

How do I use my domestic space as an art studio?



Fig.1
Sycamore book

Introduction

This study investigates how I use my domestic space as an art studio within the context of caring for a toddler. I wanted to undertake action research to benefit my situation as an artist teacher but to also contribute something that may benefit other artist mothers. My aim was to explore how my house functions as a studio during a period whilst I was creating artwork for an exhibition and to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between my practice, the space in which I create artwork and the work itself. The artwork used in this project was created over the three months of winter 2019-20 documenting the time period, meteorological conditions and plants growing in my garden – see figs 1 and 3 for examples.

Methods

I used an action research approach to designing my project. Action research suited my project as according to McNiff (2016: p.15) action research is “a way of investigating the practices of everyday life”. I work on my art practice most days during my son’s nap time and in my domestic space; for me this is my everyday life. During the length of my project I completed two cycles of action research; this study focuses on the second cycle. My first cycle investigated my routine, how my days are structured and how I use the time I have. This led to me realising that reorganising the space in which I work would allow me to use my time more efficiently – see fig.2.

After implementing this change I spent three months creating artwork culminating in the exhibition previously mentioned. When creating each artwork I took photos documenting my making processes.



Fig.3
Winter solar dyes

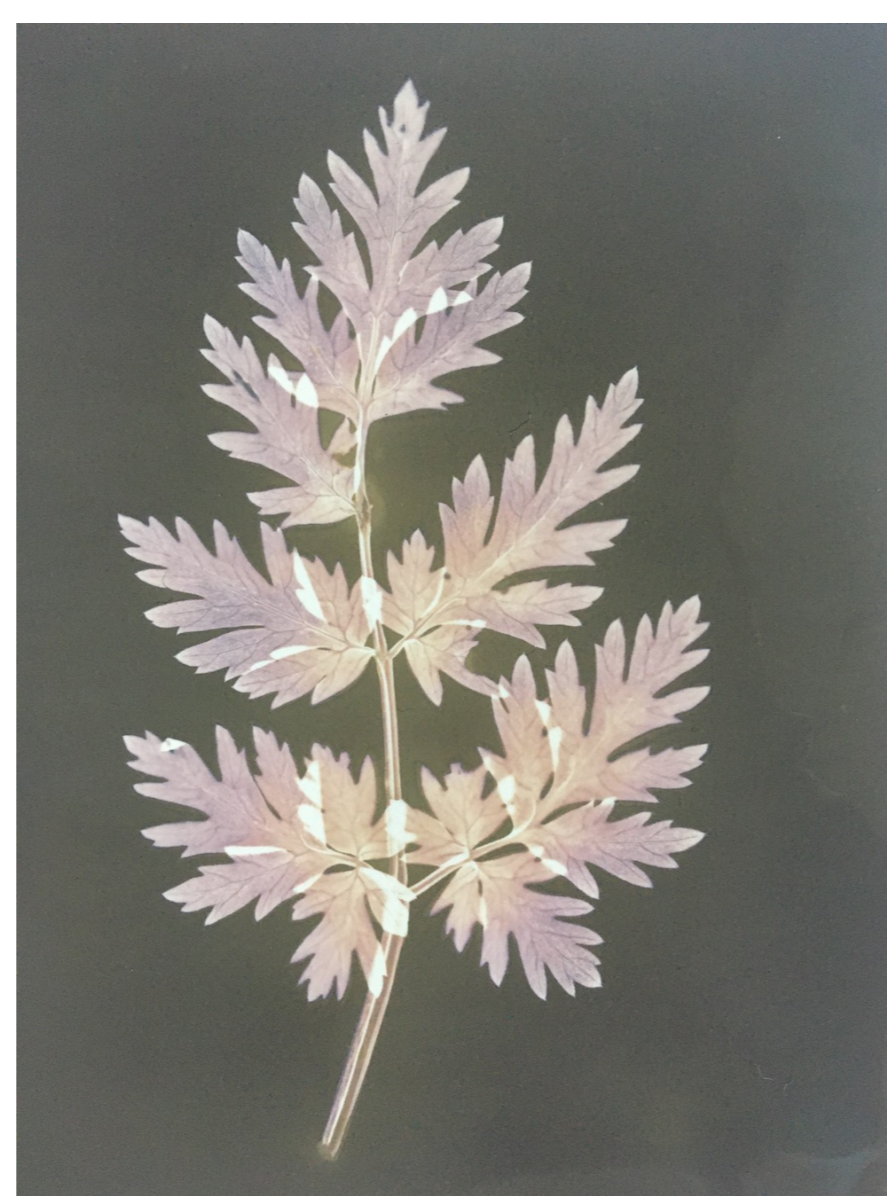


Fig.4
Winter-Spring

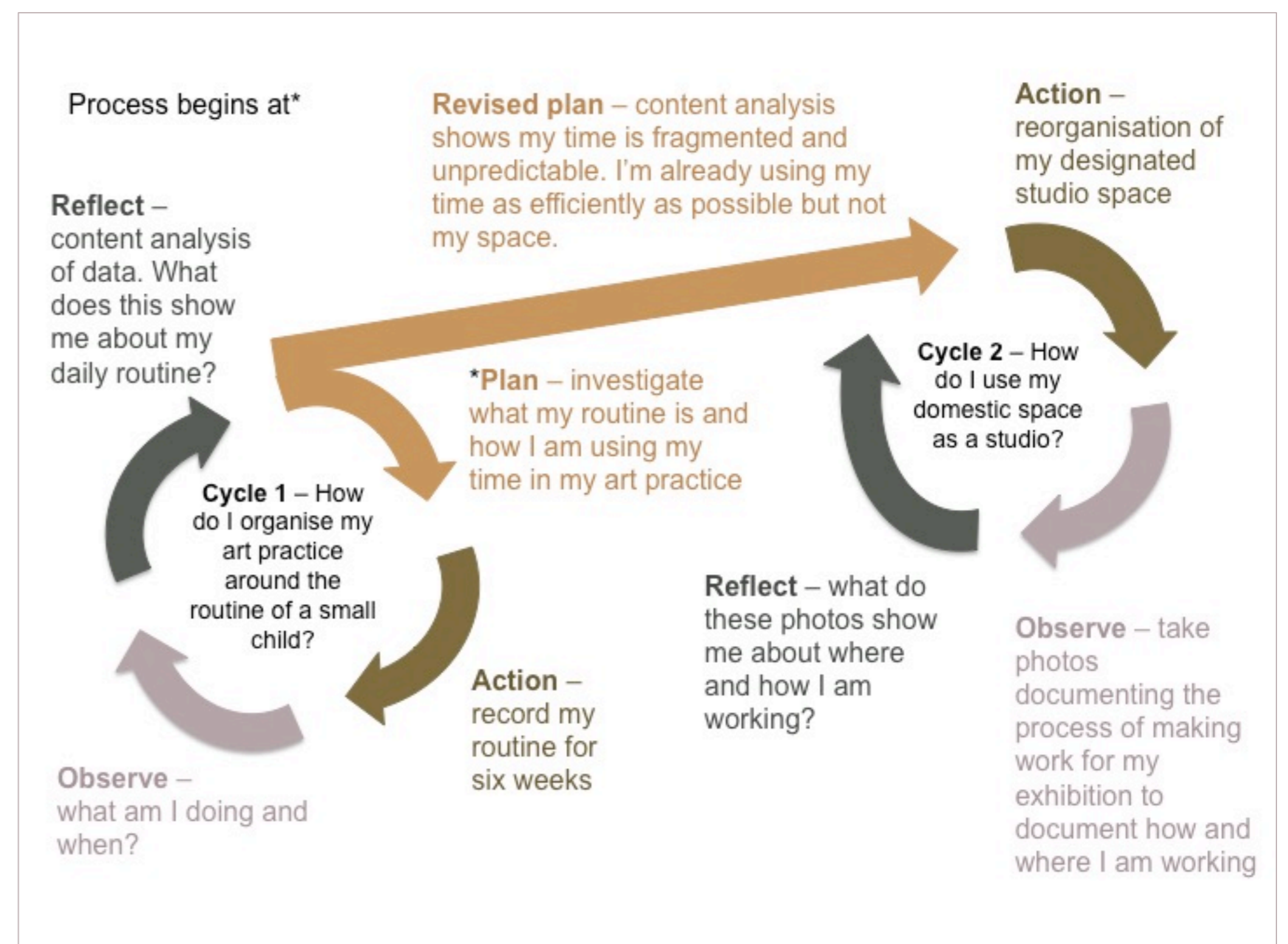


Fig.2 Action Research cycles

Conclusion

This project revealed to me that my time, space and processes are all fragmented. According to Bain this is a situation common to many artist mothers (Bain, 2004). These elements of my practice (time, space, process) have developed alongside caring for a small child in a domestic space and the blurring of boundaries between the roles and spaces of being mother and artist are what makes this work.

References

- Bain, A (2004) Female artistic identity in place: the studio, *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 171-193
 Charmaz, K (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. (2nd Edition) London: SAGE publications
 McNiff, J (2016) *You and your Action Research Project* (4th edition), Oxford: Routledge
 Shields, A (2018) Studio Conversations, *International Journal of Education Through Art*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 379-384

Findings

The data collected during this period, photos taken documenting my making processes, was analysed by coding it using a grounded theory approach. This approach encourages the researcher to be led by the data in order to draw more from it (Charmaz, 2014).

Analysing my data revealed that I don't just work in the space I have designated as a studio (a section of a spare bedroom) but that I create work across different areas of my house including the kitchen, garden and bathroom.

Using a contemporary studio studies model of considering the studio as a metaphor I identified that I use my garden and kitchen as a laboratory as lots of experimenting happens in those places (Shields, 2018). My designated studio area is used like an archive but its function is more complex than this; exploring this in depth would require another cycle of action research.

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