

From Marks to Meaning: A Mixed-Methods Study on Visual Journals in Technique-Driven Art Courses

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of visual journaling as a tool for evaluating and monitoring student development in a Basic Drawing Techniques course within the BFA in Visual Communication program. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess how visual journaling supports skill progression, higher-order thinking, and reflective practice. Qualitative data were collected from weekly journal entries, instructor observations, and rubric-based assessments, while quantitative data were derived from a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of the validity and usefulness of visual journaling, with all 30 enrolled students included through total population sampling. The findings revealed consistent improvement in technical skills across graphite/charcoal, pen and ink, and colored pencil techniques, supported by both rubric scores and self-reported student perceptions. Thematic analysis further identified key patterns of self-awareness, skill progression, confidence development, and self-regulation, indicating the enhancement of critical thinking and reflective practice. Survey results also showed high levels of agreement regarding the usefulness of visual journaling in monitoring progress, increasing engagement, and serving as a valid alternative to traditional assessment methods. Overall, the study concludes that visual journaling is an effective pedagogical and assessment strategy that supports both technical and cognitive development, promotes reflective and learner-centered practices aligned with outcomes-based education, and offers a meaningful alternative to conventional evaluation methods in studio-based art education.

Keywords: visual journaling, skill progression, reflective practice, studio-based art education, outcomes-based education

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Introduction

Studio-based art education foregrounds experiential learning and technical mastery, privileging process-oriented practice over lecture-driven instruction. Within the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) major in Visual Communication, Drawing Techniques functions as a foundational course in which students develop essential competencies such as line control, value rendering, texture, proportion, and perspective through guided demonstrations and sustained hands-on engagement. This pedagogical orientation aligns with the broader expectations of studio practice, where learning emerges through iterative making, critique, and reflection.

In the Philippine higher education context, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has institutionalized a paradigm shift toward Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) for Fine Arts and Design programs through CMO No. 43, s. 2017. This policy articulates program outcomes that emphasize critical and creative thinking, visual literacy, technical and technological competence, and professional ethics, while advocating for learner-centered curricula, model syllabi, and delivery strategies that document and ensure the attainment of these outcomes (Commission on Higher Education, 2017). Complementarily, CHED CMO No. 46, s. 2012 establishes a national quality assurance framework grounded in OBE and typology, underscoring the alignment of institutional systems—from planning and implementation to review and enhancement—with intended learning outcomes and continuous quality improvement (Commission on Higher Education, 2012). Taken together, these directives provide a strong basis for reflective, process-oriented assessment approaches in studio-based courses.

Reflective practices, such as art journaling and portfolio assessment, have been widely recognized as effective mechanisms for enabling students to monitor their development and meaningfully engage with their artistic growth (Negoiță, 2025). Visual journaling, in particular, integrates sketches, technical exercises, annotations, and reflective writing, offering a practical and structured means to operationalize CHED's OBE directives in technique-driven contexts. By documenting iterative practices alongside metacognitive reflections, visual journals serve as evidence of learning trajectories and provide a basis for formative feedback. As Williams and Shields (2025) emphasize, visual journals function as reflective learning tools that foster the active and purposeful exploration of artistic media and imagery, thereby deepening the learning process.

Empirical research further substantiates the pedagogical value of journaling in art education. In a mixed-methods study involving twelve third-year undergraduate art education students in Thailand, Sangvanich and Chinokul (2018) found that journals facilitated processes of observation, comparison, and critical analysis across different educational settings. Students utilized sketchbooks not only to document art activities but also to reflect on spatial organization, instructional design, and institutional practices encountered during field visits. In this context, the sketchbook evolved into a multidimensional reflective tool that integrated diverse artistic techniques with theoretical application, diagramming, and mind mapping, highlighting the interconnectedness of practice and conceptual understanding.

Beyond the development of technical and cognitive skills, art education also contributes to personal and socio-emotional growth. As Batič et al. (2025) argue, “art allows us to look within ourselves, to learn who we are and what interests us.” Artistic practice encourages learners to engage with their thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, enabling them to evaluate their work, consider alternative perspectives, set goals, and regulate their creative processes. These

experiences strengthen social-emotional competencies and reinforce the holistic role of art education in cultivating both artistic proficiency and personal development.

Within this study, visual journaling is conceptualized as a reflective learning journal that actively incorporates artistic media and visual exploration into the documentation process (Williams & Shields, 2025). The journaling activities are anchored in a semester-long engagement with media-specific techniques, including graphite and charcoal (e.g., hatching, scumbling, blending), pen and ink (e.g., parallel hatching and scumbling), and colored pencil (e.g., hatching, scumbling, blending, and burnishing). These technical exercises are embedded within weekly demonstrations and studio tasks, with students recording process notes, challenges, and reflections on their learning strategies.

Central to this approach is the concept of self-regulation, understood as a social-cognitive process that integrates metacognition, motivation, and behavior in the pursuit of learning goals. Self-regulation encompasses how individuals conceptualize, initiate, and sustain goal-directed actions, and it is critical for behavioral change across contexts (Frazier et al., 2021). Through the integration of reflective journaling and technical practice, students are encouraged to monitor their progress, adjust their strategies, and engage in sustained, purposeful learning.

Overall, the study positions visual journaling as both a pedagogical strategy and an assessment tool that aligns with CHED's OBE framework. By bridging reflective practice and technical skill development, visual journals not only document student learning but also foster critical thinking, creative exploration, and socio-emotional growth within studio-based art education.

Problem Statement

In technique-driven courses such as *Drawing Techniques*, assessment poses a persistent challenge. While studio critiques and product-oriented rubrics are widely used, they often privilege final outputs over the iterative processes of skill acquisition and reflective growth. Traditional critiques and juries are widely used as formal evaluation, often at the final stage, and can be threatening or negatively experienced by students, sometimes undermining learning (Biswas & Saha, 2024). Summative examinations, which are common in other academic disciplines, are difficult to formulate in drawing courses because the focus lies on hands-on practice, technical mastery, and experiential learning rather than discrete, testable knowledge. This creates a gap in reliably documenting both technical development and metacognitive growth. There is thus a need to evaluate whether visual journals, kept weekly and anchored on explicit prompts, can serve as a process-sensitive assessment tool that (a) captures skill progression, (b) cultivates critical thinking and self-reflection, and (c) provides valid and useful evidence for monitoring student learning trajectories.

The Purpose of the Study

1. Assess skill progression documented in journals across graphite/charcoal, pen and ink, and colored pencil techniques.
2. Determine how journaling fosters higher-order thinking, including critical analysis, evaluation, planning, and reflective practice (metacognition and self-regulation).
3. Evaluate student perceptions of the validity and usefulness of journaling as an alternative to summative exams, using a Likert-scale instrument.
4. Identify recurring themes and patterns in reflections and visual outputs that indicate learning trajectories, challenges, and the integration of theory with practice.

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was used, integrating qualitative and quantitative strands under an action-research orientation. The instructor implemented the journaling strategy, observed outcomes, and iteratively refined delivery within normal classroom practice.

Participants and Sampling Method

Participants comprised 30 BFA Visual Communication students enrolled in the sole section of BFA 101. The study employed total population sampling, as all students in the class who underwent the intervention were included in the study cohort. Total population sampling is this census approach applied to a clearly defined target group: instead of choosing a sample, the researcher studies all eligible units in that population frame (Turner, 2020).

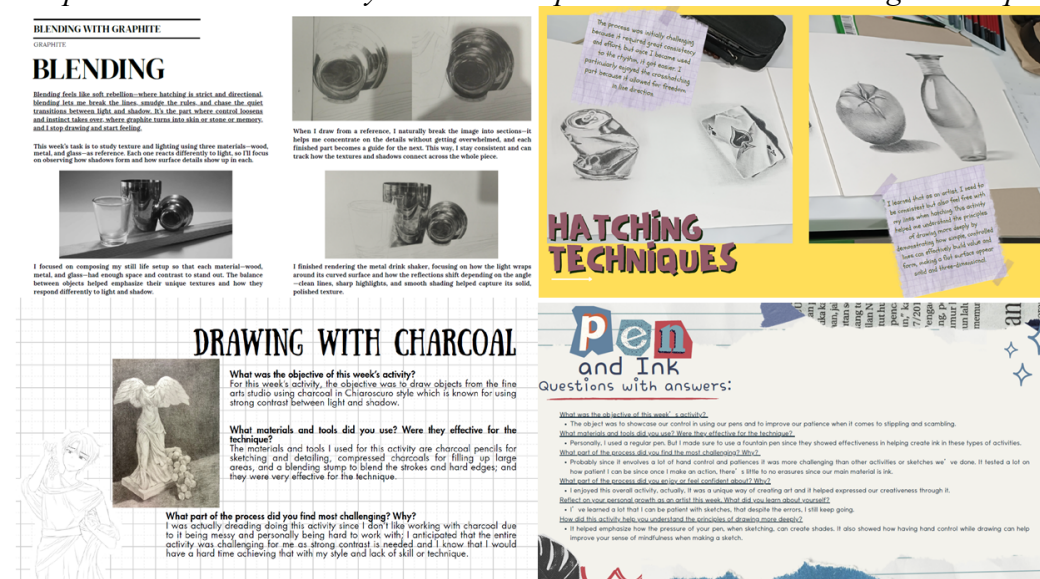
Data Gathering Procedure

Data was collected throughout the semester using three sources: visual journal; instructor observations and rubric-based assessments; and questionnaire.

Visual Journal

For every lesson and hands-on activity, students produced a journal entry comprising:

- Process documentation (photos/images of themselves working and of progressive artwork stages).
- Structured reflection prompts (answered each week concisely):
 - What was the objective of this week's activity?
 - What materials and tools did you use? Were they effective for the technique?
 - What part of the process did you find most challenging? Why?
 - What part of the process did you enjoy or feel confident about?
 - Reflect on your personal growth as an artist this week. What did you learn about yourself?
 - How did this activity help you understand the principles of drawing more deeply?

Figure 1*Sample Visual Journal Entry From Participants in BFA 101 Drawing Techniques***Instructor Observations and Rubric-Based Assessments**

The instructor monitored progress during demonstrations and practice, providing formative feedback. The rubric assessed technical skill development, application of drawing principles, process documentation and progression, creativity, and reflective practice, including critical thinking and self-regulation.

Table 1*Outcomes-Based Visual Journal Evaluation Rubric for BFA Students*

Criteria (Weight)	5-Excellent	4-Very Good	3-Good	2-Fair	1-Poor
Technical Skill Development (25%)	Demonstrates exceptional mastery of techniques (line, value, texture, shading) across graphite, ink, and colored pencil; highly controlled and consistent execution	Strong technical performance with minor inconsistencies across media	Adequate skills; basic techniques applied but lacking refinement	Limited control; inconsistent technique use across media	Minimal skill; poor execution and weak control of materials
Application of Drawing Principles (20%)	Consistently accurate use of proportion, perspective, composition, and spatial relationships; demonstrates deep understanding	Mostly accurate with minor errors in principles	Basic understanding; noticeable but manageable errors	Partial understanding; frequent inaccuracies	Incorrect or very limited application of principles
Process Documentation and Skill Progression (20%)	Thorough and systematic documentation; clearly shows progression, refinement, and improvement across entries and media	Clear documentation with evident development, though not always consistent	Basic documentation; some evidence of progress but limited depth	Incomplete documentation; minimal evidence of improvement	Little to no documentation; no observable progression

Reflection, Critical Thinking, and Self-Regulation (15%)	Highly analytical reflection addressing objectives, evaluation of tools/materials, challenges, strengths, and clear strategies for improvement; strong evidence of self-regulation	Thoughtful reflection with some analysis of process, tools, and performance	Descriptive reflection; limited analysis or evaluation	Superficial reflection; minimal insight into challenges or improvement	No meaningful reflection; fails to address journal prompts
Creativity and Exploration (10%)	Highly original work; extensive experimentation with techniques and media beyond requirements	Shows creativity with some experimentation	Some creativity; relies on familiar approaches	Limited creativity; minimal attempt to explore techniques	No creativity or experimentation evident
Organization and Presentation (10%)	Exceptionally organized, neat, complete; all entries clearly labeled with objectives, materials, and notes	Well-organized with minor lapses in clarity or completeness	Acceptable organization; some missing labels or uneven presentation	Disorganized in parts; incomplete entries or unclear labeling	Poorly organized; incomplete and difficult to follow

Questionnaire

At the end of the semester, students completed a 4-point Likert-scale survey evaluating the perceived validity and usefulness of visual journaling. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, with a total of 15 questions.

Table 2

Likert-Scale Questionnaire on Skill Progression, Reflective Practice, and Perceived Usefulness of Visual Journaling

Section A: Skill Progression
1. Visual journaling helped me improve my technical skills in graphite and charcoal techniques (hatching, scumbling, blending).
2. Visual journaling supported my learning of pen and ink techniques (hatching, scumbling).
3. Visual journaling enhanced my ability to apply colored pencil techniques (blending, burnishing).
4. Keeping a visual journal allowed me to track my progress in drawing techniques over time.
Section B: Critical Thinking and Reflection
5. Writing reflections in my journal helped me analyze my strengths and weaknesses in each activity.
6. Visual journaling encouraged me to think critically about the effectiveness of the materials and tools I used.
7. Reflecting on challenges in my journal helped me identify strategies for improvement.
8. Visual journaling made me more aware of the objectives of each lesson and how they relate to my learning goals.
Section C: Self-Reflection and Confidence
9. Visual journaling helped me recognize which parts of the process I enjoyed or felt confident about.
10. Journaling increased my motivation to practice and improve my techniques.
11. Visual journaling made me more engaged in the learning process.
Section D: Perceived Validity and Usefulness
12. Visual journaling is a valid method for assessing my learning in a technique-driven art course.
13. Visual journaling is useful for monitoring my progress throughout the semester.
14. Visual journaling should be continued in future studio-based courses.
15. I would recommend visual journaling as a learning tool to other students in art programs.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis (Thematic Analysis)

Qualitative data were derived from students' journal entries, which included both prompt responses and process notes. In keeping with reflective journaling approaches, participants wrote regular entries documenting their experiences over time, often through structured prompts, to capture contemporaneous reflections and evolving learning processes (Rudrum et al., 2022). To systematically examine these data, a thematic analysis was employed.

Initially, open coding was conducted to identify recurring patterns and significant insights within students' reflections. These initial codes were then refined and organized into broader, interpretive themes. The resulting thematic categories focused on key areas such as skill progression, challenge profiles, confidence and engagement, and the alignment between materials and techniques.

Furthermore, the analysis was guided by a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) framework, which emphasizes the interpretive role of the researcher and allows for flexible, context-sensitive theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach was particularly appropriate given the nature of the dataset, as it enabled a deeper exploration of students' subjective experiences while accommodating the complexity and variability of reflective journal entries.

In addition, visual analysis of students' artworks was undertaken to support and validate the written reflections. This included examining technical indicators such as the consistency of hatching spacing, smoothness of blending, and effectiveness of burnishing. The integration of textual and visual data enabled a more nuanced interpretation of students' learning experiences and artistic development.

Quantitative Analysis (Descriptive Statistics)

Quantitative data were obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire administered at the end of the semester. The data were analyzed using Jamovi Version 2.6. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize students' perceptions of the validity and usefulness of visual journaling. Specifically, means and standard deviations were calculated for each scale to determine measures of central tendency and variability.

Furthermore, frequency distributions were analyzed to examine the levels of agreement across survey items, providing insight into overall response patterns. In addition, the mode was used to identify the most frequently occurring responses for each item, thereby clarifying dominant perceptions among participants.

Triangulation

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed (Morgan, 2024). Triangulation is about studying one phenomenon from multiple sources of data, using different theories, methods and researchers (Donkoh, 2023). The convergence of qualitative themes, quantitative trends, and rubric ratings provided a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the role of visual journaling in supporting skill development, higher-order thinking, and reflective practice.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study on the use of visual journaling in a Drawing Techniques course. The results are organized according to the key variables of the study, namely skill progression, critical thinking and reflective practice, self-reflection and engagement, and perceived validity and usefulness of visual journaling. Both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated in this section, including descriptive statistics from the Likert-scale survey, rubric-based assessments, and thematic analysis of students' journal entries. The combined analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how visual journaling supports technical development, higher-order thinking, and holistic learning among students in a studio-based educational context.

Skill Progression

Table 3

Students' Perceptions of Visual Journaling in Supporting Skill Progression in Drawing Techniques

	N	Mean	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Item no. 1	30	4.43	5.00	0.898	2	5
Item no. 2	30	4.43	5.00	0.774	2	5
Item no. 3	30	4.50	5.00	0.777	2	5
Item no. 4	30	4.73	5.00	0.521	3	5

As shown in Table 3, the results indicate that students generally perceived visual journaling as highly effective in supporting skill development across different drawing media. All items obtained high mean scores ranging from 4.43 to 4.73, with a consistent mode of 5.00, indicating that most respondents strongly agreed with the statements. This pattern suggests a strong positive perception of visual journaling as a tool for enhancing technical proficiency.

Specifically, Items 1 and 2 both recorded a mean of 4.43, showing that students found visual journaling beneficial in improving their skills in graphite and charcoal as well as pen-and-ink techniques, particularly in hatching, scumbling, and blending. These findings imply that documenting exercises and reflecting on techniques contributed to more effective practice reinforcement and skill acquisition. The slightly higher standard deviations (0.898 and 0.774) suggest minor variations in responses, although overall agreement remained high.

Meanwhile, Item 3, which focused on colored pencil techniques, obtained a mean of 4.50, indicating that students perceived improvement in applying blending and burnishing. This suggests that visual journaling may have supported the transfer and refinement of skills across media, as students built upon previously learned techniques.

Notably, Item 4 yielded the highest mean score of 4.73 and the lowest standard deviation (0.521), reflecting strong agreement and high consistency among respondents. This result highlights that visual journaling was particularly effective in enabling students to track their progress in drawing techniques over time. The low variability indicates a shared perception among students regarding the value of journaling in monitoring their development.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 3 support the first objective of the study, which is to assess skill progression across different media. The consistently high ratings demonstrate that visual journaling not only contributed to the development of technical skills but also enhanced students' ability to recognize and reflect on their own artistic growth, reinforcing its value as both a learning and assessment tool in studio-based art education.

Critical Thinking and Reflective Practice

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of Visual Journaling in Developing Critical Thinking and Reflective Practice

	N	Mean	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Item no. 5	30	4.73	5.00	0.521	3	5
Item no. 6	30	4.70	5.00	0.596	3	5
Item no. 7	30	4.70	5.00	0.535	3	5
Item no. 8	30	4.73	5.00	0.450	4	5

As presented in Table 4, the results indicate that students perceived visual journaling as highly effective in fostering critical thinking and reflective practice. All items obtained very high mean scores ranging from 4.70 to 4.73, with a consistent mode of 5.00, demonstrating that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with all statements. The relatively low standard deviations (0.450 to 0.596) suggest a high level of agreement and consistency in students' responses.

Specifically, Item 5 ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.521$) shows that students strongly agreed that writing reflections in their journals helped them analyze their strengths and weaknesses. This finding highlights the role of visual journaling in promoting self-assessment and metacognitive awareness, which are essential components of higher-order thinking.

Similarly, Item 6 ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.596$) indicates that visual journaling encouraged students to critically evaluate the effectiveness of materials and tools. This suggests that students moved beyond procedural execution and engaged in analytical decision-making, reflecting a deeper understanding of technique application.

Item 7 ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.535$) further demonstrates that reflecting on challenges enabled students to identify strategies for improvement. This finding is particularly significant as it reflects elements of self-regulation, where learners actively monitor and adjust their approaches to achieve better outcomes.

Notably, Item 8 obtained one of the highest mean scores ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.450$), indicating strong agreement that visual journaling enhanced students' awareness of lesson objectives and their connection to personal learning goals. The low variability suggests that this perception was consistently shared among participants. This reinforces the value of visual journaling in aligning students' learning experiences with intended outcomes, consistent with the principles of outcomes-based education.

Overall, the findings in Table 4 support the second objective of the study, which is to determine how journaling fosters higher-order thinking skills. The consistently high ratings across all items indicate that visual journaling effectively promotes critical analysis, evaluation, reflective thinking, and self-regulation, thereby enhancing both cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of learning in studio-based art education.

Self-Reflection and Confidence

Table 5

Students' Perceptions of Visual Journaling in Enhancing Self-Reflection and Learning Confidence

	N	Mean	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Item no. 9	30	4.83	5.00	0.379	4	5
Item no. 10	30	4.77	5.00	0.430	4	5
Item no. 11	30	4.63	5.00	0.556	3	5

As shown in Table 5, the results indicate that students perceived visual journaling as highly effective in promoting self-reflection, confidence, and engagement in the learning process. All items yielded very high mean scores ranging from 4.63 to 4.83, with a consistent mode of 5.00, indicating that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statements. The relatively low standard deviations (0.379 to 0.556) further suggest a high level of agreement and consistency among participants.

In particular, Item 9 obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.379$), indicating that students strongly agreed that visual journaling helped them recognize which parts of the process they enjoyed or felt confident about. This finding highlights the role of visual journaling in fostering self-awareness, enabling students to identify their strengths and preferences within the creative process.

Similarly, Item 10 ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.430$) shows that journaling significantly contributed to increased motivation to practice and improve techniques. This suggests that reflective documentation may enhance intrinsic motivation, encouraging students to engage more actively with their artistic development.

Meanwhile, Item 11 ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.556$) indicates that students found visual journaling effective in increasing their engagement in the learning process. Although slightly lower than the other items, the mean score still reflects a strong positive perception. The slightly higher variability suggests that while most students felt more engaged, individual experiences may have varied.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 5 demonstrate that visual journaling plays a significant role in supporting self-reflection, motivation, and confidence among students. These results further reinforce the holistic impact of visual journaling, not only in developing technical and cognitive skills but also in enhancing affective dimensions of learning, such as engagement and self-efficacy, which are essential in studio-based art education.

Perceived Validity and Usefulness of Visual Journaling

Table 6

Students' Perceptions of the Validity and Usefulness of Visual Journaling

	N	Mean	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Item no. 12	30	4.73	5.00	0.640	2	5
Item no. 13	30	4.60	5.00	0.814	1	5
Item no. 14	30	4.63	5.00	0.809	1	5
Item no. 15	30	4.73	5.00	0.640	2	5

As presented in Table 6, the results indicate that students generally perceived visual journaling as a highly valid and useful tool in a technique-driven art course. All items yielded high mean scores ranging from 4.60 to 4.73, with a consistent mode of 5.00, suggesting that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with all statements. However, compared to previous sections, the slightly higher standard deviations (0.640 to 0.814) indicate greater variability in responses, reflecting some differences in students' perceptions.

Specifically, Item 12 ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.640$) shows that students strongly agreed that visual journaling is a valid method for assessing learning in a studio-based, technique-oriented course. This finding supports the use of visual journals as an alternative assessment tool that captures both process and output, aligning with outcomes-based approaches to learning.

Similarly, Item 13 ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.814$) indicates that students generally perceived visual journaling as useful for monitoring progress throughout the semester. While the mean remains high, the relatively larger standard deviation and lower minimum value (1) suggest that a few students had less favorable experiences. This variation may reflect differences in individual learning preferences or levels of engagement with the journaling process.

Item 14 ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.809$) demonstrates that students agreed that visual journaling should be continued in future studio-based courses, indicating support for its integration into the curriculum. The variability in responses suggests that while most students recognized its value, some may have perceived journaling as demanding or time-intensive.

Notably, Item 15 ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.640$) reveals strong agreement that students would recommend visual journaling to other art students, further reinforcing its perceived usefulness as both a learning and reflective tool. This endorsement suggests that students not only recognized its benefits personally but also saw its broader applicability in art education.

Overall, the findings in Table 6 indicate that visual journaling is widely perceived as a valid, useful, and transferable pedagogical strategy in studio-based learning. These results support its continued implementation in art education, while also highlighting the importance of considering individual differences in student engagement to maximize its effectiveness.

Personal Growth and Self-Reflection as Emerging Themes

Thematic analysis of students' responses to the prompt "Reflect on your personal growth as an artist this week. What did you learn about yourself?" revealed several recurring themes that

highlight the role of visual journaling in fostering self-awareness and artistic development. Using reflexive thematic analysis, initial codes were generated and subsequently organized into broader themes. Table 7 presents the summary of themes and representative codes.

Table 7
Themes and Codes Derived From Students' Reflections

Theme	Codes	Sample Description
Development of Self-Awareness	Recognizing strengths, identifying weaknesses, awareness of style	Students became more aware of their abilities and limitations
Skill Progression Awareness	Improved technique, better control, refinement over time	Students noticed technical improvement
Increased Confidence	Feeling more confident, reduced hesitation	Students expressed growing confidence in their work
Critical Reflection	Evaluating mistakes, comparing outputs	Students analyzed their performance
Self-Regulation Strategies	Planning improvements, adjusting techniques	Students described strategies for improvement
Emotional Engagement	Enjoyment, frustration, personal connection	Students reflected on emotional aspects of learning

The analysis revealed that students developed a strong sense of self-awareness through visual journaling. Many participants reflected on their strengths and weaknesses, indicating a deeper understanding of their artistic abilities. For instance, several entries described realizations about difficulties with specific techniques, such as shading or line control, while also identifying areas of improvement. This suggests that journaling facilitated metacognitive awareness, allowing students to critically assess their own learning.

Another prominent theme was awareness of skill progression, where students recognized improvements in their technical abilities over time. Reflections frequently highlighted increased control in executing techniques such as blending and hatching, demonstrating that journaling enabled students to monitor their development. This aligns with the study's objective of assessing skill progression, as students were not only developing skills but also becoming conscious of their improvement.

In addition, students expressed increased confidence in their artistic abilities. Many responses indicated reduced hesitation and greater comfort in handling materials, suggesting that repeated practice combined with reflection reinforced self-efficacy. This finding supports the idea that reflective practices contribute to confidence-building in studio-based learning environments. The theme of critical reflection also emerged strongly, as students evaluated their performance and identified areas for improvement. Entries often included comparisons between previous and current outputs, as well as reflections on what worked and what did not. This demonstrates the development of higher-order thinking skills, particularly analysis and evaluation.

Relatedly, students exhibited elements of self-regulation, as they articulated strategies for improving their work. These included adjusting techniques, practicing specific skills, and planning future actions. This indicates that visual journaling supported not only reflection but also goal-directed learning behaviors.

Finally, emotional engagement was evident in students' reflections, with many expressing enjoyment, frustration, and personal connection to their artistic process. These emotional responses highlight the holistic nature of learning in art education, where cognitive and affective dimensions are closely intertwined.

To enhance the credibility and validity of the results, data triangulation was employed by integrating findings from the rubric-based assessments, Likert-scale survey responses, and thematic analysis of students' journal entries. The convergence of these three data sources provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of visual journaling in supporting students' learning.

Across all data sources, there was strong evidence supporting skill progression in drawing techniques. The rubric assessments demonstrated improvements in students' technical proficiency, particularly in line control, value rendering, and application of media-specific techniques such as hatching, blending, and burnishing. These findings were reinforced by survey results (Table 3), where students reported high levels of agreement that visual journaling enhanced their skills across graphite, pen and ink, and colored pencil. Similarly, thematic analysis revealed the emergence of the theme "awareness of skill progression," with students explicitly recognizing improvements in their work over time. The alignment of performance-based evidence, self-reported perceptions, and reflective narratives confirms that visual journaling effectively supported technical development.

Triangulation of Findings

In relation to critical thinking and reflective practice, a high level of convergence was also observed. Rubric criteria on reflection, critical thinking, and self-regulation indicated that students were able to analyze their work, identify challenges, and articulate strategies for improvement. This was strongly supported by survey findings (Table 4), where students reported that journaling helped them evaluate materials, analyze strengths and weaknesses, and connect learning objectives to their work. Thematic analysis further substantiated these results through the themes of "critical reflection" and "self-regulation strategies," where students demonstrated the ability to evaluate their performance and plan subsequent actions. Together, these findings indicate that visual journaling fosters higher-order thinking processes, consistent with the study's second objective.

The triangulated data also highlight the role of visual journaling in promoting self-reflection, confidence, and engagement. Rubric results showed consistent documentation of reflective insights and increasing independence in the creative process. Survey responses (Table 5) indicated that students developed greater confidence, motivation, and engagement, with particularly high agreement on recognizing strengths and areas of confidence. These perceptions were further supported by qualitative themes such as "increased confidence" and "emotional engagement," where students expressed greater comfort and personal connection to their artistic practice. This convergence suggests that visual journaling contributes not only to cognitive and technical development but also to the affective dimensions of learning.

Finally, the perceived validity and usefulness of visual journaling were consistently affirmed across data sources. The rubric demonstrated that journals effectively captured both process and outcomes, aligning with outcomes-based assessment practices. Survey findings (Table 6) showed strong agreement that visual journaling is a valid method for assessing learning, useful for monitoring progress, and worthy of continued implementation. These perceptions were further reflected in qualitative responses, where students expressed appreciation for the structure and purpose of journaling in guiding their learning. Although minor variations were observed in survey responses, the overall pattern supports the acceptability and relevance of visual journaling as a pedagogical and assessment tool.

Overall, the triangulation of rubric assessments, survey data, and thematic analysis findings provides robust evidence that visual journaling is an effective strategy for supporting skill progression, higher-order thinking, and holistic student development. The consistency across multiple data sources strengthens the reliability of the findings and underscores the value of integrating reflective practice into studio-based art education.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of visual journaling as both a pedagogical and assessment tool in a Drawing Techniques course within the BFA Visual Communication program. Drawing upon rubric-based assessments, survey results, and thematic analysis of student journals, the findings provide strong evidence of the multifaceted benefits of integrating visual journaling into studio-based art education.

First, the study successfully assessed skill progression across graphite/charcoal, pen and ink, and colored pencil techniques, revealing consistent improvement in students' technical competencies. Rubric-based evaluations and student perceptions indicated that journaling facilitated the development of essential drawing skills, including line control, value rendering, texture, and media handling. More importantly, students demonstrated an increased ability to recognize and monitor their own progress over time, confirming that visual journals serve as effective tools for documenting and supporting technical growth.

Second, the findings demonstrated that visual journaling significantly fosters higher-order thinking skills, including critical analysis, evaluation, planning, and reflective practice. Students were able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, evaluate the effectiveness of tools and materials, and identify strategies for improvement—indicating strong engagement in metacognitive and self-regulatory processes. These outcomes align with the principles of outcomes-based education, which emphasize learner-centered approaches and the development of independent, reflective learners.

Third, the evaluation of student perceptions revealed that visual journaling is widely regarded as a valid and useful alternative to traditional summative assessments. The survey results showed high levels of agreement regarding its effectiveness in monitoring progress, supporting learning, and enhancing engagement. Students also expressed willingness to recommend visual journaling and support its continued use in future studio courses. While minor variations in responses suggest differences in individual preferences, the overall findings affirm the acceptability and relevance of journaling as an assessment strategy that captures both process and product.

Finally, the thematic analysis of journal entries identified recurring patterns that reflect learning trajectories, challenges, and the integration of theory and practice. Key themes included self-awareness, skill progression, confidence development, critical reflection, and self-regulation. These themes provide rich qualitative evidence that visual journaling supports not only technical skill development but also deeper cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. The alignment between these themes, rubric results, and survey findings further strengthens the credibility of the study through triangulation.

In conclusion, visual journaling emerges as a holistic and effective approach to learning and assessment in studio-based art education. It enables students to document their artistic processes, reflect critically on their experiences, and develop both technical and higher-order

thinking skills. By aligning with outcomes-based education frameworks, visual journaling supports continuous learning, self-directed growth, and meaningful engagement. The findings of this study underscore its potential as a sustainable and valuable practice in fine arts education, particularly in fostering reflective, skilled, and self-regulated learners.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The researcher declares that generative AI and AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, Grammarly and Microsoft Copilot were utilized to assist in correcting grammatical and spelling errors, as well as in rephrasing statements to improve clarity and accuracy. The use of these tools was limited to language refinement and did not involve the generation of original research content, data analysis, or interpretation of results.

In addition, Jamovi (Version 2.6) was used solely for the statistical analysis of quantitative data.

All outputs generated were reviewed, interpreted, and validated by the researcher. The researcher takes full responsibility for the content of this manuscript, ensuring its accuracy, originality, and adherence to ethical research standards.

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