Sustaining Creative Practice After Graduation:

Artists' Networks and Alliances in Shared Spaces

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigated how early-career artists navigate the transition from art school to professional practice by forming relationships and networks within shared studio environments. Focusing on three types of shared spaces, (a) private shared studios, (b) artist-run spaces, and (c) artist residencies, this study examined how shared environments shape artistic practices, foster resilience, and contribute to the sustainability of creative careers. Drawing on in-depth interviews and photo documentation of six artists transitioning from early-career to mid-career stages, the research explored the role of social relationships, spatial dynamics, and informal learning in shaping their professional trajectories. The study was framed by two theoretical approaches: Schlossberg's Transition Theory of 4S, which contextualizes individual adaptation during career transitions; and Actor-Network Theory, which considers the networks of human and non-human actors that influence artistic development. Through these lenses, the dissertation revealed how shared studio spaces function not only as physical sites but also as conceptual and relational environments that support early-career artists in cultivating creative agency, expanding networks, and navigating postgraduation challenges. These findings contribute to ongoing conversations about the transformative nature of art education in relation to the art world, offering insights into how alternative and collaborative models can better support emerging artists in a rapidly evolving cultural landscape.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal Background

My journey as an artist began in 2014 when I completed my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree at the Glasgow School of Art. After completing my studies, I returned to Seoul, where I was born and raised, which was the official transition into life for me as an independent artist. Without the structure of academic assignments, deadlines, or the security of a school studio, I immediately faced isolation and uncertainty as I navigated my path in the Seoul art scene.

During this period, two friends proposed sharing a studio space, which sparked the idea of transforming it into an artist-run space. This initiative allowed for the organization of four exhibitions, inviting other early-career artists facing similar uncertainties. Through this experience, new connections with the art community were formed, offering insights into how artists could engage with the broader art scene beyond institutional support. This period was my introduction to the local art scene, where shared studio spaces provided a supportive environment for initiating my creative practice.

Nearly a decade has passed since then, and I have had opportunities to participate in exhibitions and become part of a larger creative community in Seoul. As an artist, I have developed my practice in painting and sculpture. My interest in art practice primarily reflects on the experience of the city, space, and abstraction. In 2020, a new chapter began as I transitioned into research at Teachers College, Columbia University. Within this community of inquiry, I had the opportunity to reflect on the challenges, turning points, and values that contributed to sustaining and advancing my artistic practice. Through this process, my research evolved into a deeper inquiry into how shared studio environments help artists navigate challenges and how others sustain their creative practices in the Seoul art scene.

Background of the Problem: Hardships After Graduation

The MFA degree is the terminal degree in fine arts, qualifying holders to teach at the college level (College Art Association, 2015). It is primarily designed to support students in developing their artistic practices through one-on-one critiques, group seminars, and collaborative exhibitions, all of which help students cultivate professional skills and prepare for entry into the art world. In their final year, MFA students typically concentrate on refining their work while completing a master's thesis and a graduation exhibition, with the goal of establishing a distinctive artistic voice through both creative practice and written reflection (College Art Association, 2015). Sawyer (2016) noted that this developmental process is not linear but evolves through the act of creating. However, despite the rigorous training provided by MFA programs, many graduates struggle to establish themselves as professional artists. Only a small number go on to become full-time artists, and it is neither realistic nor expected that all students will pursue or achieve such a career path. Fine (2017) highlighted the challenges faced by MFA graduates, particularly in terms of careers, socialization, and continuity after graduation, which are crucial for success. He observed that many graduates begin their careers in small art spaces or alternative venues run by peers, often sustaining these efforts until they gain recognition from major galleries or museums. Conversely, he also found that some graduates abandon their artistic careers and find more stable employment, with teaching being the most common choice (Fine, 2017).

Frenette and Dowd (2020) also conducted a survey related to the trajectories of art school graduates. Their research revealed that many graduates felt unprepared for navigating a career in the arts field. The notable responses indicated a lack of training in networking, self-promotion, securing funding, and managing arts businesses. Although graduates valued their educational

experiences, such as critical thinking and professional skill development, 84% left the creative fields after a few years of graduation (Frenette & Dowd, 2020).

Bergstrom (2019) addressed how art education can help with these challenges and the stressful realities of the art world. In her research, Bergstrom found that art school graduates often face uncertainty about their future, noting that there is no clear "ladder" in the field (p. 3). Not knowing how to transition into postgraduate life was one of the major struggles they experienced. Students also emphasized the stress caused by gallery expectations, challenges in accessing funding, and pressures from the commercial art market, which may threaten their sense of authenticity. Many students doubted themselves and felt additional pressure from their unstable financial situation. As a consequence, Bergstrom (2019) emphasized the need for MFA programs to help students develop a strong sense of self and professional identity through effective pedagogy. She argued that this approach can better prepare students to confront and navigate the difficulties they face after graduation.

Articles examining the challenges art students face during the transition to postgraduation life have raised the question of whether this represents a widespread or systemic issue. It has also led to further inquiry: Is this a problem that affects many emerging artists and their sustainability in creative practices? To explore this issue more deeply, I conducted a preliminary case study.

Insights from Preliminary Case Study

In 2022, I interviewed three artists from diverse backgrounds who live and work in Seoul as part of my preliminary case study. My goal was to understand what hardships they had after finishing college and how they overcame those situations. The first participant had developed his creative practice through multiple artist residency programs. The second participant worked in a shared studio privately with friends for about 7 years while also working as a middle school

teacher. The third artist was educated in London and has lived in Seoul since 2015, where he runs an artist-run space. The aim of the study was to explore whether these shared environments present benefits or limitations to these artists' creative practices.

The three artists were selected because they use shared studios as their primary workplaces. These studio types were chosen because they represent common environments where artists continue their practice after completing their college education, spaces that are especially accessible to early-career artists. For this case study, early-career artists were defined as artists who have just finished their education and are moving on to the professional art field.

My conversations with these three artists working in shared platforms revealed how they navigated challenges and sustained their professional development. The first artist expressed that after graduation, he worked as a part-time teacher and did not have much time to create his own work. However, participating in residencies reconnected him with the art community and allowed him to continue his practice (Interview Transcript, March 18, 2022). The second artist who has used a private shared studio said that sharing a studio with his friends encouraged him to visit the space regularly and take responsibility for managing it. Compared to working alone at his parents' home, the studio provided him with motivation. Additionally, he exchanged professional knowledge and experiences, such as tips on writing funding proposals, designing portfolios, and painting techniques (Interview Transcript, April 22, 2022). The third artist described how his artist-run space became a vibrant platform for young and emerging artists to share their work and ideas, fostering connections within the artistic community. By making events in the space, he was able to network with local artists and integrate into the art scene (Interview Transcript, May 10, 2022).

Through these conversations, the artists expressed both the challenges they faced and how they handled them in their studios. However, the preliminary case study did not fully capture the benefits and limitations of the shared studio. It offered only limited insights, suggesting that shared studios provide support, but without specific details or deeper conceptual interpretations. These limitations raised further questions about how shared spaces, such as private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and residencies, support the sustainability of artistic practice. More specifically, how do early-career artists experience and make use of shared studio environments in relation to their professional development?

Although I realized shared environments served as workspaces, my curiosity grew about the benefits and limitations of these spaces. This curiosity led to further questions about the role of these spaces in sustaining artistic careers, their potential to foster creative practices, and how studios can be recontextualized within the contemporary art context.

Problem Statement

The preliminary case study of the three artists showed the ongoing struggles of pursuing creative practices after graduation. Each artist described the challenges of sustaining their practice while managing the financial and logistical pressures of maintaining studio spaces. To support themselves, they often took on side jobs such as part-time teaching, exhibition installation, and other forms of temporary part time labor. While participation in shared studio environments provided support, it did not fully resolve the tensions they faced. Instead, their experiences revealed the persistent difficulties of building a sustainable artistic practice, raising further questions about how early-career artists could navigate structural and personal barriers in the field.

The existing literature also revealed that a number of art school graduates and master's degree students struggle to maintain their art practice after graduation (Bergstrom, 2019; Fine, 2017; Frenette & Dowd, 2020; Maksymowicz & Tobia, 2017). These studies have shown that art school graduates often express stress and skepticism about their uncertain futures. They highlighted numerous obstacles, including the difficulty of securing quality jobs, increasing educational requirements, and the challenges of managing studio spaces. Similarly, Lamb (2015) found that many art school graduates experience difficulty in navigating the art field, which led her to examine the professional practices necessary for career preparation in undergraduate art programs.

Despite these findings, limited research has been conducted in relation to the context of shared studios in creative practices. Many of the studies primarily focused on individual artists' experiences in residencies or the impact of artist-run spaces on local communities, often overlooking the role of peer networks that appeared in shared environments.

To address this gap, the present research examined how networks within shared spaces supported artists in navigating postgraduation challenges and contributed to the sustainability of their creative practices. Expanding this area of study may offer a more diverse perspective on the significance of shared environments and open up conversations about how early-career artists can better transition into life after graduation.

Research Question

Given the challenges that early-career artists face in sustaining their artistic practice after graduation, what can be learned from the experiences of six early-career artists working in shared studios?

Subquestions

- What are the key affordances, limitations, and values that early-career artists encounter in shared studio spaces?
- What forms of support do early-career artists receive during and after college, and how do these supports influence their experiences during the postgraduation transition?
- What strategies do early-career artists develop to navigate the challenges of the postgraduation transition, and how are these strategies shaped or supported by shared studio environments?
- What role can art education play in preparing early-career artists to navigate postgraduation transitions by incorporating shared studio environments?

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in my personal experience as an artist and drew on both established critiques of art education and two complementary theoretical frameworks: Nancy Schlossberg's (1984) Transition Theory of 4S and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). By examining the work of scholars who critically analyzed the evolving structure and purpose of art education, such as Singerman (1999), Fischer (2006), Elkins (2008), Madoff (2009), Salazar (2013), and Jochum (2015), this study drew on a foundation of inquiry that questions traditional models and advocates for more adaptive, reflective, collaborative approaches to educating artists.

These authors have offered foundational critiques and called for new directions and inquiries in art schools in response to the changing demands of the contemporary art world. Their perspectives informed how this research can be developed in the field of art education and approach the questions of artistic development and sustainability in early-career stages.

To gain a deeper understanding, I used the 4S theory framework to analyze career progression by examining the self, situations, support, and strategies that shape an artist's journey over time. This perspective helped contextualize how artists adapt to transitions, such as moving from art school into professional practice. In contrast, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) offered a multidimensional view, emphasizing that an artist's career is shaped by a complex network of both human and nonhuman actors, including peers, institutions, funding structures, digital platforms, and shared studio environments. By integrating these two frameworks, this study examined both the individual career development process and the broader, interconnected systems that shape artistic sustainability, offering a comprehensive understanding of how early-career artists establish and maintain their creative practices in the art field.

The collected data were analyzed through cross-case thematic analysis and further developed to deepen the understanding of what shared studio spaces can offer to artists. The aim was to explore the dynamics of shared studios not merely as physical sites, but also as social, pedagogical, and conceptual spaces where artists gather and sustain.

Assumptions

Assumptions Not to Be Debated

- Early-career artists' career trajectories are influenced by various factors, including race, gender, economic status, and educational background.
- The definition of success in the art world varies and is shaped by individual goals, financial stability, exhibition opportunities, and personal fulfillment.
- Public funding can support artists, but it can also impose institutional constraints that affect artistic freedom.

- An MFA degree is the terminal degree in fine arts and qualifies artists for teaching positions. However, it is not a required credential to become a professional artist. Some artists do not hold an MFA, and only a small proportion of MFA graduates go on to sustain full-time careers as professional artists.

Assumptions to Be Debated

- Shared studios function as sites for collaborative production, networking, and the exchange of experiences, potentially enhancing early-career artists' opportunities to sustain their creative practices.
- The networks built within these spaces can offer vital support, illustrating how certain forms of support can serve as opportunities for artists to restart or redirect their practices.
- Relationships and dynamics in shared spaces are complex, requiring thoughtful organization and negotiation for effective studio management.
- Shared studio spaces can foster self-resilience by enabling artists to create their own opportunities, reducing their dependence on the art market, public funding, and institutional validation.
- Sustaining artistic practice involves a range of strategies that include not only practical approaches but also non-material values such as mutual support and emotional resilience.
- Artists' trajectories are shaped not only by their individual practices but also by external factors, such as institutional, financial, or technical support, all of which significantly impact the development of artistic practices.

Significance of the Study

The transition from art school as an institution to professional practice presents significant challenges for early-career artists. Many struggle with financial instability, a lack of exhibition opportunities, and difficulty establishing professional connections. Without institutional support (Gehlen, 1988; Michalski, 2018), artists have to navigate their careers independently, often facing isolation and uncertainty about sustaining their creative practices. Given these realities, this research examined how early-career artists can achieve better sustainability in their practices after graduation through shared studio environments.

Supporting early-career artists is essential for fostering the growth and sustainability of the artist community (Olshan, 2017). Yet, a lack of focus remains on how artists can achieve self-reliance and career sustainability. Therefore, in this study, I sought to examine how members of the art community can support early-career artists in navigating the uncertainties of establishing a professional practice after graduation. While colleges and MFA programs offer valuable artistic development and consider how emerging artists transition into professional roles within an increasingly competitive and precarious art world, less attention has been given to the role of studios and the networks that form around these spaces. Addressing how artists can build professional relationships, sustain creative practices, and develop resilience within the context of shared environments may offer a supportive pathway for graduates entering an unpredictable future.

Limitations of the Study

While this research aimed to understand how shared studio environments support early-career artists, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. These include the small number of participants, the potential influence of the researcher's positionality,

the geographic specificity of the participant group, and the time constraints of the study. Acknowledging these limitations helps to clarify the scope of the research and the potential biases that may have influenced the findings.

1. Limited number of participants: The study included only six participants. While this allowed for in-depth interviews and a detailed exploration of individual experiences, it limits the generalizability of the findings.
2. The influence of the researcher's experience: This research was initially developed from my personal experience of overcoming challenges as an early-career artist in Seoul. While the study was primarily based on interviews with six artists, there remains the possibility that my perspective and prior experiences could have shaped the direction of the research. Personal insights may influence the interpretation of data, selection of themes, and framing of conclusions.

   However, efforts were made to maintain objectivity by grounding the study in theoretical frameworks, cross-case analysis, and direct artist narratives. Recognizing this potential influence allowed for a more critical and reflective approach, ensuring that findings remain inclusive of diverse artist experiences rather than solely reflecting my own personal journey.
3. Location of participants: This research invited artists based in Seoul, a city known for its unique and dynamic art scene. In recent years, the city has attracted global art galleries and investment companies, while the public sector has offered substantial support through funding for exhibitions and art initiatives. These conditions may have influenced the opportunities available to early-career artists as they begin building their professional careers. However, the findings of this study may not be

generalizable to other urban contexts or to artists working in different environments. In cities where such resources and opportunities are less accessible, early-career artists may face more significant challenges, potentially resulting in different professional trajectories.

4. Time constraints: This study examined artists transitioning from early to mid-career but did not track their long-term sustainability. As artistic careers evolve, a longitudinal study could provide deeper insights into how shared spaces influence career progression. However, due to time limitations, this research captured only a short-term transition rather than a long-term analysis. Future studies could build on this by tracking artists over multiple years.

Summary

This introduction outlined the background, theoretical frameworks, and focus of the dissertation, detailing how the research question was developed and identifying the context of the study. The preliminary case study of three artists revealed the challenges they faced in pursuing their careers. Additionally, recent research on higher art education has informed the challenges many art school graduates face after leaving their institutions. Securing studio spaces and transitioning into professional careers remain significant obstacles. Many graduates rely on temporal jobs to sustain themselves, often leading to the gradual abandonment of their artistic practices. Although extensive research has been conducted on the value of collaboration between artists and communities (Fischer, 2006; Sanker, 2012; Shiach & Virani, 2017; Wright, 2004), limited attention has been given to where and how these experiences can be fostered and critically examined. This research aimed to investigate the role of shared environments in

shaping the creative practices of early-career artists. Specifically, it explored how shared studio spaces influence the postgraduation experiences and artistic development of emerging artists.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review examines existing research in the field of art and art education to explore the key questions and efforts that have been made in art education and the teaching of artists. Its purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation for this dissertation to better understand the challenges students face and to investigate how early-career artists sustain their creative practices after graduation. The focus on shared studio spaces stems from their role as collaborative environments where artists come together to create. This review sought to understand how relationships formed within these spaces, along with the networks they foster, influence artists' career trajectories. Finally, it aimed to identify existing gaps in the literature that this study attempted to address.

The review is organized around six main topics. The first topic provides an overview of how the concept of art education has evolved over time and what efforts have been made to better support art students. The following section offers a deeper examination of the postgraduation challenges artists face as they transition out of academic settings. This is followed by an exploration of how artists cultivate agency and a sense of belonging through friendships and shared studio environments. The next topic considers how artists actively create opportunities through their involvement in artist-run spaces. Additionally, the review analyzes the role of structured artist residencies and the ways in which administrative support contributes to professional development. The reason for dividing the spaces into these three categories is that they represent the most common types of studios early-career artists tend to use after completing their education. Lastly, it considers how the concept of the studio has evolved to understand which notions have been emphasized over time. Understanding the current discourse on how

early-career artists navigate sustainable pathways in shared studios provides an overview of what exists and what gaps still need to be addressed.

Understanding College Art Education and Envisioning Its Direction

Singerman (1999) argued that the emergence of MFA programs in universities transformed art education from a focus on skill development to a more theoretical and performative approach, shaping artists into professionals. Although MFA degrees conferred professional legitimacy on artists, he criticized the system for discouraging artistic innovation by pressuring artists to conform to academic norms and commercial expectations. Building on Singerman's (1999) critique, scholars such as Elkins (2008), Madoff (2009), Salazar (2013), and Jochum (2015) have continued to question what the education of artists should entail and how art schools can effectively prepare students for professional careers.

Before exploring recent inquiries into the education of artists and the role of art school institutions, Elkins (2008) provided an overview by building on De Duve's (1994) schema outlining how studio art education has evolved over time. In the 19th century, the Academy emphasized individual talent and skill, which were learned from the masters of the time, focusing largely on imitating beauty through traditional techniques. In the 20th century, the Bauhaus introduced a significant shift by emphasizing creativity and experimentation, rejecting the values of the Academy. In more contemporary times, artistic "attitude" and conceptualization have become central, with a move away from traditional value toward meaning and idea-based practices. However, Elkins (2008) argued that a fourth paradigm is necessary, one that engages with local specificity and cultural context, and reconsiders the meaning of creativity through a poststructuralist lens.

Looking more deeply, Elkins (2008) discussed the challenges present in BFA programs, particularly the tension between theory and the freedom of creative expression. As students transition into MFA programs in search of professional development, Elkins pointed out that there are varying degrees of expectations and contradictions. While he drew on Singerman's (1999) concepts of discipline, self-reflexivity, and deskilling as useful frameworks for understanding what the MFA might offer, Elkins ultimately suggested that the idea of deschooling might better reveal the realities of what the contemporary art world looks like.

Madoff (2009) also shared his views on what values an art school should have and how they can help reimagine the purpose of art education. He highlighted the collapse of disciplinary boundaries and the rise of post-medium practices, triggered by the emergence of conceptual art. He also emphasized the growing influence of the art market and the need for education to respond to it. In such a rapidly changing art environment, he questioned whether formal art education remains necessary. While acknowledging that traditional mentorship and informal learning within schools are still possible, he suggested alternative learning spaces such as artist-run residencies and biennial-related programs.

As one of the contributors in Madoff's (2009) book, Bauer (2009) discussed the increasing influence of the commercial art market on art schools. As a result, art institutions have become more career-focused, often limiting critical spaces for experimentation and risk-taking. Bauer called for alternative models that support students in becoming both critical thinkers and professionals. Another contributor, Renfro (2009), argued that the traditional studio model is outdated due to the growing interconnectivity and networking across disciplines. He argued that alternative studio models should be considered to better prepare students for a collaborative and digitized environment. Renfro (2009) highlighted that communal areas can be more effective

spaces for learning than isolated studios. As a result, he advocated for studio architecture to be more flexible, support interaction, and remain open to the broader student community.

Building on Renfro's (2009) idea that art studios should be more flexible and communal, Jochum (2015) discussed the changing environment of art education, which is becoming more fluid, hybrid, and interdisciplinary. He pointed out that the relationship between students and faculty shifted to be more horizontal than vertical. In this new kind of relationship, collaborative and hybrid ways of learning became alternative methods in art education. Jochum (2015) also highlighted how digital technologies influenced the boundaries of social and creative interactions. He argued that the hybridization of media, genres, and concepts generates conversations that build on one another. Madoff (2009), Bauer (2009), Renfro (2009), and Jochum (2015) all called for rethinking the structure of art schools in terms of conceptual thinking, critical practice, and more flexible educational models.

Given such inquiries and the need for change in art education, Salazar (2013) argued that there has been a lack of focus on how college studio teaching operates, highlighting the need for more research into what actually takes place within college studio classrooms. She found that, even though there has been growing interest from both cultural and institutional sectors emphasizing the importance of creativity, several issues have been identified in current college art education, such as rising tuition costs, accountability measures, concerns about teaching quality, and the increasing need to address student diversity. As Elkins (2008) and Madoff (2009) stated, the traditional structure of art schools was also a problem, as they were established in the 20th century and have not been updated for today's collaborative and tech-driven environment (Salazar, 2013). Salazar (2013) also pointed out the aging generation of professors, who developed their teaching skills from influential masters (De Duve, 1994). As a consequence,

Salazar (2013) suggested that college art education should move beyond the traditional Academy and Bauhaus models and incorporate more real-world engagement. She insisted that the school programs need to understand the influence of the art market and digital development, asking that more research be done to determine what values and skills can be taught in the studios.

Over time, scholars have continuously questioned what art schools should offer their students and how the education of artists can be better developed, especially in a rapidly evolving art world. Fischer (2006) argued that art schools often structure education around competition, staging students to compete with one another. However, he emphasized the value of cooperation over isolation, suggesting that artists can gain more by working collaboratively. These remain critical questions for all of us, as scholars, artists, and individuals who collectively shape the field. To better understand the specific challenges that art school graduates face, the following section explores the difficulties they encounter when transitioning into professional careers.

Postgraduation Challenges and Difficulties

At the undergraduate and graduate levels of art education, such as in BFA and MFA programs, students are often trained with the goal of becoming professional artists. However, research has shown that many pursued different art-related careers or left the art field within a few years after graduation (Frenette & Dowd, 2020). This is not necessarily because the students did not work hard enough or that the education programs failed to prepare them appropriately. To understand what the problems are and what kind of postgraduate lives art school graduates experience, many scholars have investigated the transition period from art school to professional practice.

Fine (2017) conducted an ethnographic study exploring the transition from graduate school into professional artistic careers, focusing on three MFA programs in the Chicago area. The programs were aimed at cultivating the artistic identities of students and training them to become members of the artistic community. However, there was a significant gap between this goal and the uncertain reality that students faced after graduation, which caused anxiety and stress. Among the many problems, occupational instability was identified as a critical issue. There was also a strong tension between what the students wanted to make and what the commercial art market expected from them. In such situations, Fine found that some students created their own opportunities by exhibiting in friends' apartment galleries and small alternative spaces. During this transitional period, some may give up on their artistic careers, while others go on to become so-called "named artists." However, what Fine (2017) emphasized was the importance of building a network within their own community and finding connections through the resources available at their schools.

A study by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) surveyed 52,315 graduates over the age of 30 about their career trajectories after graduation (Frenette & Dowd, 2020). The results showed how educational experiences, early-career work opportunities, and demographic differences influenced their postgraduate career development. First, the current education system did not sufficiently address the practical and professional needs of students, particularly in terms of specialized career training. However, what helped graduates stay in the arts field were internship experiences and networking within related industries. Additionally, students who had double majors were more likely to remain in the arts compared to those who specialized in a single area. The research also revealed inequalities: Women and people of color were less likely to stay in arts-related careers. As a response to these findings, Frenette and

Dowd (2020) suggested that arts education should better prepare students for the real world by offering networking opportunities, alumni mentorship, and training in financial and entrepreneurial skills.

Bergstrom (2019) highlighted the difficulties that MFA students face when transitioning into life beyond academia. Through literature and her previous studies, she found that students encounter complex challenges, unexpected differences, relationship difficulties, and struggles with self-identification during this transitional period. She also pointed out the unclear career paths many MFA graduates face, often working as assistant faculty and studio technicians or in administrative roles. These positions do not reflect the intended outcomes of most MFA programs. As a result, students experience emotional and career-related tensions that make it difficult to establish a stable professional identity. In response to these challenges, Bergstrom (2019) offered several recommendations: (a) build a community of like-minded individuals, (b) develop endurance and continue improving personal skills, and (c) provide pedagogical support that enhances self-awareness and fosters the development of an artist's professional identity.

These three studies highlighted the difficulties that artists faced in their postgraduate lives. Although some of the research indicated the value of building community and connecting with like-minded individuals, there was little discussion about the specific factors that allowed students to form such communities. In particular, there was limited research on the role of shared spaces and how these environments could foster agency and support for emerging artists.

Securing Artists' Agency and Sense of Belonging in Shared Studios

Traditionally, artists have often been imagined as solitary figures, working and living in studios, relying solely on innate genius and talent (De Duve, 1994). While time and effort

dedicated to studio practice remain invaluable and essential for creativity, contemporary art frequently highlights artists collaborating and creating as teams (Coles & Defert, 2012; Kester, 2011). This does not refer to artist assistants working under a master artist but rather to individual artists who come together to create something new. The following discussion examines artists who have made significant progress in their work through collaboration and collective effort in shared spaces.

Rech (2018) studied two Scandinavian painters, Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann, who shared a studio in the 19th century. Her research highlighted how they frequently painted each other's portraits and studios, a practice that functioned as a method of self-representation. The study focused on three types of paintings: portraits of each other, depictions of artists working in the studio, and scenes of artists conversing with visitors in the studio. Rech interpreted these works as reflections of their mutual support as artists and models as well as performative expressions of collaboration. Through their friendship, Bauck and Wegmann navigated the male-dominated art scene of their time and established their professional reputations. The act of painting each other allowed them to assert their identities as professional artists and construct self-representations through their bond. Rech (2018) argued that the friendship between Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann created a space for female agency amid the gender inequalities of 19th-century Northern Europe, allowing them to support and encourage each other's artistic pursuits. The study showed how the relationship between artists could serve as a foundation for problem-solving, creative motivation, and self-discovery.

Bowles (2016) examined the decades-long relationship between these two performance artists, who met in 1977 through an artist employment program designed to support Black artists in Los Angeles. They formed an immediate connection by sharing a background in dance and

sculpture (Bowles, 2016). Over 30 years, they functioned as collaborators, audiences, and sources of inspiration for one another. Bowles (2016) noted that their performances often bypassed collectors and critics, prioritizing friends and local audiences, which provided "motivation, inspiration, critiques, or support" (p. 401). While this may not have resulted in financial success, it sustained their creative practices. Their collaborations, including *Ceremony for Freeway Fets* (1978) and *Performance Piece—Nylon Mesh and Maren Hassinger* (1977), addressed themes of alienation and challenged the objectification and sexualization of Black women during that era (Bowles, 2016). Whereas Bauck and Wegmann alternated roles as artist and model, Nengudi and Hassinger shifted between artist and audience. In both cases, the artists acted as supporters, muses, and alter egos for one another, facilitating self-expression and mutual recognition. Their collaborations fostered spaces and relationships that enabled them to freely explore and express their emotions and identities.

These two examples illustrate that friendship between artists extended beyond a relationship between individuals with similar goals or tastes. Rather, it functioned as a supportive alliance that provided resilience under challenging circumstances, acting as an artistic ally against discrimination, prejudice, and societal hierarchies. By framing shared studios as a space for agency, artists facing frustrations and obstacles could utilize this space to incubate creative ideas and develop their professional identities. Moreover, friendship among artists served as a foundation for innovative collaboration, facilitating unique methods of creation through dialogue, painting, sculpting, performing, and filming. Ultimately, this solidarity and collaboration functioned as forms of alter egos, enabling artists to scaffold one another, achieve self-recognition, and evolve as professionals.

More recently, Acme Artist Studios (Acme) has been operating affordable artist studios in England since 1972. It was founded by two artists, Jonathan Harvey and David Panton, who were art school graduates in London. They initially sought out empty factories and cargo spaces to use as their studios. Today, in collaboration with local developers, Acme has expanded its sites to 15 locations across Greater London and has supported over 800 artists (Ferm et al., 2022).

Acme commissioned research to understand the value of artists' studios. The study highlighted several key aspects: spatial values, psychological and emotional values, symbolic values, material and economic values, and social values that studios provide to artists. Under social values, the authors noted that shared spaces promote social networking opportunities and facilitate positive synergies among artists (Ferm et al., 2022). They also emphasized that during the COVID-19 pandemic, artists felt a sense of support and stability from their studios (Ferm et al., 2022, p. 16).

Considering the scale and influence of Acme Artist Studios, it has evolved into something akin to an institutional artists-led residency program. It has not only fostered artists' sense of identity and well-being but has also provided cultural benefits to the community by offering inspiration and educational value (Ferm et al., 2022). Thus, to further explore how shared studio environments can support artists in sustaining their practices, artist-run spaces were examined.

Making Opportunities in Artist-Run Spaces

Need for Space for Making and Exhibiting

For recent graduates, the transition from the structured environment of school to the uncertainty of the art world can be particularly challenging. Moving out of school often leaves

artists without a sense of belonging, making this period a time of vulnerability and difficulty. In response, some early-career artists have sought alternatives. Artist-run spaces have emerged as a viable solution for gathering, creating, promoting, and sustaining artistic practices. While these spaces may not fully resolve the challenges, they offer significant potential and opportunities.

Cook (2016) argued that artists need dedicated spaces for creation and experimentation. In South Africa, for instance, he noted that galleries often prioritize commercially viable, finished artworks, leaving little room for experimental and non-commercial projects. As a consequence, Cook introduced the Parking Gallery as an "artist-run initiative (ARI)" (p. 57), a space designed to present interactive and non-commercial projects. He described the works exhibited in such spaces as "open-ended inquiry" (p. 58), fostering dialogue within contemporary art contexts and emphasizing experimental commitments. Moreover, Cook (2016) highlighted that ARIs grant artists autonomy to program their own projects, challenging the traditional gallery and curatorial systems. Politically, the Parking Gallery resisted capitalist economic structures, embodying a socialist ethos. It provided artists a space for political autonomy, fostered community dialogue, and facilitated the exchange of experimental ideas within a contemporary art context.

Beyond South Africa, Ferreri and Graziano (2014) explored similar dynamics in London, where art school graduates create their own spaces amidst capitalism and modern industry. Ferreri and Graziano (2014) examined the struggles and trajectories of young art school graduates. They argued that art school alumni face low wages and job insecurity compared to graduates from other fields. This precarious situation often forces young artists to rely on passion rather than fair compensation. Ferreri and Graziano interviewed young artists in their mid-20s who established small spaces for creative projects while juggling part-time jobs to support their

projects. Their research revealed that these artists are driven by a genuine desire to continue their artistic careers and secure their place in the art world. However, the challenges of sustaining such spaces are significant. Even university job centers often direct art students toward voluntary positions, earning unlivable wages while pursuing creative ambitions that seem unattainable. Despite these difficulties, Ferreri and Graziano (2014) found that passion remains the primary motivator for these young artists.

On the other hand, Blessi et al. (2011) investigated artist-run spaces in Montreal, Canada, a city with a rich history of artist-organized institutions and nonprofit centers. Since the 1970s, these spaces have played a crucial role in shaping the urban art scene. Despite the supportive artistic environment fostered by community and government initiatives, challenges persist. Blessi et al. (2011) analyzed 17 centers that had been operational for more than a decade, using in-depth interviews to uncover common issues. Their findings revealed that funding, management, and external networking were recurring challenges. These issues are often rooted in the origins of artist-run spaces. However, Blessi et al. (2011) also identified significant strengths and opportunities within these centers. Artist-run spaces encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration, connecting artists across sectors such as dance, music, and visual arts. They provide platforms for self-promotion, skill development, and the realization of unconventional projects that may be rejected by traditional institutions. Additionally, these spaces can act as alternative markets where artists sell their work independently, bypassing commercial galleries and fostering greater artistic autonomy.

These studies indicated the critical role of artist-run spaces as alternative venues for creativity and collaboration. These spaces served as platforms where artists could gather to sustain their creative practices while maintaining autonomy. Compared to artist residencies,

artists in artist-run spaces tended to organize more self-directed events that focused on their own initiatives rather than residency-structured programs. The following section examines how these spaces function as viable alternatives to traditional art markets, providing early-career artists with opportunities for independence and innovation.

Artist-Run Space as an Alternative Space for the Art Market

As Blessi et al. (2011) briefly mentioned, artist-run centers have the potential to serve as alternative spaces for selling artworks. Sooudi (2020) conducted a study investigating artist-led spaces as agencies navigating the precarious art market in Mumbai, India. She viewed artist-run spaces as independent entities that provide a counterbalance to the heavily commercialized art market. While these organizations operated separately from the mainstream market, they also played a pivotal role in introducing young and emerging artists to it.

Sooudi (2020) examined two artist-run spaces, Cona and Clark House Initiative, to understand how artists collectively network and position themselves as agencies. Through interviews and informal conversations with the artists, she observed that while artists often value autonomy and independence, artist-run spaces provide a framework for collective networking. These spaces allow artists to build friendships, learn promotion skills, and position themselves as agencies that resist the pressures of the commercial art world. Some artists even share living arrangements to reduce housing and living costs, further emphasizing the collaborative nature of these spaces. Artists also provide feedback on one another's work, collaborate on commissioned projects, and share resources, creating a supportive and sustainable ecosystem (Sooudi, 2020).

Within this context, artist-run spaces in Mumbai function as collective agencies that counteract the dominant forces of the commercial art market. These spaces enabled artists to generate income through art sales and commissioned projects while simultaneously reducing

expenses through resource sharing. This approach contributed to the development of a sustainable economic model that supports consistent artistic practice (Sooudi, 2020).

However, despite efforts to maintain independence and manage these spaces effectively, most artist-run spaces faced ongoing challenges in securing funding. This persistent issue underscores the need for systematic support and management strategies to assist artists in establishing and sustaining studios, workshops, and creative spaces. The following section examines how the success of artist-run spaces was related to funding, exploring strategies to ensure artists' sustainability.

Funding and Management of Artist-Run Spaces

As Cook (2016) and Sooudi (2020) highlighted, many artists strove to achieve autonomy and independence from traditional art institutions and the commercialized art market. However, in a capitalist society, the income generated through artist-run spaces was often insufficient to cover all expenses. To create a more stable environment for artists to produce work, well-planned public funding became an essential element.

Hilder (2017) investigated public funding for artist-run spaces in Vancouver from the 1960s onward, focusing on how such funding supported the rise and decline of these spaces. In Vancouver, Hilder found that artist-run spaces flourished, bolstered by relatively generous funding from the local government and the Canada Council for the Arts. For instance, Intermedia, an artist-run space founded in the late 1960s, received $40,000 annually to support experimental projects (Hilder, 2017). The scale of this funding necessitated hiring a director to manage the funds. Despite this financial support, Intermedia closed in 1972. Many new artist-run spaces emerged and disappeared after its dissolution, but the funding system became increasingly bureaucratic.

During the 1980s and 1990s, artist-run spaces in Vancouver began to resemble traditional galleries rather than alternative collectives. By the 2000s, these spaces had become more professionalized and internationalized, with curators adept at managing complex funding applications. Funding recipients were required to demonstrate the impact of their work and account for how funds were spent, further embedding bureaucracy into the system. While public funding enriched Vancouver's cultural landscape and supported the creation of new artist collectives, it also diminished the experimental and collective spirit that initially characterized artist-run spaces (Hilder, 2017). This research underscored the double-edged nature of public funding, which simultaneously nurtured cultural innovation and imposed bureaucratic constraints. A balanced approach, with a clear vision for artist-run spaces, was necessary to preserve their core values while ensuring sustainability.

Building on this insight, Grodach's (2010) research offered practical solutions for the sustainable management of artist-run spaces. She studied 12 small and mid-sized artist-run spaces in Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas. These two cities were chosen for their cultural diversity and well-balanced art sectors across public, private, and nonprofit domains. Although smaller than major art hubs like New York and Los Angeles, these locations provided a fertile environment for artist-run spaces. Grodach selected spaces based on four criteria: (a) artist-managed operations, (b) inclusion of exhibit and rehearsal arts, (c) a clear ethnic or cultural mission, and (d) a reflection of the local community.

Through interviews with artists, administrators, and funders, Grodach (2010) identified five policy recommendations to strengthen artist-run spaces and their ties to local communities:

1. Recognizing artist-run spaces as independent entities: Policymakers needed to respect the autonomy and unique characteristics of these spaces.

2. Acknowledging capacity limits: Individual spaces could not address all community needs; maintaining manageable workloads was essential for quality control.
3. Prioritizing strategic locations: Establishing spaces in areas with existing art studios and communities fostered synergy.
4. Providing stable tenancy: Offering artists reasonable tenancy durations ensured consistency and productivity in their work.
5. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration: Bridging different cultural disciplines created dynamic social networks and synergies.

With these strategies, Grodach (2010) argued that within these conditions, artist-run spaces could drive cultural growth and contribute to the economic development of their communities.

Since their emergence in the 1960s, these spaces have been referred to by various names, including artist-led spaces, artist-run centers, and artist-run initiatives. Despite differences in terminology, the underlying concepts and motivations for their creation were rooted in shared values and goals among artists. These spaces were established for exhibitions, art-making, and networking as well as acts of resistance. They served as refuges where artists could exercise autonomy and independence within both their creative practices and communities. The diverse perspectives on artist-run spaces illustrate the significant efforts artists have made to sustain their practices in shared environments.

Professional Development in Artist Residencies

Artist residencies are often considered structured programs designed to support artists' projects and professional development. Given their organized nature, residencies typically involve institutional support with full-time administration. Within this collective framework,

artists are invited to form a temporary community where they can support one another, exchange knowledge, and further develop their professional identities.

Lee et al. (2018) argued that artist residencies were key sites where such exchanges and creative productions occurred. Their research focused on a university-based residency program to explore how educational settings could effectively promote creative processes. Lee et al. found that artists often approached residencies as a risk-taking endeavor, embracing the uncertainty of new creative procedures and unpredictable outcomes. These programs motivated artists by providing an environment for experimentation, fostering creativity not only for the artists but also for the hosting institutions (Lee et al., 2018). Similarly, Arredondo (2021) discussed various aspects of artist residencies. She asserted that artist residencies function as a community within a creative ecosystem, continuously fostering questions and experimentation. However, Arredondo also highlighted the difficulties artists face when engaging with the public. Since residency programs were often more institutionalized compared to shared studios that are privately managed, artists were required to participate in open studios, which, in some cases, led to disruptions and anxiety (Arredondo, 2021).

These researchers emphasized that the financial support provided by the institution and the role of facilitating staff were crucial factors in sustaining this unique creative atmosphere. Paulus and Lejeune (2012) explored the roles and responsibilities of residency administrators in helping artists sustain their practices and develop their professional careers. Their study examined two international artist residencies, one in France and the other in Germany. Through interviews with residency staff, they discovered that organizational members served as controllers, advisors, and practical facilitators. These individuals negotiated logistical challenges, mediated between artists and institutions, and ensured the residency operated smoothly. The

study highlighted that the success of a residency was not solely dependent on the autonomy of individual staff members but rather on the broader network of the art community.

One notable finding was that residency board members actively connected artists with local galleries and art professionals. In interviews, board members invited gallerists and community leaders to meet residency artists, fostering valuable connections. Based on this, Paulus and Lejeune (2012) argued that networks built on friendship were integral to sustaining successful artist residencies. Additionally, the role of the executive director was critical for securing funding, which was essential for the organization's survival. Directors acted as bridges between artists and external funders, often government entities, ensuring that creative initiatives thrived while meeting the broader community's needs. This research underscored the interconnected nature of residencies, where artists, institutional staff, and funders form a network like a spider's web, holding the creative community together. Friendship and collaboration within this network were fundamental for fostering a supportive and productive environment.

Building on the insights of Lee et al. (2018), Arredondo (2021), and Paulus and Lejeune (2012), artist residencies have been recognized as collaborative spaces where diverse sectors of the art community support creativity. These studies collectively showed that the success of an artist residency depends on the networks formed among artists, board members, community members, and local traditions, which serve as sources of creative inspiration.

Understanding the Changing Concepts of Studios

By exploring the different forms and concepts of studios in the contemporary art field, it became important to reconsider what studios mean to artists and how the notion of the studio has changed over time. For artists, studios have long been an essential space for production. Fendrich and Plagens (2010) stated, "an artist having a studio is like a musician having a chair or a stool

on which to sit" (p. 189). Hannon (2014) also emphasized the importance of the studio, expanding the notion beyond just a physical space to include psychological inhabitation. She argued that studios are spaces where an artist's movements, memories, and traces of past uses are embodied. This perspective highlights how practices in the studio are deeply interconnected with both psychological and spatial inhabitation.

Looking both historically and toward the present, *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner (2010), raised important questions about how the concept of the studio has evolved over time and what it means to artists today. In that book, Grabner (2010) mentioned that in the past, including the modernist period, artists' studios were often seen as mysterious places, filled with litter and ancient artifacts scattered across vast, dark spaces. The studio was viewed as a place where artists isolated themselves to dedicate their time to artistic labor. However, the function of the studio has changed along with shifts in the art landscape and society. Artists like Warhol, who conceptualized his studio as a factory, Beuys with his educational approach, and the Fluxus movement to decentralize the idea of the studio, all helped trigger the conversation around post-studio practices (Grabner, 2010; Jones, 2010). The contributors in this book viewed today's studios as more domestic spaces or social platforms, reflecting the ways contemporary artists often work through interdisciplinary forms. Thus, they understand the studio as a more flexible and responsive space where artists sustain and develop their practices (Jacob & Grabner, 2010).

One of the contributors, Wood (2010), presented Brancusi's White Studio as both a space for interpreting his artistic concepts and a stage for inviting people to socialize. Brancusi, with the attitude of a modernist artist, used his studio to construct a "white" environment that shaped his artistic identity. However, he also used the space as a collaborative social networking site,

inviting Dadaists like Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp. Man Ray often helped document the studio, portraying it as a place for exchange, experimentation, and the conceptual background of Brancusi's work. The interactions with avant-garde artists further fostered Brancusi's idea of the studio as a "non-space": a fluid and open environment without clear borders (Wood, 2010). Another contributor, Jones (2010), discussed Warhol's factory studio, highlighting how it embraced an industrial concept in his practice. Rather than focusing solely on how the studio functioned or what it meant for the artist's practice, Jones explored the idea of the studio as a space for collaboration, where multiple assistants worked together as a team. Jones (2010) also examined Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) as an example of breaking away from traditional studio models, moving toward site-specific, collaborative forms of production. Taking the work outside of an indoor studio and into nature not only introduced new possibilities for the form of art but also reshaped the notion of what a studio could mean, emphasizing decentralization of authorship and the importance of collaborative networks (Jones, 2010).

More recently, painter Gregory Amenoff (2009) recalled his experience of becoming a professional artist when he first moved to New York during the 1970s. When he arrived, he took on odd jobs while pursuing his goal of becoming a full-time artist. During this period, Amenoff emphasized the importance of the studio as a practical workspace and a site for experimentation. Additionally, he noted that while the physical location of New York's Chelsea gallery district was advantageous, it was not essential to his work. Amenoff also discussed the organization and atmosphere of the studio, explaining how it supported and inspired his practice. Importantly, he stressed the value of community-building among artists, encouraging younger artists to form networks, support one another, and create their own opportunities. As he advised: "Create

opportunities for each other. Form collectives. Rent spaces. Have shows. Don't wait around for the dealers and the curators to come to you" (p. 21).

From isolated workspaces to dynamic, collaborative environments shaped by shifting social, economic, and technological conditions, the evolving meaning and concept of the studio reflect how art and artists have used these spaces over time. While studios remain central to artistic production (Fendrich & Plagens, 2010; Hannon, 2014), contemporary practices have blurred traditional boundaries, challenging fixed notions of space, authorship, and professional development. These shifts raise important questions about how early-career artists today navigate their careers, build sustainable practices, and form supportive networks after leaving formal educational settings. The following section outlines the key problems and questions that emerged from the literature review, offering a deeper inquiry into how artists sustain their creative practices within shared spaces as they transition from school to professional life.

Thinking of Artists' Collaboration

Collaboration is a concept we encounter almost daily. Many art schools and creative programs emphasize its importance, and examples of collaboration are abundant throughout art history (Shiach & Virani, 2017). However, what we often observe is the outcome or the surface of collaboration, not the process or the underlying concept. Sanker (2012) defined collaboration as a synergistic relationship in which multiple entities work together to produce outcomes greater than what they could achieve individually. Such collaborative efforts can lead to improved quality, more efficient organizations and environments, and enhanced productivity. This goes beyond the simple sharing of resources; it involves building networks grounded in mutual benefit and informal interactions. To transform these informal connections into a more structured and effective form, Sanker (2012) emphasized the importance of coordination, shared

responsibilities, and clear control to achieve specific goals. Furthermore, he advocated for cooperation over competition, a model that encourages shared workspaces and common objectives.

However, what happens when resources and opportunities are limited? In the art field, as indicated by studies referenced earlier in this review, opportunities for students and artists are often scarce. Exhibition spaces and stable teaching positions are available only to a select few. Fischer (2006) discussed the competitive nature of the art world, where artists compete for grants, students compete for jobs and funding, and even professors find themselves in rivalry with one another. Gallerists and artists compete for sales, while collectors compete among themselves to acquire desirable works. This chaotic culture of comparison and competition in the art field is rarely addressed openly. Instead, the ambitions driving it are often buried deep beneath the surface, hidden privately.

Then the question becomes: How can we reduce the stress of competition that drains the energy of practitioners and instead foster collaboration that nurtures meaningful and sustainable relationships? Fischer (2006) provided examples from both the visual art and music worlds, arguing that building ecosystems rooted in shared values and cultural support can expand artists' creative boundaries. He emphasized that when artists collaborate, they gain access to more resources, critical feedback, and diverse ideas. As Fischer put it, "creating opportunities for others always results in more personal opportunities" (p. 18).

Wright (2004) also highlighted the competitiveness of the art world, noting that many forms of art are still produced as physical objects in galleries and museums. He observed that artists often collaborate strategically to achieve their own goals rather than cooperatively. To foster authentic collaboration, Wright introduced the concept of "competence-crossing" (p. 537),

which creates opportunities for deep, reciprocal engagement without the need to reclaim one's artistic credentials. Instead, it emphasizes the combination of complementary skills that support and enhance each participant's abilities.

Sanker (2012), Fischer (2006), and Wright (2004) have shown both the value and the challenges of collaboration in the arts and beyond. Their work highlighted not only the benefits of collaborative practice but also the structural barriers that make sustainable, long-term collaboration difficult. These studies prompt us to consider why we collaborate and how we can foster meaningful and sustainable relationships through collaboration. The goal should not be limited to simply navigating the competitive landscape of the art world; rather, collaboration should be seen as a way to nurture ongoing creative practices and sustain critical dialogue across disciplines and communities.

Summary: Problems and Questions That Arose from the Literature Review

This review provided an overview of the efforts that have been made to adjust the teaching of artists and highlight key challenges artists face after graduation. It also examined how shared studios, artist-run spaces, and residencies support their development. Further, it highlighted the essential roles of networks and collaboration between artists in sustaining artistic practice, reflecting on what studios have meant to artists from the past to the present.

However, a significant gap in the literature remains: While studio spaces are commonly understood as essential sites for artistic production, how might the dynamics of shared environments prompt us to reconsider what a 'studio' can be? Could a studio be understood not only as a physical space for making art but also as a social space, a site of encounter, dialogue, and community? In what ways do these collaborative dynamics expand early-career artists' professional networks and contribute to more sustainable creative practices? How might such

elements be integrated into educational programs to prepare artists not only to produce work but also to engage with and contribute to artistic communities after graduation? These questions open up important directions for understanding how shared spaces shape the postgraduation experiences of emerging artists.

To investigate these dynamics, this study adopted a qualitative methodology grounded in semi-structured interviews with six early-career artists who have engaged with various types of shared studio spaces, including private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and residencies. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the complex, relational, and situated ways in which shared environments shape artists' trajectories during the transitional phase following graduation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study aimed to understand the limitations and benefits of shared studio space for early-career artists in sustaining their creative practices. Specifically, it examined three types of shared studios: private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and artist residencies. To evaluate how artists progress in these environments, the research primarily drew on interviews that explored both past and current experiences. In addition, photo documentation served as visual data to complement the textual findings. Using a qualitative cross-case study approach, this study identified the unique characteristics and complexities of each shared studio space and analyzed how artists engaged with them throughout their creative development.

This chapter revisits the research question introduced in Chapter 1, serving as a reminder to readers. It also presents the rationale behind the methodology, provides an overview of the research sites, describes the participants, and outlines the methodological approach.

Research Question

Given the challenges that early-career artists face in sustaining their artistic practice after graduation, what can be learned from the experiences of six early-career artists working in shared studios?

Subquestions

- What are the key affordances, limitations, and values that early-career artists encounter in shared studio spaces?
- What forms of support do early-career artists receive during and after college, and how do these supports influence their experiences during the postgraduation transition?

- What strategies do early-career artists develop to navigate the challenges of the postgraduation transition, and how are these strategies shaped or supported by shared studio environments?
- What role can art education play in preparing early-career artists to navigate postgraduation transitions by incorporating shared studio environments?

Rationale for Methodology

In-depth interviews focus on individuals' lived experiences and personal narratives (Marshall et al., 2021). Through interviews, this study gathered insights into the use of shared studios, their limitations, and the artists' efforts to build peer networks that support sustainability in artistic practices. Marshall et al. (2021) argued that in-depth interviews are a powerful tool to uncover the essence of shared experiences among individuals in similar circumstances. They emphasized that such shared experiences can be analyzed as valuable phenomena and compared to extract core characteristics. Consequently, a qualitative case study approach using in-depth interviews was selected to explore how shared studio environments support early-career artists to sustain their practices.

By asking detailed questions about participants' experiences, similarities and differences in the use of shared studio spaces were identified. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were particularly appropriate for this study because they allowed for tailored questions based on participants' backgrounds, studio types, and career stages. The interview structure was developed considering the following three criteria:

1. Past and present experiences: Following Seidman's (2019) recommendation, participants were asked about their past and present experiences to understand how they have developed their careers as artists.

2. Shared studio experiences: This part of the interview examined participants' specific experiences in their respective shared studios. Adopting a "traveler's" attitude, as described by Marshall et al. (2021, p. 160), the study followed participants' narratives to capture unique experiences.
3. Networking, values, and limitations of shared studios: The final section explored the perceived value of shared studios and the role of artist networks in sustaining artistic practices. It also revealed some of the unsuccessful experiences associated with shared studio use.

Based on the structure, the interview questions were developed using insights from the review of relevant literature, a preliminary case study, and considerations of each artist's career trajectory. Each interview was semi-structured and tailored to the specific studio types and circumstances of the participants. This approach enabled close engagement with the artists, allowing for the collection of detailed accounts of their lived experiences.

Careful listening helped identify key moments and challenges that contributed to their confidence and creativity as well as the barriers and difficulties they encountered. Finally, strategies for overcoming these obstacles in the development of artistic careers were examined.

Sites

Shared studios were central to the research question because this study examined the diverse ways in which these spaces shape the experiences of early-career artists. They were accessible and affordable options for early-career artists, offering opportunities for collaboration and networking. To examine how artists built networks and utilized them within these spaces, three specific types of shared studio environments, which were commonly found in the field, were selected: (a) private shared studios, (b) artist-run spaces, and (c) artist residencies.

These three types of shared studios have been identified as environments where artists engage and collaborate with one another (Blessi et al., 2011; Bowles, 2016; Cook, 2016; Dudi & Choudhary, 2011; Ferreri & Graziano, 2014; Lee et al., 2018; Nishimura et al., 2017; Paulus & Lejeune, 2012; Pinto et al., 2020; Rech, 2018; Sooudi, 2020). Dividing them into private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and public residency studios allowed for a closer look at how varying degrees of formality, structure, and purpose influence artists' experiences. Each type represented a different approach to working collectively, prompting questions about how artists negotiate with one another, find support, and develop strategies. Together, these examples helped build a broader understanding of how shared space, collective structure, and relationships shape the ways artists develop their creative practices.

Private Shared Studios

Private shared studios are the most common type of workspace for early-career artists after graduation. These studios function as organic environments where artists create paintings, sculptures, and other forms of art. In this study, private shared studios were defined as spaces managed by individual artists who are responsible for rent and operational costs. Unlike artist residencies, private shared studios do not require competitive applications or external funding. Instead, artists had to find reliable peers to share the space.

Because these studios often operated on the foundation of friendship, effective communication, negotiation, and collaboration among studio members were essential. Potential studio partners included friends from BFA or MFA programs, high schools, local art communities, or even connections formed through online platforms (Hannon, 2014; Saarinen & Krueger, 2022).

Artist-Run Spaces

Artist-run spaces served as alternative platforms for artists to establish their careers. These spaces were defined as exhibition venues operated by artists, prioritizing the presentation of artworks over their creation. Managed and funded by individuals or small groups, artist-run spaces frequently hosted exhibitions, seminars, and workshops, fostering engagement with local communities and providing networking opportunities with other artists and industry professionals (Puletti et al., 2024; Tunnikmah et al., 2023).

Compared to private shared studios, artist-run spaces were more publicly accessible, offering greater opportunities for building professional networks and cultivating a sense of community among practitioners.

Artist Residencies

Artist residencies were structured programs that provided artists with both workspace and accommodation. While some residencies operated privately, many programs were managed by art institutions such as colleges, museums, or arts councils. Admission typically involved a competitive application process, making acceptance a significant milestone in an artist's career development (Arredondo, 2021; Neuendorf, 2016).

Residencies were generally short-term, lasting between 3 and 12 months, and were designed to support artistic growth. These programs often incorporated professional development activities, including writing workshops, one-on-one critiques, open studios, experimental projects, and opportunities for solo exhibitions.

Participants

For this study, artists who were transitioning from the early-career to mid-career stage were invited to share their lived experiences. The aim was to understand the challenges they

faced, how they managed those challenges, and how they reached a stage where they could sustain their practice more stably. To ensure this, each participant met the following criteria:

- at least 2 years of experience using a specific type of shared studio; and
- artists who were consistently producing work and actively participating in group exhibitions and other forms of art events.

Two artists were selected from each of the three types of shared studios. To protect the rights and privacy of the participants, the names of the artists and the spaces they manage have been anonymized and replaced with numerical identifiers. Additionally, the six participants introduced in this section of the dissertation were different from the artists presented in the preliminary case study.

Table 1 presents a glossary of the abbreviations used throughout the study relating to artists and their spaces.

Table 1

Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
A1-A6	Artist No. 1 through Artist No. 6 (pseudonyms for participants)
S1 & S2	Artist-run spaces run by Artist No. 3
S3 & S4	Artist-run spaces run by Artist No. 4
E1	Education center run by Artist No. 4
R1, R2, & R3	Artist residencies in which Artist No. 5 participated
R4, R5, & R6	Artist residencies in which Artist No. 6 participated

Artists Who Are Using or Have Used Private Shared Studios

Artist No. 1 (A1). This artist is a painter who had utilized private shared studios for 5 years, relocating multiple times due to changes in her career, artistic practice, and relationships with studio members. Initially, she shared a studio with an artist she knew, along with some college friends. However, she later collaborated with new studio mates with whom she had no prior relationship. Her primary medium was painting, although she also engaged in commissioned work.

Artist No. 2 (A2). A painter, this artist had worked in private shared studios for over 3 years, initially near his college and later in Seoul's Euljiro district. He shared the space with five friends from his undergraduate program. In his early 30, he actively participated in exhibitions in the area while working alone in his father's studio. More recently, he and a colleague relocated their studio to a suburban area outside the city to secure a larger space suitable for creating large-scale paintings.

Artists Who Are Running or Have Run an Artist-Run Space

Artist No. 3 (A3). This artist works with traditional Korean painting materials, has been managing an artist-run space since 2018, and has recently expanded by opening a second exhibition venue. The primary objective of Space No. 1 (S1) was to provide opportunities for artistic experimentation and to broaden the contextual frameworks of artists' works. In 2022, she established a second space in another area of the city, named Space No. 2 (S2).

Artist No. 4 (A4). This artist is a painter who has managed two artist-run spaces. The first space, Space No. 3 (S3), was located on the east side of the city, functioned as an experimental space for early-career artists. The second space, Space No. 4 (S4), was situated on

the west side of Seoul in the Hongdae district. S4 operated as a more professional exhibition venue and educational space, offering classes to individuals interested in learning art.

Artists Who Are in or Were in Artist Residency Programs

Artist No. 5 (A5). This artist had his first residency experience, Residency No. 1 (R1), in 2010. Since then, he has participated in two additional residencies, Residency No. 2 (R2) in 2022 and Residency No. 3 (R3) in 2023. At the time of the study, he did not have a dedicated studio but was considering establishing a space that would function both as a workspace and as a venue for engaging and communicating with peer artists and friends. His practice spanned multiple media and explored the meanings of words, instructions, repetition, exhibition spaces, and immateriality.

Artist No. 6 (A6). This artist primarily worked with new media, including video, sound, and installation. His first artist residency experience was in 2014 at Residency No. 4 (R4). Since then, he has participated in two other residencies in Seoul, Residency No. 5 (R5) and Residency No. 6 (R6). All of the residencies he joined were publicly funded programs hosted by art institutions. In addition to his residency experiences, he had also carried out large-scale commissioned projects in open spaces, incorporating site-specific elements. At the time of the study, he was participating in a private artist residency managed by an art foundation in the city.

Defining Early-Career Artists

One of the largest funding sources in Seoul is the Seoul Foundation for Art and Culture. To provide more opportunities for early-career artists and reduce the stress of competition, the foundation defines early-career artists as those within the first 5 years of their careers (Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture, n.d.-a). This rule was established to protect opportunities for early-career artists from having to compete with those who have more professional experience

and connections in the field. In this dissertation, early-career artists were defined as those who have just completed their education and are entering the professional art field. The participants in this study were mostly artists transitioning from the early-career to mid-career stage in order to reflect on and understand their past and present experiences.

Location of the Research

This study involved six early-career artists based in Seoul, a city with growing global significance in the contemporary art world. The reason for inviting artists who were based in this area stemmed from my own engagement with the city's art scene. The experiences gave me firsthand insight into the complex realities of studio management, collaboration, and artistic labor, and I was interested in how other emerging artists navigate similar dynamics in a rapidly evolving, globally connected cultural hub.

Another reason for inviting artists who were based in this region was that, in recent years, several global art galleries and investment firms have established a presence in the city. Notably, internationally renowned galleries such as Pace Gallery and White Cube, along with other mega-galleries, have opened branches in the city. Additionally, the launch of the Frieze art fair in this region underscored the art scene's growing significance in the global art market. However, the notion of the market here is not intended to suggest that the artists' trajectories are judged by it, but rather to provide contextual background for where this research took place.

Beyond the expansion of the private sector, the city benefits from substantial public support for the arts, including funding for exhibitions and art projects. The Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture conducts an annual open call for local-based artists, allocating more than 130 billion won (approximately $91 million USD) in funding for artist projects each year (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2024). This combination of private markets and public funding may

create a fertile environment for early-career artists to establish and develop their professional practices. However, the city's thriving art scene also fosters intense competition, presenting both opportunities and challenges for emerging artists.

The city's unique combination of resources, institutional support, and competitive dynamics provided a dynamic context for understanding the trajectories of the participating artists. Rather than limiting the findings to the functions of shared studios, it offered a broader perspective on how early-career artists navigate and sustain their practices within the wider art ecosystem.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews and photographic documentation of studio spaces. These methods provided insight into the artists' lived experiences and captured how their studios function as spaces for artistic production and networking.

In-depth Interviews

Verbal data were gathered through in-depth interviews conducted in the participants' studio spaces. Each interview lasted up to 90 minutes and was recorded with participant consent using the Clevernote app. Additionally, key points and emerging themes were documented through field notes to highlight significant aspects of the discussions. The field notes were taken during the interviews while the participants were speaking. Keywords that emerged during the conversations were highlighted and later used to identify initial codes.

The interview transcripts, originally in Korean, were translated into English using the Papago app. After translation, transcripts were reviewed and corrected for accuracy before being

shared with participants for verification. This process ensured that participants could add further details or request the removal of any content they found sensitive or inaccurate.

The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews was to gather personal stories that reflected broader social, cultural, and institutional dynamics to allow for open-ended, nuanced results. The aim was to gain deep insights into each artist's career development, struggles, and coping strategies. To capture the complexity of each participant's practice, a semi-structured interview format was used (see Appendix A). However, this approach could sometimes steer the conversation in certain directions. To minimize this and reduce researcher bias, the interview questions were carefully designed to remain neutral, open-ended, and flexible, encouraging participants to guide the discussion based on their own experiences and perspectives.

Photo Documentation

Photographic documentation served as a secondary data collection method, providing visual insights into how artists managed and organized their shared studio spaces. Creswell (2016) stated that "photography captures a moment or event in extraordinary detail and further depth to the data" (p. 173). The images captured how participants allocated and negotiated shared areas, distinguished between production and exhibition spaces, and utilized communal areas for conversation, collaboration, and networking.

Photographs were taken using a smartphone camera and were subsequently transferred to a secure storage device to ensure data protection. To safeguard participants' privacy and maintain data confidentiality, all images were permanently deleted from the original device after transfer.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Schlossberg's (1984) 4S Transition Theory and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to examine the experiences of artists in shared studio spaces. The 4S framework is an adult transition theory that helps to explain how individuals manage and adapt to different stages of life. It provides a theoretical lens to examine who the person was, what situation they faced, and how they coped with the challenges of transition. The 4S Framework focuses on four key factors: *Self, Situation, Support*, and *Strategies*.

In more detail about the 4S model, *Self* refers to the personal characteristics and resources an individual brings to a situation, including socioeconomic status, gender, age, health, psychological conditions, and self-efficacy. *Situation* encompasses an individual's prior experiences, stress levels, and perception of their circumstances. *Support* highlights the role of social networks, such as intimate relationships, family, friends, and community, in providing affirmation, assistance, and constructive feedback. *Strategy* describes the coping mechanisms individuals employ to manage stress, including assessing the situation, reframing perspectives, and engaging in proactive actions such as optimistic thinking (Schlossberg et al., 2022).

The 4S model offered an overview perspective that helped to map individual responses and coping strategies during periods of change. This theory was chosen because it offers a framework for understanding how adults navigate challenges during life transitions. Examples of such transitions include college graduation, retirement, divorce, and career changes (Goodman et al., 2006). The experiences of the six artists in this study were closely aligned with the graduation and career planning transitions described in the 4S model. By applying the 4S lens, their transitions and coping strategies can be better understood. However, the theory focuses primarily on individual aspects of coping and does not adequately address the influence of

cultural barriers or systemic issues within society. As a result, ANT was employed to identify the external factors that impacted the participants. Additionally, the *Self* in the 4S model centers on personal and demographic characteristics, offering limited insight into an individual's deep emotional experiences or trauma. This presents a limitation in fully understanding the interpersonal and psychological complexity of transitions. Moreover, the artists' engagement with transition was neither linear nor singular, but rather repetitive and multifaceted. To capture the broader scope of their experiences, the 4S framework had to be applied iteratively and in a nonlinear manner, reflecting the evolving and dynamic nature of their transitions.

Complementing this, ANT provided a broader perspective by analyzing interactions between human and nonhuman actors, such as institutions, technology, materials, and social networks, highlighting how these interconnected elements shape artistic careers. It proposed that phenomena result from complex, multilayered networks where sociological and technological elements carry equal weight.

Sayes (2013) explored the concept of nonhumans as actors, defining them as entities such as "animals, natural phenomena, tools and technical artifacts, material structures, transportation devices, texts, and economic goods" (p. 136). Nonhumans acted as mediators, influencing and shaping human interactions by collectively delivering actions within networks. Examples included tools like air pumps, sword blades, invoices, and digital technologies (Sayes, 2013). Wei (2023) extended this perspective to digital tools, examining how applications like health codes in China functioned as actors that influenced societal behavior. She highlighted how digitalized tools, such as mobile apps, acted as mediators, reshaping social interactions and reflecting interdependent and antagonistic relationships in digitalized spaces (Wei, 2023). This dissertation also built on these perspectives by considering the role of contemporary digital tools,

particularly smartphones and social networking platforms like Instagram, in reshaping human connectivity, professional visibility, and self-presentation within artistic communities.

The data were initially coded based on field memos taken during the interviews, and later organized according to the categories of the 4S framework and ANT. This approach enabled the identification of patterns and variations in how participants coped with transitions and the external factors that influenced their experiences. This coding approach facilitated a deeper understanding of individual experiences. To identify themes, the codes were applied in a cross-case analysis to uncover recurring concerns and strategies across different cases. This process offered insight into common themes while detecting the uniqueness of each artist's lived experience. Additionally, the use of multiple theoretical frameworks, data-driven codings, and cross-case analysis helped reduce potential researcher bias.

Researcher's Position, Reflexivity, and Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2016) stated that "in qualitative research, it is imperative that researchers engage in the process of self-reflection on how personal biases may affect the project" (p. 146). This study emerged from my experience working in shared studios, which raised questions about studio management, interpersonal dynamics, career development, and networking within the Seoul art scene since 2014. While these prior experiences provided valuable insights and contextual awareness, they also introduced the potential for confirmation bias in interpreting the value of shared studios as well as selection bias in the recruitment of participants. To mitigate researcher bias, careful protocols were established for participant selection, interview design, and the data analysis process. Additionally, I believe that success should not be defined solely by market visibility or institutional exhibitions. Instead, I see success as the ability to continue one's creative practice and maintain a sense of inner well-being.

First, the interviewees were selected based on the criteria outlined in the participant section: (a) at least 2 years of experience using a specific type of shared studio; and (b) active engagement in art-making, including regular participation in group exhibitions and other art-related events. Considering the criteria, the participants came to my attention through their active use of shared studios. A1 and A2 are painters who used privately shared studio spaces and often posted open calls for studio mates and promoted various events happening in their studios. A3 and A4 are artists I encountered through their exhibitions and involvement in artist-run space activities, which I had been observing through their Instagram posts. They frequently shared updates about events and shows held in their spaces. A5 and A6 are artists who have been involved in artist residencies since such programs first emerged in the local art scene. Both have participated in multiple residencies throughout the surrounding metropolitan area over time.

The participants were invited via email, providing them with background information about the research and a general outline of the interview questions. To avoid researcher confirmation bias, I carefully designed the questions to remain neutral and not lead participants toward specific responses. The interviews were structured in three parts, with additional questions asked during the conversations as needed. Follow-up questions were also sent via email and incorporated into the dataset. The collected data were systematically coded by memos and analyzed using two theoretical frameworks, allowing for a reflexive approach and helping to minimize researcher bias throughout the analysis process.

Additionally, to ensure the privacy and protection of interviewees, this study followed the ethical guidelines established by the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (TC IRB). Adhering to these protocols safeguarded participants' rights and upheld the researcher's ethical responsibilities. All recorded information was anonymized to prevent the identification of

participants, minimizing potential risks to their privacy, employability, educational opportunities, or reputation. Participants' names and studio spaces were replaced with labels to maintain confidentiality and encourage open, honest discussions. Consent was obtained for recording interviews, using transcripts, and storing data securely on a protected device (see Appendix B).

Summary

This study employed a qualitative cross-case study approach to explore how early-career artists established sustainability in their practice within shared studio environments. Focusing on private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and artist residencies in Seoul, I examined the challenges artists faced after graduation, the impact of shared spaces on artistic continuity, and external factors that influenced career trajectories.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with six artists (two from each studio type) and photo documentation of their workspaces. Interviews, conducted in Korean and later translated into English, focused on participants' experiences, their studio environments, and the role of networking in sustaining their artistic practice. The 4S Transition Theory and ANT were applied to analyze both individual career transitions and the broader art ecosystem.

Ethical considerations were ensured through IRB protocols, with participant anonymity and data protection prioritized. Additionally, the research design was carefully structured to identify potential sources of researcher bias and implement strategies to mitigate them. The following chapter presents a detailed analysis of each artist's interview, followed by cross-case themes that emerged throughout the research process.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents an analysis of interview data using Schlossberg's 4S framework and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to explore early-career artists' transitions from college to professional life. The 4S framework offered insight into how artists coped with challenges and developed strategies within shared studio environments. In contrast, ANT allowed for an examination of broader networks, including nonhuman actors such as institutions, technologies, and environments. Together, these frameworks provided a multidimensional understanding of how individual experiences were shaped by both personal and systemic factors.

Using both frameworks together made it possible to capture a range of themes that appeared during the interviews. Part I begins with an overview of each artist's trajectory. The 4S framework was used to identify internal coping processes in shared spaces, while ANT was used to map external relational networks with the location of the study. This dual coding approach enabled the identification of both personal strategies and the broader social and institutional structures influencing artistic careers. In Part II, these codes were used in the cross-case analysis to identify common themes as well as differences across individual cases. Part II expands on the findings through a comparative approach, providing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of early-career artists and revealing four key themes:

- Common difficulties encountered in early careers;
- The support and supporters in their journey;
- How artists managed each type of shared studio; and
- Strategies developed within shared studio environments.

Together, the 4S framework and ANT provided a comprehensive approach to analyzing the cases, offering a multilayered perspective of the artists' trajectories. This approach revealed

how shared studios, personal relationships, and institutional support systems interacted to form complex networks that shaped their transitions from college into postgraduate life.

Part I: Overview of the Trajectories of the Six Artists and Analysis of Actors

During their interviews, the six participants shared unique experiences in their journey to becoming artists. Every participant had different backgrounds and assets, showing that each artist had their own way of becoming an artist. However, by examining their experiences in three different types of studios, it was possible to observe how different spatial structures influenced both the personal and professional trajectories of emerging artists. Visual charts for each artist are included at the beginning of their overview to support the complex trajectory of each artist and to show how the 4S framework was applied in the data analysis.

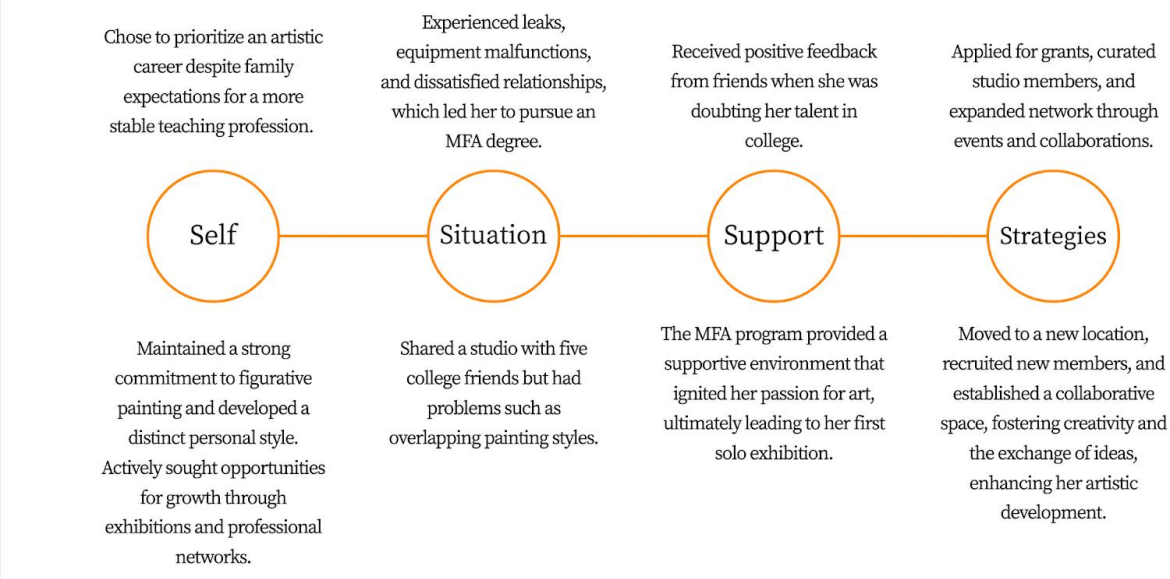
Artists Who Are Using and Have Used Private Shared Studios

This section examines the experiences of two artists who have used private shared studios extensively throughout their careers. Both artists have had experience using a shared studio in their college. Artist No. 1 (A1) worked in three different shared studios after graduation. Artist No. 2 (A2) began working in his father's home as a studio, later transitioning to college studios and multiple private shared studios.

A1. A1 is a female figurative painter known for her imaginative, animated characters. She began her career in 2016 with her first solo exhibition after navigating a challenging educational journey, which included attending an art high school, college, and graduate school. Throughout her career, she has worked in three shared studio spaces, each presenting challenges and opportunities. Her initial experience in a college studio was unsatisfying, but she also received encouragement from friends. See Figure 1 for A1's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 1

Overview of A1's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model

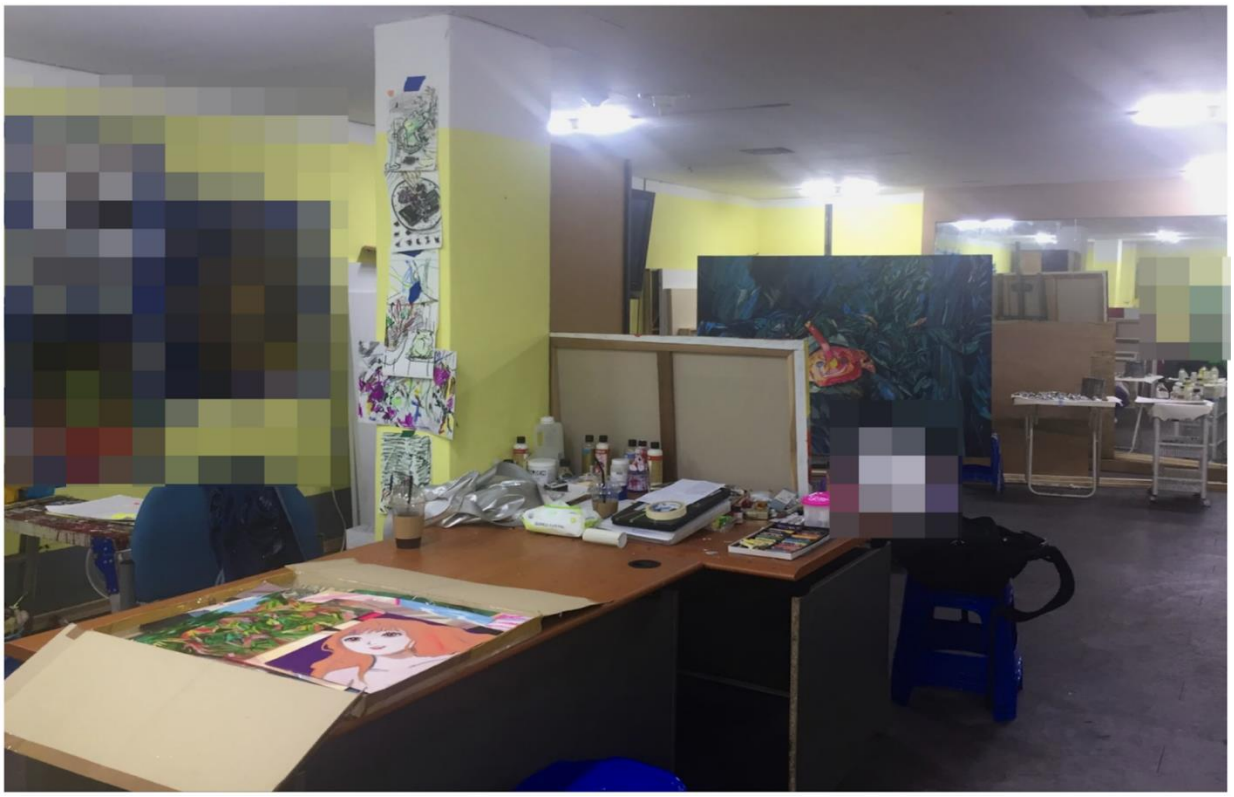


A1's first studio experience after school came with several difficulties, including leaks due to its basement-level location, equipment malfunctions caused by high levels of moisture, and eventually loss of trust, which led to the end of the relationship. This experience led her to pursue an MFA degree. The program provided a supportive environment that ignited her passion for art, ultimately leading to her first solo exhibition.

A1's second shared studio (see Figure 2) was in Gwangjin-gu, near her college, and she shared it with college friends; however, she faced challenges such as overlapping painting styles. Since they were close friends and shared similar interests, their themes and painting styles gradually became similar, which caused tension and stress among the artists. Consequently, the studio was dissolved, and they had to find another space.

Figure 2

View of A1's Second Shared Studio



A1 developed personal strategies to navigate financial challenges, particularly after losing her parents' financial support when she chose not to pursue a career as an art teacher. To sustain herself, she took on multiple part-time jobs to cover studio rent and material costs, although this proved financially and creatively unsatisfying. As a result, she applied for various art grants and open calls, successfully securing exhibition funding from the Seoul Art Foundation for her first solo show. This financial support allowed her to focus more on her artistic practice. Additionally, she participated in an artist network program hosted by an art foundation, which helped her expand her professional connections. She engaged with other artists through workshops and casual networking events, fostering a collaborative community.

A1's experiences in shared studio spaces have shown mixed results. While she benefited from peer feedback in her college studio, her first two shared studios after graduation presented challenges. In her current studio, she adopted a more strategic approach by conducting an open call to curate a group of artists. Eventually, she formed a cohesive working environment with a sculptor and an illustrator, leading to a harmonious and mutually beneficial collaboration. With the support of their extended networks, she hosted events and connected with art professionals. The availability of grants further facilitated these networking opportunities.

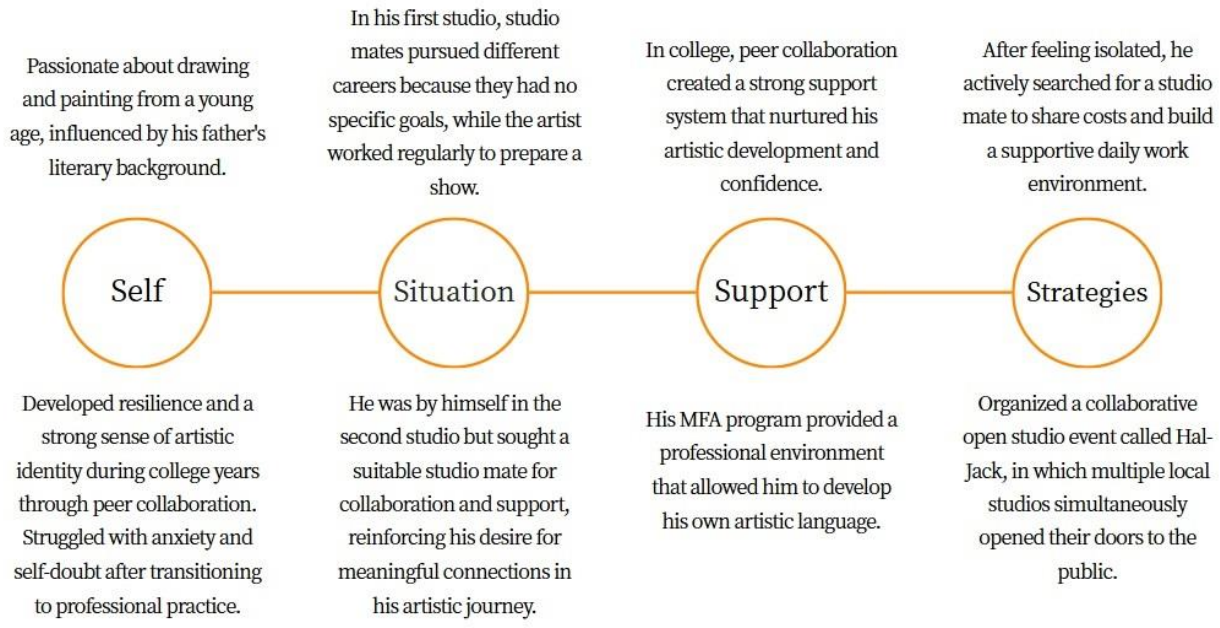
A2. A2 is a male artist in his early thirties with a passion for drawing and painting. His father, a Korean literature teacher, heavily influenced his artistic journey. He began painting as a hobby in his father's home and gradually transitioned through various studio spaces, including communal studios during college and his own studios after graduation. While in college, he was deeply inspired by his peers, enjoying the collaborative atmosphere that nurtured his artistic growth. After graduation, he shared a studio with four friends; however, as many of his classmates pursued other careers because they did not have a clear goal. Finally, this shared studio only lasted for a year. This transition motivated him to attend graduate school, where he refined his skills and developed a more professional approach to art through practical coursework. After completing his studies, he transformed his father's former office into a larger studio, continuing his ongoing commitment to creating art while searching for a suitable studio mate.

A2 also experienced anxiety and stress while working as an assistant to a renowned artist, which led to health issues and a sense of losing his creative identity. While graduate school helped him expand his network and refine his theoretical understanding of art, he struggled with isolation and limited opportunities within the art scene. Working alone in a private studio further

deepened his feelings of solitude, diminishing his productivity and motivation. Consequently, he sought a suitable studio mate for collaboration and support, reinforcing his desire for meaningful connections in his artistic journey. See Figure 3 for A2's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 3

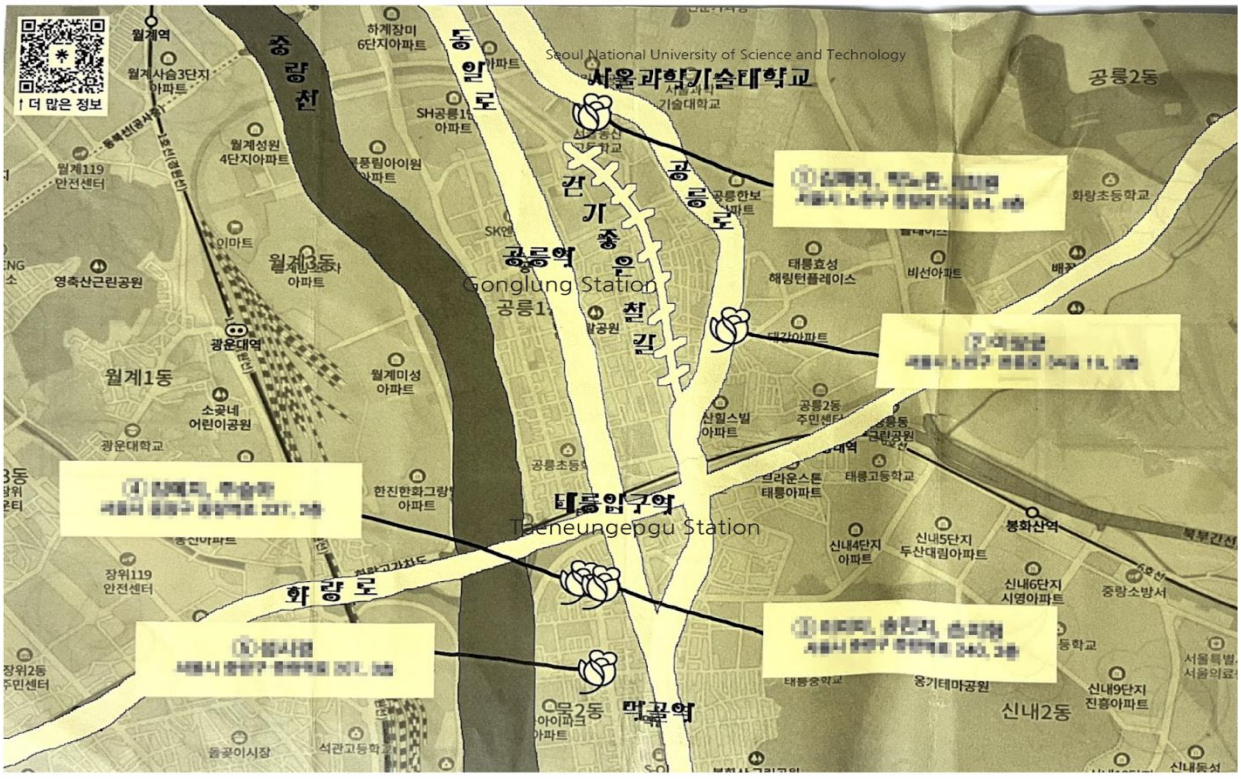
Overview of A2's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model



A2 actively sought connections with fellow graduates facing similar challenges. As a response, he organized a collaborative open studio event called *Hal-Jack*, in which multiple local studios simultaneously opened their doors to the public (see map in Figure 4). The event attracted a larger audience than anticipated, supported by social media outreach. The event facilitated meaningful conversations between artists and visitors. Due to the event's success, A2 and his friends were later invited by the local government to participate in an art fair, which provided further exposure and potential sales opportunities. However, despite recognizing the benefits of working independently, A2 sought a studio mate to reduce financial burdens and enhance community engagement.

Figure 4

A Map of the Open Studio "Hal-Jack"



Artists Who Are Running or Have Run an Artist-Run Space

This section introduces two artists with experience managing artist-run spaces, which differ from private shared studios by emphasizing exhibitions and programs. While these spaces often begin as workspaces for creating art, they are eventually transformed into platforms for hosting exhibitions, social events, and community programs.

The following describes the experiences of two artists managing artist-run spaces in Seoul. Artist No. 3 (A3) has been running an artist-run space since 2018 and now manages two such spaces in the city. Artist No. 4 (A4) co-established her first space in 2012 and the second in 2015, focusing primarily on educational programs led by multiple artists rather than traditional exhibitions.

A3. A3 is an artist in her early 30s who manages two artist-run spaces while actively engaging in residencies and exhibitions. Her passion for painting began in childhood, and in college, she explored various materials before developing an interest in traditional Korean painting. Although her coursework focused on technical skills, a Visual Discovery class broadened her artistic perspective and solidified her career aspirations.

Throughout her career, A3 has struggled with isolation. Her college curriculum emphasized traditional techniques over contemporary art, limiting her exposure to the evolving art scene. After graduation, she worked as an administrator and took tutoring jobs to support herself while sharing a studio with separate rooms, which isolated her from fellow artists. Seeking more connection, A3 relocated to Euljiro, a creative hub in the city center, but found networking challenging due to her introverted nature.

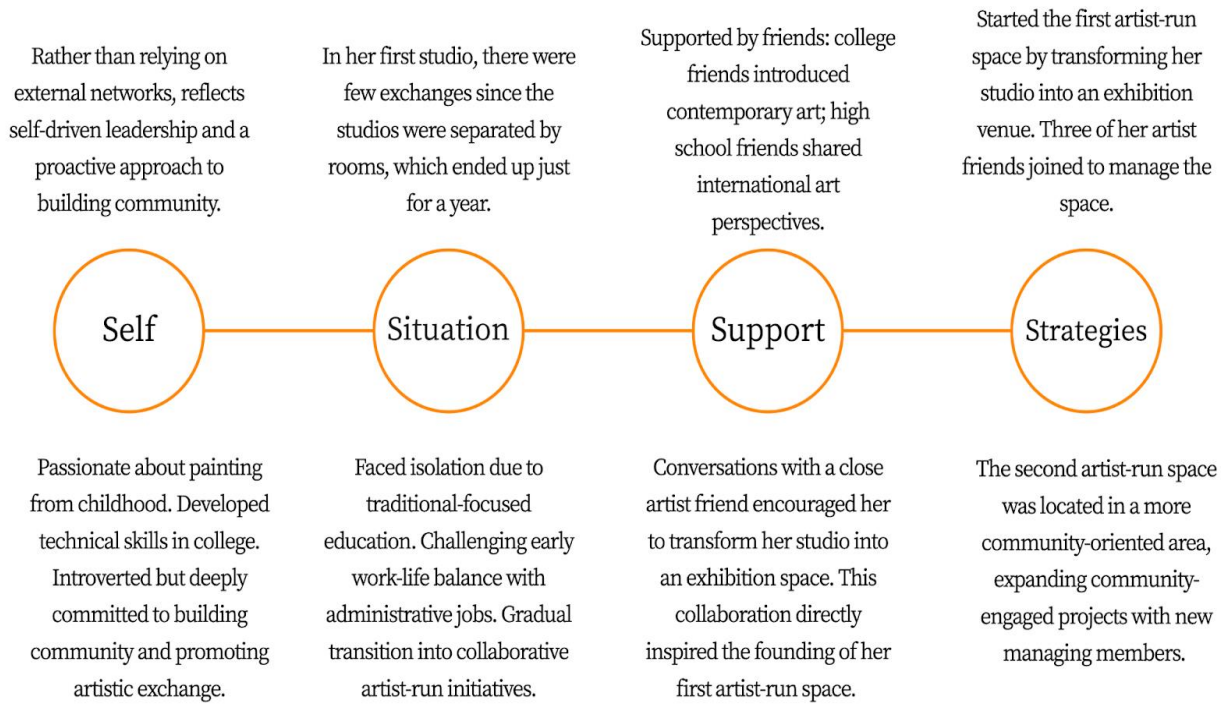
A3's most meaningful support came from friends. A college friend introduced her to contemporary art events, while high school friends studying abroad provided insights into the

international art world. A pivotal moment came when, while preparing for her first solo exhibition, conversations with an artist friend led to transforming her studio into an extension of the show. This experience deepened her artistic connections and inspired her to establish her first artist-run space.

Rather than seeking out networks, A3 invited artists to her studio. In 2018, she converted her space into an exhibition venue, which evolved into a collaborative initiative with three friends, hosting exhibitions and workshops to foster experimentation. Over 4 years, their collective explored sustainable and alternative models for artist-run spaces. See Figure 5 for A3's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 5

Overview of A3's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model



In 2021, A3 co-founded a second artist-run space, expanding programming to include workshops, open calls, and interdisciplinary projects (see Figure 6). Their initiatives engaged broader audiences, incorporated international exchanges, and emphasized traditional Korean materials. They also invited guest artists for specialized projects and created an archival website to document their work.

Through these efforts, A3 has built platforms that promote artistic exchange and collaboration. Her spaces have become vital hubs for creativity, reinforcing the importance of artist-led initiatives in fostering a dynamic and inclusive art community.

Figure 6

Exterior of the Second Artist-Run Space (S2)

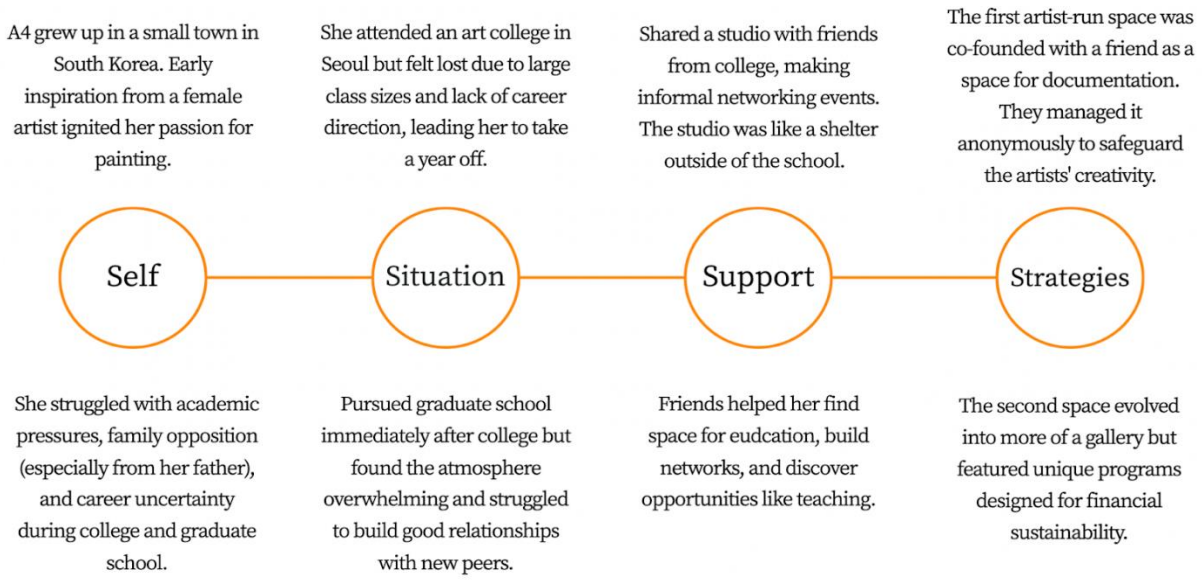
A4. A4, a female painter in her late 30s, has exhibited her work in the city and co-founded two artist-run spaces. Growing up in a small southern town in South Korea, A4 was inspired by a female artist who taught art to her. Although A4 briefly prioritized academics in

high school, counseling sessions reignited her passion for art, with support from her mother and despite her father's opposition. A4 attended an art college in Seoul, where large class sizes and career uncertainty led her to take a year off. However, this break reaffirmed her love for painting and solidified her commitment to becoming an artist.

A4 faced challenges in building relationships and achieving self-sufficiency. In college, she relied on peer exchanges for learning, drawing inspiration from students in different majors. After graduation, she pursued an MFA but struggled to connect with new peers and found the studio environment distracting, prompting her to seek a space outside of school. She also observed that many of her friends faced difficulties launching their careers due to limited exhibition opportunities and financial instability. A4 highlighted the competitive nature of the art scene, where many of her peers were unprepared for the realities of sustaining an artistic practice. See Figure 7 for A4's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 7

Overview of A4's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model



Friends played a crucial role in A4's artistic journey. While in graduate school, she shared a studio with former classmates, creating a supportive and collaborative environment. They organized informal open studios, fostering a sense of community. In 2014, a friend introduced A4 to a group of engineers interested in art. They provided A4 a classroom space, allowing her to expand her teaching opportunities without financial burden. Over the past decade, A4 has successfully run an education center in her own space (see Figure 8), inviting artists to teach and supporting both instructors and students. This initiative has helped sustain many artists' careers and fostered a dynamic network.

Through her practice, A4 co-founded two artist-run spaces. The first, launched in 2012, provided a communal environment for artists to experiment with their work in a low-pressure setting. In 2017, she co-founded a second space with a more gallery-like format, hosting exhibitions and events, including Taste View, a program that displayed artists' works in cabinets for storytelling and sales. Although these spaces faced challenges in attracting broader audiences and financial sustainability, public funding helped maintain some part of their operations.

Through her artist-run spaces and education initiatives, A4 has created platforms supporting artistic exchange, collaboration, and sustainability, rethinking the importance of artist-led initiatives in contemporary art.

Artists in an Artist Residency Program

This section examines two artists who have participated in artist residency programs, spaces designed for artists to live and create for a set period. Unlike shared studios or artist-run spaces, artist residencies offer accommodations alongside studio facilities, fostering an immersive environment for creative development. In South Korea, such residencies are often

Figure 8

View of Artist No. 4's Education Studio (E1)

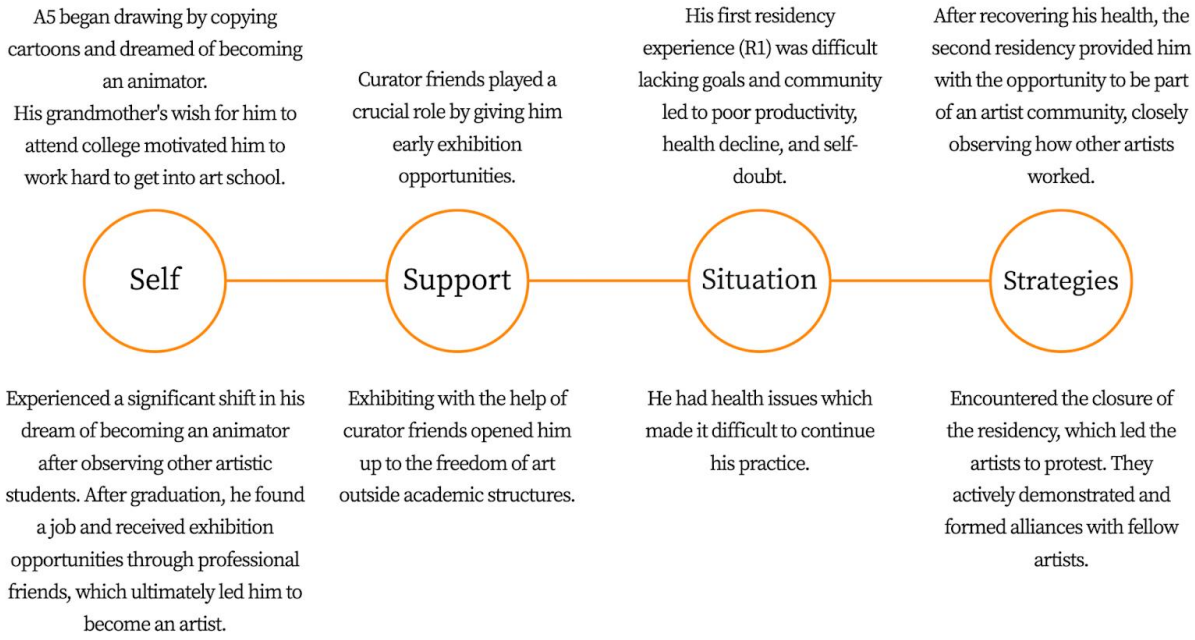
funded by public institutions like art museums and cultural foundations. These programs typically run for a year for domestic artists and 3 months for international participants, bringing together practitioners from diverse backgrounds.

A5. A5 is a male artist in his early 40s who explores themes of language, instructions, and exhibition spaces. His artistic journey began in childhood by copying cartoons, initially aspiring to become an animator. However, following his grandmother's wish for him to attend college, he worked intensively to gain admission to an art school. In college, A5 experienced cultural shock among talented peers and was dissatisfied with uninspired professors. Despite this, his residency experiences and relationships with other artists shaped his practice, and at the time when the interview was held, A5 was seeking to create his own collaborative space.

After college, A5 worked in various roles, including assisting at an alternative art space and coordinating an international cartoon festival. Uncertain about pursuing art professionally, he gained motivation when curator friends invited A5 to exhibit his work, exposing him to creative freedom outside academia. This experience led him to graduate school, where he deepened his understanding of contemporary art theory; later, he participated in a group exhibition at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. After his graduate studies, he joined his first residency, R1, hoping for creative growth. However, without clear goals and minimal interaction with peers, A5 struggled with productivity and felt he had wasted the opportunity. There were health issues in his progress, leading to a decline. During this period, he turned to teaching, which helped restore his well-being and creativity. After nearly a decade away from the art world, he returned with renewed curiosity, inspired by his students and other artists' contemporary practices. See Figure 9 for A5's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 9

Overview of A5's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model



To reconnect with the art community, A5 applied to the residencies with a clear goal and engaged actively with fellow artists. Unlike his earlier experience, he found a supportive structure facilitating collaboration and idea exchange. He expanded his practice through workshops and projects, including a walking performance documented by peers, deepening his understanding of collaboration. A5 also experimented with residency dynamics by transforming his studio into a "private" space, challenging traditional structures (see Figure 10). However, when the city council threatened to shut down the residency, he joined fellow artists in protest, strengthening their bonds and initiating discussions on the sustainability of artist residencies.

Through these experiences, A5 recognized residencies as essential for artistic growth and collaboration. Despite institutional challenges, he values their diverse perspectives and continues exploring new ways to engage with the art community.

Figure 10

View of the Open Studio at Residency No. 3 (R3)

A6. A6 is a new media artist in his early 40s with extensive experience in artist residencies. His passion for art began in childhood, influenced by his sister, and deepened during a year in Australia, where an individualized art curriculum and an encouraging teacher inspired him to pursue art seriously.

Returning to Seoul and pursuing college, A6 thrived under professors who introduced him to contemporary art and local art spaces. However, as a junior, he faced a curriculum focused on sculpture rather than media art. To compensate, he explored video art archives and media spaces in the city, shaping his artistic path independently.

After graduation, financial constraints prevented A6 from studying abroad, leaving him uncertain about his future. While his peers pursued other careers or graduate studies, he received an unexpected opportunity to assist a renowned new media artist he admired. This experience was transformative, providing a supportive studio environment where he developed his own projects, built connections, and gained insights into the art world. Observing how his mentor navigated galleries and museums inspired him to establish his own studio.

After 4 years, A6's mother's declining health forced him and his sister to leave their jobs to become caregivers. This difficult period left him feeling far behind his peers as they advanced in their careers. Despite the challenges, A6 continued creating art, often working in cafés near a hospital. Meanwhile, a former colleague reached out, leading to a career-reviving solo exhibition in an alternative space in the local area. This opportunity reignited his artistic identity and opened doors to further exhibitions. See Figure 11 for A6's artistic trajectory using the 4S model.

Figure 11

Overview of A6's Artistic Trajectory Using the 4S Model

To sustain his practice, A6 strategically pursued residencies. In R4, he built a strong network; in R5, he gained access to larger studios, enabling ambitious projects like a commission for the Arko Museum of Art. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he joined R6, where he reconnected with peers and learned new techniques (see Figure 12). Each residency enriched A6's artistic growth, helping him navigate challenges and evolve within its art community.

Figure 12

Studio View at R6

Analysis of Actors Through ANT: The External Forces

In ANT, the term "actor" refers to any factor that can influence change within a social system. This concept extends beyond human individuals to include organizations, institutions, and other nonhuman entities that contribute to the formation and transformation of networks in complex ways.

The artists interviewed in this dissertation were positioned at the center of these networks, revealing the intricate and multifaceted journey of becoming an artist. However, it was essential to identify the external forces that influenced this journey and understand which actors played a decisive role in shaping their career trajectories. The following section examines the key external forces in two ways: human and nonhuman actors. They emerged as important factors in the artistic development of the six participating artists.

Human Actors

Families and Friends. Family often served as the initial foundation and one of the first human actors influencing an artist's journey. In most cases, families provided early support, encouraging artists to study fine art and pursue creative interests. However, this influence was largely limited to the precollege period. Once artists entered college, the role of friends and peers became significantly more crucial in shaping their decisions and sustaining their artistic paths.

For some artists, family support remained conditional or even disappeared entirely when they chose to pursue a career in art. Some parents encouraged their children to seek stable professions, such as teaching, rather than becoming full-time artists. In cases where artists refused to follow a conventional career path, some families withdrew financial support, forcing them to take on part-time jobs to sustain themselves. A1 was among those who did not receive full family support. Initially, her parents supported her decision to attend a private art high

school and college. However, they expected her to become an art teacher rather than a professional artist, concerned about the financial instability and social reputation. Without financial support from her family, she took on numerous part-time jobs, including working at theaters, weddings, hospitals, and clothing stores, as well as editing for the Seoul Art Foundation. Despite the variety of roles, the work was mostly unfulfilling.

A3 faced a similar situation. She received no financial or emotional support from her family when she entered college, forcing her to take multiple jobs to support herself:

> After entering college, I had no support from my parents, so I had to pay for all the living and art materials. After graduation, I tried to do money jobs and artwork simultaneously, but it was challenging. At the same time, I taught high school students on their art entrance exams. Since I worked a lot, balancing my work with my life was challenging. I also worked as an administrative assistant at school. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

Both A1 and A3 experienced economic hardship and job-related stress during their studies, making their early artistic journeys particularly challenging. In these challenging situations, the support of friends and peer artists became vital, offering reassurance, motivation, and professional guidance.

However, not all friendships resulted in supportive or positive experiences. In some cases, friendships within shared studios led to stress and conflicts. A1 encountered a significant issue when her artistic style began to overlap with that of her college friends while sharing her second studio. This similarity caused tension and ultimately altered their relationship. Similarly, A2 grew distant from his college friends due to differing career goals; while he had scheduled exhibitions and short-term objectives, his friends lacked clear exhibition plans. A3 also faced challenges when transitioning to her second artist-run space, as differences in vision and goals among her colleagues led to the need for new members, marking the end of previous collaborations. A4 also expressed the difficult relationships that she had when she was in the

Master's program. A6 recalled experiencing a sense of falling behind while taking care of his mother and working alone from home or in cafés.

These relationships were not always harmonious; at times, they led to conflicts and emotional burdens. Despite occasional challenges, the mutual respect and support among friends and peers not only helped sustain their artistic momentum but also played an active role in shaping their development. These relationships provided both emotional and professional reinforcement at pivotal moments in their careers, contributing to their growth as artists. The support they received from friends is discussed in more detail in Part II of this chapter.

Professionals and Administrators. Engagement with professionals played a pivotal role in the development of the artists' careers. These professionals included pioneer artists who provided inspiration and mentorship, curators who facilitated exhibition opportunities, and professors who offered critical artistic guidance. Unlike friends and peers who provided emotional and informal support, professionals acted as human actors who directly offered opportunities that led to immediate career advancements and artistic growth.

Such interactions often took place in artist residencies or other art-related workplaces, where institutional structures facilitated connections between artists and professionals. Artists participating in residencies had frequent access to mentors, curators, and administrators, enabling them to expand their networks. Similarly, those working in art-related jobs naturally encountered art professionals in their daily work. In contrast, artists in private shared studios had fewer structured opportunities to engage with professionals and had to take the initiative in organizing meetings and networking events. However, these self-initiated interactions often felt more organic, fostering deeper and longer-lasting relationships.

A5 and A6, who had art-related jobs and participated in artist residencies, spoke extensively about how professionals influenced their development at different stages of their careers. A6, for example, worked as an assistant for a pioneering artist who became a role model for him. This experience gave him a clear vision of what he aspired to be. Additionally, through his connections at the artist's studio, he was introduced to a curator, which resulted in his first solo exhibition at a nonprofit art space. Afterward, when he participated in residency programs, the opportunities provided A6 to collaborate with professionals allowing him to expand the scale, depth, and diversity of his work. He participated in several museum commissions, which helped him develop larger projects that he would not have attempted otherwise.

A5 also benefited significantly from professional networks. His curator friends gave him opportunities to participate in group exhibitions, where he gained insight into the creative freedoms of contemporary art. During his residencies, he and other artists collectively negotiated and networked with professionals, administrators, and fellow artists. At Residency B, informal tea-time discussions with administrators and artists often led to new conversations, collaborative projects, and open studio events that engaged the public. At R3, A5 took on a more active political role, joining fellow artists in protesting against the bureaucratic city council, which attempted to shut down the residency without consultation. Through this experience, he built strong alliances with administrators and fellow residents, demonstrating how professional relationships in residencies could extend beyond artistic collaboration to advocacy and collective action.

On the other hand, A1 took an active approach by organizing informal gatherings, inviting professional contacts such as curators and critics. She also applied for funding to bring in art critics who provided valuable feedback on her and her studio mates' work. Through these

initiatives, she was able to foster professional engagement within the less structured environment of a private shared studio, creating ongoing relationships and conversations.

These cases showed the critical role of professionals and administrators in shaping artistic careers. While art-related jobs and residency programs facilitated these relationships, artists in private shared studios had to create their own professional networks through self-initiated events. Ultimately, interactions with curators, mentors, and institutional administrators played a crucial role in helping these artists develop their practices, expand their networks, and provide exhibition opportunities, proving that professional engagement was a decisive factor in career progression.

Nonhuman Actors

The main nonhuman actors that emerged from the interviews were: (a) the three types of shared studios, (b) public art funding, (c) the local art scene, and (d) the social network systems. These four components were interconnected, influencing one another and shaping the artists' experiences and career development.

Shared studios were the foundation of creation for the six artists. The artists interviewed for this dissertation experienced different types of shared studios in the larger metropolitan area of Seoul, each playing a significant role in their artistic journeys. The relatively affordable rent in shared studios allowed many artists to continue working in these spaces after graduation. Additionally, four public artist residencies were managed by art institutions, which functioned as public studios where artists could build a community, develop their skills, and experiment with new projects.

Public art funding was another essential nonhuman actor that directly impacted the artists' careers. Many of the interviewed artists had received funding from the Seoul Art and

Cultural Foundation and the Arts Council Korea, which provided financial support for exhibitions and events. The nourishing amount of funding available to artists and independent art spaces was a crucial factor in their ability to sustain and develop their practices.

The interplay between shared studios, public funding, the creative environmental benefits of Seoul, and social networking systems contributed to shaping the journey of artists. The mix of these elements created a landscape where artists could grow, collaborate, and navigate their professional careers. These nonhuman actors were deeply embedded in the artists' experiences, influencing their opportunities and providing the infrastructure that affected their creative journeys.

The Three Types of Shared Studios. While the three types of shared studios, private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and artist residencies, were the most common studio environments in the region, it is important to note that the relationship between shared studios and artists' career trajectories was not strictly linear. Shared studio environments played a crucial role in providing essential support, networking opportunities, and professional development. However, for many artists, failures and regrets also accumulated during their time in shared spaces. As they reflected on the causes of these difficulties and stresses, artists adapted their strategies and responded to their evolving needs during critical phases of their professional journeys.

Despite the complexity of their formation, strong artistic communities often emerged, as the shared studio environments facilitated regular interactions, exposure to each other's work, and informal networking opportunities. These spaces naturally fostered close relationships, enabling artists to build trust, engage in meaningful discussions, and support one another's creative development.

The collaborations that emerged from shared studios were not simply transactional. Artists did not just fulfill assigned tasks for each other; rather, they actively negotiated, problem-solved, and adapted to challenges together. Even though there were difficulties in management and interpersonal conflicts in relationships, the six artists continuously shared peer dialogue and experiences. They developed ways to navigate collectively the complexities of the art infrastructure in Seoul and strengthen their practices and careers through mutual support.

The Impact of Public Art Funding. The Seoul Art and Cultural Foundation plays a crucial role in supporting artists and sustaining the local art scene (Choi, 2025). Each year, the City Council allocated funds to the foundation, which were then distributed through open calls for artists seeking financial support for exhibitions, publications, and research projects. These open calls were exclusively available to artists who live and work in the area, making them a significant resource for local creatives.

The artists interviewed for this dissertation had experience applying for and receiving this funding. The amount awarded varied significantly, ranging from approximately $2,000 USD to over $20,000 USD, depending on the project, the artist's experience, and the scope of the proposal (*SFAC—Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture Arts Support*, n.d.-b). This funding was instrumental in covering essential expenses such as renting exhibition venues, purchasing materials, and compensating collaborators. Since securing funding significantly reduced the financial burden of preparing a show or event, winning an open call became a critical milestone in an artist's career development.

To increase their chances of success, some artists collaborated with peers or teamed up with curators who could assist with proposal writing and thematic organization. A1 shared her experience of collaborating with a curator to manage funding. A4 collaborated with her friends

but described how funding procedures could become overly administrative, complicating creative processes. Similarly, A5 reflected on a residency-led collaboration that involved a funding competition, noting that it resulted in an unnatural and temporary partnership between artists. While leveraging collective expertise allowed artists to create stronger and more compelling applications, issues related to formal and administrative procedures also emerged, affecting both their artistic practices and interpersonal relationships. The impact of receiving funding was immediate and transformative, bringing direct, practical, and career-changing results, whether by enabling artists to have solo exhibitions, experiment with new materials, or engage with broader audiences. Public art funding played a vital role in shaping their professional trajectories, providing not just financial support.

The Art Landscape of the Research Location. The art landscape of the research location provides important context for understanding the environment in which early-career artists develop their practices. The location of this research was Seoul, one of the largest cities in Asia, and a city that has cultivated an art scene that has rapidly expanded and gained international attention (Chung, 2024).

This global recognition has resulted from a complex interplay between economic growth and the quality of exhibitions produced by the city's art institutions. However, beyond institutional support, the passion and persistence of local artists formed the foundation of Seoul's contemporary art scene. The artists living and working in the area have established studios, created independent exhibition spaces, and built artistic communities, shaping the city's creative landscape (Kim & Choo, 2023). Over time, some of these artists have gained international recognition, and some independent art spaces have evolved into institutionalized venues, adding depth and complexity to the city's artistic ecosystem.

As previously discussed, public art funding has played a crucial role in fostering this growth. The combination of state support, economic infrastructure, and artist-driven initiatives has created a dynamic and multilayered art scene. The artists interviewed for this dissertation are all based in Seoul and have directly or indirectly benefited from the city's art infrastructure.

The direct influences of this infrastructure included exhibitions at art institutions and galleries, access to public funding, and affordable shared studio spaces. A5 and A6 were artists who received notable support from art institutions, particularly as their practices evolved within artist residencies managed by various organizations. A1 and A2 reported that they had exhibitions in galleries and participated in art fairs, which supported their creative practices. The indirect influences encompassed the broader economy of the city, job opportunities available to artists, and the artistic communities formed during their career development. A1 shared her experience of holding multiple jobs, including working as an editor at an art foundation, to support her artistic practice. A2 and A6 discussed their experiences working as assistants to renowned artists. Other participants also described working in art-related jobs and participating in public talks, lectures, and exhibitions to sustain and advance their careers. In this environment, the six artists were deeply embedded within and inseparable from the local art scene. Their careers and creative journeys cannot be fully understood without considering the broader landscape that shaped them, an environment where economic forces, institutional support, and grassroots efforts within shared studios collectively contributed to the formation of contemporary art.

The Social Network System as a Tool. During the interviews with the six artists, it became clear that Social Network Systems (SNS) played a crucial role in building relationships, sharing opportunities, and promoting artistic activities. The artists used SNS platforms such as

Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, and personal websites as tools to expand their networks, organize events, and document their work.

A1 used Facebook and Instagram to find a studio mate. By posting within her existing network of friends and followers, she was able to connect with someone who was already familiar with her work and shared common artistic values. This method proved to be a more reliable and efficient way to find a studio partner compared to traditional methods.

A2 used Instagram as a promotional tool for the open studio event he organized with other artists. Through Instagram posts and live updates, the event gained instant visibility in the art scene, attracting a wider audience than traditional word-of-mouth promotion.

A3 utilized both Instagram and a website to promote and manage her artist-run spaces. While Instagram served as a platform to announce events and invite new people to the community, the website functioned as a digital archive, preserving the history of past projects and providing detailed documentation of exhibitions and collaborations.

A4 used Instagram and Tumblr, each for distinct purposes. She used Instagram primarily to recruit students for her education center and to share updates about her exhibitions. Meanwhile, Tumblr served as a project archive, allowing her to tell short narratives about each project and create an accessible record of her work.

A5 made significant use of Instagram during his residency at R3. He used the platform to invite artists to participate in his walking project and later leveraged it as a tool for activism. When the city council threatened to demolish the residency, he and his peers used Instagram to raise awareness, document the situation, and mobilize support from the art community.

A6 found Instagram particularly useful for staying connected with peers he met in residency programs. By following their activities online, he could keep track of exhibitions, attend events, and maintain relationships, even after the residency ended.

These cases showed that SNS were necessary tools for the artists' practice. They were not only platforms for sharing news and promoting projects; they also played a role in networking, collaboration, activism, and maintaining professional relationships. However, a clearer understanding of what it can do and how to use it effectively was yet to be discovered. As a nonhuman actor, SNS influenced how artists navigated their careers, built connections, and engaged with their artistic communities.

Summary of Analysis of Actors: The External Forces

This section examined the complex relationships between human and nonhuman actors in the artistic journeys of six artists, using ANT as an analytical framework. At the foundational level, family and friends played a crucial role in supporting artists in the early stages of their careers, particularly during precollege and college years. However, after graduation, the influence of professionals such as curators and mentors became more significant, providing opportunities for artistic growth and career development. Many of these key professional relationships were formed through graduate schools and artist residencies, which facilitated networking and exposure to institutional support.

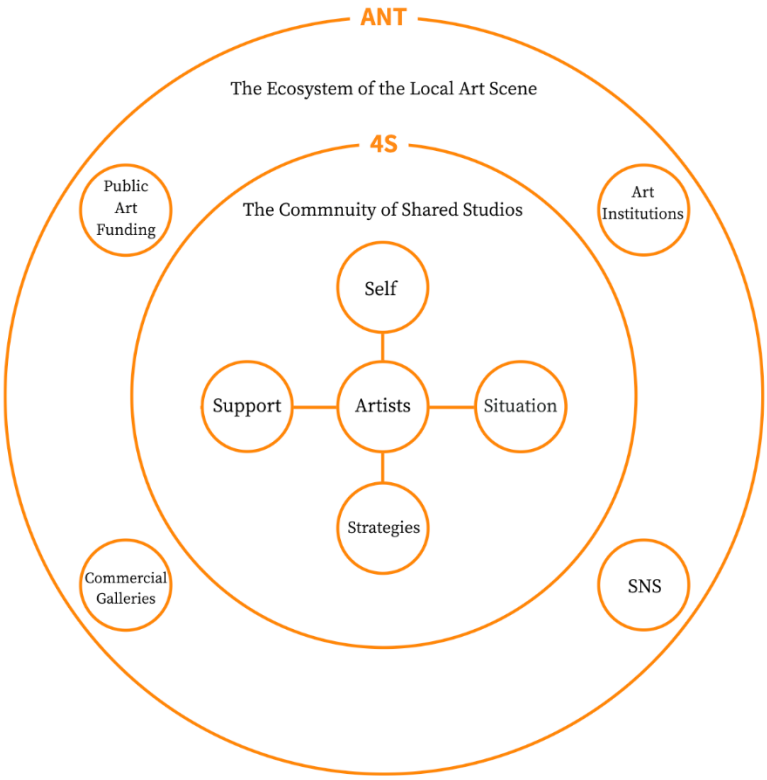
Beyond human actors, nonhuman actors had a profound impact on shaping the artists' careers. The three types of shared studios served as essential workspaces and networking hubs. Public art funding, particularly from institutions like the Seoul Art and Cultural Foundation, provided financial support for exhibitions, research, and collaborative projects, enabling artists to sustain their practices. Additionally, the vibrant and evolving metropolitan art scene offered a

dynamic environment where artists could engage with both local and international artistic communities. Here, SNS served as a tool for artists to connect with one another and acted as a complementary mechanism for achieving their creative results. Through social media platforms, artists could network, share opportunities, promote their work, and document their projects.

By analyzing these relationships through the lens of ANT, the diverse human and nonhuman elements functioned as an interconnected ecosystem, affecting individual artistic identities. The interplay between social networks, institutional structures, and physical spaces played a defining role in shaping the artistic careers of the six participants, demonstrating that an artist's journey is deeply embedded in a network of support, collaboration, and opportunities (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

A Visual Diagram of Data Analysis Using the 4S and ANT



Part II: Cross-Case Themes and Analysis of Actors

In Part II, the codes identified during the interviews and the analysis process in Part I were used for cross-case analysis, which uncovered common challenges, recurring patterns, and key differences, ultimately leading to the identification of four main thematic streams:

1. common difficulties encountered in their early careers;
2. the support and supporters in their journey;
3. how artists managed each type of shared studio; and
4. strategies derived from their shared studio environments.

These themes provided insights into the challenges commonly faced by early-career artists after graduating from college. When they faced challenges, all six participants reported receiving either support or discouragement from human actors in their professional development. While the nature and extent of this support varied, they played roles in shaping the artists' ability to navigate professional hardships. Additionally, the analysis explored the characteristics of shared studios, focusing on how and why the artists physically managed these environments. It examined not only the practical use of these spaces but also the values and limitations inherent to each type of studio. Although the studios operated in diverse ways and their impact was not always positive, they gradually evolved into strategic hubs for relationship-building and artistic development. The final section investigates the nonmaterial strategies that emerged from these shared environments, highlighting how artists navigated and responded to the challenges and opportunities they encountered.

Common Difficulties Encountered in Their Early Careers

The six artists introduced in this dissertation came from diverse backgrounds and took different paths to becoming professional artists. Some aspired to be artists from childhood, while

others made this decision after completing graduate school. Although each artist followed a unique trajectory, common themes emerged from their narratives. The following section categorizes these shared experiences and examines how the artists responded to their circumstances.

College Experience and Challenges. All the artists who participated in this dissertation attended art colleges in Seoul, majoring in fine arts. Three of the artists graduated from the same institution, while the other three attended different schools. Despite their varied academic backgrounds, most of the artists expressed dissatisfaction with their college curricula and faculty. Only A6 had a positive relationship with his professors and recalled his college experience as valuable. A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5 noted that very few classes or professors influenced their perspectives or career paths.

A1 described her professors as unprepared, often arriving with a cup of coffee, providing random feedback, and leaving class early. A1 mentioned:

> The professors' classes were sloppy. The class quality was like chatting in a café, and the professors gave me random answers. The professors were unprepared for the class. However, I tried to listen to the professors at the time without a doubt. It was a rough class, which confused me. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

Similarly, A2, A4, and A5, who attended the same institution, expressed disappointment with the curriculum and faculty. Although their school is recognized as one of the top art institutions in the region, the quality of education did not meet students' expectations. A5 remembered as:

> The professors came to class for ten minutes and left with no instructions. So, my friends and I went for lunch. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

A3, who graduated from a different institution, explained that her school's curriculum focused primarily on traditional Korean painting techniques, which made it feel disconnected from the contemporary art scene in Seoul because the classes were more centered on technical

skill development than on contemporary practice. She found that the program offered few opportunities to engage with current artistic trends:

> It was a curriculum to learn traditional methods rather than the contemporary context or contemporary art, so I felt somewhat disconnected from the field. I didn't even know this class was old-fashioned at that time. Maybe that's why I wasn't very interested in the class. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

Only A6 recalled a meaningful college experience, attributing this to his first- and second-year professors, who had recently returned from studying abroad and participated in an artist residency program. Their fresh perspectives provided him with valuable insights into the contemporary art world:

> I really admired the professors I met during my first year. They helped me fall in love with contemporary art by showing me why it was exciting and valuable. One professor, who was in a residency program, brought in portfolios of active artists and shared them with us. She also gave us a magazine called *Seoul Art Guide*, encouraging us to visit galleries and art spaces in the city. These experiences made me want to continue studying contemporary art and pursue a career as an artist. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

By comparing these experiences, a significant gap emerged between college and the realities of the contemporary art field. While faculty disengagement was a critical factor, the more fundamental issue was that course content was outdated and failed to reflect the current art landscape. Consequently, students had to seek external resources to compensate for these deficiencies.

Despite these challenges, the artists found peer relationships crucial to their artistic growth. A1 noted that her college studio had an open layout, allowing students to observe each other's work in progress. Since she did not receive constructive feedback from her professors, she relied on her peers for meaningful critiques and encouragement:

> The school studio was an open studio. There were small partitions, but it was a structure where other students could come and see the paintings they were working on. Because of this structure, friends or seniors could see my work in progress, and rather

than professors, advice from friends and encouragement from seniors motivated my practice. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

A2 had a similar experience; he enjoyed wandering through other students' studios to observe their creative processes. This hands-on, immersive approach was his preferred learning method, as opposed to traditional classroom instruction:

> Actually, I really liked seeing other people's work. While watching other people's work, I had a lot of questions. I think there's a certain energy given by the school studio when people who think differently gather and share their thoughts. (A2, Interview Transcript, May 10, 2024)

A3, for example, relied on friends to inform her about special lectures and external learning opportunities:

> I had a friend who majored in painting, but I think she was more interested in what was happening in the field. She attended many special lectures from people who are actively working in the field, and I learned about the field through chats with her. Even now, I often keep in touch with her and talk about what is going on in the field. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

Interactions with the friend broadened her perspective, introducing A3 to the practical aspects of the art world. Additionally, A3 maintained connections with friends who studied abroad. Through their Skype calls, she gained indirect insights into the international art scene.

Similarly, A6 sought additional resources outside of school. During his third and final years, when faculty and curriculum changes no longer aligned with his interests, A6 spent more time in the library and visiting digital archives at local museums, where he accessed video footage of masterpieces:

> I often visited the Media Act in Chungmu-ro, spending hours exploring video art. Even though the college curriculum didn't match my interests, I found inspiration and knowledge in these spaces outside of school. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

In conclusion, although each artist's experience varied, the general consensus was dissatisfaction with the education in college and faculty engagement. However, the open studio

environment fostered collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, allowing students to exchange feedback and support one another's artistic development.

Unsettled Life After Graduation. The six artists in this study had diverse experiences after graduation, each navigating their postgraduate lives in different ways. However, many faced financial instability, limited opportunities, and uncertainty in defining their career paths. A1, A2, A3, and A4 used shared studio spaces after graduation, collaborating with former college friends in various arrangements. In contrast, A5 and A6 attended artist residencies for their creation. Meanwhile, they secured regular jobs, which later provided connections that helped them grow as artists.

A1 shared a studio with an artist she had known for several years. This was her first independent studio experience after college, but it proved challenging due to poor conditions. The basement-level studio suffered from water leaks and malfunctioning equipment, making it an unsuitable workspace. After just a year, they abandoned the studio, and A1 decided to pursue graduate school to seek new connections and a supportive community.

A2 and A3 had similar experiences. After graduating, A2 and five college friends rented a studio near their college. He had an upcoming exhibition and was highly motivated to produce work. However, his friends lacked clear goals, which led to a gradual decline in engagement. Over time, they stopped using the studio and shifted toward other career paths. After a year, the shared studio dissolved:

> After a year, some people quit making artwork, and others went to graduate school, so few studio members were left. Not all the members were settled after graduation, so I think they wandered and worried a lot. I think the reason is that there is no exhibition after graduation and no clear goal for the members. I think my friends were anxious because they didn't know what they really wanted to do and did not know what they liked. (A2, Interview Transcript, May 10, 2024)

As a consequence, A2 enrolled in graduate school to further develop his practice.

A3 took a position as an administrative officer at her college while maintaining a shared studio nearby. However, the demands of her job, which involved frequent interactions with students and faculty, left her with little time to focus on her own artistic work:

> Simply, I wanted to become an artist, but I didn't know how. Even after graduation, I was working as an administrative assistant at school, so I saw how the school was functioning and thought about going to graduate school. I think I wanted to have a certain sense of belonging. However, I think graduate school did not help me a lot in growing as an artist. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

Moreover, although her first studio out of college was a shared studio, it was divided into separate rooms, limiting interaction among artists. This isolation prevented the development of an artistic network, leaving her feeling disconnected from the larger art scene.

A4 chose to enter graduate school immediately after earning her undergraduate degree. However, the experience did not align with her expectations. The overwhelming number of students and the constant exposure to their work made it difficult for her to concentrate on her own artistic development. Additionally, she struggled to form meaningful relationships with her new peers:

> I went to graduate school right after graduating from undergraduate school, but I didn't use the studio at the graduate school. When I used the studio at school, it was difficult to see my work accurately because there were a lot of people, and it was a distracting atmosphere. There was also no significant difference between the undergraduate and the graduate school classes because the same tutors came in. I didn't know how to talk to new people I met in graduate school, and it was challenging to make a deep relationship. (A4, Interview Transcript, July 25, 2024)

In response, A4 sought out a studio space outside the school, partnering with former college friends who shared her aspirations and emotional struggles as an emerging artist.

A5 and A6 took a different path, securing jobs immediately after graduation to support themselves financially. A5 worked as an assistant curator for an animation festival, while A6 became an assistant to a master artist:

> I had a lot of worries. I was considering whether to go to graduate school, study abroad, or get a job to make money. At that time, my parents were in a difficult financial situation, so I had to give up the idea of studying abroad. In 2008, a close senior contacted me about assisting a famous artist. This artist was one of my favorites, someone I admired through exhibitions and archives. I thought it would be a great opportunity to work in his studio. After graduation, I was hired to work there full-time. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

Their primary motivation for working was financial stability. Until they could secure spots in artist residency programs, both artists primarily worked from home or in cafés, limiting their creative practices to their circumstances.

In summary, the initial experiences of shared studios for A1, A2, and A3 were unsatisfactory. This was primarily due to their lack of knowledge on how to utilize the space effectively, set clear goals, and collaborate with their studio members. However, these early challenges served as learning experiences, helping them develop strategies for creating more stable and productive work environments in the future. By contrast, A4 had a positive experience because her shared studio provided a refuge from the overwhelming atmosphere of her graduate school's crowded studio space. The key to this success was sharing the space with friends who shared a common artistic vision, fostering both creative and emotional support. A5 and A6 faced financial constraints that required them to pursue full-time jobs after graduation.

Summary of Common Difficulties Encountered in Their Early Careers. Through the interviews, both shared and unique experiences emerged among early-career artists. These experiences can be categorized into two main themes: (a) College Experiences and Challenges; and (b) Unsettled Life After Graduation. Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with their college education and the quality of instructors. However, peer relationships and shared studio spaces played a crucial role in providing support and constructive feedback. In open studio

environments in college, artists relied on one another for critiques and motivation, fostering collaboration and creativity despite limited institutional support.

After graduation, many artists encountered financial instability and uncertainty regarding their career paths. While some joined shared studios, they often struggled with challenges such as isolation and a lack of institutional structure. Others pursued regular employment, which provided financial stability and, in some cases, valuable professional connections that facilitated their re-engagement with the art scene. Their curiosity, passion, and dedication to art sustained them as they navigated the difficulties. Despite these challenges, the artists needed support to redirect their careers and pursue their journey as artists.

The Support and Supporters in Their Journeys

The artists introduced in this dissertation received various forms of support throughout their journeys to becoming professional artists. As reported in Part I, family support was often present before they entered college. However, family members, who often lacked direct experience in the art field, were not always able to provide the necessary guidance or solutions. Instead, artists primarily relied on their peers or more experienced artists within the art scene for support. The types of support artists received could be categorized into two main forms:

1. Receiving feedback and encouragement: Peers and senior artists played a vital role in offering constructive criticism, motivation, and reassurance during challenging times.
2. Receiving opportunities to restart: Through connections within the artistic community, artists found new chances to re-engage with their practice, whether through exhibitions, residencies, or collaborative projects.

These forms of support were essential in helping artists persist through challenges, reinforcing the importance of artistic networks in sustaining a creative career.

Receiving Feedback and Encouragement from Peers. A1, A2, and A3 received crucial feedback and encouragement from their friends and senior artists. Despite these differences in their studio environments, all three artists had close friends who understood their struggles and provided emotional and psychological support rather than material assistance.

A1 found encouragement from her peers during college. At the time, she was uncertain about her future, unsure whether she wanted to become an artist or even if she had the talent to do so. In moments of doubt, her friends and senior artists reassured her, motivating her to continue painting and helping her hold onto her dream of becoming an artist.

A2 also received strong support from the friends he met in college and graduate school. His way of engaging with his artistic practice was through sharing experiences and attending exhibitions and artist talks with his peers. By exchanging thoughts and perspectives on art shows, he refined his ability to articulate his ideas and speak about his own work. This learning-through-dialogue approach allowed him to grow both intellectually and artistically.

A3 similarly found support from friends during both college and the early stages of establishing her artist-run space. Initially, when she had limited knowledge about the art scene, her friends kept her informed about current trends and opportunities. Interactions with friends broadened her perspective, introducing her to the practical aspects of the field. These further inspired her decision to set up a studio in the heart of the city, surrounded by other art spaces and studios. However, even after securing a central location, A3 sometimes felt isolated from the broader art community. It was again her friends who suggested transforming her studio into an artist-run space, a move that not only helped her break out of isolation but also marked the beginning of her career as a manager of an artist-run space.

Receiving Opportunities to Restart. Some artists received critical opportunities at pivotal moments in their careers. When they lacked opportunities to showcase their talents, friends and colleagues played an essential role in helping them reestablish themselves in the art scene. A4 benefited from friends who helped her secure a teaching space and supported the development of her educational institution. Meanwhile, A5 and A6 were introduced to exhibition opportunities through their professional networks, allowing them to present their work and gain visibility.

A4's case was unique because she established a sustainable system where artists could earn income through teaching. By offering classes directly related to their artistic practices, this initiative provided a means for artists to support themselves financially while continuing their work. However, launching the education center was a significant challenge, requiring both investment and risk. At a crucial moment, a group of art enthusiasts, individuals with the financial ability to contribute, offered to support the project. Their motivation stemmed from a genuine interest in learning about art and creating a space for artistic discussion. By covering the rent costs, they supported A4 in establishing the education center without the immediate financial burden.

On the other hand, A5 and A6 received career-developing exhibition opportunities. In A5's case, independent curators, who were also his friends, invited him to participate in group shows. These exhibitions became transformative experiences, deepening his love for art and helping him understand its boundless creative possibilities. He recalled these moments as eye-opening, reinforcing his belief in art's freedom and potential:

> Since I worked at an alternative art space, the curators invited me to take part in a show. A friend of mine, who is also a curator, asked me to submit one piece for her project. From that experience, I realized that the art I learned in school was very different from the art shown in alternative spaces. I was surprised by what I could do as an artist

> and what could be presented as art. In the outer world, all those small things could become art, and everything seemed possible. That was the moment I decided to become an artist. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

A6's case was even more critical because it came at a particularly difficult time in his life. While caring for a sick family member, he was disconnected from the art world and uncertain about his future. At this low point, a former colleague from a previous job introduced his work to a curator, who offered him the chance to exhibit. This opportunity led to a solo show, which became a turning point in his career, opening doors to artist residencies and reconnecting him with the art community:

> It was a fairly dense program, but considering my situation at the time, I was very happy to participate. The solo exhibition gave me the chance to expose my work to a wider audience, and afterward, I received many invitations and opportunities. In 2013, I participated in three to four exhibitions a month. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

In most cases, support arrived unexpectedly from friends and colleagues at moments when the artists were uncertain about their paths. When they struggled to find solutions, others stepped in, offering guidance and opportunities that ultimately helped them restart and move forward in their careers.

Summary of the Support and Supporters in Their Journeys. While some artists received encouragement from their families, others had to navigate their artistic paths independently, often facing financial struggles as a result. A1 and A3 lacked family support and encountered financial hardships, whereas A2 and A6 benefited from familial encouragement that helped facilitate their artistic development.

However, beyond family support, friends played a crucial role in shaping artists' careers, particularly during difficult periods in college and early career development. While family

encouragement could provide a foundation, the support of peers and experienced artists often helped artists find direction and overcome challenges.

For instance, A1 gained motivation and confidence through the encouragement of friends during her college years, while A2 refined his ability to articulate his artistic vision through discussions with peers at exhibitions. Similarly, A3 overcame feelings of isolation by transforming her studio into an artist-run space, an idea inspired and supported by her friends.

Friends and colleagues also played a significant role in providing opportunities to restart. A4 was able to develop an educational platform with the support of friends who helped her establish a profit model. Likewise, A5 and A6 secured exhibition opportunities through professional networks, enabling them to showcase their work and gain visibility.

Ultimately, unexpected support from friends and colleagues was instrumental in helping artists navigate uncertainty and advance their careers. Whether through encouragement, feedback, or direct opportunities, these relationships proved to be essential in sustaining artistic growth (see Table 2 for a summary of support for the artists).

Table 2

Summary of Support

Type of Support	Source of Support	Artists	Impact
Emotional Support	Friends, Senior Artists	A1, A2, A3	Motivation during doubts (A1), learning through dialogue (A2), and emotional support during isolation (A3).
Opportunities to Restart	Friends, Professional Networks, Colleagues	A4, A5, A6	New exhibitions (A6), teaching spaces (A4), and residencies that revived artistic careers (A5 & A6).
Financial and Material Support	Art Enthusiasts	A4	Funding rent for the educational institution, enabling a sustainable teaching platform.
Family Encouragement	Family Members	A2, A6	Encouragement to study art (A2 & A6) and financial stability in the early stages (A6).
Lack of Family Support	Absence or Limited Family Support	A1, A3	Faced financial hardship and career uncertainty and overcame challenges through peer support.

How Artists Managed Each Type of Shared Studio

This study sought to understand how early-career artists developed the ability to sustain their artistic practices and navigate the challenges of surviving as creative professionals after graduation. Specifically, it examined how shared studio experiences served as both practical and strategic tools for survival in Seoul's competitive art environment.

One of the sub-research questions guiding this study was: What are the key affordances, limitations, and values that early-career artists encounter in shared studio spaces? To address this question, the following section examines how artists managed the three types of shared spaces and analyzes the distinct characteristics of each. It is more about how artists physically negotiated, adapted, or organized their use of shared space.

A1 and A2 primarily developed their careers within private shared studios. A3 and A4 gained experience by managing artist-run spaces within the broader urban art community. Meanwhile, A5 and A6 participated in multiple artist residencies across the metropolitan region. By exploring these different studio models, this section offers insights into how each space supported artistic development, professional networking, and creative collaboration, while also drawing attention to their limitations and instances of less successful experiences.

Private Shared Studios: A Vessel for Navigating the Challenges. A private shared studio is one of the most fundamental forms of an artist's workspace. For many art school graduates seeking a studio, a private shared studio is often the first and most accessible option. Unlike artist residencies, which require competitive applications, securing a private shared studio involves finding like-minded friends, forming a team, and renting an affordable space (Kelly, 2024).

A1's first shared studio was unsuccessful due to poor studio conditions, including water leaks and malfunctioning equipment. Her second studio, shared with five close friends from college, initially functioned well. However, since they worked with similar materials, their artistic styles began to resemble one another, leading to stress and creative conflicts. As a result, they eventually ended the shared studio:

> The biggest problem was that the work became similar. Since everyone used painting as a medium, the painting style became similar. Also, as we talked a lot with each other, our interests became similar. One person talked about a waterfall, another artist painted a waterfall, and the other person drew it a few weeks later. This kind of situation was uncomfortable. Also, as friends with similar backgrounds and situations gather together, it doesn't seem to give each other much impetus or development. That's why we ended the shared studio. Each one got to find a studio in a more beneficial direction. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

By contrast, A1's most recent shared studio has been more successful because it includes two artists and designers working in distinct media with different methodologies. They have effectively structured their use of the space, negotiating its functions to suit their individual needs:

> It's much more peaceful and better than before. The people who use the studio now work hard and maintain the space responsibly. By just watching how the sculptor works, I've learned about the complexity and difficulty of creating sculptures. I really respect her. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

Additionally, they have invited professionals from diverse fields to network within the space. This balanced dynamic has fostered a supportive and inspiring environment, fueling the artists' motivation and creativity.

Similarly, A2's first shared studio did not work out due to a lack of clear goals and motivation. Many of his studio mates rarely used the space because they had no scheduled exhibitions or deadlines. After completing his MFA, he worked in a solo studio for a while but later sought a studio mate. His motivation for sharing the space was not only financial but also

social; he wanted a companion with whom he could exchange ideas about painting and engage in creative discussions:

> There is a benefit to using a studio alone, but also some responsibility. If someone is in their early career, it is better to use a shared studio to reduce the burden of rent and utility costs. Also, it has the benefit of not getting isolated from the art scene and getting encouragement from each other. But when you feel ready to be independent, using a studio alone can be a good choice. (A2, Interview Transcript, May 10, 2024)

A follow-up conversation with the artist provided insights into his current studio practices. He shared that he had grouped with a like-minded peer who shares his interest in contemporary art, fostering meaningful discussions and collaboration. Together, they relocated to a new studio that offered more space to accommodate their shared artistic practices.

By exploring different shared studio models, this section offers different insights into how such environments can support or constrain artistic practice. Participants described how sharing space and splitting operational costs enabled greater access to resources and helped maintain financial sustainability. However, they also pointed to challenges, including aesthetic style overlap between artists and a lack of clearly defined goals within shared settings. While being surrounded by other creatives often fostered collaboration, idea exchange, and potential partnerships, the benefits were not guaranteed. The effectiveness of a shared studio depended on its structure, interpersonal dynamics, and the alignment of artistic intentions. When these conditions are well-balanced, the shared environments create a sense of belonging and mutual support, encouraging members to inspire and motivate one another in their individual practices.

Artist-Run Spaces: Hubs for Experiments and Creative Risks. An artist-run space is a venue created by artists to sustain their practice, support fellow artists through exhibitions, and build networks with various visitors from the art scene (Luther, 2018). These spaces function as

studios, galleries, and community hubs where artists can experiment with ideas and take creative risks before stepping into institutional art spaces (Puletti et al., 2024).

In this dissertation, A3 and A4 provided examples of artist-run spaces. A3 has been involved in running two artist-run spaces since 2018. Along with her friends, she has organized exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and collective networking events in these spaces. A4 has also managed two artist-run spaces, as well as an education center, as part of the space. Her journey started in 2014 when she helped a friend transform a small basement into a functional exhibition space. After 5 years, they moved to a new location, expanding their vision to include an art education program alongside a separate exhibition space. Both artists have years of experience in managing artist-run spaces, witnessing both their strengths and limitations.

A3's first artist-run space was born from conversations with a close friend. At the time, she was feeling isolated and disconnected from the art scene. Together, they came up with a plan to transform her studio into an exhibition space where visitors could see the process of her work. It was a way to invite people into their space while simultaneously introducing themselves to the local art network:

> At first, rather than having a specific strategy or starting with a clear goal, I really wanted the space to work as a networking platform rather than sharing my concerns about how to continue my creative activities as an artist. However, I wasn't able to do all the jobs by myself. I had to find some good friends who could run the space with me. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

Two friends from college joined her, forming a team of four. Later, they expanded their efforts, opening up the space for other early-career artists who were in similar situations. The space became a hub for networking, curating exhibitions, and experimenting with ideas. They actively sought out talented artists, particularly recent graduates who had limited opportunities, and curated group shows based on their recommendations.

From 2018 to 2022, S1 hosted multiple exhibitions, published three books, and organized workshops. Notable events included a potluck party where artists used traditional Korean painting materials and foods to spark discussions about their practices. The space became more than a gallery. It was a site for collaboration, experimentation, and community building.

There was not necessarily conflict, but rather a shift in relationships during the process of managing the spaces. Initially, each member had a strong sense of belonging and commitment to the space. However, as time passed, the artists had to balance their personal artistic careers with the demands of running the space. This led to some members gradually stepping back to focus on their own practice. When A3 opened her second artist-run space, she refined her approach by inviting guest members who had specific roles. For example, an artist specializing in space repair incorporated maintenance as part of her creative practice, while another member documented exhibitions and designed the archival website:

> In addition to the open call, we are considering inviting guest members. Depending on the situation, experts or artists in a specific field are invited as guest members to do a project. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

This flexible model allowed artists to collaborate on projects without the burden of long-term commitment, creating a more sustainable and efficient artist-run space.

Additionally, their second artist-run space was in a different part of the city, and this time, it had a more open layout with a storefront facing the street. The new space hosted a variety of programs, such as a touring exhibition with artist talks in South Korea and Japan. This event explored themes of traditional Korean painting materials, nationalism, and cross-cultural perspectives. Other workshops included collaborations with architects to investigate local neighborhoods and their hidden structures, fostering a deeper connection with the surrounding community. One unique project transformed the space into a temporary Airbnb-like experience,

where visitors participated in communal meals and discussions, blurring the lines between the audience and the artist.

On the other hand, A4's experience took a slightly different path. The first artist-run space (S3) was established in 2012 in the Sangbong-dong area. It began as an informal initiative when a friend of A4 remodeled a part of his parents' basement as a white-cube studio to photograph his installation works. The space gradually attracted other artists, including A4, who used it to document her own works. Recognizing the potential, they formalized its use and shared access guidelines via social media platforms like Tumblr and Twitter.

The goal of S3 was to serve as a beta test space, a place for experimentation without the pressures of formal exhibitions. Exhibiting artists remained anonymous, and the founders called themselves "managers." This approach encouraged risk-taking and creativity, fostering a supportive environment for emerging artists. Over 5 years, the space hosted numerous projects and built a network of peer artists united by shared struggles and aspirations.

In 2017, A4 and her friends launched a second artist-run space (S4) on the west side of the city, situated above her education studio. Unlike the experimental goal of the first space, the second space was designed as a more formal gallery with movable walls to accommodate diverse exhibitions and events like workshops and artist talks.

One notable program, Taste View, featured 35 artists who displayed and sold their works in cabinets, providing visitors with an intimate view of the artists' tastes and narratives. While the program received significant interest, its financial sustainability was limited. Most sales occurred within the artists' circle, and external funding was required to maintain the space. Despite these challenges, A4 saw the space as a critical platform for networking and showcasing innovative ideas.

Another notable aspect of A4's journey was her experience in building an educational institution as part of S4. In S4, she and her collaborators developed a financially sustainable model. They made an educational space (E1) where artists could teach classes based on their practices. The tuition fees collected from these classes were reinvested into artists' projects, allowing them to continue their work without solely relying on external funding.

The E1 has evolved into a multifunctional platform offering classes for both hobbyists and professionals. The E1 currently employs 18 tutors teaching 35 classes, including conceptual courses such as The New Order. This class, led by a visual designer and artist, explores the intersections of coding, design, and theoretical discourse about websites, offering a radical alternative to traditional design education.

Classes in the E1 were not limited to technical instruction; they integrated the tutors' creative methodologies, making them unique and reflective of contemporary trends. For example, a drawing class initially focused on representational techniques but gradually introduced abstraction as a means of expressing invisible emotions. This flexible, student-centered approach appealed to both art lovers and professionals seeking advanced skills and insights.

The analysis of these two artists' experiences suggested that artist-run spaces may serve several key functions: (a) providing a space for experimentation and artistic creation; (b) offering opportunities for exhibitions and exposure; (c) serving as platforms for collective networking; and (d) a system for financial sustainability through educational programs and events. These functions, as observed in the experiences of A3 and A4, offered insights into how artist-run spaces can foster forms of coexistence and collaboration among participating artists. Rather than waiting for institutional support, the artists involved in these spaces described actively generating

opportunities, establishing platforms for exhibitions, community interaction, and resource-sharing. While shaped by individual needs and contexts, these spaces were also perceived as inclusive environments that supported broader artistic networks and experimented with sustainability models, including educational programs, workshops, and art sales.

However, the space also showed a kind of life span. When it first opened, it was fresher and active but still unknown. As the space gained more attention and became more present in the field, there was increasing pressure around management, responsibility, and quality control. For these reasons, the members of S1 left to secure more time for their own practices. S3 also came to an end when A4 and her friends received too much attention and recognition from the local art scene. They felt that the S3 model had to end because it was originally intended to be experimental; thus, they decided to start a new chapter with S4.

Overall, the experiences of A3 and A4 revealed the potential of artist-run spaces as tools for sustaining creative practices. As the participants in this study indicated, artist-run spaces were distinctive because of their flexibility. These spaces often shift in form and function, depending on the needs and intentions of the artists who manage them. In this evolving process, the participants also emphasized the importance of community engagement and collaboration with practitioners from diverse backgrounds. This adaptability enabled artists to continue their work, share resources, and respond creatively to the uncertainties of life after graduation.

Artist Residencies: Platforms for Collective Advocacy. Unlike the other shared spaces discussed in this dissertation, artist residencies are managed by art institutions or funded by city councils, meaning public funding plays a significant role in their operation (An & Choi, 2019). With relatively more financial resources compared to private shared studios and artist-run spaces, artist residencies typically have full-time managers, often curators or administrators, who

are responsible for designing programs and fostering an environment conducive to creativity. Their role extends beyond logistics, facilitates networking opportunities, organizes artist programs, and connects artists with the broader community (Paulus & Lejeune, 2012).

Before entering artist residencies, both A5 and A6 lacked proper studio spaces. They worked in homes, cafés, or temporary spaces at their schools, primarily relying on laptops and limited resources. Because of this, both expressed a deep sense of excitement when they were finally given a dedicated studio.

A5's first residency experience came right after graduate school. At the time, he entered the program without a specific goal, which led to some regrets about not maximizing the opportunity. Although he visited his studio regularly and engaged in some reading and drawing, he felt unsure of how to utilize the residency fully. Additionally, he did not participate actively in social gatherings, which limited his interactions with other artists:

> During the residency [R1], I didn't do many works because I didn't have any special plans, and there wasn't much interaction between the artists. When I went to the studio in the morning, I would read a little bit or draw small sketches. I was given good conditions, but I didn't know how to use them well. It would be more beneficial to enter a residency when someone has a plan and knows what to do. I learned something, but it wasn't enough to feel the maximum value of the opportunity. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

This situation arose because he entered the residency directly after graduation without significant professional experience or an understanding of how to use such opportunities. Reflecting on the experience during the interview, A5 expressed regret about not fully appreciating or utilizing the residency at the time.

A year passed quickly, and A5 had to leave the residency. Without a dedicated studio, he began working from home again. Although he received invitations to participate in group

exhibitions, he declined due to his mental and physical health. During this period, he was unable to continue his artistic practice.

However, after recovering from health issues and entering his second residency (R2), he realized the immense value of having a large studio space. His project involved transforming his studio into a cargo space for other artists, allowing him to explore themes of publicity and privacy within the residency system.

Unlike his time in R1, A5 this time had a clear goal, which greatly influenced his attitude and projects. The artists in the residency were also open-minded and eager to share experiences and collaborate. Participants included painters, sculptors, media artists, and photographers, most of whom were emerging artists actively engaged in the art scene. They often gathered in the communal kitchen, shared meals, and even organized a trip to the countryside during the summer:

> I loved the life at R2. Everything was amazing. The artists who gathered that year were working with diverse materials, and the office managers were very kind. It was a completely different atmosphere from the R1. At R1, I rarely visited other artists' studios or spoke to them, partly because I didn't drink. At R2, I was more open-minded and talked more actively with others. I even visited the office just to say hello. The managers and artists were kind, and I felt very happy. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

The positive atmosphere at R2 was attributed not only to the artists' attitudes but also to the dedication of the residency managers. These individuals, responsible for overseeing residency operations, played a crucial role in creating a supportive environment:

> The reason the atmosphere was so good was because of the managers. The performance and atmosphere of a residency program can vary greatly depending on the managers' commitment. They often visited my studio for tea and conversation. I could tell they genuinely cared about the artists they invited. They even attended the artists' shows to cheer us on. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

A5's experiences at R2 included participating in professional development programs, such as a 3D printing workshop and artist-led sessions for sharing unique skills. However, one program, the Collaboration Initiative, was less satisfying:

> We participated in open studios, learned new skills, and traveled together. These activities strengthened our bonds as artists. However, the collaboration program felt too formal. It would have been better if collaboration had occurred naturally, rather than being directly arranged by the managers. This aspect must be challenging to address in the form of an institution. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

Following his time at R2, A5's third residency expanded on his previous explorations. During this period, he experimented with new concepts, including a walking performance that spanned approximately 50 kilometers between Location A and Location B. Additionally, A5 actively engaged with the spatial conditions of the residency by experimenting with how the assigned studio could be used. He deliberately blocked access to his space during open studio events—an intentional act that challenged conventional expectations of visibility, transparency, and public accessibility typically associated with residency programs:

> An artist's studio is a private space, but residencies are inherently public. At R2, I used my studio as a cargo space for other artists. At R3, I wanted to reject the publicity of the residency system. So, during the open studio, I built a wall to create distance and a barrier between my space and the visitors. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

A6 also emphasized the significance of having a large workspace. Before entering a residency, he lacked a studio due to family circumstances, often working from home or in cafés. His first residency (R4) provided only a modest space, but he found fulfillment in the warm and supportive community. This year-long program included about 16 national artists and 6 international artists, who participated for 3 months. For A6, the most valuable aspect of his time at R4 was the community of artists.

At the time, A6 was still in the early stages of his career, working from home with limited visibility in the art scene. However, the artists participating in the same year were well-

known and actively exhibiting. Initially, he felt intimidated, but over time, they became close friends:

> Although I lacked much experience, I was fortunate to enter R4 through the application process. The artists that year were established figures in the art scene, while my career had just started. The exchanges with these artists were very important to me. I was able to network naturally at exhibition openings and after-parties. Without those connections, it would have been difficult to build a network. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

These informal gatherings allowed him to build relationships and share experiences with peers. By the end of the residency, A6 felt a stronger sense of belonging to the artist community and gained confidence in his practice.

A6's second residency (R5), with a much larger studio, allowed him to experiment with new gadgets and sounds before showcasing them in exhibitions:

> At R5, the size of the studio spaces was enormous. This allowed me to improve the quality of my work. Even using the same equipment, the sound and spatial experience were entirely different. Having such a large space also enabled me to take on commissioned projects, which became a new focus in my work. For example, when working with sound, I could experiment with unexpected variables and control them better before presenting in an exhibition venue. This was something I couldn't do at home. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

For A6, having access to a large studio space for the first time allowed him to expand the scale of his projects. The ability to experiment with sound and test installations in a controlled environment significantly enhanced his work.

One of the commissions A6 worked on during this period was for the Arko Museum of Art in 2015. The project involved researching the history of the museum building, which had once been a college and hospital, and creating a large-scale installation incorporating sound, light, and movement. The size of the studio allowed him to collaborate with technicians and refine his work before installation.

The third residency (R6) provided yet another expansive workspace, where A6 pushed his practice further, incorporating new media and methodologies. At R6, A6 found opportunities to collaborate and exchange knowledge with other professional artists. Unlike art school, where students often follow each other's styles, the residency encouraged artists to focus on their individual practices while sharing their expertise:

> Exchanging ideas with other artists at the residency was about solving problems together and inspiring new questions. It wasn't about copying techniques or styles. Everyone was an expert in their field, and we could take only the information we needed to grow our own practices. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

The artist said that a physical studio was not just a place for experimentation but also a space for imagination, an environment that allowed them to dream bigger and take creative risks.

Through interviews and analysis, several key values of artist residencies were identified: (a) opportunities to take risks and experiment in a larger studio space; (b) natural opportunities to network with artists from different backgrounds and career stages; and (c) creative and professional development through structured programs and peer interactions.

On the other hand, there were some conditions to have a successful engagement with the residency programs: (a) having a clear goal for participating in a residency, as entering without a defined plan or artistic direction can lead to underutilization of the opportunity; (b) understanding that not all structured programs will suit every artist's working style; and (c) acknowledging the vulnerability of residencies to external factors, including bureaucratic decisions or funding cuts, which can bring challenge in the autonomy of both artists and managers involved.

In summary, the artist residencies of A5 and A6 offered artists a structured yet dynamic creative environment. The benefits extend beyond physical space; they provide networking opportunities, professional development, and platforms for collective advocacy. A5 and A6

shared both the rewards and challenges of their residency experiences, emphasizing how these programs allowed them to expand their practice, form meaningful connections, and establish alliances. Informal interactions and peer support played a crucial role, fostering a strong sense of community that continued beyond the residency itself.

Summary of How Artists Managed Each Type of Shared Studio. The primary goal of this dissertation was to explore how shared studio experiences contributed to artists' career development. This study examined three distinct types of shared studios—private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and artist residencies—each of which offered unique benefits and challenges. This section discussed how artists managed each type of space, highlighting the practical challenges they faced and the events that took place within their studios. It focused on how artists used these spaces to sustain and develop their artistic practices.

Private shared studios, often the first choice for recent graduates, provided a cost-effective and flexible working environment where artists can collaborate while maintaining autonomy. A1 and A2 emphasized the importance of self-determination and the motivation gained from being in a supportive, shared space.

Artist-run spaces, managed by the artists themselves, served as platforms for experimentation, exhibitions, and community engagement. A3 and A4 demonstrated how these spaces foster artistic networks and even enable financial sustainability through events and educational programs.

By contrast, artist residencies, funded by public institutions, offered structured institutional support, spacious work environments, and valuable networking opportunities with professionals from diverse backgrounds. A5 and A6 shared how these residencies not only provided space for creative exploration but also facilitated collective action, strengthening

artistic relationships. The following section looks more closely at how the artists used these spaces, examining the strategies they developed to achieve their goals.

Strategies Derived from Their Shared Studio Environments

The six artists participating in this dissertation collectively managed their shared studio spaces as a means of sustaining their artistic practice. Within these environments, they naturally engaged in networking, exchanged knowledge, and learned from one another. This section takes a closer look at how they used shared studios, aiming to understand the strategies that emerged from these experiences. While previous sections focused on the physical management of shared spaces, this part emphasizes the nonmaterial values and deeper meanings that surfaced through interviews and data analysis.

Informal Networking and Collaboration as a Means of Progress. Across the three types of shared spaces, the artists emphasized the benefits they gained from the support and connections they formed with one another. Natural and autonomous networking occurred in private shared studios and artist-run spaces, where artists themselves established and managed the environment. By contrast, networking in artist residencies was often structured through residency programs designed by managers. However, meaningful connections often formed after the residencies ended because artists maintained relationships by attending each other's exhibitions and events.

A1 and A2, who used private shared studios, exemplified how informal networking within these spaces led to professional opportunities. In most cases, the artists who initiated these studios acted as hosts, managing the space by inviting other artists to form a community. They frequently organized informal gatherings, such as parties, meetings, artist voluntary seminars, and open studio events.

A1 highlighted how informal parties played a crucial role in expanding her network. Studio members invited their friends, who were professionals in the art scene. This organic, multilayered networking structure allowed her to build valuable connections. One significant outcome was that this relationship was further extended to receiving curatorial support for an exhibition from a curator she met through this network:

> I often hosted parties by inviting friends, including a curator I know from a past exhibition. Through these casual events, we met new people and stayed connected through social media…. I was so busy just working on my painting that I didn't have much time for anything else. Fortunately, one of my friends, who is a curator, helped me with the paperwork. She proofread the application, which helped me concentrate on my project. She cared for other things needed to open an exhibition, such as opening, design, and paperwork. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

A2 emphasized the importance of conversation in the studio. His first shared studio dissolved because the other members did not come to the studio regularly due to a lack of goals. However, his later shared studio experiences gave him more meaningful engagement. For A2, the primary condition for sharing a space was finding someone who could continue artistic discussions and move forward on the journey together.

Beyond providing space, artist residencies also foster natural networking opportunities, allowing artists to engage with peers from various career stages and disciplines. A6 recalled his time at R4, where, as an emerging artist, he was surrounded by more established practitioners. Although there was a clear career gap, his fellow residents welcomed him into their circles, inviting him to openings and events, which gave him a sense of belonging and confidence. Similarly, A5 highlighted the support that he received within his residency programs. During his walking project, he received support and encouragement from fellow artists who volunteered to document his performance.

Both artists noted that informal gatherings, such as casual meetings, shared meals, and coffee breaks, played a crucial role in networking. These spontaneous interactions led to the exchange of professional skills, sparking creative ideas and mutual inspiration. While formal residency programs offered structured development opportunities, it was the organic peer-to-peer engagement that truly enriched their experiences and professional growth.

These examples suggested that shared studios functioned not only as workspaces but also as strategic networking hubs, where informal connections played a crucial role in expanding artists' networks, creating new opportunities, and sustaining their practices. As A5 mentioned earlier, rather than formal gatherings or collaborations organized by authorities, it was casual gatherings and voluntary collaborations that played a pivotal role in strengthening artistic communities and fostering professional relationships.

Professional Learning Through Reflecting on One Another. For the six participants, shared studios were not just physical spaces to share; they became places where artists could learn and transform. The six artists learned by negotiating with one another. This unique learning process took place in all types of shared spaces, but it was especially noticeable in private shared studios and artist residencies.

In private shared studios, spaces were often divided by simple partitions or even just stacks of unfinished works. The artists used the space in organic and flexible ways, negotiating how to work within their given environment. In this setting, they were exposed to each other's work processes, unintentionally learning by watching how their peers approached their practice.

A1, who worked in private shared studios, shared how much she learned simply by watching her studio mate work. As a painter who primarily worked with acrylics and oil paints, she had never worked closely with a sculptor before. However, at the time of the interview, her

studio mate, a sculptor working with metal and ready-made objects, was preparing for a solo exhibition. The studio was filled with sculptural pieces in progress, with scattered tools and materials that A1 had never encountered. She described how she learned without direct instruction, just by observing how her studio mate assembled and experimented with materials:

> By just watching how the sculptor works, I've learned about the complexity and difficulty of creating sculptures. I really respect her. (A1, Interview Transcript, May 3, 2024)

Seeing the sculptor's process expanded A1's awareness of unfamiliar materials, leading her to imagine how she might incorporate new elements into her own painting practice. The studio environment functioned like a live classroom, where the artists naturally learned and reflected on each other's work.

In artist residencies, even though studio spaces were separated, artists had opportunities to present their work through residency programs. By watching other artists' presentations, research processes, and discussions, they could develop new perspectives and refine their skills as professional artists.

A6 recalled a learning experience during one of his residencies. Since his work was primarily based on new media and installation, he had never worked with acrylic painting before. Curious about the material, he asked a fellow resident, a painter, for guidance. However, instead of giving him technical instructions, the painter simply suggested that he experiment on his own. The artist's response was not meant to discourage him but rather to emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to engage with material. Following this advice, A6 began exploring acrylic paint in his own way, playing with textures and unconventional techniques. He recalled:

> The advice from the painter was transformative. He said to truly understand the material, I needed to ruin and revive things on my own. Even if I failed, those failures would have meaning. Since then, I've spent time independently studying materials, and gradually, my own language has emerged. (A6, Interview Transcript, September 8, 2024)

This process eventually led to a new series of paintings that A6 had never imagined creating before. He later exhibited these works in a solo show, combining them with his moving images and sound pieces. Through this experience, A6 not only learned how to use acrylics but also discovered a new way of approaching material experimentation, one that was self-driven rather than guided by external instruction.

Both cases illustrated how learning in shared studios and residencies differed from structured academic training. A1's learning was visual and observational, shaped by watching how another artist worked in a shared environment. A6's learning was experimental and process-driven, emerging through a conversation that encouraged him to discover his own methods.

While private shared studios allowed artists to absorb knowledge organically by being immersed in each other's work, artist residencies provided opportunities for deeper critical reflection and experimentation. Ultimately, the learning that took place was not about direct teaching or formal training. Instead, it came from conversations, shared experiences, and moments of observation, allowing artists to reflect on one another's work, exchange ideas, and push their creative boundaries.

Alliances of Artists and Communities of Creation. One of the most interesting themes that emerged from the interviews was the sense of alliance and communities that artists experienced in their shared studio environments. Across all three types of shared spaces—private shared studios, artist-run spaces, and artist residencies—artists often described a deep sense of belonging, responsibility, and collective creation. This invisible network of artists could not be quantified or valued in material terms; instead, it was a lived experience characterized by a spirit of collaboration and mutual support.

However, this sense of community was not without its complexities. Some artists noted challenges in maintaining boundaries, tensions arising from differences in working styles or personalities, and occasional feelings of being left behind or competition. Thus, while shared spaces fostered connection and solidarity, they also reflected the complexities and negotiations inherent in collective creative environments.

In private shared studios, the flexible and informal boundaries between artists encouraged casual conversations about everyday concerns, artistic struggles, and professional development. In artist-run spaces, artists took on the responsibility of managing the space, curating exhibitions, and developing self-sustaining models to support their creative work. Artist residencies provided structured programs aimed at professional growth, but many artists valued the relationships and networks they built just as much as the skills they acquired. By sharing space, time, and a passion for creation, the artists across the three studio settings formed strong yet complicated and complex alliances that shaped their artistic journeys.

A1 and A2 shared how private studios became places where they built strong networks, took on responsibilities, and developed a collective creative community. A1's first and second shared studio experiences were not always satisfying due to challenges in relationships among the artists. However, when A1 was preparing for a solo exhibition, her friends provided crucial support by helping her write proposals and curate the show, which allowed her to focus entirely on her painting. In addition to professional collaboration, informal studio gatherings and networking events further expanded her connections with curators and other professionals in the art world.

A2 similarly invited friends to his studio but expanded his networking approach by linking multiple shared studios for a joint open studio event. Unlike typical open studios, where

individual artists invite visitors to their personal spaces, this event involved five local studios working together to create a larger, community-driven event. They named it “Hal-Jack,” meaning “open wide and welcome.” The event ran for 3 days, with all five studios opening their doors simultaneously. To guide visitors, the artists created a detailed map highlighting the participating studios and artists. Visitors could explore the studios by following the map, turning the event into an interactive and engaging experience.

A3 and A4, who ran artist-run spaces, also built strong networks among peer artists. One defining characteristic of artist-run spaces was their transformability. A3 utilized this flexibility when launching her second artist-run space, designing new programs that encouraged community engagement. By inviting professionals from other creative disciplines, such as architecture and performance art, she diversified the space’s network and brought new perspectives into the creative exchange:

> We want the space to be used as a base or platform. It’s a base where we can invite various people and share ideas with each other. So, the way we think of it is to give more public engagement and collaboration. (A3, Interview Transcript, July 19, 2024)

A4 structured her space with exhibitions and education programs, curating events that brought together large groups of artists. As mentioned earlier, A4 and her collaborators organized a show, TasteView, which featured 35 artists who displayed and sold their works in cabinets. Even though they had some income to share with the participating artists, it was not enough to sustain their practice. However, her education center (E1) was a sustainable system where artists could teach with their talent. E1 employed 18 tutors teaching 35 classes. For A4, these initiatives were not only strategies to sustain her practice but also platforms to address the broader challenges faced by early-career artists. The artist-run spaces provided venues for

experimentation, networking, and alternative exhibition methods, while the education studio offered a stable income and opportunities to engage with diverse audiences.

A5 and A6, who participated in artist residencies, emphasized the strong sense of community and creative exchange that developed in these programs. An example occurred when A5 was at R3. Without prior notice, the city council attempted to shut down the program, disregarding the artists and administrators involved. In response, the artists transformed their open studio event into a form of protest:

> We protested to protect the residency. Many artists from Location A and Location C joined us to support the platform. It wasn't just about preserving the space. It was about resisting bureaucratic decisions that disregarded the artists and their work. (A5, Interview Transcript, August 14, 2024)

Their demonstration gained attention, drawing support from other residency artists and the broader artistic community. Additionally, A5 collaborated closely with residency administrators, working to address issues that artists faced. When he needed support and collective action, he actively gathered the voices of fellow artists and communicated their concerns to the administration. Further, A5 even did a solo protest in front of the city council building. This incident made the residency network visible and tangible, reinforcing the strength of collective artistic voices.

A6 reflected on how the motivation and passion of other artists in the residency deeply inspired him. Since the residency space was accessible 24 hours a day, he witnessed how intensely other artists worked, which fueled his own creative drive. He also highlighted the generous invitation from peer artists, which allowed him to integrate into the art community. This experience provided an opportunity to engage in a creative network that he had not previously encountered.

A6 also mentioned the lasting impact of residency networks. He emphasized that the connections forged in residencies did not dissolve after the program ends. Instead, they continued and became stronger afterward. Many residency artists remained actively involved in each other's journeys, attending openings, sharing resources, and supporting one another long after their time in the program. These relationships contribute to a broader sense of community.

Summary of Strategies Derived from Their Shared Studio Environments. One of the primary objectives of this dissertation was to explore the potential of shared studios in fostering artistic development. Interviews with the artists revealed that these spaces served as strategic environments for career advancement by enabling networking, peer learning, and community-building. The artists facilitated these spaces with flexibility, creating opportunities for informal support through events and initiatives such as open studios. These collaborative settings encouraged a unique learning process, where artists gained insights through observation and dialogue, shaping their practices organically. A shared sense of belonging and responsibility further reinforced their creative journeys and contributed to the sustainability of their careers.

Three key strategies emerged from the analysis: (a) networking and collaboration as a means of professional progression; (b) learning through reflection on peers; and (c) forming alliances and creating communities of practice. These strategies showed that shared studios are not only physical workspaces but also dynamic ecosystems that support artistic growth, foster meaningful relationships, and enrich the broader arts community. See Table 3 for a summary of the strategies that emerged from the analysis.

Table 3

Summary of Strategies

Strategy	Description	Activities	Impact
1. Networking and collaboration as a means of professional progression.	Building informal networks through shared studios, casual gatherings, and events.	Studio parties (A1), Hal-Jack open studio event (A2), and residency informal gatherings (A5 & A6).	Expanded professional connections that led to curatorial support, exhibitions, and career opportunities.
2. Professional learning through reflection on peers.	Learning by observing, discussing, and experimenting alongside peers.	Learning from sculptor studio mate (A1) and learning new material exploration at residency (A6).	Expanded technical and conceptual skills, developed self-driven learning habits.
3. Forming alliances and creating communities of practice.	Building artist communities, co-managing spaces, and organizing joint events.	Making events, classes (A3 & A4), a joint open studio event (A2), and protesting in residency (A5).	Making a community of artists created vital ecosystems that helped artists build sustainability.

Summary of Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter analyzed interviews conducted with six artists who incorporated shared studios into their career development. A1 and A2 utilized private shared studios, A3 and A4 had experience managing artist-run spaces, and A5 and A6 participated in artist residencies. The interviews illustrated how each artist navigated the challenges of establishing a career in the competitive and often unpredictable art world. While their backgrounds and personal journeys differed, with some facing financial instability, health issues, or a lack of institutional support, they all shared a passion for creation and emphasized both the benefits and limitations of shared spaces in sustaining their artistic practices.

When the 4S theory was applied to the analysis, Part I provided an overview of each artist's transition across four areas. Although the artists had different backgrounds, such as

varying levels of family support or educational experiences, they engaged with those around them and utilized the shared studio environment to develop support systems. After graduation, their survival strategies also differed depending on the types of studios they accessed. Within each unique shared space, although challenges remained, the artists collaborated effectively to overcome obstacles and move forward. For example, artists in private shared studios leaned heavily on peer support and informal networking, while those managing artist-run spaces emphasized public engagement and resource-sharing. Artists who participated in residencies benefited from structured programs, larger workspaces, and opportunities for professional development. Within each unique shared space, although challenges such as financial instability, creative conflicts, or bureaucratic pressures remained, the artists collaborated effectively to overcome obstacles and advance their practices.

In addition to these internal strategies, other external factors influenced the artists' trajectories. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) was used to identify key human actors, such as family members, friends, administrators, curators, and fellow artists, who either provided support or, at times, exerted a disapproving or obstructive influence. Meanwhile, identified nonhuman actors, such as shared studios themselves, public funding systems, social networking platforms, and the broader local art scene, played equally crucial roles in shaping artistic development. These actors functioned not only as resources but also as agents that systematically and institutionally impacted the artists' ability to sustain their practices. This dual approach provided a broader understanding of the environmental systems that both supported and challenged the artists' growth, highlighting the complex interplay between individual agency and structural conditions.

Part II described a comparative analysis across the six cases, identifying shared themes such as the importance of peer-to-peer learning, the role of informal networking, the necessity of goal-setting within shared environments, and the tension between collaboration and competition. Despite their different pathways, the participants emphasized the critical value of community, shared responsibility, and adaptability in their early careers.

Building on these findings, Chapter 5 connects the analyzed data with existing literature to further contextualize the role of shared studio spaces and artist networks within broader theoretical and historical frameworks. By situating these case studies within scholarly discourse, this next chapter considers how these interconnected factors align with or pose new inquiries to previous research.

Table 4 provides an overview of how the research questions which guided this study aligned with the findings presented in Chapter 4.

Table 4

Aligning Research Questions with Findings

The Main Research Question	
Given the challenges that early-career artists face in sustaining their artistic practice after graduation, what can be learned from the experiences of six early-career artists working in shared studios?	
The First Subquestion	**The Second Subquestion**
What are the key affordances, limitations, and values that early-career artists encounter in shared studio spaces?	What forms of support do early-career artists receive during college and their postgraduation transition, and how do these supports influence their experiences in shared studio environments?
Findings	
- Private shared studios: Affordable workspaces that encouraged daily practice, peer support, and informal networking. - Limitations: Financial pressure, creative conflicts, and lack of clear goals among members. - Artist-run spaces: Self-oriented platforms for exhibitions, experimentation, and community building. - Limitations: Financial instability and balancing management duties with personal practice. - Artist residencies: Structured programs providing funded studios, professional development, and peer networks. - Limitations: Bureaucratic challenges, occasional formalized collaborations that felt restrictive. - Key values across spaces: Artists valued shared learning through observing each other's practices, informal networking through parties and social events, and the sense of community built through forming alliances during difficult situations.	- While some artists received emotional support from family, many faced limited practical guidance, as family members often lacked direct experience in the art world. - Peer support emerged as a frequent form of help. Friends and senior artists offered encouragement, emotional reassurance, and critical feedback, helping artists persist through periods of doubt and career uncertainty. - Friends and professional networks provided career opportunities, including exhibition invitations, residency recommendations, and teaching positions, which helped artists establish or advance their practices. - Informal peer networks within shared studios and artist communities played a critical role in sustaining artists' motivation, expanding their professional contacts, and fostering a sense of belonging. - The support came unexpectedly, often arriving at critical moments.

Table 4 (continued)

The Third Subquestion	The Fourth Subquestion
What strategies do early-career artists develop to manage the challenges of the postgraduation transition period, and how are these strategies shaped or supported by shared studio environments?	What role can art education play in preparing early-career artists to navigate postgraduation transitions by incorporating shared studio environments?
Findings	
- The main strategies were (a) networking and collaboration as a means of professional progression, (b) professional learning through reflection on peers, and (c) forming alliances and creating communities of practice. - Informal networking and collaboration: Artists built professional networks organically through casual studio events, parties, and peer support. Shared studios acted as networking hubs that opened up exhibition and collaboration opportunities. - Professional learning through reflection on peers: Artists learned by observing each other's work processes and receiving informal advice. This peer-driven learning encouraged experimentation, skill development, and finding individual artistic voices. - Forming alliances and creative communities: Shared studios fostered a sense of collective belonging and responsibility. Artists collaborated on projects, co-organized events, and developed sustainable models like educational programs to support their practices. Protesting together when the community was in threat.	- Artists expressed dissatisfaction with outdated college programs and limited faculty engagement. Traditional programs often failed to reflect contemporary art practices or support students' professional development. - Peer learning in open studio settings during college became critical for growth. Informal feedback and shared observations among peers replaced formal instruction and motivated artistic development. - Some highlighted the need for art education to better prepare students by simulating postgraduation life. - Some artists recommended improvements included integrating shared studio experiences, professional practice workshops, and emphasizing peer learning and community-building in curricula.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter integrates the literature analysis from Chapter 2 into the findings from Chapter 4 to address the central research question: Given the challenges that early-career artists face in sustaining their artistic practice after graduation, what can be learned from the experiences of six early-career artists working in shared studios? The purpose of this question was to explore how shared studio experiences served as a practical and strategic means of survival and to contextualize the role of shared studios. To examine this question in depth, the themes that appeared through the cross-case analysis were further developed into seven themes.

By analyzing these themes, this chapter addresses the subquestions and provides a comprehensive understanding of how shared studio spaces fostered resilience, creativity, and sustainability among early-career artists navigating the challenges of the postgraduation period.

The Problems Found in College Art Education and the Communal Studios

The shift from the traditional academic model to the Bauhaus system marked a turning point in art education, prompting ongoing debates about what artists should be taught. As the art world evolved, educational approaches began to move beyond technical training, placing greater emphasis on attitude, conceptual thinking, hybridity, and collaboration (Elkins, 2008; Jochum, 2015; Madoff, 2009; Salazar, 2013; Singerman, 1999). Today, the BFA and MFA are accessible programs for training artists, and artists pursuing PhDs represent another emerging paradigm in the field (Elkins, 2008; Maksymowicz & Tobia, 2017). Although these programs aim to support artists in becoming professionals and finding positions in art-related fields, debates and concerns remain about what these programs can truly offer students. There is still no widely accepted framework for what an artist's education should entail. Some scholars emphasized the value of one-on-one mentorship within studio settings, while others advocated for a focus on conceptual

development, interdisciplinary methods, or professional preparation. This ongoing uncertainty reflects the nature of art itself, which is constantly transforming and evolving over time (Elkins, 2008; Jochum, 2015).

All of the artists interviewed in this dissertation attended art colleges, and some had prior experiences in specialized art high schools. While their educational backgrounds varied, they shared similar reflections on both the benefits and limitations of formal art education. Their experiences showed that entering an art college or graduate program was often considered a first step toward becoming a professional artist, even though alternative paths exist (Gavin, 2021). The education of artists has become an extensive system and industry, shaping how artists are trained and reacting within the field (Maksymowicz & Tobia, 2017).

The most common issues that appeared in the interviews were outdated educational content and disconnection from the professional art field (Bergstrom, 2019; Fine, 2017). Most of the artists, except for A6, described their college experiences as unsatisfying. For example, A1 recalled her professors coming to class unprepared, conversing casually with students, and providing little structured guidance. A3 similarly reported that her experiences in college and graduate school led her to seek alternative learning environments, such as shared studios outside of school. A5 mentioned that some professors left classes shortly after they began, not showing commitment to teaching. According to the artists, during the period when they were students—approximately 10 to 20 years ago, the authority of tenured professors was often seen as absolute, making it difficult for students to voice complaints or demand better educational experiences. As a result, the artists described finding their own ways of learning and relying on peer support for growth.

Fine (2017) stated that the role of art schools is twofold: First, they help students create an artistic identity; second, they assist students in building a social network they will use after graduation. However, most of the artists interviewed for this dissertation did not fully experience what Fine (2017) described. The classes were more focused on technical skills rather than the development of artistic identities. The content was outdated and did not reflect the changes occurring in contemporary art. The networking they were building was primarily among themselves, rather than with the local art scene or professionals. Several participants expressed feeling underprepared for the transition into a professional career, expressing a lack of career guidance and insufficient professional training. Their experiences reflected some of the broader concerns discussed by Morrisroe and Roland (2008), who argued that MFA graduates are often unprepared for professional careers as artists or educators, emphasizing the need for more precise pedagogical training. While art schools aim to prepare students for teaching careers, this may not fully address the fundamental challenges that artists face. Artistic careers do not follow a single trajectory, nor do they guarantee stable opportunities, making it difficult to establish a fixed curriculum that ensures survival in the art field (Fine, 2017).

One of the subquestions in this dissertation examined how art education could better support early-career artists during their transition into the professional field. Specifically, the question considers whether shared studio spaces might offer benefits or support in this process. In response to this question, a particularly interesting observation emerged from the interviews: All six artists reported experiencing a similar studio environment during college. Due to limited space, a large number of students shared a communal studio, typically divided by makeshift partitions or stacks of works-in-progress. These open and unstructured environments created a unique dynamic in which students were constantly exposed to one another's work. Without strict

boundaries, students naturally observed each other's progress, exchanged techniques, and engaged in informal conversations. The setting functioned as a kind of creative melting pot, where students encountered diverse ideas, negotiated space, and developed early social and professional networks (Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018; Workman & Vaughan, 2017).

A1 recalled that when she lost confidence in her talent and felt unsure about her path, her friends and seniors had encouraged her to continue. A2 particularly enjoyed visiting his peers' and seniors' studios because it allowed him to see how others worked and absorb new techniques that helped him refine his artistic approach. A3, whose major was Korean traditional painting, initially felt detached from the art scene. However, a friend she met in a class introduced her to contemporary art lectures and discussions, which completely shifted her perspective and reshaped her artistic career. A4 met friends who could share not only physical space but also their creative and emotional experiences. Their relationship extended into graduate school, where they rented a shared studio outside the university to continue supporting one another. A5 and his friends, frustrated by their professors' lack of engagement, explored alternative art spaces and exhibitions, which provided more meaningful exposure to diverse artistic practices. A6 had passionate and inspiring professors in his first year, but by his third and final year, the quality of education declined significantly. As a result, he spent most of his time outside of school, visiting digital archives and exchanging information with peers who shared his interest in new media art.

Through progress, the six artists developed their own ways of learning through complex encounters, negotiations, and peer networks. This learning process was not just about acquiring technical skills but also about discovering artistic interests, conducting research, and reflecting on their practices. As Bergstrom (2019) stated:

> Indeed, they are faced with massive shifts in meaning for their artistic priorities, time and money expenditures, and day-to-day motivations. Perhaps, this oscillation from unsettled student self to one's professional identity is understandable, and a resolution remains elusive.… Encouraging students to accept (and recognize in one another) the discomfort as well as the solace of reflectiveness when developing a personal and professional self is important. (p. 31)

Bergstrom's argument related the importance of acknowledging the uncertainties artists face after graduation and the necessity of preparing for this transition. However, as Fine (2017) pointed out, there is no single path to becoming an artist, making it impossible to predict and prepare fully for the future. Instead, the six artists developed the ability to navigate their own paths, learn to identify their interests, conduct research, and extract meaning from their work. Further, they shared ideas with peers, receiving feedback and refining artistic concepts through collective reflection.

Although the six artists described feeling a lack of structured guidance in their formal courses, they also recalled positive aspects of their communal studio environments during college. The colleges they attended all had shared studio spaces, which enabled peer learning and informal exchanges. Despite limited formal instruction, these shared spaces allowed the six artists to support each other, form peer networks, observe one another's work, and organically exchange techniques and ideas (Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018; Workman & Vaughan, 2017). For the artists, this environment played an important role in their artistic development, offering opportunities to create, discuss, and engage with their peers in ways that formal coursework did not always provide.

These unstructured yet interactive and supportive environments helped the six artists gradually discover their interests, develop their practices, and construct their professional identities. However, such learning experiences would not have been possible without the respectful relationships formed among peers. Given these shifts, reimagining the function of

studio spaces in higher education has become increasingly important, prompting critical reflection on how art education can more effectively prepare students for the realities of professional practice (Bauer, 2009; Elkins, 2008; Jochum, 2015; Madoff, 2009; Renfro, 2009; Salazar, 2013). The following section further explores the significance of the support that occurred during the transitional period. It examines how the support system enabled artists to restart and expand their careers.

Shared Studios as a Place for Support and Restart

The artists interviewed in this dissertation reported that they often had to take on multiple side jobs to sustain their creative practices. The main reasons were financial pressure and the lack of family support. Hennekam (2017) researched how artists manage conflicting work-related identities to support their artistic careers. She found that, due to incompatible professional demands and social expectations, artists often experience psychological strain and relationship challenges. A1 and A3 shared direct experiences of role changes while working in different settings. A2 described the stress he endured while working for another artist. A5 worked as an assistant curator after graduation. A6 was responsible for caring for a family member who was ill. In such difficult situations, the artists required opportunities to restart and refocus their careers on their creative work.

The second subquestion asked what forms of support early-career artists received during their postgraduation transition, and how these supports influenced their experiences in shared studio environments. The aim was to understand how the shared environment cultivated the support and allowed the artists to restart, experiment, and create opportunities for themselves.

Historical cases, such as those of Jeanna Bauck and Bertha Wegmann, illustrated how female artists created supportive studio environments when excluded from male-dominated

artistic spaces (Rech, 2018). Similarly, Senga Nengudi and Maren Hassinger, two Black women artists, used their artistic collaboration as a means of resisting racial and gender discrimination (Bowles, 2016). Even without a fixed studio, they moved between venues, continuing to create and collaborate. Their support system, based on friendship, provided a space where they could freely develop their identities as artists, despite the challenges posed by a white, male-dominated art world. These examples illustrated that a studio is not merely a physical workspace; it is also a site where artists support, protect, and nurture their professional identities, foster resilience, and sustain their practices (Liguori et al., 2023).

All artists received different types of support, but in the cases of A4, A5, and A6, critical support experiences emerged during their transition periods. When A4 was launching her educational institution, a friend introduced her to a group of art enthusiasts who offered key support. This support was crucial because they provided the physical space that later developed into a platform for other artists to teach and achieve sustainability. For A5, who was completing his studies and working as an assistant curator, friends invited him to participate in group exhibitions in their alternative spaces, which allowed him to present new work. This opportunity helped him realize his desire to pursue a professional artistic career. Later, during his participation in artist residencies, his projects involved the active support of peers through documentation, collaboration, and participation in performance-based work. The network he built through shared studios sustained and expanded his practice.

In A6's case, artist residencies became a turning point in expanding his practice. Before joining these programs, he did not have a dedicated studio, working instead from his parents' home and cafés and using only a laptop. At this difficult moment, a former colleague from his shared studio connected him with a curator, leading to his first solo exhibition. This opportunity

marked the beginning of his professional career and led him to residencies that further expanded his practice.

The relationships artists formed in and around studios were essential elements of support and continuity in their practices. For instance, in the case of Acme Artist Studios, many contemporary artists used shared studios not just to reduce costs but to exchange knowledge, form professional networks, and support one another (Ferm et al., 2022). Also, from Bowles's (2016) and Rech's (2018) cases, shared studios can function as safe spaces for artists supporting each other to overcome discrimination, marginalization, or professional isolation. The support networks developed in and around these communities acted as safeguards, enabling artists to continue creating, experimenting, and expanding their networks (Bowles, 2016; Liguori et al., 2023; Rech, 2018).

In their study, Evans et al. (2019) found that a mentoring model and peer support in care homes can boost artists' confidence, skills, and sustainability. Their research showed that artists supported each other by exchanging knowledge and developing their projects beyond the care home setting into the broader community. Similarly, as seen in the cases presented in this dissertation, whether in private shared studios, artist-run spaces, or residencies, these environments provided artists with the support necessary to initiate projects, incubate ideas, and navigate the complexities of an artistic career. However, there were also conflicts and difficulties in managing both relationships and the shared spaces. The following section discusses the complexities involved in navigating these dynamics.

The Complexities of Managing Shared Spaces and Relationships

The first subquestion asked: What are the key affordances, limitations, and values that early-career artists encounter in shared studio spaces? By examining how the six artists engaged

with these environments, a complex picture of management, negotiation, success, and failure emerged. It was difficult to simply characterize each case or determine a clear trajectory for the artists involved. Instead, their experiences revealed a diverse range of strategies and outcomes, shaped by the dynamics of shared space and interpersonal relationships.

The experiences of A1 showed the complexities of relationships in shared studios. Her first two shared studio experiences did not work out as she had hoped. Her first shared studio was with an artist she met through a group exhibition. Although their relationship started well, it did not last long due to differing expectations and working styles. Additionally, the poor conditions of the studio contributed to their separation. As Heaphy and Davies (2012) argued, friendships are not always peaceful or uplifting but can also be ambivalent, disappointing, and fraught with challenges. In reality, relationships, especially in collaborative spaces like shared studios, often involve conflicts, creative tensions, and unexpected changes in relationships (Roa, 2018).

A1's second shared studio was with close friends from college, all of whom were female painters of a similar age. Initially, this arrangement worked well because they were in similar situations and could relate to each other's struggles. However, as they spent more time together, a new problem emerged. Since they shared the same influences and artistic concerns, their ideas, themes, and painting styles began to overlap. When one artist painted a waterfall, others would develop similar ideas, leading to frustration and stress. Over time, they became worried about losing their artistic identity, which eventually strained their relationships and led them to separate their studios. This experience aligned with Heaphy and Davies's (2012) argument that friendships, particularly within creative collaborations, are not always harmonious and can

become complex. Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (2024) also emphasized the importance of maintaining a personal ego when working in collaborative environments.

However, A1's third shared studio experience was different. This time, the studio was composed of artists from diverse backgrounds who worked with a variety of materials and disciplines. Unlike her previous experiences, where similarity led to tension, this studio provided a balanced and stimulating environment. As Crépel (2014) described, friends act as alter egos, helping individuals broaden their knowledge and perspectives. In this sense, friendships functioned as mirrors, reflecting different aspects of oneself and shaping personal and professional development. According to this view, relationships in shared studios were not just about companionship but also about exchanging knowledge, inspiring new ideas, and expanding creative possibilities.

In A3's case, when she launched her second artist-run space, the members who had collaborated with her on the first initiative chose not to continue. Their decision was not rooted in conflict but in the desire to focus on developing their own practices, as the management of an artist-run space required considerable time, energy, and commitment. This shift did not signify the end of their relationships, but it prompted A3 to reconsider how collaborative structures could be sustained without overburdening individuals. Her experience reflected broader challenges observed in artist-run initiatives. Sutton (2018) discussed the challenges and complexities of managing cooperative spaces. He observed that curating by committee can sometimes result in bland or diluted outcomes, which may raise questions of curatorial integrity. Similarly, as A3's former collaborators experienced, Sutton also highlighted the difficulty of balancing personal artistic practice with the collective responsibilities of running a space. Roa (2018) further explored the complexities of artistic collaboration, emphasizing that conflict is

often an inherent part of working together. His advice was not to avoid conflict but to approach it through active listening and thoughtful responses rather than reactive behavior. Together, these perspectives helped to frame A3's case not as a failure of collaboration but as an example of the need for adaptable, responsive approaches to collective practice.

Not only did the artists face difficulties in collaborating with others, but they also struggled to set their own personal goals. A2 and A6 experienced similar problems when they had their first shared studios. For A2, his first private shared studio with his college friend did not work out well because the members did not have a clear goal. Only A2 had scheduled exhibitions, so he came regularly to the studio. The others, who lacked clear goals, gradually stopped coming. A6 said that in his first residency, he did not have a clear plan for how to use the opportunity. He was not really networking with other artists because he did not feel as if he belonged in the space. A6 felt it was a wasted opportunity since the residency was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Morton (2007) discussed the importance of having a clear goal for artists. Through the case of Roger Dale Brown, Morton emphasized that artists should establish specific short-term and long-term goals rather than pursuing vague or undefined ambitions. Giol (2018) also emphasized the importance of having a clear goal. In her research, she outlined key elements that artists should consider when setting goals: They should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. This framework, commonly known as SMART, can also be applied by artists to create structured plans for their creative practice (Giol, 2018). While it is important for each artist to have their own individual goals, it is equally important to establish a clear vision for shared spaces, considering why the artists have come together and what they hope to achieve collectively through the space.

The artists interviewed for this dissertation showed the complexity of relationships within their shared studio spaces. While some relationships were strong and offered essential emotional and professional support, others were marked by tension, misunderstandings, or unmet expectations. Even when relationships in shared studios faced challenges, these connections often played an important role in shaping the artists' practices and fostering their self-development. The following section continues to explore the values and characteristics of shared studios and how artists engaged with these spaces to support their practices.

Making Opportunities in Shared Studios

The previous section examined the complexity of managing shared studios and how artists responded to these challenges. This section explores the unique values of shared spaces, focusing on how artists created their own opportunities within them.

With experience in running two artist-run spaces and an independent education program in Seoul, A4 indicated how shared spaces could be structured for continuous sustainability. Their second space functioned as both an exhibition venue and an educational hub. The exhibition space was designed to showcase early-career artists' work in a more commercial setting, helping them gain visibility and sell their art. To make this process less intimidating and more artist-friendly, they developed a cabinet system where each artist was given a dedicated space to display their work. The event was financially successful, but it still lacked long-lasting sustainability. Like many artist-run spaces worldwide, they relied on public funding, which exposed financial instability and dependence on institutional support (Grodach, 2010; Hilder, 2017).

On the other hand, A4's teaching initiative emerged as a more stable model for self-reliance. The education model offered an innovative approach to financial sustainability. Unlike

the exhibition-based system, which depended on public grants, the teaching space generated a steady income. It also expanded the role of artists beyond exhibition-making, allowing them to share knowledge and build creative communities. Classes ranged from realistic drawing to abstract expressionism as well as Korean traditional painting combined with contemporary influences. Some courses were designed for professionals, such as a website-building class for artists led by a designer who sought to create an alternative approach to digital portfolio-making.

Nabirye (2024) discussed how collaborative art spaces and initiatives rooted in community can foster inclusive, student-centered learning environments. Similarly, by structuring a community-driven educational platform, A4 and her peers created a sustainable model of financial self-reliance. The effectiveness of this initiative was based on mutual support and shared creative aspirations. Unlike conventional teaching institutions, their model emphasized peer-led learning, collaboration, and professional development, ultimately strengthening the shared network of artists.

In A3's case, she initially started her studio as a space for her own creative work, located in an area known for its artistic activity. However, despite being in an art-centered neighborhood, she struggled to integrate into the local art scene. As Howard et al. (2017) noted, peer dialogue systems can foster meaningful change. In one case, a conversation with a friend led to a breakthrough: The artist decided to transform her studio into an exhibition space, inviting other artists and art professionals to visit, engage, and exchange ideas. This initiative marked the beginning of her artist-run space and became a key step in her integration into the broader art community. Through A3's experience, it was possible to see that dialogue between peers became the foundation for new ideas, allowing her to take agency over her artistic trajectory (Howard

et al., 2017). A3 and her friends did not just wait for the opportunities to come. They actively made their own spaces and moved on to a new chapter of their career.

The cases in other literature also showed how artists secure self-reliability and independence. Sooudi (2020) studied artist-led spaces in India, which operated as independent agencies resisting the commercialized art market. His research revealed that young artists were rejected from the mainstream art industry, where only established and expensive artworks were exhibited. Instead, they created their own shared spaces where they could present experimental, open-ended works that engaged with contemporary artistic discourse (Cook, 2016). By selling their work and collaborating on commissions, they reduced operational costs and ensured financial sustainability (Sooudi, 2020). These spaces also provided artists with networking opportunities, promotional skills, and collective security, positioning themselves as an alternative to the traditional art market.

Despite the financial struggles faced by art school graduates (Ferreri & Graziano, 2014), the cases examined in this part showed that self-reliance and opportunity creation were possible in shared environments (Sooudi, 2020). Artists have used shared spaces as tools for financial independence, artistic experimentation, and professional growth. For some artists, this could be reducing costs and collaborating on commissioned projects, resisting the pressures of the commercialized art market (Sooudi, 2020). For others, like A4 and A3, shared spaces became sites of creative autonomy, allowing artists to exhibit, experiment, and sell work on their own terms.

While artist-run spaces provided independence, they also faced the challenge of financial instability. Some artists had to rely on public grants, which, while beneficial, limited their autonomy and long-lasting sustainability (Grodach, 2010; Hilder, 2017). One of the innovative

and sustainable approaches that emerged from this research was the education-based model developed by A4. By creating an alternative teaching space, A4 and her peers secured financial stability while maintaining their artistic practice. The model also expanded beyond traditional art education, integrating professional development workshops and alternative learning experiences.

Non-Material Values as Strategies for Sustainability: Informal Networks, Peer Learning, and Alliances

The artists in this dissertation reported various ways of using each type of shared studio. Private shared studios were described as affordable workspaces that supported daily practice, peer interaction, and informal networking, despite ongoing financial pressures, creative tensions, and a lack of unified direction among members. Artist-run spaces enabled self-directed exhibitions, experimentation with ideas, and community building, although artists also experienced financial instability and the challenge of balancing managerial responsibilities with their own practices. Artist residencies offered structured programs that promoted professional development and expanded peer networks. However, artists like A6 encountered bureaucratic barriers and felt constrained by overly formalized collaborations. Amid these varying dynamics, the artists developed distinct strategies: They formed informal networks, learned through one another, and built alliances that fostered a sense of belonging and mutual support. The following section examines these strategies in more depth to better understand how artists navigated the challenges of the postgraduation transition period.

Informal networks occurred across all types of shared studio spaces. However, A1 and A2, who used private shared studios, reported that these spaces supported significant informal networks among artists. A6 also shared his respectful relationships with peers he met during residencies. Freedman et al. (2013) studied how informal art communities can serve as a learning method while also functioning as spaces for entertainment and social networking opportunities.

Their findings showed that students often learn through social interactions and shared interests. They also argued that formal education alone cannot fully bridge certain gaps, as some meaningful learning experiences emerge more naturally in informal settings. Yang's (2024) research similarly highlighted the importance of interpersonal networks between professionals, which foster collaboration and can further develop into organizational structures. From the cases of the six artists examined in this study and related literature, informal networking emerged as one of the key necessities for forming supportive artistic communities. Marsick and Watkins (2001) stated, "informal learning is usually intentional but not highly structured. Examples include self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning that includes opportunities to review learning needs" (pp. 25-26). While formal education and residency programs provided structured knowledge and events that led to various types of relationships, informal networks, as shown by the participants, offered organically developed connections. These relationships often motivated artists to engage with one another, cultivating mutual respect and lasting friendships.

Peer learning in shared studios also emerged as an important strategic element. A1 and A6 shared their experiences of learning through observing and engaging with others in the studio, while A2 consistently emphasized the importance of conversations with studio mates. Numerous studies have addressed peer learning in various educational settings. Faller et al. (2022) stated that learning occurs when there is a deep level of shared understanding, commitment, and interaction between individuals. In everyday lived experiences, people engage in informal and incidental situations where learning enables them to recognize shared values and build communities, similar to the process of peer coaching (Faller et al., 2022). In fine art education, one such context is the group critique. Rodrigues (2025) explored the role of peer

critiques in college studios, framing them as both communal and contested spaces where students collectively construct meaning. However, the peer learning described by the participants in this study appeared more organically, developing naturally and voluntarily through daily interactions rather than through formalized critique sessions. As A2 emphasized, conversations between artists were key to unlocking new ways of learning and development. Similarly, Ward (2025) highlighted the importance of dialogue in collaborative settings, emphasizing how education can foster more conversation in the classroom to build trust and better respond to changing situations.

The final strategy indicated by the six artists through their interviews was the formation of alliances between artists. These alliances often began with informal networking and casual conversations. However, over time, these networks evolved into more structured and supportive relationships, forming artistic alliances. A1, for example, shared how informal gatherings, such as casual studio parties, eventually became a reliable support system. These connections later played a significant role in helping her manage her solo exhibition. The interpersonal relationships she built during these events extended beyond a single project and continued to support her in subsequent collaborations (Yang, 2024). Similarly, A2's private shared studio functioned as a platform for building creative alliances. He described his experience organizing Openstudio_Hwaljjakk, an initiative that brought together five studios and 10 artists within the same neighborhood. Unlike traditional open studios, which typically feature a single artist's studio such as those found in colleges, this event was a coordinated effort among peers. It aimed not only to showcase individual practices but also to foster a collective presence and deeper community engagement.

This open studio event was unique in that all five studios were located within a 10-minute walk of each other, and visitors were given a map to navigate between them. The participating artists were mostly peers from a local MFA program, and they used the event to showcase works-in-progress, drawings, and tools used in their creative processes. A2 and his peers worked closely to build a sense of belonging within their community. One of their efforts was curating recommendations for local restaurants and cafés, encouraging visitors to engage with the broader neighborhood atmosphere. Their thoughtful planning and community focus made the event an instant success, drawing attention from art students, artists, and independent curators in the local art scene (Openstudio_Hwaljjakk, 2023). Ferm et al. (2022) reported that events such as open studios, which promote civic engagement, can create social value and potentially foster creativity. In their research, Acme Artist Studios contributed to a strong sense of place and generated cultural value (Ferm et al., 2022). However, they also noted that artists often felt burdened by having strangers enter their studios, which required care and support from facilitators. Although certain issues remained to be addressed, events hosted by A2 and his peers, along with those organized by members of Acme Artist Studios, reflected their efforts to build a strong sense of belonging within their community.

A3's strategy centered on initiating collaborative projects. To expand their reach and foster wider participation, A3 and her peers announced an open call for artists interested in exploring themes related to the neighborhood's identity. One of the most notable outcomes was a collaboration with architects to create a walking program that examined the visual and structural characteristics of the area. Similar to Pinto et al.'s (2020) residency project in Amalfi, this initiative encouraged participants to pay attention to often-overlooked architectural elements, such as the uniquely shaped rainwater pipes found throughout the neighborhood. By walking

through and analyzing the area's design together, the artists developed a deeper understanding of its architectural identity. This process not only strengthened their connection to the local community but also reinforced their relationships with one another through shared inquiry and co-creation (Cook, 2016; Sooudi, 2020).

In the case of A5, a unique alliance of artists emerged when the residency faced the threat of closure. When the artists received news that the space would be shut down, they felt confusion, sorrow, and anger, believing that the unilateral decision by the city council was unfair and unjust. In response, they transformed their open studio event into a form of protest. They created posters highlighting the injustice, shared their concerns through social media, and mobilized support from the broader art community, eventually bringing public attention to the issue. This collective action was made possible by the artists' shared belief in artistic autonomy and the value of creative spaces. As Healy (2011) expanded the definition of friendship beyond emotional bonds to include social relationships that share communal virtues and histories, A5 and his fellow artists showed this civic aspect of friendship. Their relationships were not solely based on personal affection but rather on shared values, mutual support, and collective action. Their civic friendship reflected a mutual commitment to protecting their shared ideals, which further developed into a form of alliance.

From the cases examined in the artists' interviews, it was clear that shared studios functioned as more than just workspaces. They served as places for building networks and alliances, benefiting not only the artists but also the surrounding communities. Through artist residencies, creative initiatives in both rural and urban settings have led to cultural revitalization (Dudi & Choudhary, 2011; Pinto et al., 2020). In artist-run spaces, collaborations between artists and local communities have fostered engagement with local heritage and urban identity. In

private shared studios, artists have formed collaborative informal networks, increasing visibility and expanding their audience reach through events like Openstudio_Hwaljjakk.

As Basov (2018) noted, through collective work, artists have transformed everyday spaces into sites of creative exchange, where interpersonal relationships within collectives are shaped by shared objects and common goals. Informal networks between artists have sparked not only interpersonal bonds (Yang, 2024) but also a sense of place and belonging (Freedman et al., 2013) and valuable learning opportunities fostered through ongoing conversations (Ward, 2025). These interactions have often led to the formation of alliances rooted in common objectives and artistic visions (Basov, 2018). Through this collective engagement, artists developed non-materialistic strategies not only to sustain their individual practices but also to contribute to their broader artistic and local communities, nurturing a dynamic and evolving creative ecosystem.

The Dynamics of Actors in the Journey to Become an Artist

In their journey to becoming artists, the six participants received support from friends, family, and professionals, while also building strong networks within shared studios and artistic communities. However, to understand the artists' trajectories more deeply, external factors also need to be examined. To gain this understanding, the end of Part I in Chapter 4 applied Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to analyze both human and nonhuman actors involved in their trajectories. Within this complex web of interactions, the six artists forged unique paths to shape their professional identities (Bergstrom, 2019). Although their journeys were marked by difficulties, they collectively navigated challenges through reflective, supportive friendships and collaborative environments (Crépel, 2014).

Family plays a fundamental role in shaping identity (Haydon et al., 2023), but as individuals mature, external relationships also impact their paths. Among the six interviewed

artists, experiences with family support varied: While some benefited from financial assistance and studio space, others faced opposition, requiring them to sustain their creative practice through multiple part-time jobs, a challenge common among art school graduates (Fine, 2017). Despite differences in studio environments, the artists collectively developed informal networks within shared spaces, creating their own strategies for overcoming obstacles. Peer support and learning emerged as one form of problem-solving (Crépel, 2014; Workman & Vaughan, 2017), while hosting gatherings and forming open studios provided further opportunities to build professional networks. They also sought relationships with administrators and other professionals to advance their careers. However, friendships were not always stable; conflicts over artistic differences or collective management sometimes disrupted studio arrangements, necessitating the careful selection of collaborators and continual adaptation (Heaphy & Davies, 2012).

On the other side, while human actors functioned as an inner boundary network that influenced the artists' journeys, a complex network of nonhuman actors also played a significant role.

Public Funding and the Social Network System

The Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture aims to "bring more attractions to the city with Arts and more joy to citizens with Culture through the promotion of diverse creative activities for all" (Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture, n.d.-b). It supports approximately 300 visual arts projects each year, awarding between $2,000 and over $20,000 USD per project. The funds are used for materials, venue rentals, hiring professionals, and advertising. All six artists interviewed had experience receiving these grants, describing them as essential resources for preparing exhibitions. However, they also shared the challenges of writing proposals and

navigating administrative procedures. The stress of securing funding and dealing with bureaucratic processes was similar to what Hilder (2017) found in Vancouver, where public funding sometimes constrained artists' creativity by adding administrative burdens.

Beyond financial support, artists also relied on the social network system (SNS) as a key tool for networking and professional development. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have transformed how artists connect with audiences, galleries, and institutions (Dolcini, 2014). Mason and Robinson (2011) noted a significant reliance on the internet and SNS for more specific, fast-changing information that supported career development. Rendell (2020) discussed how artists adapted to social media during the global pandemic, while Budge (2015) explored how these platforms reshaped interactions with galleries and museums. The six interviewed artists also reflected these trends in their practices.

A6 used SNS to keep in touch with residency peers, strengthening bonds through continued engagement with their work. A3 and A4 used SNS not only to share their personal artistic journeys but also to manage their artist-run spaces, maintaining separate accounts for their individual work and their studios. This was not just the artists' case but also a global trend (Post, 2015). Through these platforms, they could recruit new collaborators, announce open calls, and share updates on exhibitions. SNS became a crucial nonhuman actor that helped artists build their identities, find opportunities, and expand their networks.

The Local Art Environment and Artist Development

To understand more deeply what shaped the artists' careers, it was essential to examine the local art scene itself. As a city of 10 million people, Seoul blends modern skyscrapers with historic neighborhoods. Behind the city's high-rise developments, there are old houses and small factories from the 1970s, which have become hubs for artists seeking affordable studio spaces.

Locations such as Euljiro, Mullae, Meokgol, Seochon, and Seogyo are well-known for attracting artists who want reasonable rent and a community-oriented creative environment. These areas serve as incubators for private studios and artist-run spaces (Song, 2022).

Additionally, the city offers a diverse range of galleries, museums, and artist residencies that support emerging artists. Small galleries actively seek new talent, while major national and international galleries collaborate with global art fairs such as Frieze and Art Basel (Frieze, 2024). Since the debut of Frieze in 2022, collector interest in young artists has increased significantly (Kim & Choo, 2023). Among the interviewed artists, A1 and A2 exhibited with galleries participating in art fairs, enhancing their professional visibility. Meanwhile, institutions such as the Seoul Museum of Art and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art provide critical exhibition opportunities for early-career artists by hosting annual solo and group shows. A5 and A6 engaged with these institutions, gaining valuable exposure through curated exhibitions. These institutional opportunities were highly sought after and represented significant milestones in the artists' career trajectories.

The ecosystem of the local art scene enabled the six artists to develop their careers gradually, depending on their professional stage. They begin by renting low-cost studios in older buildings before progressing into artist residencies, where they build connections with institutions and professionals. Among the interviewed artists, A1, A3, and A4 exemplified this trajectory of gradually moving into established art institutions. Over time, the artists further collaborated with galleries and secured opportunities to exhibit in museums. Although this journey was rarely straightforward, the interconnected nature of the region's art ecosystem helped the artists navigate challenges, expand their networks, and find innovative ways to establish themselves professionally (Sim, 2020).

Rethinking the Studio: Notions of Shared Creative Spaces

Apart from these nonhuman actors, the three types of shared studios formed the foundation of the artists' creative paths, providing spaces where they could begin their practices, build networks, and envision future possibilities (Solomon, 2018).

In *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, editors Jacob and Grabner (2010) raised questions about the evolving concept of the studio. Starting with the image of the artist working alone in a large space, from the Renaissance to the Modernist periods, they invited contributors to reflect on how the notion of the studio continues to shift within contemporary art practice. Two of the contributors, Jones (2010) and Wood (2010), discussed how the concept of the studio has evolved, highlighting examples such as Brancusi's White Studio being the conceptual background of his work, Stella's and Warhol's studios functioning like factories, Robert Smithson's creating art in natural environments, and the rise of collaborative practices seen in cases of Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Gilbert and George, and Komar and Melamid.

As the concept of the studio has evolved in various ways, as noted by Jacob and Grabner (2010), Jones (2010), and Wood (2010), all of the artists discussed in this dissertation worked in different forms of studio spaces. They developed unique forms of studios based on their individual situations and needs. Drawing from their experiences, this study showed that shared studios function not only as practical sites for making art but also as flexible, relational environments that help sustain their creative practices. In private shared studios, artworks themselves often became barriers, blurring the boundaries between one artist's space and another's. The division between individual practices was often unclear but organic. In artist-run spaces, the use of the studio was more flexible, depending on the needs of each project. Sometimes, these spaces served as venues for performances, educational workshops, temporary

accommodations (like an Airbnb), documentation hubs, or even as display storage for selling works. Rather than functioning as a permanent site for making paintings or sculptures, these spaces supported the visibility and exchange of ideas. In artist-in-residence programs, artists typically had private rooms but shared communal spaces for cooking, conversation, and making. These environments encouraged informal exchanges of experience and ideas (Renfro, 2009). Importantly, the relationships formed in these residencies often continued beyond the program itself, sustained and expanded through social media.

On the other hand, there were still some considerations to address when using the shared studio. Kelly (2024) described both the benefits and challenges that arose when artists shared studio spaces. She emphasized that connecting with the right people at the right time and forming a sense of community could be crucial for both personal and professional artistic growth. Saarinen and Krueger (2022) explored how studios can be customized to support artistic practices when they are used alone. In their view, a studio is a space where the artist can control even the smallest details, such as tools, furniture, and actions, all of which can influence creativity and artistic agency. It is also a place where artists can access memories, rely on music, and engage with their own works that are physically present in the space (Saarinen & Krueger, 2022). The contrast between working independently and within shared spaces emerged from the interviews with A2 and A3. A2 noted that working alone provided autonomy and allowed him to customize his studio and actions essential to painting. However, he preferred sharing a studio for the valuable conversations that expanded his creative perspective (Bruffee, 1999; Howard et al., 2017; Ward, 2025). Similarly, A3 described the isolation she experienced when working independently. Transforming her studio into an artist-run space with her friends allowed her to connect with a broader artistic community (Amenoff, 2009).

These cases illustrated how the concept of the studio is not something a person can define in one phrase but continues to evolve (Jacob & Grabner, 2010). Other artists and researchers echoed similar experiences, reinforcing that shared studios foster networking, collaboration, and creative exchange (Ferm et al., 2022; Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018; Workman & Vaughan, 2017). The cases suggested that new understandings of studio spaces are needed, particularly in recognizing the value of shared environments for both artistic growth and community-building. As Hannon (2014) observed, in the contemporary art landscape, the studio is no longer just a physical space for making; it is also a space where artists can reflect their psychological identities. Moreover, it is a place where artists can gather, share experiences, and connect with others to move forward. The concept of the studio, especially in the context of shared spaces, should be reconsidered and continuously explored to understand how it can bring more meaning to artists and support those who nurture creativity.

Summary of Chapter 5: Shared Studios as a Foundation of Creative Ecosystem

This chapter connected existing research with insights gained from interviews with artists. It first examined the realities that art school graduates face after leaving academia, particularly their struggle to establish careers in a highly commercialized and competitive urban environment. Based on the experiences of the artists and findings from the literature, graduates were not adequately prepared for professional life, even with professional training provided by art school programs (Morrisroe & Roland, 2008). Art school graduates found themselves in precarious financial situations, relying on low-paying part-time jobs while struggling to secure exhibition opportunities and integrate into the art scene (Fine, 2017). The artists interviewed in this study shared a range of common challenges. For example, A2 and A3 described feelings of isolation, while A1 and A4 reported the stress of navigating administrative processes for funding

applications. A5 and A6 spoke about personal health issues alongside ongoing financial instability. Additionally, the findings highlighted the complexities of managing a shared studio, which included financial pressures, a lack of clearly defined goals, interpersonal tensions, the burden of administrative responsibilities, and the constantly shifting dynamics inherent in collaborative environments. However, the artists gradually learned to navigate these challenges, drawing lessons from failure and finding resilience through mutual support and collective alliances.

As the artists transitioned into their postgraduate lives, they received varying levels of support and opportunities to restart their practices. This support was not always predictable, but often emerged from relationships formed earlier, especially during challenging times. In some cases, these connections helped artists find studio spaces or exhibition opportunities. However, relationships within shared studios were not always ideal or harmonious (Heaphy & Davies, 2012). These environments often brought interpersonal challenges, requiring artists to find thoughtful ways to manage them (Roa, 2018).

Beyond simply offering a place for experimentation, shared studios became a means for artists to create their own opportunities. Similar to the cases documented by Cook (2016) and Sooudi (2020), some artists began to organize their own events, invite audiences, and curate their own exhibitions rather than waiting for invitations from curators or institutions. They also explored alternative financial models to support their studios while preserving their artistic values. Some organized exhibitions with sales components, aiming to maintain a clear distinction from the commercial market by prioritizing artistic identity over profit. These initiatives not only sustained their individual practices but also contributed to the wider creative community by

linking artists through communal events that fostered a sense of belonging and collective energy (Nabirye, 2024).

While managing the physical space and creating opportunities were practical aspects of managing shared studios, nonmaterial strategies also emerged as significant. Artists developed informal networks through casual gatherings and events, with peer exchanges and daily conversations serving as vital tools for artistic development (Freedman et al., 2013). They also learned from one another through valuable conversations and shared experiences (Ward, 2025). These informal forms of networking and learning often evolved into alliances, particularly when artists faced external challenges. Such alliances were rooted in shared goals and artistic visions (Basov, 2018). Through these nonmaterial strategies, artists cultivated a strong sense of place and belonging within shared studio environments (Freedman et al., 2013).

To better understand what influenced the artists' trajectories, the perspective of ANT highlighted how both human and nonhuman actors played critical roles in shaping their careers. Human actors included family, friends, administrators, and professionals. While family provided early foundational support, peer artists became increasingly significant as the artists grew more independent (Crépel, 2014; Haydon et al., 2023; Workman & Vaughan, 2017). Friends and collaborators helped them navigate everyday challenges, while professionals and administrators contributed to their skill development, professional networking, and career progression. Even though not all relationships were supportive, the artists gradually learned how to manage complicated relationships. They were learning through trial and error. This human influence functioned like software, shaping the intangible aspects of artistic growth, such as networking and knowledge exchange.

Nonhuman actors, on the other hand, included the shared studios, public funding, the SNS, and the broader local art scene. The availability of affordable studio spaces enabled artists to form collectives. Even public funding caused bureaucratic processes (Hilder, 2017), but public funding played a crucial role in covering material costs and venue expenses, allowing artists to focus on their practice. The highly connected SNS platforms provided a vital tool for information-sharing and professional networking, helping artists stay updated on each other's work and opportunities (Dolcini, 2014; Mason & Robinson, 2011). Additionally, the balance between the commercial art market and institutional support helped sustain artists at different career stages, offering opportunities both within independent creative spaces and established galleries and museums (Kim & Choo, 2023; Sim, 2020; Song, 2022).

Among the nonhuman actors, the three types of shared studios formed the foundation of the networks that raised questions about what the studio means in the contemporary art community. While existing literature has showed that the concept of the studio has evolved beyond a physical space for art-making (Hannon, 2014; Jacob & Grabner, 2010), the experiences of the six artists in this study added nuance by indicating the studio's nonmaterialistic values, such as informal networks, peer learning, and making alliances between artists, which gave a sense of belonging. These spaces not only facilitate networking and collaboration (Ferm et al., 2022; Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018; Workman & Vaughan, 2017) but also serve as sites of mutual care and alliances that contribute to the artists' creativity.

Nevertheless, working alone in a studio still held certain advantages, as it allowed for full control over the space and processes (Saarinen & Krueger, 2022). As Hannon (2014) said, in contemporary art, the studio has evolved beyond a mere site of physical creation to become a space where artists explore and express their psychological identities.

Amid this dynamic interplay of human and nonhuman influences, the six artists steadily progressed in their creative journeys. While they faced systemic challenges and frustrations with their education, they worked collectively to address obstacles and move forward. The shared studio communities were at the heart of this progress, fostering friendships based on collaboration rather than competition (Fischer, 2006). These artists did not passively wait for opportunities; they actively invited people into their spaces and expanded their networks. The availability of public funding and the dynamic structure of Seoul's art ecosystem were critical factors that influenced their trajectory, with successes and failures continuously ebbing and flowing. Within this environment, shared studios became more than mere workspaces; they evolved into creative alliances and ecosystems that sustained artistic practices.

Chapter 6: Educational Implications

This dissertation examined the values and limitations of shared studios through interviews with six artists. Building on existing research and common challenges identified in the literature, this study explored how early-career artists respond to the difficulties of establishing networks and sustaining a creative practice, particularly in the context of shared studio environments. Existing literature highlighted how art school graduates often feel disconnected from the art world, facing uncertainty, stress, and a lack of opportunities. However, the six artists in this dissertation gradually found ways to manage these challenges by forming and participating in shared studios. Although the process involved many failures and constraints, they developed unique networking models and slowly found their way into the art scene. At the foundation of their progression, there was a supportive community they built with their peers, enabling them to address challenges collectively and sustain their creative practices.

By analyzing the role of shared studios, this chapter considered two key educational implications for college programs:

1. integrating shared studio values into college curricula to promote collaboration and professional networking and
2. visualizing life after graduation by thinking about practical strategies for establishing sustainable artistic careers.

The first approach focused on enhancing collaboration and peer support within existing college studio environments. It examined how curricula could be developed to emphasize networking and mutual support, equipping students with essential career-building skills rather than fostering competition. The second approach addressed the transition from school to professional life, encouraging students to think critically about their futures. This included

envisioning their career paths, planning for shared studio spaces, securing their artistic identities, organizing exhibitions or events, and exploring financial sustainability.

By integrating these pedagogical strategies, early-career artists could build confidence in their practices and develop resilience within shared studio environments. This approach aimed to strengthen their ability to create, collaborate, and sustain themselves as creative practitioners in an uncertain professional landscape.

Integrating Shared Studio Values and Fostering Collaboration in Classes

The interviews and data analysis revealed insights into the artists' diverse experiences in college and MFA programs. Many expressed dissatisfaction with their formal education and sought alternative ways to learn. A1 noted that her professors were unprepared for class and provided inadequate critiques. A2 learned more from observing peers in their studios than from his instructors. A3, whose major was traditional Korean painting, found that her coursework focused on skill and lacked contemporary context and exposure to current movements. A4 recalled only a few inspiring classes, mostly led by part-time lecturers who were actively working in the field. A5 experienced a lack of engagement from faculty, recalling how professors rarely attended classes, leaving only teaching assistants to check attendance. A6 had a positive experience during his first 2 years, but after the professors he admired resigned, the curriculum shifted, forcing him into more traditional sculpture practices. As a result, he had to find his own ways to continue his education outside of school.

These artists attended college between the early 2000s and 2010s, a period when art education was structured differently than it is today. At the time, art schools were often hierarchical and authoritative, with professors exerting significant influence over students' careers. However, as societal attitudes shifted, classroom dynamics gradually became more equal

and liberal (Elkins, 2001; Thornton, 2013). This change was also present in Seoul and throughout South Korea, but hierarchies between teaching staff and students still remained. The shift may have been driven by a new generation of students who were less willing to accept authority passively and instead sought greater autonomy in their learning.

De Duve (1994) argued that art education has shifted from mastering standardized techniques to emphasizing aesthetic thought. While traditional learning focused on observing an object's outer form, modern art education prioritized the attitude and conceptual ideas embedded in the work. This transformation was largely influenced by the rise of conceptual art and changing material values. Al-Amri (2016) examined contemporary art education methods and emphasized the increasing cultural diversity in art education, the inclusion of professional artists in schools, and the formation of partnerships with museums and other art institutions. Additionally, numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of community-engaged art education models, which encourage students to connect with both the community and the broader art field (Blatt-Gross, 2023; Lawton, 2014; Peters & Barnett, 2024). Peters and Barnett (2024) conducted a case study on how community-engaged art practice can be applied as critical pedagogy in higher education. Their findings indicated that collaborative engagement, social responsibility, and self-reflection are key elements in preparing students for sustainability in the art industry. They argued that integrating these values into education provides a more effective approach to equipping students and fostering transformative art practices.

As seen in the cases above, the field of contemporary art continues to evolve rapidly, shaped by emerging themes and shifting trends. This may be part of the reason why the six artists in this dissertation were not fully satisfied with their education, as art programs often struggle to keep pace with these changes (Peters & Barnett, 2024). Their challenges underscored the need

for a more adaptive and collaborative learning environment that fosters both conceptual exploration, professional skill development, and the creation of networks that provide sustainability in their creative practices.

The Importance of Collaborative Learning in Art Education

One of the key ideas that emerged from these interviews was the importance of peer learning and shared experiences in creative spaces. When the artists were students, they learned not only from instructors but also from engaging in reflective discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and social interactions. Bruffee (1999) proposed that collaborative pedagogy encourages critical thinking through group interaction and develops a sense of ownership in collaborative settings. He argued that knowledge is not acquired in isolation but constructed through social engagement and dialogue. In this context, understanding the importance of collaborative learning gives students a chance to think of how to solve problems together rather than alone. It may be a way to better prepare for real-world challenges and have more sustainability in their trajectories.

Emphasizing the value of shared studio spaces would be a way of enhancing collaboration in art education. While some educators and students may prefer individual studios for privacy, shared spaces encourage interaction, exposure to different artistic processes, and collective learning. Removing physical barriers such as walls and curtains between workspaces fosters transparency, allowing students to observe each other's creative processes (Lynas et al., 2013). In alignment with social constructivist theory, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is an inherently social activity where students benefit from engaging with peers who bring diverse knowledge and skills. In this view, shared studios serve as vital spaces for collaborative learning, offering opportunities for students to exchange ideas, provide feedback, and develop new perspectives (Lynas et al., 2013).

Wenger (1998) further reinforced the importance of communities of practice, where individuals with shared interests collaborate to exchange resources, solve problems, and shape their professional identities. This concept is particularly relevant in the context of shared studios, as students who work together not only enhance their artistic development but also build networks that may continue beyond graduation. These early experiences in collaborative spaces could become the foundation for lifelong professional relationships, reinforcing the idea that learning is not an individual endeavor but a communal process.

In the field of contemporary art, the meaning and methods of collaboration between artists have been reshaped by technological advancements and social movements. In *Collaborative Art in the Twenty-First Century*, the editors Bacharach et al. (2016) insisted that collaboration often arose out of practical necessity; artists shared materials and equipment because a solo artist cannot afford all the resources required for a project. Today, with widespread access to information through the internet and the ability to build networks easily, the nature of collaboration has shifted dramatically, enabling artists to work more efficiently (Bacharach et al., 2016). To understand more about how artists collaborate, the editors invited contributors to reconsider the concept of collaboration in light of technological developments, critical and theoretical reflections, and more personal and intimate forms that affect artistic practice.

One of the contributors, Manresa and Bacharach (2016), explored how technology has reshaped the ways in which artist collectives operate both in street spaces and virtual environments. They argued that new technologies create opportunities for artists to form communities that challenge traditional authorities and geographic boundaries. Using tools such as locative media and mobile phone-based technology, artists co-construct databases of personal

experiences and knowledge related to physical spaces. For example, the artist group [murmur] collected personal narratives about specific locations, allowing stories to occupy and transform those spaces. Yellow Arrow used stickers embedded with unique codes, enabling people to share stories connected to particular places through Short Message Service (SMS) messaging. Grafedia involved writing hyperlinked text in public spaces, linking physical locations to digital images, videos, and sound files. Through these projects, Manresa and Bacharach (2016) showed how new technologies facilitate the creation of localized knowledge and foster creative communities. They also highlighted how such practices amplify marginalized voices and work to decentralize authority constructed by powerful institutions.

As seen in the cases above and from De Duve's (1994) perspective, the concept of the lone genius has long been challenged as both art forms and modes of social engagement have transformed. In such a context, collaboration has become more natural than working alone. Responding to these changes, Corballis (2016) argued that the theories and concepts of collaboration also need to be reconsidered. Rather than adopting a harmonious model of collaboration, Corballis proposed a negative model in which artists work apart. One example he provided was his collaboration with a photographer, where text and image were created separately, deliberately maintaining paradox and refusing to subordinate one medium to the other. Through this process, Corballis (2016) found that the value of collaboration lies in the tension between collaborators. The gaps and miscommunications that emerged did not resolve differences but instead made them visible, highlighting fragmentation rather than unity. As seen from the case, the concepts and forms of collaboration can differ and have multiple dimensions, but Bacharach et al. (2016) also highlighted the intimate and personal levels of collaboration, which may transform the artist's identity or even trigger an identity crisis.

Admitting the different perspectives on collaboration, this raises the question of how shared studio values might be thoughtfully integrated into college education. In turn, students can develop stronger professional networks and enhance their creative problem-solving skills, which contributes to building resilience. Learning in a socially engaged environment fosters innovation, adaptability, and the confidence to navigate the complexities of an artistic career. Nonetheless, certain challenges remain, as illustrated by the case of A1, who experienced a painting style overlap that led to a potential identity crisis (Bacharach et al., 2016). However, from the interviews of the six artists participating in the present study, shared studios in college showed they served as the starting point for future communities of practice, equipping students with the collaborative mindset necessary for sustaining a creative career. Therefore, recognizing the value of networking and collaboration in shared studio environments is essential to art education, while also giving thoughtful consideration to individual identity.

Thinking About Applying Social Network Systems in Our Classes

The literature review and interviews with six artists showed that SNS have become an important tool for self-promotion within art communities. Castro (2012) explored how social media have transformed the learning experience in classrooms. His research found that students benefited from comparing each other's work, receiving dynamic peer attention, and extending their learning beyond the physical classroom into a broader online community that provided diverse feedback (Castro, 2012). Similarly, Sweeny (2009) examined the concept of identity, which emerges through the complex interactions facilitated by social media. Through tagging, mash-ups, and simulation, Sweeny argued that users of digital technology can construct alternative identities, fostering greater connections, critical reflection, and creative engagement. More recent work by Almogren et al. (2024) examined the impact of mobile learning, social

media engagement, and artificial intelligence in higher education. The findings indicated that a personalized and adaptive learning environment is a crucial factor in ensuring a successful learning experience in the classroom.

The studies indicated that integrating new technologies into art classes involves a wide range of dynamic factors. However, as Almogren et al. (2024) noted, personalizing the use of social media is crucial for maximizing its benefits while preventing its misuse. Therefore, it is critical to consider detailed and individualized approaches to using SNS platforms effectively.

A critical understanding of available platforms and their unique characteristics is necessary for effectively navigating contemporary art promotion. Some platforms, such as Instagram, are more suited for showcasing still images, while others, like YouTube, accommodate artists working with moving images or performance-based art. Recognizing how different platforms align with specific artistic practices highlights the increasing importance of integrating SNS into contemporary art education.

Moreover, SNS platforms today serve purposes beyond networking and connection; they also function as valuable tools for archiving. In particular, artists managing artist-run spaces use social media to reach new audiences and direct them to their archival websites. Both A3 and A4 actively utilized SNS accounts to attract viewers to their websites, where they provided more detailed information and in-depth insights into their past projects. Therefore, another important consideration was how students can effectively use SNS to draw viewers into an open space and guide them toward their archives for deeper engagement.

The debate over incorporating SNS into art education remains ongoing. While there is no definitive consensus on the most effective approach, the influence of these technologies continues to expand. This evolving context highlights the need for a critical understanding of

both the potential and limitations of SNS, as educators and artists navigate the complexities of integrating digital platforms into contemporary artistic practice.

Visualizing Life After Graduation and Imagining Strategies for a Sustainable Career

Encouraging students to visualize their future and anticipate potential challenges and opportunities allows them to shape their artistic careers proactively (Wolff & Fulton, 2017). Rather than serving as a warning or an early exposure to harsh realities, this process can be understood as a method of strategic preparation and a means of exploring possible future trajectories. Frenette and Dowd (2020) have conducted quantitative research on who remains in the art field and who leaves after graduation. Their conclusion was that students with internship experience who had built a strong network in the field remained more in the field. Additionally, they stated that the students will benefit more from the entrepreneurial-focused curricula (Frenette & Dowd, 2020). Visualizing their future and anticipating potential challenges would be a considerable strategic preparation. This proactive approach enables them to navigate their artistic careers effectively, aligning their educational experiences with their professional future.

From the artist interviews, data analysis, and studies on shared studios, three key considerations emerged when imagining possible futures for supporting early-career artists. First, establishing private shared studios can serve as a foundation for artistic practice and informal networking. Second, artist-run spaces may offer opportunities for creative growth by hosting different kinds of social events and contributing to achieving financial self-reliance through teaching and selling initiatives. Third, expanding professional human networks and learning new skills through artist residencies can play an important role in strengthening students' sustainable artistic careers and the practice. Rather than presenting fixed solutions, these considerations

suggest potential strategies for fostering resilience and community building, considering the evolving stages of artistic practice.

The selection of a studio type and career direction often reflects a student's unique circumstances, goals, and evolving needs. Rather than following a fixed path, understanding one's situation and critically considering the relationship between studio environments and professional strategies may support more sustainable creative and professional development.

To gain a deeper understanding of the type of studio that best suits students' needs, the following section outlines the key characteristics of different studio models and presents insights gathered from artist interviews. Additionally, integrating these considerations into educational programs can better support students as they transition from schools to professional artistic careers, helping them to cultivate the tools needed to navigate postgraduation challenges with more confidence and adaptability.

Establishing Private Shared Studios for the Foundation of Creation and Networking

Private shared studios emerged as a common and accessible setting for early-career artists in this study, offering a flexible and self-directed environment with minimal external regulation. Rather than representing an ideal model or a definitive solution, these spaces functioned as a backdrop for exploring how the early-career artists engage in collaboration, navigate identity formation, and manage interpersonal dynamics that can shape and advance their practice. To think more about this, several critical steps can be considered to ensure a successful and sustainable experience. The interviews from A1 and A2 revealed that one of the important factors was finding the right studio partner, as this individual will be a key collaborator in managing the space, negotiating shared responsibilities, and maintaining a productive atmosphere like an alter ego of oneself (Crépel, 2014). Trust and mutual respect are essential

for a positive working relationship. Without these elements, private shared studios can become a source of conflict rather than support (Heaphy & Davies, 2012; Roa, 2018; Sutton, 2018).

In discussing the establishment of private shared studios, A2 noted the challenges of selecting studio partners through impersonal means such as social media platforms. Collaborations formed among long-time friends, classmates, or college colleagues were described as more effective, given the existing familiarity with each other's working styles and personalities, which can contribute to a more balanced studio environment. At the same time, A1 highlighted the significance of setting clear ground rules and fostering a culture of mutual respect, open communication, and shared accountability to support the ongoing dynamics of a shared space. These insights suggested that interpersonal familiarity and proactive communication structures play a critical role in sustaining collaborative studio practices (Giol, 2018; Kelly, 2024; Morton, 2007).

When considering who could be a suitable studio partner, the theme of studio location also emerged as a significant factor in the interviews with A1 and A2. Several factors were consistently emphasized. Proximity and accessibility were regarded as important, with both participants suggesting that studios ideally be located within a 30-minute commute to encourage regular use. Additionally, locating studios near other creative hubs was seen as offering synergistic opportunities for collaboration and networking (Amenoff, 2009). Space considerations were also central; studios needed to be large enough to accommodate the diverse practices and storage needs of multiple artists, with door dimensions suited for transporting larger works (Hannon, 2014). Participants further noted the influence of environmental factors such as floor level and natural light, identifying basement spaces as less desirable due to issues with moisture, ventilation, and lighting. Finally, the sustainability of a studio was tied to practical

considerations, including the management of utility costs and the availability of shared facilities like restrooms and kitchens. Together, these reflections highlighted the complexity of selecting a studio space that can support both individual and collective artistic practices.

Among the artists in this study, maintaining motivation and sustaining professional growth emerged as recurring challenges. Without the structure of an academic environment, such as professors, deadlines, and regular check-ins, the artists need to develop self-directed systems of accountability. In reflecting on his first shared studio experience, A2 identified the absence of short-term goals as a key reason for its dissolution. Studies and practitioner accounts suggested that activities such as writing and sharing artist statements annually, attending exhibition openings collectively, organizing open studios, and hosting reading groups or seminars can contribute to a vibrant and sustained studio practice (Fehr, 1996; Giol, 2018; Morton, 2007; Why Every Artist Should Have Goals, n.d.). Rather than following a rigid framework, these practices can be understood as strategies for maintaining engagement, building community, and supporting both individual and collective professional development. Marsick and Watkins (2001) stated:

> Learning grows out of everyday encounters while working and living in a given context. A new life experience may offer a challenge, a problem to be resolved, or a vision of a future state…the context within which the experience occurs, the personal, social, business, and cultural context for learning that plays a key role in influencing the way in which people interpret the situation, their choices, the actions they take, and the learning that is effected. (p. 29)

Additionally, as illustrated by A2's experience, forming alliances with other local shared studios can significantly amplify impact. A2 coordinated initiatives, such as joint open studios or collaborative events, which have the potential to increase visibility, provide networking opportunities, and alleviate the isolation that many independent artists experience. These observations suggested that careful partner selection, thoughtful choice of studio space, and the

development of structured collaborative practices contribute meaningfully to the role of private shared studios as foundations for both artistic creation and professional growth.

Making Opportunities and Achieving Financial Self-Reliance

While establishing an artist-run space involves considerations similar to those of setting up a shared studio, such as managing relationships, defining roles, and addressing financial matters, it also entails additional reflection, as noted by A3 and A4, on how to create a space to show rather than make. This does not necessarily mean replicating a traditional white cube gallery; rather, it involves exploring what makes the space distinct and meaningful. It is important to think of what defines the identity and purpose of an artist-run space (Johnson, 2019).

The character and direction of an artist-run space often emerge from personal motivations, community influences, or spatial contexts. In the case of A3, her first space developed out of a desire to overcome isolation by transforming her studio into a place where she could connect with others through exhibitions and events. Her second space responded to its urban environment, situated on a ground level where passersby could easily see inside, making it accessible to a broader audience. In contrast, A4's first space was in a half-basement, requiring visitors to enter through a window, which created a unique, almost theatrical experience. The unconventional setting shaped the type of work shown, leading to more experimental exhibitions. Later, A4 co-founded another space that functioned more like a gallery, balancing curatorial experimentation with financial sustainability through ticket sales and artist commissions.

These cases illustrated how the unique identity of each space could inform the development of strategic approaches and help define its character. Additionally, it raised questions about how personal and local contexts can be involved and how artists navigate

financial and logistical challenges while maintaining artistic integrity. This required artists' unique assets, as well as the shifting dynamics of their surroundings, to inform these questions continuously.

Beyond the physical space itself, there was also the question of how artist-run spaces develop their public presence. While some spaces remain informal, others actively engage with audiences through programming and branding. Many spaces, including those run by A3 and A4, have used social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share updates, announce events, and expand their networks. Developing a recognizable visual identity, such as a logo or a consistent online presence, has also played a role in shaping how these spaces are perceived and remembered.

Programming is another aspect that artists have to rethink and experiment with continuously. A3's and A4's spaces structure their activities around annual exhibitions, open calls, or art markets, while there were other smaller-scale events, such as regular gatherings, seminars, workshops, or collaborative projects. These events were shaped not only by the practical and financial challenges of running an artist-led space but also by the changing interests and goals of the artists involved. It was about how these spaces create an ongoing dialogue with their audiences and reflect their interests.

Archiving has also emerged as an important element in maintaining visibility and professionalism. A3 and A4 have created dedicated websites using platforms such as Cargo Collective, Wix, Tumblr, and Framer to document past and ongoing projects. These archives not only served as a record of the space's activities but also contributed to its sustainability by attracting potential collaborators, funders, or future participants.

While artist-run spaces provided a sense of autonomy, they also demanded significant labor, negotiation, and collaboration. The artists have found that sharing responsibilities among a collective of peers makes it easier to sustain these spaces. However, this also raised questions about leadership structures, role distribution, and commitment.

In thinking about these questions in the educational context, what Bruffee (1999) said about collaborative pedagogy, the perspective of the social constructive theory of Vygotsky (1978), and Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice, it would be important to consider how academic programs can do more to support and prepare students for the realities of managing independent art spaces. It is about how curricula could integrate concepts of network-building, financial self-reliance, and collaborative practice. These considerations continue to evolve as artists find new ways to adapt and sustain their creative practices.

Ultimately, it is important to understand that artist-run spaces are not fixed structures but ongoing negotiations between artistic vision, financial realities, and collective dynamics. Flexibility and adaptability were key advantages of these spaces. Rather than providing a fixed model, they encourage a continual process of rethinking, adapting, and reimagining what it means to create and sustain independent artistic platforms.

Expanding Human Networks and Professional Skills in Artist Residencies

Artist residencies provide opportunities for artists to connect with new peers, professionals, and administrators while expanding their networks and developing professional skills. They also serve as entry points to larger art institutions, such as museums (Arredondo, 2021; Gardner, 2013; Verma & Priya, 2024). However, due to their numerous benefits, artist residencies were highly competitive, making it challenging, especially for early-career artists, to

secure a spot. Even mid-career artists often faced difficulty gaining acceptance, leaving limited opportunities for those just starting out (Lauter, 2024).

In South Korea, several artist residencies are funded by art institutions and cultural councils. The Seoul Museum of Art's Nanji Residency, founded in 2004, was established by repurposing water refining facilities on a former landfill site. Each year, the program hosts 16 to 19 national artists and researchers, along with one or two international artists. Participants engage in open studios, artist and critic matchmaking, writing workshops, exhibitions, and public presentations, providing structured opportunities to develop and showcase their work at an institutional level (*Nanji Residency Seoul Museum of Art*, n.d.). However, the artists emphasized that the impact of residencies extends beyond the program itself. As A5 and A6 described, the relationships formed during residencies often continue long after they have ended. Many artists maintain contact through social media platforms, following each other's exhibitions and projects. These extended networks often provide ongoing opportunities and professional support, making the residency experience far more valuable than just a 1-year program.

In addition to networking with fellow artists, developing strong relationships with residency administrators was equally important. Administrators were not just managers; they were program coordinators and key supporters who helped artists navigate projects, exhibitions, and logistical challenges. The dynamic between artists and administrators could significantly impact the residency experience (Nishimura et al., 2017). Rather than viewing them as gatekeepers or supervisors, establishing respectful and collaborative relationships with administrators can enhance the flexibility and effectiveness of the program, benefiting both the artists and the residency itself.

Various residencies were available for artists to apply for in South Korea. The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art managed the Changdong and Goyang residencies, while the Incheon City Council oversaw the Incheon Art Platform. The Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture managed Art Space Geumcheon. Each residency offered distinct programs, facilities, and artistic focuses. Therefore, as A5 mentioned, it was crucial to identify specific goals and align them with the residency's mission when applying. Given the highly competitive nature of these programs, making a clear goal and persistence played a vital role in securing a spot.

Residencies provided a space to connect with fellow artists, professionals, and administrators, offering invaluable experiences that extend well beyond the duration of the program. For the artists, these relationships and experiences served as critical stepping-stones in their artistic and professional development.

Summary of Educational Implications

This chapter explored ideas that could be incorporated into current art education, focusing on two main areas: (a) fostering the value of networking and collaboration in the classroom, and (b) visualizing life after graduation.

The first section emphasized the importance of collaborative learning by drawing on theories from Bruffee (1999), Wenger (1998), and Vygotsky (1978). Bruffee (1999) argued that collaborative pedagogy enhanced critical thinking, deepened understanding, and fostered a sense of ownership through interdependent learning, emphasizing that knowledge is socially constructed. Wenger (1998) introduced the concept of communities of practice, in which individuals with shared interests learned collectively, exchanged resources, and shaped both their professional development and identity. Vygotsky (1978) reinforced the idea that learning was

inherently social, suggesting that students benefited from engaging with peers of diverse knowledge and skills. These perspectives highlighted that shared studios in college settings were more than just workspaces; they functioned as collaborative learning environments where students exchanged ideas, observed each other's creative processes, and worked collectively on projects. From these insights, it became evident that knowledge was socially constructed, and shared spaces encouraged mutual growth and innovation. Therefore, reconsidering the role of collective learning and peer interaction in art education was essential.

The second section examined how art school graduates can visualize life after graduation to better prepare for it. These insights were drawn from the experiences of the six artists who were interviewed in this dissertation and supported by other resources:

- Private shared studios provided an initial foundation for artistic practice, fostering collaboration, networking, and the sharing of resources. Successful shared studios require careful consideration of studio partners, location, financial management, and collective goals.
- Artist-run spaces extended beyond shared workspaces by serving as platforms for exhibitions, opportunities, and financial self-reliance. Establishing and sustaining an artist-run space required defining a unique identity, strategic branding, and thoughtful program development to maintain engagement and visibility.
- Artist residencies offered early-career artists invaluable opportunities to expand their networks, develop professional skills, and connect with institutions. The value of residencies often lies in the relationships formed with fellow artists and administrators, which continue to provide professional and creative support beyond the residency itself.

Despite the challenges of transitioning into the professional art world, shared studio environments enabled artists to create opportunities, build networks, and sustain their practices. Through active engagement in these spaces, artists not only developed professionally but also formed sustainable collaborations that continued to support and shape their artistic journeys. Ultimately, to cultivate a more effective educational environment and ensure sustainable conditions for young artists, it was essential to emphasize the importance of collaboration and the value of networking within the classroom. Encouraging students to reflect on and critically engage with these concepts could foster a more supportive and interconnected artistic community that extends beyond their academic experience.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Just as every individual follows a unique path in life, the journey to becoming an artist varies from person to person. Each artist's background, including family support, education, engagement with the art scene, and other external factors, shaped their creative development and career trajectory (Kolbe, 2021; Lieu, n.d.). However, despite these differences, many early-career artists faced similar challenges after leaving school, with the transition from academia to professional practice often marked by uncertainty, financial instability, and limited opportunities, causing some to discontinue their artistic pursuits within a few years (Frenette & Dowd, 2020). A recurring issue was the lack of guidance in sustaining an artistic career. Both the six artists and cases from the literature reported struggles in securing studio space, exhibition opportunities, financial independence, and professional networks. Although higher education provided formal training, it offered limited preparation for the complexities of building a career in the arts (Bergstrom, 2019; Fine, 2017; Frenette & Dowd, 2020; Morrisroe & Roland, 2008).

Given these difficulties, this study was guided by the following question: What insights can be gained from the experiences of six early-career artists working in shared studio environments that support their ability to continue creating and engaging with the art world? Through interviews with six artists, the research explored how shared studio experiences serve as strategic responses to these challenges, helping early-career artists overcome isolation, develop professionally, and navigate financial constraints.

To explore these questions, this study adopted a qualitative approach, conducting six in-depth interviews with artists who had experience using shared studios. In-depth interviews provided a detailed understanding of lived experiences and helped identify thematic patterns related to artists' career development. The collected data revealed that shared studio experiences

not only functioned as practical and strategic solutions but also provided non-material values for artists at different stages of their careers.

Through cross-case analysis, four major themes were identified, each offering insight into the challenges and strategies shaping early-career artists' professional development. First, the study highlighted the common difficulties artists encountered in their early careers, including financial instability, limited exhibition opportunities, and difficulties in securing studio space. Second, it examined the types of support that artists received in such difficult situations and the outcomes that resulted from that support. Third, it discussed how artists managed different types of shared studios, revealing the varying benefits and limitations that appeared with each model. Fourth, the study identified strategies that emerged from shared studio environments, demonstrating how these collaborative spaces functioned as sites for informal networking, resource-sharing, and increased visibility within the art community.

By closely examining the four main thematic streams from the findings, seven key topics emerged in Chapter 5, each offering a deeper understanding of the role of shared studios in early-career artists' professional development.

The first topic highlighted communal issues in higher art education. The six artists expressed dissatisfaction with their programs and professor engagement, describing their education as lacking practical preparation for sustaining an artistic career. However, they also found alternative ways to overcome these gaps. The artists sought knowledge among friends in large communal studio settings and beyond the classroom, forming learning communities within shared studio environments (Renfro, 2009). These informal learning environments allowed students to observe each other's creative processes, exchange ideas, and build friendships that continued beyond graduation (Faller et al., 2022; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). As a consequence,

there is a growing need to reconsider the role of studios within higher education and to reflect on how future art education can better prepare students for professional practice (Bauer, 2009; Jochum, 2015; Madoff, 2009; Renfro, 2009; Salazar, 2013).

A recurring theme was that shared studios provided a place for experimentation and opportunity (Cook, 2016). The six early-career artists struggled to find opportunities to showcase their work. However, they used shared studios as valuable spaces for testing ideas and developing their artistic voices. In private shared studios, conversations with studio mates expanded artists' creative ideas in an informal setting. In artist-run spaces, various shapes of venues serve different experimental purposes, reinforcing the importance of having a space to create freely without external pressures. Some artists organized exhibitions, workshops, and events that generated income, helping sustain their creative practices. One artist even developed an education center within a shared studio, offering courses that not only provided financial stability but also supported other artists by sharing resources and expertise. Artist residencies provided more spacious environments for artists to experiment and expand their creative imaginations. It also provided opportunities to expand their networks toward professionals. To cultivate such an environment, dialogue between artists was crucial because the effectiveness and harmony of the space depended on their mutual relationships (Howard et al., 2017; Nabirye, 2024).

However, not all relationships and studio management were peaceful and harmonious. There were complexities in managing shared studios, and artists had to find thoughtful ways to navigate challenging situations (Roa, 2018; Sutton, 2018).

Another significant function of shared studios was their role as networking hubs and community-building platforms (Nabirye, 2024). Many artists utilized their spaces to connect

with both local and broader art communities. Open calls, collaborative projects, and united open studios allowed artists to engage with local residents, other artists, and cultural institutions. Artists in shared studios also worked on site-specific projects, collaborating with local communities and architecture. One artist organized united open studios, linking multiple spaces together to attract greater visibility within the mainstream art scene. These initiatives were only possible because artists had physical spaces where they could gather, organize, and host events, demonstrating how shared studios served as a hub for networking between artists, communities, and the local art scene (Cook, 2016; Sooudi, 2020).

Beyond the physical use of shared studios, several important nonmaterial strategies emerged. These included informal networking, peer learning, and forming alliances with fellow artists (Faller et al., 2022; Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Yang, 2024). Informal networking appeared across all types of shared spaces, particularly in private studios and artist residencies. The artists valued informal networking more than the structured programs offered by the residencies. Peer learning also occurred organically through shared conversations, a way of reflecting on one's own practice by engaging with others, which led to the exchange of new knowledge (Freedman et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2017; Nabirye, 2024; Ward, 2025). These relationships often deepened over time, especially during moments when artists needed to maintain visibility or respond to external challenges. In such instances, they formed collective alliances to support their community and amplify their voices within the art scene (Basov, 2018).

While shared studios played a significant role in fostering artistic growth, they were not the only factors shaping an artist's career. This research identified both human and nonhuman actors that influenced artists in various ways, highlighting the complexity of artistic career development:

- Among the human actors, family played a critical role by providing different levels of support, ranging from financial assistance and encouragement to, in some cases, opposition to an artistic career (Haydon et al., 2023). Friends and peers served as collaborators, mentors, and sources of critical feedback, although these relationships could also become challenging under certain conditions (Crépel, 2014; Workman & Vaughan, 2017). Additionally, professionals and administrators helped artists navigate institutional spaces, offering opportunities and facilitating professional connections.
- The nonhuman actors also significantly shaped artists' trajectories. Public funding was crucial for many, providing financial support, yet the application processes and institutional expectations often introduced stress and constraints. The local art ecosystem, with its mix of artist-run spaces, museums, galleries, and residencies, created a dynamic yet highly competitive environment that influenced career opportunities. Lastly, the social network system (SNS), particularly platforms like Instagram, became an essential tool for expanding networks, sharing work, and staying informed about opportunities (Mason & Robinson, 2011; Rendell, 2020). Each artist engaged with these platforms differently, reflecting the varied ways in which digital presence influences contemporary artistic careers.

The interaction between these actors was complex and varied among artists. No single factor determines an artist's success or development. Instead, the career trajectory of an artist was shaped by an intricate and organic network of influences in which human and nonhuman actors played different roles at different stages. This perspective challenged the notion that artistic success was purely individualistic. Instead, it emphasized the collective nature of artistic

survival, where artists navigated complex networks, adapted to shifting conditions, and relied on collaborative environments to sustain their practice (Bruce, 2023).

Through the findings and discussion, this dissertation tried to establish nuances in an ongoing discussion about the role of the studio in the contemporary art context. The concept of the studio has evolved over time, shaped by its purpose and function (Jacob & Grabner, 2010). Re-examining what studios are, particularly what shared studios can offer early-career artists, was a final goal of this research. By exploring the value of shared studio experiences and how they contribute to the sustainability of artistic practice, this dissertation brought greater attention to the role of shared studios in the postgraduation phase, both within the field and in art education. Although the number of participants was limited to six artists, their experiences highlighted the significance of networks, alliances, and the collaborative atmosphere fostered within these spaces. These studios were more than just physical workspaces; they became the foundation of their creative ecosystem, offering opportunities to build friendships, test ideas, and establish financial and professional sustainability.

Rather than identifying a single determinant of success, this study showed how multiple factors intertwine to form an ecosystem that nurtures artistic growth. Shared studios functioned as one possible model within a broader system where peer relationships, institutional support, community engagement, and digital platforms intersected. It was not any one factor but, rather, the ongoing, interconnected influences of various factors that shaped an artist's career. As conditions in the art environment continue to evolve, further research and discussions on alternative models of support and sustainability remain essential.

At the end of this research, I reread *Art and Fear* by David Bayles and Ted Orland (2001), a book I first read 10 years ago as an early-career artist. At the time, I had just completed

my MFA and returned to my hometown, unsure of how to continue my practice and feeling isolated, much like the artists I interviewed. *Art and Fear* offered me ideas and a mindset for sustaining an artistic life, but the reality I faced was harsher than I had anticipated. Over time, I lost the mindset the book described. Now, after a decade of experience working with galleries, institutions, and navigating the art field, I find myself a somewhat different person, more grounded, more resilient, and someone who has learned how to recover and continue. On this journey, I have met friends who shared the worries, questions, difficulties, and joys of inquiring into art. Shared studios, in their various forms and at different stages, were the places where I met these friends and where I prepared for the future. Writing this dissertation reminded me of the values I had not fully recognized, even though I had benefited from them. It taught me that becoming both an artist and a researcher is a collaborative and evolving learning process, one that allows me to reconnect continuously with the questions that first brought me to art in the first place.

It also redirected me to the values in *Art and Fear*, which offered a meaningful reflection on the realities of an artistic career. This time, the book resonated differently, offering deeper insights than when I first encountered it. The book discussed how fear was an inevitable part of the creative process and how uncertainty was a challenge every artist had to confront. While it offered various suggestions for overcoming these difficulties, three key takeaways resonated strongly with this dissertation:

1. making connections through art and building relationships that sustain artistic growth;
2. engaging with a community that offers support, collaboration, and encouragement; and

3. working through fear rather than trying to eliminate it, embracing uncertainty as part of the journey (Bayles & Orland, 2001).

These principles aligned with the findings of this research, emphasizing that while the artistic path was unpredictable, it was not one that had to be walked alone. The support of friends and peers, combined with a clear yet flexible approach to opportunities and networks, enabled artists to navigate uncertainty with greater confidence, purpose, and resilience. The shared studio model, in its various forms, served as a tangible example of how artists created environments that fostered both personal and collective growth.

Ultimately, while the journey of an artist is often filled with fear and doubt, it is also a process of self-discovery, creative exploration, and shared experiences. At first, my own journey as an artist was not marked by success but by countless failures and rejections that deepened the uncertainty. However, approaching this path with a sense of collaboration, adaptability, and persistence transformed it into more than just a professional pursuit; it became a meaningful way to understand myself, contribute to a creative community, and find joy in the process.

Implications for Further Research

Given the findings of this study, which highlighted the critical role of shared spaces, peer-driven learning, informal networks, and the challenges surrounding career sustainability for artists, several directions for future research are proposed. These themes and ideas are grounded in the lived experiences of the six artists interviewed and aim to extend the understanding of how collaborative environments and support structures can enhance artistic and professional development across different contexts:

- Career Sustainability Beyond Early-Career Artists: While the networks in shared spaces provided support structures for early-career artists by offering encouragement

and opportunities to restart, the artists eventually moved on to the next stages of their careers, where they required more targeted strategies. In future research, I aim to broaden the scope of research by adopting a longitudinal approach that continues to explore how artists' needs evolve over time and across different stages of their careers.

- Comparative Studies of Art Ecosystems in Different Cities: Since this study was conducted in the local context of a major metropolis such as Seoul, and the participating artists primarily exhibited their work in this area, the question of comparative research across different cities arose. Future studies could explore how variations in funding structures, community systems, commercial relationships, and institutional supports in other locations influence artists' career development. Identifying common challenges and effective career pathways across diverse art ecosystems could provide valuable insights for strengthening artistic careers.
- Shared Studios to Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration: The collaborative interactions observed in shared studios fostered the creative sustainability of early-career artists and provided valuable learning opportunities through the observation and engagement of each other's practices. Building on these insights, I aim to investigate how collaborative models within other sectors of the arts can be adapted across professional communities, such as writers, academics, and designers, to foster innovation, collaboration, and professional growth across various fields.
- The Role of Digital Platforms in Artistic Professional Development and Adaptation into Art Education: Given the benefits of social networking platforms for inviting other artists, sharing information, and archiving artistic practices, future research

could explore how digital tools can be systematically integrated into higher art education programs. In particular, I want to see how these platforms can function as structured methods for professional learning, peer feedback, and artistic progression, and how they may become essential tools for sustaining long-term artistic practice.

- Bespoke Institutional Support for Artists in Shared Studios: Private shared studios and artists-run spaces are spaces where artists themselves manage and control the environment. Although these studios offer flexibility and foster intimate relationships among artists, their sustainability is often short-lived, with many closing within a few years. Given these challenges, I want to examine what new forms of institutional or programs could strengthen connections between private shared studios and the broader art community, ensuring greater sustainability and professional development opportunities.
- Sustainability of Residencies in South Korea: Artist residencies have provided professional networks and opportunities for artists to expand their practice within institutional contexts. However, many residencies around the region offered similar programs and have become part of a standardized system. Given this situation, I want to think about how residency programs can be diversified to offer more meaningful and individualized experiences that better support artists' career growth, creative development, and the expansion of professional networks.
- Shared Studios as Cultural Bridges in the Global Art Scene: The emergence of shared studios in Seoul can be seen as a unique characteristic of the city's art scene. I want to think about how these spaces act as cultural bridges, facilitating meaningful

connections between local artists and the broader international art community, and contributing to their growing position within the global artistic network.

Among these various topics, my core interest remains in understanding how we can better support artists in sustaining their creative practices across different stages of their careers. As a first step, I aim to explore the emerging systemic challenges, such as reduced funding and the decline of the art market, that early-career artists face in today's rapidly changing art environment. The next step will be to meet with mid-career artists to understand the different obstacles they encounter as they progress in their careers. These conversations will form the foundation of my research into their experiences and needs and will guide my continued exploration of the broader themes outlined above.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Past experience and questions about the artist
    a. First engagement with art and art education
    b. The art education experience at college and how the artist used the studios at college
    c. The experience after graduation: What types of studio does the artist have, and how did it happen?
    d. The experience of using a studio outside of school
2. Navigating hardships
    a. What are the difficulties of sustaining art practice after graduation?
    b. What support has the artist got from people around the artist (ex. family, friends, or other artists' support programs)?
    c. Are there any systematic problems in MFA programs or from the art scene?
3. Shared experiences in each of the spaces (artist-run, studios, and residencies)
    a. The duration, number of people, and the relationship of the members of shared studios.
    b. How is the space divided, and what was the decision-making process?
    c. The events and programs of shared spaces
    d. How do artists manage shared spaces, and what is the role of each member?
    e. What are the benefits of shared space?
    f. What are the difficulties of shared space?
4. Collaboration and networking to sustain an art practice
    a. Tell me about the experience of collaboration and networking in the shared studio
    b. How did the event happen, and what were the results?
    c. Did the event help the artist to further the practice?
    d. How does collaboration and networking expand outside of the studio? (ex. exhibitions, meeting new people, and professional development)
5. Future Plans
    a. How will you use the studio? Do you have plans to move or use a studio for yourself?
    b. What do you think is the most important factor in becoming an artist?
    c. What support is necessary for early-career artists?
    d. What is your dream studio?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: **Artists' Network in Shared Spaces: A Way of Furthering Creative Practices.**
Principal Researcher: Heejoon Lee, Teachers College
+82 10 48975825, hl3340@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in this research study called "_____**Artists' Network in Shared Spaces: A Way of Furthering Creative Practices.**_____." You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are over 18 years old and have graduate training in CITI**.** Approximately nine people will participate in this study, and it will take 90 minutes for each to complete over 2024-2025 of one day each.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? (Keep this simple and no more than two or three sentences.)

This study is being done to determine the experiences of shared studios. It is to see how early-career artists make relationships and networks in three types of shared spaces. Through this research, I expect to examine nine artists who are working in shared spaces to see what the characteristics of each space are and how the artists are making progress in such conditions.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, the primary researcher will individually interview you and take photo documents of your studio.

During the face-to-face individual interview, you will be asked to tell your experience of using a shared studio**.** This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is written down (transcribed) the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will still (or will not) be able to participate. The researcher will just take hand-notes. The interview will take approximately 90 minutes. You will be given a de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential. The photo documents of your studio will be used with your permission.

All of these procedures will be done in your studio at a time that is convenient to you.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to

consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems that you experienced in graduate school or while working in your school. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. You might feel concerned that things you say might get back to your supervisor. Your information will be kept confidential.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a de-identified code, such as Artist 1 or 2, instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

Person-to-person exposure is the most frequent route of transmission for infectious viruses (e.g., flu, COVID-19) and occurs via direct inhalation of respiratory droplets during close contact. Simple preventative measures, (e.g., frequent hand washing, disinfecting the workspace) can help reduce disease transmission.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of art education to better understand the best way to support early career artists.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. However, your transportation costs (or time and effort) will be covered. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the individual interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished. You will still be paid for time and your transportation costs.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio and photo recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your

participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the primary researcher's dissertation.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR PHOTO RECORDING

Audio recording and photo recording are part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, **you will still be able to participate** in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___I consent to allow written, photo and/or audio-recorded materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College, Columbia University

_____

Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written, photo and/or audio-recorded materials viewed outside of Teachers College, Columbia University

_____

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Heejoon Lee, at +82 10 4897 5825 or hl3340@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is

the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date**: _____

Signature:

_____