

## Artist Praxis: Studio as a Premise of Knowledge

Jalaini Abu Hassan

College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam 40450 Selangor Malaysia

[jaiahassan@gmail.com](mailto:jaiahassan@gmail.com)  
Tel: +60122002646

---

### Abstract

The goal of this paper is to talk about the idea of art making as a studio art production process and to describe how studio praxis can be a fundamental ground for generating new knowledge in which an artist innovates, discovers, introduces, rejects, chooses, compromises, transforms, and analyses within the premise of making. The studio is defined as an ontological premise (what the studio is) and a methodological procedure (how things are made in the studio). Studio art production shows the studio as a place where theory and practice, thinking and making, meet in making new knowledge.

**Keywords:** Artist Praxis, Art Making, Investigation, Knowledge Generation, Methodology, Ontology, Studio Process,

*eISSN: 2398-4287© 2022. The Authors. Published for AMER ABRA cE-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioural Researchers on Asians/Africans/Arabians) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iSI9.4252>*

---

### 1.0 Introduction

This article will examine the idea of making art as a process of producing studio art, and it will also explain how studio praxis can serve as an essential foundation for the development of new information. These are the goals of this piece of writing. An artist will be described as innovating, discovering, introducing, rejecting, selecting, compromising, altering, and analysing new ideas during the studio praxis when operating under the presumption that they are generating something. Both the ontological assumption of the studio, sometimes known as "what the studio is," and the methodological process that defines it are included in the studio's definition. The ontological assumption of the studio (how things are made in the studio). In the context of the creation of new ideas, the development of studio art demonstrates the studio's position as a location at the confluence of theory and practice, as well as thinking and making. The body of research associated with the studio investigation provides an acceptable study of the studio procedure as an important representative of this indication.

### 2.0 Literature on Studio Habitus

The review considered the related literature. It is rather peculiar how knowledge in exciting thing-making does not exist in practice and self in easily transferable forms, as there are no equations, toolkits, manuals, templates, statistical analyses, and few replicable processes. Elkins (2000; 2004) describes a painter's knowledge as alchemical (referring to Johann Conrad Barchusen's complete emblematic sequence of alchemy). They are either a fully developed technique resulting from years of practice and generations of accumulated knowledge and wisdom or merely a trackless scene of perpetual isolated reinvention. Visual art has a certain kind of visual intelligence in visual art, a type of knowledge that can only come from making (Grierson, 2003). Artist's studio is a subject that has been studied, discussed, and written in many ways, from historical to physical function, its intimacy, ontology and pedagogic (Goodson & Gill, 2011). However, one of the most crucial aspects that most literature does not elaborate on is the complex, intimate, didactical

*eISSN: 2398-4287© 2022. The Authors. Published for AMER ABRA cE-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioural Researchers on Asians/Africans/Arabians) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iSI9.4252>*

relationship its inhabitant (artist) has with this sacred space. This presentation takes a critical gaze into the intense environment of my studio space as a severe and sustained attempt to discuss what takes place in the realm of making and how art production goes beyond the physicality of making (McGann, 1985; Moon, 2016).

The materials, tools and processes are vital to considerations of authorship and understanding the economic and social contexts from which my art is made—describing and sharing detailed information about my studio art production by providing a precise application and situation, the independent conceptualisation of the studio environment. It is an intersection of thinking and making. The ontology used to describe real situation art making scenarios in my studio involving physical hardware, tools, material, processes, and application – (the ontological resonance) Within methodological discussion that describes the artist's way of knowing (through making). My engagement in the studio activity. The section describes the physical and metaphysical relevance within the studio environment that influences the procedural process of making. The idea of art as a process deals with studio art research. Today's contemporary world acknowledges the making of intelligence through art. Thus, it is essential to respect the integrity and importance of the art mission to extend knowledge and understanding through making and doing (Cary, 2012). As an artist, academic and researcher, what has always been exhilarating about studio investigation and documentation is that it permits non-protocol procedures, such as special permission to start in the middle or end from the 'beginning'. This criterion, in turn, allows those being investigated (process) to take centre stage. There is a dramatic twist of irony within this scenario of painting and writing simultaneously. I need to paint in order to write. I cannot write about the elements of line, colour, form, symbol, and narratives if I do not see them. Painting in my studio makes me see. Artmaking is examined as a form of inquiry into artists' theories, practices, and contexts. The critical and creative investigations in the studio are forms of research grounded in art practice (Sullivan, 2004).

The kind of validation required in art-based inquiry, according to Jones (2006) and Leavy (2009; 2020), supported the view on the issue of validation in art-based research, where the trustworthiness and assessment in art-based inquiry should be addressed by first and foremost, understanding of the objective of the practice which is resonance, understanding, multiple meanings dimensionality and collaboration. Therefore, Pelias (2004) suggests that all research offers first-hand person narratives (of "I" instead of "researcher"). Art making is an essential tool in my research undertaken as an opportunity for me to develop as an art maker, to progress and produce more high-level, satisfactory work. The ideas align with living theory in action research that the goal of one's research is to improve the quality of one's field of practice. According to Dallow (2003), aesthetic knowledge embedded within (studio) practical knowledge is evident in art practice; doctoral research theory stresses the role of tacit knowledge in artist competence practice in the studio as knowing-in-action and in practice. Before the bright gallery wall, extensive curatorial write-up, obscene price tag or intellectually discussed by the art critic/historian, painting is born in a messy studio between rubbles and paint-splattered walls where the painter works in isolation for hours, even years. The studio is a breeding ground, creating the habit from which acquired skills evolve into embodied skill, a form of 'practical reason' artists use to work with material objects. The studio has physical and metaphysical dimensions. There are internal and external processes in the art-making that make the studio 'unsettled'. It is a necessary insanity, according to Elkins (2000), pointing out the fact that years-long spent in a studio can make an artist into a treasury of almost incommunicable knowledge about the unique properties of materials with his improvised method of production. Others term it as 'sparring zone', 'battleground' or '*gelanggang*' in Malay terms. It is a mythic proportion, a mysterious realm of the artist as shaman, sorcerer or '*bomoh*', working alone brewing his magic potion to face his demons or heal his patient. This is a remote space hardest for outsiders to enter, in which the artist engages in an inner dialogue with himself and his work. Despite the intimate description, the studio can also be thought of as a space where knowledge is acquired, a site of learning for the artist. Such knowledge might include everything from the sentiment of material to technical expertise to procedural decisions, self-understanding, and management, as reflected in other thoughts, like Basaree et al., (2015), who used visual arts to promote Malaysia's art and cultural heritage abroad. We can see the artist here as an active researcher; his theory and practice are negotiated within the confines of the studio.

### 3.0 Studio Process

Within my studio process (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), bitumen and other industrial materials such as polyurethane, shellac, polymer and water-based asphaltum are extensively used. Knowledge of the sophistication of the medium and its intrinsic characteristic is ultimately embedded within my practical skill. This kind of knowledge is tough to pass on; furthermore, it is certainly not expressed well in any technique book simply because it involves chemistry, value, mood, feeling and emotion (Elkins, 2012; 2018). All these become epistemological phenomenon that is worth analysing.

In a focused scope, my study addresses the fact that most of my making process is embedded with procedures and numbers of judgments and decision-making that are not purely conceptual or only have to do with the sense of materiality. I am initiating my investigation toward analysing this procedural decision in my method of creating. In this case, for instance, the unique property of bitumen (sepia-tone) is exclusively selected to inform the sense of time and space with the notion of a nostalgic past. This is due to its sophisticated sepia stain that is suggestive of the process of ageing. In addition, I decided to use the strength of figuration in most of my paintings in order to convey characteristics in my local narrative. The decisions were made based on my judgmental initiation in regard to my concerned issue (of social) and medium relevancy. The strategy defines the narratives of my painting as a theoretical framework for a methodology (McLeod, 2004). By doing so, I demonstrate my process of painting through a methodology determined by the theoretical framework of narrativity.



Fig 1: Artist's studio KL. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).

My studio is my practical domain comprised of practical skill, knowledge, and experimentation. The cooperation between the physical space and me is fundamentally important. The practical knowledge imparted within my creative process is interdependent/inter-reliant with the physical nature of my studio. It is rather peculiar how knowledge in the fine arts does not present itself in easily transferable forms, as there are no equations, no toolkits, no manuals, no templates, no statistical analyses, and few replicable processes. James Elkins describes a painter's knowledge as alchemical (referring to Johann Conrad Barchusen's exhaustive emblematic sequence of alchemy). Most of them cannot be explained well in words. They are either a fully developed technique as a result of years of practice and generations of accumulated wisdom or merely a trackless scene of perpetual isolated reinvention. The studio, according to him, is a necessary insanity, a kind of psychosis. It is a 'warm womb, packed round with manure, and the artist is the slowly rotting pulp inside' (Elkins, 2004, p.159). Knowledge gained in the studio is unique and has its complexity where instead of learning words, painters learn substances. Long years spent in the studio can make an artist into a treasury of nearly incommunicable knowledge that is very hard to pass on and certainly not expressed well in books on artists' techniques.



Fig. 2: Artist's studio KL. 2020. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).

The complexity of studio orientation initiates me to keep a casual track record and logbook. A studio journal becomes my written exposition of the narrative of my art making. It casually indicates the progress and type of narrative used in developing the body of works. This methodology exposes ongoing practice to theoretical framing and theory-driven investigation (Eden & Ackermann, 2018). This active documentation stated how it is a crucial component in studio-based inquiry as it reveals the intellectual and creative substance of the artwork. Artist-acquired knowledge about concepts, materials, processes, and applications depends greatly on the activities in which they are engaged. This is the core issue of importance within the studio practice inquiry that allows the process to become more accessible to others and open the work to critique.

When Tony Godfrey, a curator from London based in the Philippines, visited my studio in early 2014, he wrote (*Jai, Painting Industry*, 2015) about the unusual sense of how a particular body of works developed. Things built up, according to him and developed a kind of history of making – just like an archaeological site. The messiness is a result of an unintentional mental map. One can still see the traces of experimentation and ideas taking form. There is a lot that can be learnt about the artist from his studio, according to Godfrey – not just how he makes art but what he responds to, what music he plays, and what book he reads and likes to be around. There was also a

sense of history in my studio observed by Godfrey. He noticed a few older paintings and drawings, a few unfinished works, and traces and marks of bitumen on the floor from previous experimentation. These are the history of the processes ‘recorded’ in a very direct form of documentation. For me, understanding and discovering comes through the process of making, and the generation of new knowledge is embedded within the work (process) I make, influenced by the physical surrounding (Jones, 2006). There is a certain kind of visual intelligence in making art, a kind of knowledge that can come only from making. The artwork investigated how painting responds to socio-political challenges during the creative and production processes. Formulations evolve through art. It encourages artists to act as social commentators or consciences (Hassan, 2021).

One of the main challenges within my studio practice is to demonstrate the theoretical and practical drive of painting itself. The conception of images is informed of the meaning through objective expression by the material realisation (see Fig. 3 to Fig. 5). Macleod and Holdridge (2004) suggested that it might be appropriate to see this exercise as a *matrixial* theory, a complex marriage of ideas, matters (form) and theory, which is external to practice. The complexity of this (artist’s) theory is that it constantly involves conceptual framing. It is propositional and may well be dependent upon the relationship between the written texts and the body of works. However, it is also demonstrative of the intellectuality of making, which is not like the intellectuality of writing.



Fig. 3: (a)



Fig.4: (b)



Fig. 5: (c)

*A painting is made of paint, bitumen, petroleum base fiber, solvent, and other scientific/synthetic materials. Each has its property, logic, and meaning, even before it is shaped into forms and images.*

Bitumen is more than just a medium to me. The complexity of its property is almost alchemical. It disguises as a vicious black poisonous substance, but truly brilliant once you get to know its characteristic.

*Often the materials transcend their role as a medium for transmitting information and contain the aesthetic qualities that transform them into objects of beauty in its own merit.*

(Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).



(a)



(b)

Fig. 6: The Telling Wall. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).

These are traces and evidence of the painter’s movement, scribbles of thoughts, spots and smears, trial and error, testing strips, matching swatches, and incidental and accidental marks spilt over time and processes. They are meaningless graffiti, unrecognised dialogues speaking silently in the incomprehensible language (see Fig. 6).

These are traces and intrinsic evidence of making recorded intuitively, incidentally within the confine of the studio environment (see Fig. 7). Like the tales of ancient Altamira cave drawings, these marks embodied the artist’s movements and activities captured during the making process. They also represent the dominant tools and materials used.





Fig. 7: Marking the Territory. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).



Fig. 8: Command Post. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).

Stained red chair - strategically placed as a calculated viewing distance to view the entire works in progress. Here, crucial, critical, judgmental, procedural decisions and negotiations are made. The imaginer, conceptualist, producer, and critic are shared in Fig. 8.



Fig. 9: The Studio Office – A Paint-free Zone. (Source: Jalaini Abu Hassan, 2020).

A paint-free zone that requires a different mode of orientation. A more formal arrangement with more organised tasks such as writing, online serving, digital image banking, intense reading, and napping. The paint-free zone has its own rules, regulation, and attitude. It operates distinctively according to its formal nature, shown in Fig. 9. Selected works, sketches, images of references, and photography were displayed as data, sources of references, records, history, trails, and others.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

To sum it all up, the production of studio art exemplifies the studio as an environment in which theory and practice, thinking and making, come together to generate new knowledge. The ontological premise of the studio, which is "what the studio is," and the methodological process that defines it are both included in the definition of the studio (how things are made in the studio), where an artist has a unique way of perceiving the world (through making). It is impossible to gain insight that reveals new connections that advance understanding

without having a personal involvement in the activity of studio practice. The fundamental components of studio praxis include practical knowledge gained through experiential learning, studio habitus, direct involvement with materials, and expressive media, which are how ideas and conceptual frameworks are realised in visual form. In the journey of my artistic practice, I investigate and discuss the factors contributing to the emergence of studio practice as an integral component of research culture.

## Acknowledgement

The author would like to express gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA for a grant under 600-RMC/MYRA 5/3/LESTARI (092/2020).

## References

- Basaree, R. O., Legino, R., & Ahmad, M. Y. (2015). Visual art approach to promoting Malaysia's art and cultural heritage overseas. In International Colloquium of Art and Design Education Research (i-CADER 2014) (pp. 675-682). Springer, Singapore.
- Cary, R. (2012). *Critical art pedagogy: Foundations for postmodern art education*. Routledge.
- Dallow, P. (2003). Representing creativeness: Practice-based approaches to research in creative arts. *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education*, 2(1), 49-66.
- Eden, C., & Ackermann, F. (2018). Theory into practice, practice to theory: Action research in method development. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 271(3), 1145-1155.
- Elkins, J. (2000) *What Painting Is*. New York. Routledge
- Elkins, J. (2004). *What painting is*. Routledge.
- Elkins, J. (Ed.). (2012). *What do artists know? (Vol. 3)*. Penn State Press.
- Elkins, J. (2018). Are Art Criticism, Art Theory, Art Instruction, and the Novel Global Phenomena?. *Journal of World Philosophies*, 3(1), 79-92.
- Goodson, I., & Gill, S. R. (2011). *Narrative pedagogy: Life history and learning (Vol. 386)*. Peter Lang.
- Grierson, E. M. (2003). Visual intelligence: a post-9/11 discursive approach to questions of representation and cultural signifying practices in art education. *Australian Art Education*, 26(2), 7-11.
- Hassan, J. A. (2021). Adaptations and Negotiating Socio-Political Issues on Painting. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(9), 502–510.
- Jones, K. (2006). A biographic researcher in pursuit of an aesthetic: The use of arts-based (re) presentations in “performative” dissemination of life stories. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 2(1), 66-85.
- Leavy, P. (2009). Arts-based research as a pedagogical tool for teaching media literacy: Reflections from an undergraduate classroom. *Learning Landscapes*, 3(1), 225-242.
- Leavy, P. (2020). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. Guilford Publications.
- McNiff, S. (2009). *Art-Based Research*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kinglet Publishers.
- McGann, J. J. (1985). *The romantic ideology: A critical investigation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Macleod, K., & Holdridge, L. (2004). The doctorate in fine art: The importance of exemplars to the research culture. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 23(2), 155-168.
- McLeod, J. (2004). *The Significance of Narrative and Storytelling in Post psychological Counselling and Psychotherapy*.
- Moon, B. L. (2016). *Art-based group therapy: Theory and practice*. Charles C Thomas Publisher.
- Pelias, R. J. (2004). *A methodology of the heart: Evoking academic and daily life (Vol. 15)*. Rowman Altamira.
- Sullivan, G. (2004). Studio art as a research practice. In *Handbook of research and policy in art education* (pp. 803–822). Routledge.