
G. James Daichendt is Associate Professor and Exhibitions Director in the Art and Design Department at Azusa Pacific University and online professor for Boston University’s graduate program in art education. In *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research*, Daichendt discusses the need for improved writing and research at the M.F.A. level, the accepted terminal degree for studio arts in the United States, while emphasizing the primacy of art making. Daichendt proposes that in the future more universities in the United States will offer doctoral degrees in the visual arts, much like their counterparts in other English speaking countries. If so, M.F.A. programs need to better prepare students by raising writing standards, such that assigned papers are not “rooted in personal opinion” or “rarely meet any scholarly expectations.”

Rather than simply theorizing, Daichendt provides a guide to practicing reflective scholarship, whereby “writing is used as a tool to reflect, reorganize, and inquire into the studio process” with the goal of creating better art. In the appendices, a sample research proposal, and a research study function as concrete examples.

The book lacks an index, but the table of contents breaks down the seven chapters into sections, and at the end of each chapter, the author provides one to three pages of references. Interspersed throughout are twenty-eight black-and-white illustrations of average quality, including photographs of artists at work, studio interiors, and works of art. The quality of the copy-editing is inconsistent, such as with punctuation, and that may undermine the author’s central argument for some readers. The twenty-three page preface by John Baldacchino, Associate Dean at the School of Art & Design, University College, Falmouth, United Kingdom, has an erudite tone with sophisticated prose that contrasts sharply with Daichendt’s ordinary writing style.

Though not a substantial scholarly work, overall the book is an interesting addition to higher art education literature because it provokes discussion about the rigors of the M.F.A. curriculum and provides a framework for using arts research to support art making. While the primary intended audience is M.F.A. students and faculty, those with an interest in the arts may benefit from reading an insider’s examination of the history and status of studio arts within the academy, although libraries at universities that offer degrees in the studio arts should particularly consider this book for their collection.

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