

The Use of Feldman's Method as Self Critic in the Process of Art Creation

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of social media on young artists' self-image and creative process within a studio practice context, exploring how digital influences shape their visual identities and thematic choices. Through Feldman's art criticism model comprising description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, this study provides a structured critique of students' artworks. It examines how social media aesthetics guide their artistic decisions and influence their conceptual frameworks. The study uses qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, visual analyses, and documentation, to capture primary data on the interaction between digital media and creative expression. Findings reveal that social media informs students' stylistic choices and prompts critical reflection on external influences affecting their artistic practice. Feldman's framework aids students in critically analyzing existing works, enhancing their observational skills, and strengthening their contextual and conceptual thinking during the initial stages of creation. This approach offers a valuable alternative pedagogical method for painting courses in art universities, encouraging students to engage analytically with digital aesthetics in their creative development.

KEYWORDS

Feldman
Painting
Studio Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Feldman's theory of art criticism has long been an essential tool for understanding the value of a work of art through a structured method of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Feldman proposes that art criticism begins with carefully describing the artwork's visual components of shapes, colors, textures, and other tangible aspects. These are followed by analyzing the artwork's formal qualities, such as balance, composition, rhythm, and proportion. This foundational analysis serves as the first step in determining the value of an artwork. Furthermore, Feldman argues that the purpose of art criticism is to explain: "Critics must judge the artwork and estimate its value as art," which implies that criticism is not merely descriptive but evaluative (Carney, 1994). His four-step interpretation process involves describing the work's literal aspects, analyzing the facts and building visual evidence, interpreting the evidence in light of internal and external factors, and finally reaching an evaluative stage. The personal perspective of the critic is key to this process, as the value of the artwork is assessed based on subjective insights rather than objective facts (Yetri et al., 2018).

In the context of art education, art criticism is a focal point. It is the foundation for any artistic endeavor, particularly in drawing and visual arts education. Art teachers engage in criticism as they describe, analyze, experiment with, and distribute artworks. Their role is to teach techniques and help students develop a deeper understanding of the arts. Art education encourages the development of both aesthetic taste and critical appreciation, fostering an environment where students refine their technical skills and broaden their linguistic and intellectual abilities. Barrett emphasizes the importance of art education in transferring artistic concepts and guiding students to apply these skills creatively and critically. This process includes the practical application of artistic knowledge—through drawing or other mediums, built upon a foundation of cognitive, visual, and experiential learning (Barrett, 2000).

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of Generation Z's daily lives, typically characterized by their deep integration with digital technologies. According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (2024), the internet penetration rate among children aged 7 to 17 reached 75% in 2021, with 94% of youth aged 16-30 online (Berita Pemerintah, 2024).. This underscores the prevalence of digital culture within Generation Z, who have grown up in an environment shaped by social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook (Jayatissa, 2023). These platforms facilitate self-exposure in various forms, allowing users to connect and present curated versions of themselves. While social media provides new opportunities for communication and self-expression (Adegboyega, 2020), it also raises questions about its impact on self-image, identity, and mental health.

Social media has become a central tool for self-expression among Generation Z, particularly in their quest to establish and maintain an online identity. Users engage in self-representation through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, constantly curating their online personas in response to external validation and feedback (Adegboyega, 2020). For art students, social media has not only become a space for self-expression but also serves as a reference for their artwork and an avenue for promoting their creations. This interaction with social media influences their understanding of identity and, by extension, their artistic practices. The overwhelming availability of images and personas online raises questions about forming authentic self-identity, leading to a complex intersection between personal and digital realities.

According to Hill (2022), Patron et al. (2024), Poninghaus (2019), and Whitten (2023), visual arts play a significant role in making connections between surrounding realities and personal perspectives, as well as representing these ideas visually. Artists communicate abstract ideas by transforming them into visual language (symbols), which may originate from a particular phenomenon (Hill, 2022; Patron et al., 2024; Poninghaus, 2019; Whitten, 2023). However, a problem may arise during the communication process if the information conveyed needs to be completed or biased. Damas (2023) discusses the concept of a “*quarter-life crisis*,” a transitional period experienced by young adults between the ages of 20 and 30, characterized by essential questions about existential identity (Damas, 2023). This transition is now occurring earlier, partly due to the rapid development of the digital world. Gen Z, currently in the productive age range, is particularly affected. The ease of obtaining information online does not necessarily mean that it aligns with their needs. The search for self-existence appears to be a central life goal for Gen Z, with various references to self scattered freely in cyberspace. Arts students who belong to this generation often use social media as a reference for their existence and as a platform for promoting their artwork. This raises an important question: “*What is the visual impact of self-image on social media on the artwork of art students?*”

Furthermore, the initial question posed in the practice class which is based on research was: “How does social media affect students' understanding of their identity in the class studio art project?” In the process of creating and making art, it is possible for this question to evolve into: “*Are art students experiencing mental health issues as a result of social media?*”, “*How can the experiences of art project students contribute to the understanding of self?*” This basic research will further explore the aesthetic symptoms that appear visually in student work in the creation process.

The development of theory in art often needs to catch up to the rapid evolution of issues and artworks in the field. As Barrett (2021) notes, Feldman's theory of art criticism remains contextually

significant in art education for understanding an artwork's substance (Barrett, 2000). However, according to Alashari (2021) and Amwiine and Nnenna (2024), in a practical classroom setting, the interpretation stage, focused on analyzing factors within the work, can become somewhat biased due to lecturer-student interactions (Alashari, 2021; Amwiine & Nnenna, 2024). Duaa Alashari and Abd. Rahman Hamzah (2022) argues that the Feldman method is widely used in classrooms to emphasize art fundamentals, particularly the elements of art and design principles. Through practice, students can strengthen their development by applying the formalist approach, inherently identifying key elements and principles during critique (Duaa Alashari & Abd. Rahman Hamzah, 2022).

Previous research by Yokochi and Okada (2019) shows that the stages of creation in practical studio classes are designed to reflect actual conditions in the art field, fostering an environment that mimics real-world art creation (Yokochi & Okada, 2019). In this context, Ayuningtyas and Sari (2024) cite Tabrani, who identifies two key stages in the creative process: the ideas and the preparation stages (Ayuningtyas & Sari, 2024). However, internal and external factors influence the process, which can impact the individual creative outcome. The ability to transform abstract ideas into aesthetic language is a central teaching goal, successfully translating ideas into visual language is a valuable learning outcome for students. Mace and Ward (2002), after interviewing artists, developed a process model of art-making with four stages: artwork conception, idea development, making artwork and idea development, and finishing the artwork (Mace & Ward, 2002). While the model offers useful insights into the art-making process, Mace and Ward did not delve into the mechanisms that guide progression through these steps. This notion is further supported by Miyarta, Hasanah, and Irawan (2023), who argue that the relationship between artworks and their creators is inseparable. Art serves as a medium to convey ideas that reflect everyday phenomena (Miyarta et al., 2023).

Additionally, studies by Hellman and Häikiö (2024), Horvath (2024), Phillips, Johnson, and Li (2022), and Wahida (2015) highlight how understanding surrounding phenomena forms the foundation for critical thinking, a key component of Feldman's art criticism framework (Hellman & Häikiö, 2024; Horvath, 2024; Phillips et al., 2022; Wahida, 2015). This framework is applied here as a participatory method in art creation, aiming to demonstrate how art criticism theory can be used to develop artwork ideas. By integrating the theory of art criticism with contemporary issues such as digital culture and self-image, this research seeks to explore how critical thinking can be applied to developing artwork ideas in a classroom setting. Openly, this research investigates the impact of social media on young artists' self-image and creative process within a studio practice context, exploring how digital influences shape their visual identities and thematic choices (Bishop, 2023; Colaco et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2019; Tvrdišić, 2022). Through Feldman's art criticism model comprising description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, this study provides a structured critique of students' artworks. It examines how social media aesthetics guide their artistic decisions and influence their conceptual frameworks.

It means that this research will examine how art students, particularly from Generation Z, navigate the intersection of personal identity and digital representation in their artistic practices. Feldman's theory will be applied through this lens to help students critically engage with their social media experiences and understand how these experiences shape their identities and artwork. The research will contribute to art education by offering a comprehensive approach to teaching critical thinking, fostering deeper engagement with students' creative processes, and helping them navigate the complex relationship between identity, social media, and art creation

METHOD

In the first stage, initial data collection was carried out when students were introduced to the general description of work practices in class and continued with the second stage, the interview stage. The purpose of the second stage was to obtain information about issues of interest, critical thinking, and aesthetic choices in the students' works in previous studio practices. The third stage involves a more intense observation of the choice of self-image to be displayed as the object of the work, reinforced by notes during the creation process. Furthermore, in the fourth stage, the narrative analysis method was chosen to analyze the final visuals of the student paintings. This research

employs qualitative methods, using Feldman's four-step art criticism model—description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation—to explore social media's influence on fine arts students' visual imagery and painting practices. In line with Feldman's emphasis on objective observation and structured critique, each stage builds upon the previous to reveal layers of visual meaning and social context within students' artworks (Duaa Alashari & Abd. Rahman Hamzah, 2022; Feldman, 1994).

1. **Description:** As Feldman describes, this stage centers on objectively naming and observing the literal elements. Here, initial data is gathered as fine art students engage with studio practices, focusing on visual aesthetics such as image, color, medium, and subject on previous works. This approach aligns with Feldman's directive to minimize personal bias by focusing on observable details to ensure an impartial baseline for the critique.
2. **Formal Analysis:** This stage corresponds to Feldman's recommendation to build on visual evidence. Through interviews, students discuss formal aesthetic choices, like composition, line, and spatial relationships within each piece. This analysis sheds light on the design principles influenced by digital aesthetics, revealing how social media shapes students' technical and creative decisions.
3. **Interpretation:** Feldman underscores interpretation as the most challenging and critical stage, aimed at discovering deeper meanings and contextual relevance. This research closely observes students' selected self-reflective images and symbolic choices within their artworks, interpreting how they reflect broader social media trends and personal narratives. This aligns with Feldman's view of interpretation as essential for uncovering the significance of an artwork within a larger social and personal context.
4. **Evaluation:** Finally, in the judgment or evaluation stage, narrative analysis is used to assess the final works, following Feldman's approach to objectively determine the success of each piece based on its stated artistic goals. This stage evaluates the students' creative and technical skills, emphasizing Feldman's criterion for art criticism: assessing both artistic intention and execution to foster a sophisticated appreciation of visual art.



Figure 1. An Example of A Student Previous Work Shows A Tendency to Raise The Theme of Women as The Subject of Paintings

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Yokochi and Okada's analysis of the art-making process introduces a structured framework for understanding how artists adapt and modify their conditions throughout the creation of an artwork. Their typology spans several stages, beginning with Artwork Conception, which corresponds to the initial stage where artists begin forming an idea or concept for their work. This stage involves a reflective process where the artist considers themes, inspiration, and potential methods for execution. It is often an open, exploratory phase where ideas may remain fluid and evolving. In the Idea Development stage, the artist refines these initial concepts, seeking clarity and purpose. This involves more specific decisions regarding subject matter, medium, and methodology, which allow the artist to structure the groundwork for the artwork's creation. As the process progresses, the Artwork Creation and Idea Development stage represents the period where the artist

actively works on the piece, further developing both the artwork and the underlying concept. In this stage, the artist engages with the material and conceptual elements, adjusting and modifying the work as it evolves. This phase is characterized by the iterative relationship between the concept and the physical realization of the artwork, where ideas can be revised or reinterpreted based on the material and creative feedback. Finally, Artwork Completion represents the culmination of the creative process, where the artist finalizes the work, bringing together all elements, conceptual, technical, and material, into a finished piece. This stage includes evaluation, reflection, and final adjustments to achieve the intended outcome. The completion phase mirrors Feldman's emphasis on evaluation, where the artist assesses artistic intention and execution. Yokochi and Okada's framework thus parallels Feldman's four-step model of art criticism description, formal analysis, interpretation, and evaluation with their art-making process, allowing for a holistic view of how creative decisions unfold from conception to completion. While Feldman's model offers a critical lens for analyzing artworks, Yokochi and Okada's typology emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of the artist's creative process, illustrating how the journey from idea to execution is often non-linear and subject to continuous modification and refinement.

Table 1. Yokochi and Okada's (2019) Table of Types of Process Modifications And Definitions; The Process of Art-Making: An Analysis of Artist's Modification of Conditions In The Art-Making Process

Reference Frame for Modification	Modification Type	Definition
None	Type 0 No modification	Reproducing a previous work
	Type 1_1 Unsystematic change	Changing both a previous motif, method, and concept without any specific goal (or sub-goal) e.g., changing all based on a temporal (casual) idea
Idea	Type 1_2 Searching for suitable subjects and methods based on prior artistic ideas	Changing both motifs/subjects and methods to make artwork more suitable for the prior idea e.g., searching motifs and methods based on the idea for prior work
	Type 2_1 Quantitative modification	Changing size or material of previous work without changing subjects and concepts (becoming bigger/smaller size than previous work) e.g., changing the size of Mobiles
Methodology	Type 2_2 Subject modification	Changing motifs/subjects to make a new artwork by using the same methodology as for prior artwork e.g., applying Mobiles to various motifs
	Type 2_3 Subject modification with reconsideration of methods	Reconsidering the methodology while making new artwork by changing subjects and realizing availability/possibility of the methodology e.g., reconsidering availability of Mobiles methodology
Sub or Main art concept	Type 3 Structure modification	Generating a new methodology, in line with a sub art concept or a main art concept of artwork series e.g., generating "Mobiles" as a new methodology of sculpture
Creative vision	Type 4 Concept modification	Forming a main art concept and generating sub-concept (artwork series) according to a creative vision e.g., generating "Constellations" series based on Calder's main theme "Universe"

Meanwhile, based on the data collected in the individual interview process, students showed a great influence of social media imagery (Instagram & TikTok) on the selection of visual appearance in their work. This student told a story about how she was psychologically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a part of Gen Z (born in 2005), she believes in virtual reality. This means that the past pandemic (COVID-19) changed how people treat screens (computers, smartphones), where humans became very dependent on technology and the internet. When the pandemic required us to stay home, people could not update their knowledge about the reality outside the house. There was a tendency to believe what was displayed on television or more personalized screens like smartphones. People consider themselves part of this world and make connections virtually to show their existence to others. This context is what virtual reality means, more so as a situation and behavior, not as a technology tool. Uploading a photo of oneself or even a photo of one's work on social media (Instagram) determines how one's self-image in the virtual space reflects the same in real life. This

student had difficulty gaining self-confidence due to a moment when, one day, she posted a photo of herself wearing a mask on Instagram. She said she received positive comments about her appearance in that post. However, when she uploaded a photo without a mask, she started getting negative comments, saying she looked different. This situation, as described by Lowisz, states that instead of using social media for positive communication and the benefits of connectivity, youths use it to the contrary (Adegboyega, 2020). In this case, the comments she received became her way of judging herself.

The process starts with developing ideas and methods to deliver as artwork. Each work is maximized to be completed within one month. The experimentation and creation of paintings, starting from the idea development stage, is based on Table 1 from Yokochi and Okada's method. After presenting previous paintings (background, concept, etc.), the student stated that she wanted to change ideas, methods, and concepts without explaining more specific goals to describe the plan for the next painting.

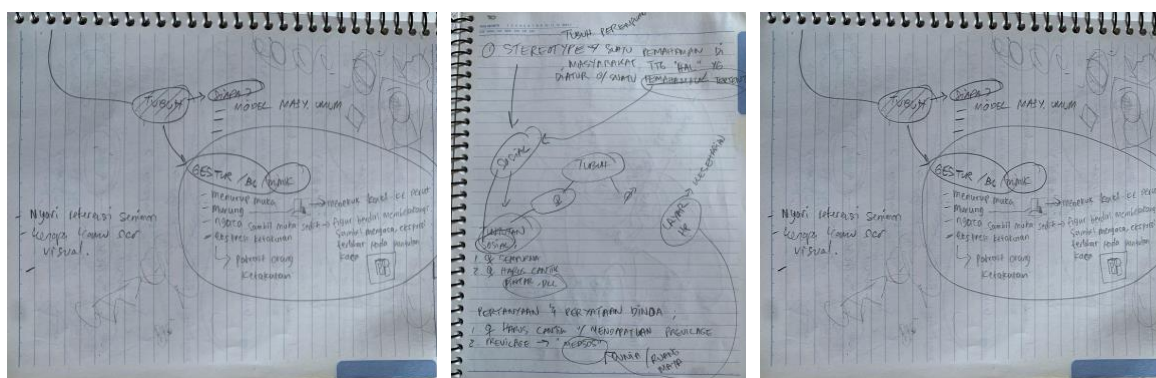


Figure 2. Student Notes of Mind Mapping.

The next step is the methodology of type 2-3 (Yokochi and Okada), the subject of modification with reconsiderations with methods. The student was introduced to the mind-mapping method that begins with finding keywords. Determining and exploring these keywords will help the student to keep their concept ideas and work on track. In this stage, the student chose the keywords Body, Stereotype, and Instagram. Students are slowly guided to determine the overall main idea that will be raised in their work. This is category 3, Sub or Main Art Concept in type 3 (Yokochi and Okada); structure modification. To explain her critical thinking, she helped by writing a structured artist's statement. The statement is as follows:

"Entering the young adult phase will certainly be close to social media. In the virtual world, it is now easier to find information and also see the other side of what we see in reality. More and more use of social media has made me realize that many people out there judge a person based on the standards that exist in social media, ranging from physical standards, lifestyles, hobbies, and others. On the one hand, using social media also makes me feel insecure and afraid of other people's judgments of me. As a teenager, I did not care about what others saw on social media or the real world. However, I became afraid to show my life and physique when entering the young adult phase. Moreover, I also became very closed on social media, I also felt afraid of the first assessment when meeting new people, especially the assessment of my physique. However, I became afraid to show my life and physicality when I entered the young adult phase. Moreover, I also became very private in the social media I use; I also fear the first judgment when I meet new people, especially physical judgment. I also feel very insecure seeing other people who are much more visible. I am indeed afraid of other people's judgment in the real world and social media, but in fact, it does not make me hate them or stay away from the environment of the outside world. Therefore, I made this work to illustrate my fear of judgment from people and insecurity. I am very interested in making this work because cases like mine are certainly experienced by many."

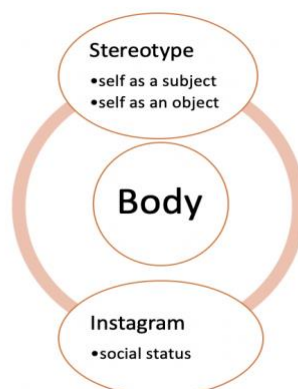


Figure 3. Mind mapping as a proposed concept by the student.

From this chart, we can see and understand that for Generation Z, the digital world is a real world where various information can be easily obtained. A virtual stereotype determines the standard of value towards someone or something. Trying to meet these standards is necessary for some people (in this case, the student). This also affects the issue of self-acceptance in society. For Lestamega, painting is not just a matter of artistic expression (Lestamega, 2024). Rather, it is a sociocultural product in which the artist perceives phenomena, social realities, and cultural changes are mixed. In this case, the body is used as a vehicle to get to and achieve social needs. The fear of rejection becomes a trust issue based on previous experience. In addition to the habit of using social media and the need to search for information on social media, this must be kept from being kept away or even released for today's young generation, only to state a self-existence and social status. The situation is described in Figure 3.

As described above, stages appear when entering the creation process of visual ideas. The student has prepared seven basic sketches on paper, and the lecturer will choose which sketches are considered relevant to convey the background idea and the concept (image 1). Keywords (Body, Stereotype, and Instagram) that were determined by the students at the beginning of the meeting became the anchor for the sketches. One selected sketch will be transferred onto an 80 cm x 100 cm canvas.



Figure 4. Sketch on paper (left) and sketch on canvas (right).

This student presented a female figure that repeats itself. This repetition, apart from studying the correct gestures and body language, for her this figure is a reflection of herself. The sketching on paper is completed within one hour without further stimulation from the lecturer. After creating several sketches, the lecturer selects based on visual principles (unity, composition, and balance). The unity of the elements of line and shape to form a body figure, the composition of objects in the

paper, and the balance that takes into the existence of objects to reach the points of attraction to explore. However, when this sketch was transferred to the canvas, several object adjustments occurred with several considerations of student expressions.

Artwork Analysis



Figure 5. Student Work, “*Insecure*” (2023), 100 cm x 80 cm, Acrylic on Canvas.

The final works of the student will be analyzed based on Feldman's art criticism steps, as described in Table 2.

Table 2. Feldman's Analysis of The Painting Titled “*Insecure.*”

Level	Stage Classification	Result
1	Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One female body without showing the face covered by her hands. - The dominant colors used are maroon and purple. The figure of the body is presented in a purplish color. - The brush strokes look a mixture of rough (expressive) and medium (blending) all over the canvas - White is used as part of the body outline and as a light accent on the body figure.
2	Formal Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One body is presented repeatedly. - The figure at the front has a firmer line than the figures behind it. - Compositionally, the canvas is filled with female figures. - The figure of the woman's body is not shown proportionally; it is aimed at the fingers and the whole body shape. - Overall, the left field feels fuller than the right, so it does not meet the balanced requirements.
3	Interpretation	<p>The work "Insecure" visually presents a woman's body with uncomfortable gestures and body language. The hand gesture that covers the face shows that this figure does not want to be known or associated with a certain identity. The repeated object emphasized the discomfort experienced and was described with expressive lines.</p>
4	Evaluation	<p>Evaluation of the work "Insecure" is not necessary regarding points of art as an artist's expression.</p>

From the finding data, the description in Table 2 shows that Feldman's theory of art criticism can be applied by students in forming initial ideas. To follow this point, students should upgrade themselves by developing the idea or the medium of choice as a consideration. The situation is clearly stated: The results indicate that artists in their early careers changed their artwork unsystematically and searched for suitable subjects and methods based on their previous ideas/concepts. Unsystematic refers to taking "a big jump" in creation, making it difficult to identify the commonality between new and previous artwork (Yokochi & Okada, 2019).

It takes work for the student to follow the instructions in a limited time. The Students have to explore the theme and methods at the same time. However, art criticism consists of several layers of reading. In this case, Feldman's theory on the lecture's part of reading the interpretation of the works becomes too subjective because of the creation process in the classroom during the consultation time

CONCLUSIONS

The stages of the creation process begin with the idea stage and initial preparation, which are the initial challenges faced by every artist or art student. Some of the factors that cause this are situations outside the individual (current phenomena, cultural changes) or conditions within the individual (social reality). Feldman's theory, in this study, is applied to the initial preparation stage so that students can think critically and analytically about previous works. The process helps students to be more observant in determining the context and concept of the work to be created. So, the work has a high and strong aesthetic value content in the current context. Thus, this method can be used as an alternative learning method in the creation process in painting courses at art universities.

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