individual researchers or small groups. One can have a better idea about the research environment and the circulating topics by browsing the publications of the Academy's Press <http://leidykla.vda.lt/>

There is also a published quarterly academic peer-reviewed magazine *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis* <http://leidykla.vda.lt/leidiniai/acta-academiae-artium-vilnensis>

An open call for papers is also available for all PhD students. From time to time special issues devoted to artistic research are being compiled and full texts are available online. For example "Education in, for and through Art" (2017) <http://leidykla.vda.lt/leidinys/1293521618/educacija-mene-menui-per-mena> or "Artistic Research: Theory and Practice" (2015) <http://leidykla.vda.lt/leidinys/1293521618/meninis-tyrimas-teorija-ir-praktika-artistic-research-theory-and-practice-2015-79>

Development of the practice-based arts research area

From 2003 to 2012 VAA was already offering a third cycle degree – art licentiate – which was postgraduate studies (after MA) but wasn't equivalent to a PhD degree. Its main goal was to educate teachers for the Academy and facilitate artistic development. It was two years long and artist had to make a new art project and write a reflection on it (50-60 pages). For comparison, an MA programme has also a research element and is treated as a practice-based research programme, where 60% is practice and 40% is research work. For graduation a written paper is also required of about 24 pages long.

In 2011 VAA started offering 3rd cycle practice-based doctoral studies (DA) in Fine Art and Design, which was equivalent to a PhD degree. DA has inherited both the good sides and the shortcomings of the existing PhD programme because it was not fully adapted to artists and designer's needs. It was based on a PhD in Art History & Theory and its culture of how to do research.

At this moment there is still not any common agreement in the Lithuanian research community on whether art and artistic practice is recognised as research. However, every year the research and artistic output of the staff is evaluated by the Research Council and every production unit is evaluated with some points. So far exhibitions and similar outputs are given far less points than scholarly articles or monographs.

There is a current discussion to change the nation-wide regulations for DA and make them a bit more flexible and relevant for the artists since the existing ones are very similar to the regulations for a 3rd cycle degree for the humanities. There is also a discussion at the highest level to make a list of recognised and exemplary outputs of artistic research in the Research Council of Lithuania.

The Research Council of Lithuania is planning to include legally the ability for a Doctor of Art to apply to their post-doc programmes. So far, only one Doctor of Art has received post-doc funding (but it means that DA degree was accepted as equal to PhD) and is successfully implementing the project.

Relation to educational frameworks and existing research

The current programme is in line with the general principles of the Bologna Declaration (1999) incorporating: the credit system, social dimension, mobility, importance of in-service training, cooperation etc. It focuses on the Florence Principles released in 2016 by ELIA.

Most of the doctoral courses are based on recent research and artistic practice of the teaching staff. Invited visiting and external Professors cover the areas which are not covered by in-house Professors such as philosophy and sociology.

Some teaching is based on recent research on relevant artistic research issues discussed in Vytautas Michelkevičius' post-doc monograph "Mapping Artistic Research. Towards diagrammatic knowing" (Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2018).

Collaboration with the community partner – expanding peer-review

So far most of activities carried-out in Doctoral programmes were produced inside the Academy, except for those in the Nida Doctoral School (NDS).

There is a common understanding that a doctoral student has to be reviewed by two peers (academic and artistic) in most cases for the same project. The first one is a common (double and sometimes blind) peer-review inherited from the academic field, mostly humanities in the VAA case. It involves reviewing the final theses, its process presented in yearly seminars, proposals for various conferences and seminars and publishing articles in peer-reviewed magazines.

A similar peer-review process should also happen in the art scene where peer-reviewers are mostly curators or artists if it happens in artist-run-spaces.

This section is intended to describe two practices: one the current and the second a prospective way of collaborating with a community partner. Nida Doctoral School is an international programme initiated by the Nida Art Colony of Vilnius Academy of Arts and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. The University of the Arts Helsinki and the University of the Arts London joined the platform in 2017. Since 2018 NDS is designed and organised by all four partner schools. Upon successful completion of the NDS course participants gain 5 ECTS credits.

NDS is tailored for doctoral students in visual and performing arts, design and architecture. However, there are also limited places for students within the humanities and social sciences if their research is related to the arts, design and architecture. The programme comprises seven day-long intensive courses organised once a year, and a one to two month-long doctoral residency which are part of the international Nida Artist-in-Residence programme. So, the doctoral students have two different opportunities to immerse themselves into two different experiences: an international school with a conference-seminar like an experience and artistic production and reflection situation. Both of them with a highly competitive peer review process.

NDS so far was organised 7 times: 2012 *'Re-Visions and Re-Drafts'* (in collaboration with the SHARE network); 2014 *'The Future of Image'* (dedicated to Jacques Ranciere), 2015 *'Smoke and Mirrors – Staged Arguments and the Legitimation of Artistic Research'*, 2016 *'CO-ACTION'*, 2017 *'Tweezers and Squeezers: Methodological Approaches and Research Methods in Art, Design and Architecture'*, 2018 *'Naked on the Beach. On the Exposition of Artistic*

Research', 2019 *'Fight The Power 2019/1989: We, the Ungovernable'*.

To sum up NDS is facilitating an International environment for practice-based research where doctoral students can present their work and research, get collective feedback and individual tutorship. The process of application to the school involves peer-review by the Board members of NDS and representatives from research departments from universities.

More <http://nidacolony.lt/en/nida-doctoral-school>

The second collaboration is prospective and is happening at this moment. So far, every year most of the doctoral students were participating in semi-obligatory yearly exhibitions in the internal VAA gallery *'Titanikas'*. They were asked to show the artefacts and processes of their work in a group show which has varied from random constellations (everybody brought one object and place it somewhere) to a well curated event. However, most of the shows had a *'report-like'* feeling of a rather big and heterogenous group of artists and designers.

For the 2020 spring season the opportunity was made to *'outsource'* the process and facilitate the doctoral students to propose a piece for the open call released by our community partner - Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius. The inhouse curators will make a (peer-review) decision and curate a show where doctoral students will be placed next to the other artists who participated in the open call. The show will be on display in February-April 2020. After this collaboration, we will be able to reflect on the pros and cons of placing doctoral students outside and working with the community partner. Moreover, we can also look at the artists-researchers in a wider panorama among other participants.

The third trajectory of collaboration is inviting staff members from community partners to supervise or consult doctoral projects. This is now in the testing stage and will be reflected-on in the future.

Research Programme accreditation

The research programme conforms to the National framework of Doctoral Studies in Art and is not accredited by the same agency as the BA and MA studies - SKVC (Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education), but by Lithuanian Research Council.

The main document which regulates the programme is Regulations for Doctoral Studies in Art which is endorsed nation-wide by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport. For schools carrying Doctoral Studies in Arts programmes they have their own internal regulations which are adapted to specific field of art: fine art, design, music, etc.

Research Programme title

The programme awards with Doctor of Arts (DA) – "Meno daktaras" (in Lithuanian).

It should be equivalent to PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) and the assumption is that it is equivalent at least in the National context. More practice-based evidence is needed to confirm this statement because so far there were not so many situations where this could be tested.

Aims of the programme

- The aim of the Doctoral Programme is to prepare artists and designers to:
- Conduct practice-led research in order to unite their creative activity with independent scholarship
 - participate in the pedagogic activities of higher education as practitioners, researchers, and teachers
 - initiate and implement artistic research and design thinking that will expand knowledge and understanding about the visual arts and design
 - instil sufficient professional and enterprise skills in order to contribute productively to the creative and cultural industries, both nationally and internationally.

Mode and length of study

Currently it is 4 years, 8 semesters full time (high-attendance) study programme. However, if we envisage more international distance-learning students (i.e. non-local residence students), the programme should be transformed into two intensive taught sessions (1-2 weeks long) that could happen in the beginning and the end of the semester. This model might also better suite Vilnius-based students, since most of them are quite busy with participation in the local and international art & design scenes.

Programme structure (modules, credits etc.) and its dualism

The Doctoral Programme consists of the following:

- I Studies: The amount of credit cannot be less than 40 ECTS study credits;
- II Artistic-creative Practice: 100 ECTS study credits;
- III Research work: 100 ECTS study credits.

The total amount of credit for Doctoral Studies is 240 ECTS credits. As one can see most of the ECTS is assigned for individual artistic and research work. Therefore, the practice of artist-researcher is placed up front and studies only supplement the main focus.

The doctoral student and the supervisory team establish a provisional work plan for four years that outlines both the art/design project, and its accompanying preparatory research-related activities. The plan is regarded as a tool to deepen the doctoral student's artistic and research competences.

The subjects are selected from a proposed list. Two courses are compulsory – *'Seminar on Artistic Research'*; and *'Seminar on the Preparation of the Art/Design Project'*. The *'Seminar on Artistic Research'* is used to discuss the concept, principles and examples of artistic research; and to shape a doctoral student's individual strategies for artistic research.

During the *'Seminar on the Preparation of the Art/Design Project'* the doctoral student presents the latest developments in both their practice and of their research-related activities. The topic of their art/design project is discussed during the course, and their methodology and the possible outcomes of both their practice and their research is critically considered. Those participating are the cohort of fellow students, the student's supervisor(s), committee members and external experts.

Since 2018 the new compulsory course *'Research as Praxis'* was introduced by visiting Professor Marquard Smith, who is helping to make the programme more international.

Artistic-creative practice includes:

Producing an art project
Participation in the exhibitions and other public ways of exposition
Presentation in the conferences and seminars

Research work includes:

Writing a thesis
Presentation in the conferences and seminars
Publication of outcomes as an article

In the present regulations for Doctoral studies the research work is defined in much more details than artistic-creative work. Besides common elements of doctoral thesis (introduction, methodology, communication of research process, conclusions, etc.) it is indicated that the thesis has to be 30.000-40.000 words length with a 5000 words summary in a foreign language. It is noted that both of them are of equal importance, however there no instructions how to measure and evaluate this. This duality becomes always a subject of discussions among supervisors and committee members coming from different backgrounds: art practice and scholarly research (mostly humanities).

Some doctoral students treat the Doctoral programme as a long-term residency programme for artists. This still has to be negotiated between them, the programme and its Directors. There are both dangers and opportunities in this approach. However, you cannot avoid the fact that each doctoral place is connected with a grant equal to an average salary in Lithuania. Moreover, you have access to Vilnius Academy of Arts resources (laboratories, staff, knowledge, etc.) and research community. Some doctoral candidates also receive a studio.

Discussing the issue of dualism – two pilots

Every year the Research Council for Lithuania announces an open call for topical EU funded doctoral places. This gives an opportunity to form supervisory teams and propose a specific field of research. If the funding is granted, later on open call is announced and artists are accepted to these specific research topics.

Within this line as well as within the CrD trajectory, there are now two doctoral students' projects funded and ongoing.

Experimental doctoral research projects

Artist-researcher Arnas Anskaitis project *'An Artist's Systems of Knowing, Mapping and Exposition'* (2016-2020) is supervised by curator and researchers Dr. Vytautas Michelkevičius and artist Prof. Artūras Raila.

Arnas Anskaitis is questioning the duality and schism of an art project which is inscribed within the regulations. He is questioning the separated elements of an art project by asking why artwork cannot be treated as research and research work cannot be treated as art. His main artistic research interests are writing and its visuality, therefore he is considering *'to write'* part of his thesis in the space as an art project. Formally he will meet the requirements listed in the regulations because he will present the required amount of words both in written text and on the screen.

Curator and writer Valentinas Klimašauskas applied to the funded project *'Artist writing as an artwork and as a research'* (2019-2023) supervised by Dr. Vytautas Michelkevičius and Prof. Artūras Raila. The external consultant

writer and artist Paulina Egl Pukyt was invited to join the team as consultant. The intention of this project is to deliver one output – a written text which could be treated at the same time both as artwork and as research. Legally, it should meet the requirements of the regulations. Of course, during the process a lot of practical and conceptual questions start to arise and is going to occur more and more. Valentinas Klimašauskas has proposed a more specific topic *'Portrait of A Young Artist in the Style of Institutional Critique'* and he is going to work on it for 4 years.

Both cases are very interesting in the sense of understanding how an artist's knowledge is produced and communicated and what kind of artwork can be treated as an outcome of 3rd cycle studies.

Programme learning outcomes/benchmark statement

The doctoral programme learning outcomes corresponds to National framework and to the 8th level mentioned in the Tuning Academy and Florence principles (ELIA).

Teaching & Learning strategy (supervision etc.)

The doctoral students have always two supervisors for the creative part and research part of their art projects. The first one is usually an artist and the second one is a researcher from humanities or social sciences. Most supervisors so far came from art history & theory or philosophy backgrounds. If there is a need a consultant from any field could be invited.

Recently, there is a new trend where freshly graduate Doctors in Art start to become supervisors of creative projects and this might bring the supervision process into new level.

One supervisor can have a maximum of 4 doctoral students.

The meetings between the student and supervisors are not regulated. They happen based on individual needs. In most of the cases, it is a collaboration with peers in a friendly community with a horizontal structure. There are almost no obligations for the student to follow the supervisor's advice or do some work for him/her.

According to existing regulations the supervisor of the creative part should have worked at least three years in the Academy with a workload of a minimum of 128 contact hours.

With the help of Creator Doctus and a new strategy of doctoral studies there is a tendency to loosen the regulations and firstly make exceptions and accept supervisors from outside.

In the partnership model with a social partner, one supervisor or consultant could be a curator from an art centre. This will strengthen discussion between the Academy and society while carrying out research which meets both academic and societal needs.

Since October 2019 a curator from CAC Dr. Ūla Tornau was invited to be a consultant for a doctoral student project. She is going to work in collaboration with supervisors of artistic and research work. Since she has expertise both in international curatorial practice and research, she can consult regarding both elements of doctoral work. This trajectory will be reported on at a later stage.

Assessment

The doctoral students are assessed every year based on the output of their research and artwork.

For the final evaluation the doctoral student has to submit an art project made of interrelated art works and 30.000-40.000 word thesis.

There are two stages of final assessment:

- Internal review of Artwork & Thesis by invited reviewers
- Viva (public defence)

Doctoral submissions are internally assessed by 2 reviewers prior to a final public defence in front of a jury (Doctoral Committee) of 5, including at least 2 External examiners.

The External Examiners must include staff associated with the relevant partner institution and up to one independent foreign artist of international standing.

3 members of the jury must be artists and 2 must be scientists, and all members of the jury must operate at a level equivalent to that of a 'Professor'. After public defence, there is a closed voting procedure of committee members if to grant the Doctor of Arts degree. After successful individual and independent voting, the whole doctoral process is finalised. Witnessing of the actual artwork should be central to the examination process. There is a need to try to make the public defence and discussion (Viva) take place within the exhibition itself if it is the main element of an art project presentation.

Selection of candidates

Candidates are selected through the international open call which is announced every late spring. The selection is made by the entrance committee of 5 members who are selected from Doctoral Committee. During the first round, after discussions based on provided application material the shortlist is made and then candidates are invited for interviews with the Committee.

So far only Lithuanian-speaking candidates have been accepted but we hope with wider international promotion we might get some international candidates, especially since the studies for EU residents are free and a state grant is provided for every accepted candidate.

Applicants have to provide for the committee:

- Letters of recommendation of two recognised artists;
- CV and description of creative activity;
- Description of the proposed art research project (3000 - 5000 words);
- Portfolio (including reviews in the press, art pieces, photographs reflecting the development of creative activity);
- MA diploma and other required documents.

Because of the CrD project and partnership with the social partner – Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, in spring 2019 the external evaluator was invited to the entrance committee. The Curator from CAC Dr. Ūla Tornau who has extensive curatorial experience at national and international levels (Lithuanian Pavilion in Venice Biennale, etc.) helped in the selection with the internal committee. We hope to continue this practice, and this will help to secure that the successful candidates will be recognised (peer-reviewed) by both academic and art field experts.

Quality development and quality assurance

The quality is developed and assured on two levels: internally inside the academy and externally.

Internal Quality development and quality assurance

Quality of doctoral studies is assured by the heads (Directors) of the programmes together with internal Doctoral Committees: there is one for Fine Art and one for Design.

Each of committees consists of Associated Professors as well as Professors: humanities scholars and artists with international recognition.

Since the summer of 2019 the decision was made to split the position of the Head of Doctoral Studies into three positions and name them according to the programmes: Head of the Doctoral Programme in Fine Arts, Head of the Doctoral Programme in Design and Head of the Doctoral Programme in Art History & Theory. So, now the Heads can develop quality having more direct contact with doctoral students and faster respond to their needs.

External Quality Assurance

The Lithuanian Research Council carries out an evaluation of doctoral studies in art at Lithuanian research and higher education institutions. This is to help institutions improve the quality and effectiveness of their PhD. Evaluations are conducted at least every 4 years (6 years for first time PhDs programmes).

In accordance with the *'Procedure for Quality and Effectiveness Evaluation of Doctoral Studies in Art'*, the process addresses: the consistency of the goals of doctoral studies in art aligned to the mission and strategy of the institution; the quality of doctoral studies and doctoral results; the effectiveness of doctoral management; the adequacy of human resources and the infrastructure. The conclusions of the experts together with suggestions on the continuity of the evaluated doctoral studies are submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

Legislation regulating the evaluation of doctoral studies in art and related documents:

Regulations for Doctoral Studies in Art (Order No. V-69 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 08/02/2017)

Procedure for Evaluation of the Quality and Effectiveness of Doctoral Studies in Art (Order No. V-277 of the Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania, 06/11/2017)

During the first external international evaluation in 2017 the programme was evaluated as successful. Evaluation results are available online in Lithuanian - <https://www.lmt.lt/lt/mokslo-kokybe/meno-doktoranturos-vertinimas/2017-m.-meno-doktoranturos-vertinimo-rezultatai/2969>

CREATOR DOCTUS

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