



ART AND DESIGN STUDIO

Year 1

SECTION

3

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND ETHICS IN ART AND DESIGN

Art and Design Theories and Application (ADTA)

Professional Practice and Ethics (PPE)

INTRODUCTION

This section will introduce you to the professional conduct and ethics of art and design studio practice. Ghanaian artists engage in a variety of professional activities, ranging from improving their creative skills to managing the financial and promotional aspects of their work. Professional conduct and ethics guide creative people in tackling issues encountered in producing and sharing their artwork. These include cultural sensitivity, responsible use of materials, environmental care and protection, and abiding by copyright and other laws in relation to their artistic practices.

At the end of the section, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of professional practice in Art.
- Analyse the concept of Ethics in Art and Design.

Key Ideas

- Art and Design Studio practice is a profession.
- Art and Design Studio profession is guided by ethics.
- Artworks produced by Art and Design Studio professionals can help solve everyday problems in Ghana.
- Registered artistic works enjoy copyright protection.

CONCEPT OF PROFESSION IN THE FIELD OF ART AND DESIGN STUDIO

The term “profession” refers to specialised jobs or careers in the field of art and design studio practice. A profession is also explained as a regulated group of creative people who follow set guidelines, present themselves to the public as experts in a field that they have mastered through study and specialised training, and are willing to use their knowledge and abilities for the benefit of others.

Art and Design Studio professionals engage in artistic and creative activities, applying their knowledge and skills to create works of art that have utilitarian, functional, educational, communicative, aesthetically pleasing, economic, and socio-cultural importance.

A person who belongs to a profession is known as a **professional**. Within their specialist domain, professionals are bound by **codes of ethics** and pledge loyalty to competence, morality, and honesty, as well as selflessness and serving the needs of society. Professionals have social and professional responsibilities.

Professionalism is the behaviour that is typically expected from a member of a chosen profession. It is often associated with adhering to a code of practice, which outlines the values, rules, ethics, and customs of the profession. Some of the professions in Art and Design Studio practice include painting, textiles, sculpture, ceramics, jewellery, fashion design, visual communication design, art education, photography, videography, and game design.

Activity 3.1

Using one or two of the following methods of research, brainstorm the meaning of professional practice in art and design:

- a. Photographs of artworks
- b. Interview art teachers and/or art and design professionals in your community
- c. Online (internet)

Importance of Art and Design Studio Professions

Art and Design Studio professions offer a wealth of benefits, enhancing both personal and professional lives. These careers not only foster creativity and innovation but also provide opportunities for self-expression and problem-solving. Additionally, they contribute to cultural enrichment and economic growth. Let's explore some of these advantages in more detail.

1. Communication and cultural expression

Art and design professionals can play vital roles in communicating and shaping cultural identities in communities. Through artworks, symbols, storytelling, and various other methods, Art and Design Studio professionals can convey complex cultural expressions that can educate, inspire, and be thought provoking.

2. Problem-solving, creativity, and innovation

Art and Design Studio professionals leverage their creativity and innovation to address everyday societal challenges. By thinking outside the box, they develop unique solutions that enhance functionality, aesthetics, and the user experience.

Their work not only resolves problems but also drives progress and inspires new ways of thinking.

3. Advocacy and social commentary

Art and design professionals can raise awareness, provide firsthand accounts of events and stories, and encourage others to work towards a more equal and fair society. Through their creative and critical practices, the art and design professions and professionals contribute to the continuing conversation about significant societal challenges through their artworks.

4. Industrial growth and economic impact

Art and design studio practices contribute to the economic growth of art professionals and the nation at large. Art and design professionals contribute significantly to a vibrant and competitive industrial environment that can create employment and boost revenue generation in the rapidly changing Ghanaian society.

5. Preservation of cultural heritage

Art and Design Studio professionals create artefacts that preserve and celebrate Ghana's cultural ideals. Their work in researching cultural heritage and organising exhibitions plays a crucial role in keeping traditions and historical narratives alive. Through their efforts, they ensure that cultural heritage is not only maintained but also appreciated and understood by future generations.

6. Creating a sense of identity

Art and Design Studio professionals are instrumental in cultivating a sense of identity, which fosters self-expression and strengthens cultural and community ties. By engaging in personal exploration and community projects, they help both themselves and their communities develop a deeper understanding of their own identities and shared values. Their work promotes personal growth and collective cohesion, enriching the cultural fabric of society.

7. Emotional expressions and connections

Art and design professionals use their creative works to convey emotions that enrich both individual lives and communities. Through various art forms, they connect personal expression with shared experiences, enhancing environments in ways that positively impact emotional well-being. Their contributions can inspire reflection, foster empathy, and strengthen community bonds, creating a deeper emotional connection with the world around us.

8. Aesthetic purpose

The aesthetic purpose of art and design focuses on the creation of beauty and visual harmony. Art and design professionals produce works that address the social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs of the Ghanaian people. By crafting visually appealing art pieces, they enhance environments, uplift spirits, and contribute to cultural and personal enrichment, meeting diverse needs and preferences within the community.

Education and training of Art and Design Studio Artists

To become a professional artist, there are various educational and training pathways available. These pathways offer valuable opportunities for aspiring artists to develop their craft, enhance their skills, and advance their careers. These include:

- **Formal Education:** Pursuing degrees or diplomas at art-related universities, institutes, and training centres.
- **Workshops and Continuing Education:** Attending specialised workshops and short courses to refine skills and stay updated with industry trends.
- **Apprenticeships:** Gaining hands-on experience through apprenticeships with established artists or studios.
- **Self-Study and Online Resources:** Using self-study methods and online platforms to learn new techniques and expand knowledge.

Certification/licensing of artists

There is no explicit qualification or licensing requirement for artists, unlike for some professions like medicine or law. It is challenging to create a consistent certification procedure since the art world is so broad and includes so many different disciplines, styles, and mediums. Additionally, artistic expression is often subjective, and creativity is inspired by uniqueness and personal perspectives. Certification or licence, however, may be relevant or advantageous for artists in the following situations:

1. **Art Education:** Depending on the rules and regulations of the education authority in the country of practice, artists who intend to teach art in formal educational settings may need to get teaching credentials or certifications. Obtaining teaching qualifications often requires finishing specialised courses or programs that focus on art education and teaching strategies, as in the case of Ghana. In addition to certification, one has to acquire a teaching licence to qualify as an art teacher in Ghana.
2. **Art Therapy:** Individuals who practise art therapy typically require specific credentials or licences. These qualifications often include earning a master's degree in art therapy from a recognised university, followed by obtaining a licence from reputable regulatory bodies in the country of practice. This specialised training ensures that art therapists are equipped to use creative processes to support the emotional and mental well-being of their clients, meeting professional standards in therapeutic practice.
3. **Conservation and Restoration:** Conservators and restorers have the role of ensuring that artworks, artefacts, objects of historical importance, and monuments are preserved for future generations. Specialised training and accreditation are often essential for artists working in the conservation and restoration of artworks, particularly in museums, historical organisations, or cultural institutions. These roles require a deep understanding of preservation techniques, materials,

and ethical considerations to ensure that valuable pieces of cultural heritage are maintained for future generations. Artists in this field must often undergo rigorous training to develop the skills necessary for this highly specialised work. The credentials attest to the artist's proficiency in safeguarding and restoring artwork while upholding industry norms and ethics.

- 4. Public Art Commissions:** In some instances, it may be necessary for artists to possess particular credentials or licenses to be eligible for public art commissions. The accreditations can prove an artist's capacity to manage significant projects, engage with communities, and guarantee observance of safety and public art standards. A portfolio of work—visual records of artworks an artist has created over time—is often crucial for securing public art commissions. This collection showcases the artist's style, skill, and creative evolution, providing potential clients or commissioning bodies with a clear understanding of their capabilities and suitability for specific projects. A well-curated portfolio can significantly enhance an artist's chances of being selected for high-profile opportunities.

Licensing of Original Creative Artworks

Section 1 of the Copyright Act of Ghana, Act 690 (Act 2005) provides works eligible for copyright (**Table 3.1**).

Table 3.1: Extract of Eligible Works for Copyright (Act 690)

Section 1—Work eligible for copyright

- (1) An author, co-author or joint author of any of the following works is entitled to the copyright and protection afforded to that work under this Act
 - (a) literary work,
 - (b) artistic work,
 - (c) musical work,
 - (d) sound recording,
 - (e) audio-visual work,
 - (f) choreographic work,
 - (g) derivative work, and
 - (h) computer software or programmes.
- (2) Despite subsection (1), a work is not eligible for copyright unless
 - (a) it is original in character,
 - (b) it has been fixed in any definite medium of expression now known or later to be developed with the result that the work can either directly or with the aid of any machine or device be perceived, reproduced or otherwise communicated, and
 - (c) it is;
 - (i) created by a citizen or a person who is ordinarily resident in the Republic,
 - (ii) first published in the Republic and in the case of a work first published outside the Republic is subsequently published in the Republic within thirty days of its publication outside the Republic, or
 - (iii) a work in respect of which the Republic has an obligation under an international treaty to grant protection.
- (3) The eligibility of a work for copyright is not affected by its artistic quality, the purpose of the author in creating it or the manner or form of its expression.
- (4) For the purposes of this section a work is original if it is the product of the independent effort of the author.

From **Table 3.1**, it can be observed from the provisions of Section 1 that works are entitled to copyright protection. Additionally, Section 1(2) outlines the criteria for selecting eligible works. These criteria include originality, being fixed within a definite medium of expression, being created by a resident or Ghanaian citizen, and works that

the Republic has a responsibility to protect. Furthermore, Section 1(3) clarifies that the artistic quality, purpose, or form of a work's expression does not affect its eligibility for copyright protection.

The originality of a work, in terms of copyright, is defined as the product of the independent effort of the author or creator. Art professionals are encouraged to register their original artworks to secure copyright protection and enjoy the associated benefits. This implies that art professionals are obliged to comply with copyright and other relevant laws in Ghana.

Activity 3.2

Visit an Art and Design professional in your community and discuss five important points related to the concept of professional practice in art. Begin by introducing yourself and ask the following questions to guide your discussion:

- a. What is your name, and what type of art or design do you specialise in?
- b. How long have you been practising in your field?
- c. What does professional practice mean to you as an artist or designer?
- d. How do you maintain creativity and innovation in your work?
- e. What ethical considerations do you take into account in your practice?
- f. How do you contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage through your work?
- g. What challenges do you face in maintaining a professional standard in your field?

Take detailed notes on the professional's responses, including their name, specialisation, and years of practice, and be prepared to share your insights with the class.

Activity 3.3

- a. In groups of three, gather and use the available resources such as textbooks, online materials, and any relevant tools to brainstorm and discuss what "professional practice in Art and Design" means. Come up with your own clear definition.
- b. Examine how the concept of professional practice in art has been applied to address at least four social and emotional issues in society. It could be issues such as community identity, emotional well-being, or cultural preservation.
- c. Create a short presentation or poster that showcases all your findings.
- d. Present your findings with the class.

CONCEPT OF ETHICS

Having earlier explored the concept of art and design as a profession, let us turn our attention to the concept of **ethics**. This is because *professions and ethics* have a strong relationship.

Art and design work is created using unique creative abilities and skills, making it subjective. This means that people experience and interpret art and design in different ways. Without understanding the historical or cultural background of these works, people might judge them according to their own ethical standards. Therefore, it is important to consider ethics when creating art and design. Artists and designers have a moral responsibility and the right to express themselves, but they should ensure their work does not promote unethical behaviour in society.

Ethics in art and design studio practice refers to the standards, ideals, and moral concerns that direct an artist's or designer's conduct and decision-making during their creative endeavours. It involves taking care to create, exhibit, and engage in art and design responsibly and mindfully. In other words, **ethics** is concerned with moral principles that govern behaviour or the creative pulse. Usually, people tend to pass an ethical judgement on art and design works based on societal beliefs, values, and ideologies. Works that conflict with or are in contrast with societal norms, beliefs, and ideologies may receive backlash as unethical. As art and design studio practitioners enjoy the power of free artistic expression, they should be mindful that observance of societal ethics is equally important to promote peaceful coexistence and development in Ghana.

Ethics in Art and Design Studio Practice

Some ethical considerations required in art and design studio practice include:

1. **Authenticity and originality:** Creators of all kinds are urged to uphold the importance of these qualities in their work. This means producing works of art that are truly their own and refraining from plagiarising or appropriating the ideas or creations of others without their consent or giving due credit. **Plagiarism** is explained as copying or using texts or images without gaining permission for or giving necessary recognition or reference to the rightful sources. In other words, it has to do with taking someone's cultural artistic expression, tangible or intangible, without their consent. Cultural plagiarism leads to loss of credit and profit for the original source and creates an uninformed cultural interpretation. **Appropriation** involves using someone's creative work with or without their consent for personal or economic gain. The ethical approach is to seek the consent of creatives when using their works.
2. **Integrity and honesty:** Artists and designers should uphold integrity and honesty throughout their work, in their dealings with others, and in their depictions of it. To do this, they must clearly communicate their abilities, credentials, and aesthetic goals to customers, associates, and the general public.

3. **Ethical use of materials:** Designers and artists must think about how their choice of materials will affect society and the environment. This entails employing eco-friendly, non-toxic, and ethically sourced materials whenever practical and reducing any waste or pollution brought on by their creative processes.
4. **Societal responsibility:** Designers and artists can use their talents to help solve societal problems, promote inclusivity, and encourage positive change. This means they should use responsible storytelling or visual communication and be aware of how their work might affect society.
5. **Respect for others:** Artists and designers ought to be considerate of the rights, dignity, and cultural sensitivity of other people. When using someone else's image or personal information in their work, they must acquire their approval in advance and consider how their artwork and design can affect different people in society.
6. **Transparency in collaborations:** When working with others, designers and artists should clearly define everyone's roles, responsibilities, and rights. They should ensure that benefits such as payments or royalties are shared fairly and that everyone gets properly acknowledged and credited for their contributions.

Importance of Ethics in Art and Design Studio

Observing ethics is crucial in the art and design studio for various reasons. The benefits that artists and designers derive from adhering to ethical practices can be both direct and indirect. Art and Design Studio professionals need to maintain an ethical approach, as their work can affect society in multiple ways. Some of the key reasons why ethics are important in the art and design studio include:

1. **Respect for others:** Ethical considerations ensure that artists and designers respect the rights, dignity, and cultural sensitivities of individuals within their society and the nation at large. This approach promotes a more inclusive and respectful method of creating artworks, ensuring that their work does not become a means of disrespecting others or society as a whole.
2. **Originality and integrity:** Ethics help artists and designers maintain the originality and integrity of art and design works. Adherence to the ethical principles and standards required of artists and designers helps them preserve the honesty and sincerity of their works, which in effect enhances their value and impact.
3. **Prevention of causing harm:** When artists and designers adhere to ethical standards, it helps prevent harm—whether social, emotional, cultural, psychological, or physical—to individuals or communities. Artists and designers prioritise and think about how their work affects different people in order to avoid promoting harmful stereotypes or ideas.
4. **Building trust and confidence:** Adhering to ethical standards helps build trust between artists, designers, clients, and the audience. When people see that an artist or designer is honest and cares about ethics, they are more likely to trust and support their work.

5. **Promoting social responsibility:** Ethical practices help ensure that art and design positively influence society and culture, promoting social responsibility and supporting constructive change.
6. **Professionalism:** Ethics are important for all professionals in art and design. Following ethical standards shows that you are professional and reliable, which in turn helps you build a successful career and maintain a good status in the field of art and design.
7. **Legal Compliance:** Many ethical principles match closely with legal requirements. By following ethical standards, artists and designers can ensure they are mindful of issues such as intellectual property and privacy.

By reviewing the importance of ethics in the field of art and design studios, you will have learnt that they are crucial for showing respect, staying true, being socially responsible, and maintaining professionalism in the creative world. When artists and designers follow ethical standards, they can develop art that reflects their ideas, values, and beliefs positively.

Activity 3.4

Scenario

You are part of a team working on a community art project. Your team needs to ensure that the project follows ethical practices and respects cultural sensitivities.

In groups of three, follow the instructions below to explain the concept of ethics in art and design studio.

Instructions

1. Discuss the following questions as a group/ team:
 - a. Why is it important for artists and designers to follow ethical guidelines in their work?
 - b. How can unethical practices impact individuals or communities?
 - c. What are some examples of ethical issues that might arise in an art project?
 - d. How can your team ensure that your project respects cultural and social values?
 - e. What steps can you take to address and resolve any ethical dilemmas that may come up during the project?
2. Summarise your discussion from Question 1 and prepare a brief presentation to share with the class. Highlight the importance of ethics in Art and Design in your presentation and propose strategies to handle ethical challenges in your community art project.

Activity 3.5

1. In pairs, use resources such as photographs, videos, and real objects to explore how ethics in Art and Design relates to at least four social and emotional issues in society.

Hints:

- a. Consider how artwork can address sensitive topics like gender, culture, mental health, or inequality.
 - b. Look for examples where artists have shown respect for cultural traditions or where ethical boundaries have been crossed.
 - c. Think about how artists consider people's feelings, rights, and dignity when creating their work.
 - d. Discuss how ethical art can bring positive change or awareness to social issues.
2. Create a PowerPoint presentation or poster to showcase your findings from Question 1 and explain how ethical practices in art can influence these social and emotional issues.

Review Questions for Section 3

1. Refer to the concept of professional practice in art as discussed in the introduction of this section and provide your own understanding of professional art practice.
2. Create a written or pictorial presentation showing four (4) important points relating to the concept of professional art practice.
3. Produce a written or oral presentation on how the concepts of professional practice in art have been used in relation to social and emotional issues in society.
4. What is your understanding of ethics in the art and design studio?
5. State and explain the importance of observing ethics in art and design studio practice.

Extended Reading

- Dymarski, Z. (2019). The art of ethics as the art of wise life in the concept of Jozef Tischner. *Studies in East European Thought*, 71, 375-385.

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