

The Space/Physical Site

An art space, a physical site where individuals and facilitators meet to create, is ideally a site dedicated to making. There are several crucial qualities of the physical site that need to be accepted and arranged for, as much as possible. For the visual arts, it must be an area where a mess can be made, where paint can spill and tables floors and walls become stained and scratched. Without this expectation and essential requirement, creative exploration will be negatively impacted. Beyond this: a large enough space to accommodate table work, and easel work, rack and shelf storage for works-in-progress and art supplies and a deep sink for cleaning up with a water source. Any standard sized classroom can be utilised and rearranged but double or triple the standard classroom space is ideal. (Classroom here is only a reference point for scale, any viable space can be utilised.)

Although any suitable space for a specific number of artist/participants can be arranged and the basic furnishings provided, a simultaneous consideration should be the pleasantness/beauty of the site and of the appropriate furnishings. This is not to say that an art site cannot be humble; an Arts space can exist anywhere from a patch of bare earth to a marble-floored villa. However, if a site and its furnishings can be selected and constructed around the concept of encouraging and igniting creative and aesthetic appreciation and contemplation, then the physical site itself can often become an uplifting refuge and enlightening experience. There are many examples of such spaces and many artists' manuals that describe ways and approaches to setting up a studio but overall, what is needed is a large enough site with good lighting and preferably some natural light, access to a sink, and with furniture and space arranged and dedicated to creative endeavour.





Art Space and Places

An outline by Vincent Twardzik Ching

The Place/Required Attitude and Behaviours

As mentioned in the paragraphs above, an Art Space that fosters creative-making and thinking is not entirely dependent on the physical site but can be greatly enhanced by providing conducive physical requirements and qualities known to compliment and support the making experience and should be to the extent possible.

A greater influence on whether the well-documented benefits children, youth and adults can receive through consistent participation in Creative Arts, is determined by the attitudes and behaviours of those acting as facilitators/guides/instructors within that place of creative endeavour.

If those organising the space and what goes on there do not understand what supports or supresses creative-making and do not have a grasp of where different age groups are at differing stages of development of mental and creative growth, each having different interests and needing different support, then even a well-equipped and designed arts space/site will likely fail to engage and sustain the majority of those who come there to create. In the worst-case scenario such a place (the mental and emotional site) when devoid of knowledge about and appreciation of how to support creative-making can actually suppress and extinguish the will and healthy gratification derived from creating. Obviously, this is not the desired outcome of time spent on making visual art.

Under the best conditions, the facilitators will often view themselves as assistants to the Artists and will fully understand the value inherent in each participant's own volition, ideas, preferences and choices. There may be introductions to techniques, to different art genres and concepts. There may even be themes as is common among scholastic approaches. The difference, however, is that in the space/place that truly fosters an individual's creative-making, the priority and important decisions about what happens in the artwork must be given over to the hands and will of the individual participants and they must come to know explicitly that this is the case. This can only come about if those in positions of authority within the space, facilitators/assistants/parents are prepared to play their role with appropriate behaviour. This implies, for example, that even parents invited to stay to accompany their children must be made aware beforehand that participants are in total control of creative decision making and that mindsets of adult judgement that manifest as impulses to correct or change their wards artwork must be restrained. The role of assistants will require 2-3 days of training and ongoing application of appropriate attitudes and behaviour. Facilitators should be experienced in working with the particular demographics of the group's participants and even if experienced in the Arts will often need training in the same.





Outside of the authority figures that exist within the Creative space there are often external authorities/shareholders who support the existence and creation of such spaces. They too, prior to any setup, must be briefed about the existence of attitudes and behaviour that result in participants gaining or losing the tangible benefits associated with creative experiences and must become aware that external demands for specific types of ‘products’ that are based on adult judgments of ‘good’ or ‘beautiful’ will serve to extinguish enthusiasm in too many of the participants. Again, obviously not the desired result after an investment of time and resources. Thus, there is a need for the education of adults across the spectrum of our societies as to the well-studied benefits derived from all manner of the young having regular exposure to creative-making and the Arts. Young artists of all backgrounds often have no issues with selling their creations but for many, creative-making is deeply personal and constantly in flux. For some, they may once and awhile enjoy the newness and challenge of trying to fulfil an external goal that has many restrictions and for those individuals, this can be arranged and can be a beneficial experience. To make such demands frequent or worse, as standard, would however, for most participants result in a suppression of creativity, enjoyment and of any benefits that stem from an atmosphere that is purposely be fine-tuned for the fostering creative-making, thinking and feeling. If all shareholders are well aware and in agreement as to the purpose of establishing an Arts space/place then a balance can be achieved but should be weighted heavily in favour of establishing and maintaining those prerequisites that are known to more often provide both short-term and long-term benefits to more participants.