

***Self-Reflection on Buddhist Dhamma Teachings through Acrylic Paintings and  
Video Art: Experiential Approach of Understanding***

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**Abstract**

This research aims to study the experiential method of learning and understanding of buddhist teachings on Truth or Dhamma through self-reflection of the artist creating acrylic paintings and video art. The qualitative research methodology was used in data collecting and analysis. The result of the research has shown that the experiential approach of artistic works could accelerate personal growth of the artist on buddhist teachings through self-reflection and self-healing at the deep level. Artistic practice could increase inner peace/meditative state of mind, leading to intuitive understanding of philosophical scriptural teachings. This suggests that one of the best ways to learn buddhist philosophical teachings, which generally explains the nature of mind and life, is through the experiential exploration within of one's own mind, that is, through artistic practice.

Keywords: experiential learning, buddhist dhamma teaching, acrylic painting, video art, self-reflection

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## Introduction

Amid our complex and chaotic society nowadays, one finds himself/herself looking for the way out, including religious path. Buddhist Dhamma/Truth is one of the path chosen by many to lead the way out of sufferings. However, traditional meditation practice could be discouraging to contemporary practitioners. The application of artistic creation could be an interesting innovative method to enhance concentration, mindfulness, and self-reflection similar to Buddhist traditional meditation practice. The experiential learning of Buddhist Dhamma/Truth through the use of acrylic painting and video art making is thus interesting to be explored.

## Objective

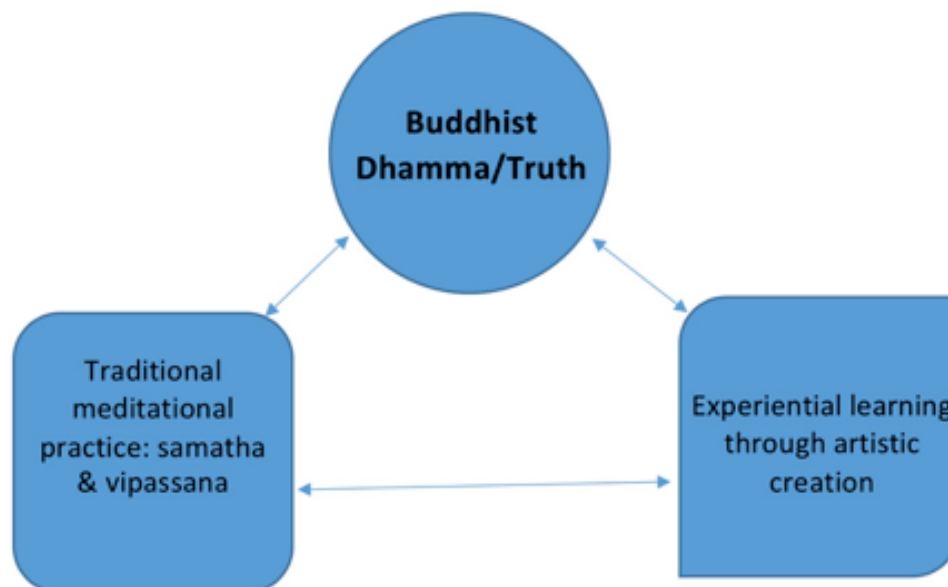
1. To study the path of meditation through experiential learning using acrylic painting and video art making to understand Buddhist Dhamma/Truth.

## Methodology

Qualitative methodology is used in data collecting and data analysis: journal writing and content analysis.

Self-exploration of the researcher as the creator of artistic medium of acrylic painting and video art is focused in this research, based on the concept of experiential learning and self-reflection.

## Conceptual Basis



From this diagram, Buddhist Dhamma/Truth could traditionally be understood through the practice of Samatha, that is, concentration meditation for inner peace and mind centering, and Vipassana or insight meditation, that is, reflective observation of intrinsic Truth of nature, basically based on the power of the concentrated, peaceful state of mind gained from Samatha practice.

However, by using experiential learning method through artistic creativity like acrylic painting and video art, one could possibly understand the deep meaning of Buddhist Dhamma/Truth as well, through the potential of concentration practice and reflective observation of the process of artistic creation.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Experiential learning: tacit learning**

1.1. The explicit and tacit knowledge process: Ikujiro Nonaka & Hirotaka Takeuchi  
The internalization process is the process of understanding and absorbing explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge of individuals. The internalization process is basically the experiential process, through one's own practice/action, in real situation or simulating situation. This would provide the opportunity for one to directly experience and understand the actual concept and methods. This process is the process of transferring explicit knowledge to other individuals or groups (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

1.2. The process of learning by doing: Michael Polanyi  
Polanyi states that most of our knowledge is tacit knowledge. He explains, 'We can know more than we can tell'. While explicit knowledge could be transfer through systematic language, tacit knowledge could only be learnt through one method, that is, giving one the opportunity to teach oneself. Thus, Polanyi explains human learning process that we learn through bringing ourselves into relation with the object learnt, in the manner of 'indwelling'. (Polanyi, 1969).

### **2. Buddhist meditation practice: samatha and vipassana**

2.1. Samatha concentration meditation for inner peace and centering of the mind.

2.2. Vipassana: insight meditation, the reflective observation of intrinsic Truth of nature, basically based on the power of the concentrated, peaceful state of mind gained from Samatha practice.

## **Research Results**

The results could be divided into 2 parts:

1. Acrylic painting
2. Video art

## 1. Acrylic Painting

1.1. Concentration, mind centering practice while painting : acrylic colour is water-based, requiring much concentration and mindfulness to control the smoothness of colours blending.

1.2. The philosophical content of the paintings required inner contemplation.

The examples of acrylic paintings explored in this research are as following:



- Sea of interconnectedness: the inseparable nature of the wave (ego) and the ocean (wholeness)



- The chain of karma(action): the tie of attachment



- Sea of interconnectedness: we are the inseparable part of the whole, the elements in nature.



- The cycle of Anicca: the impermanent nature of Nature.



- Seed/chain of karma: the fruits of action

## 2. Video Art

2.1. Concentration, mind centering practice while creating. Video art is the mixture of art forms by nature: film, music, photography, and performing arts. This blending of different artistic forms required detailed concentration.

2.2. The philosophical content of the video art required inner contemplation.

Themes explored in video art creation in this research are as following:

- The chain of Karma: the effect of karma or our action, especially with attachment.
- Sea of interconnectedness
- The cycle of Anicca: the impermanence nature of nature
- The seed/chain of Karma

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

- Acrylic painting and video art making are the art forms conducive to building mind concentration and mindfulness. They could be used as the medium for Samatha meditation: Buddhist meditation practice for centering the mind.
- The philosophical content of this artistic practice is based on Buddhist Dhamma/Truth, that is, the law of karma(action), the interconnectedness of all things, and Anicca (the impermanent nature of Nature). The creation of the art thus required contemplation and self-reflection on the subjects explored. This could be comparable to Vipassana meditation: Buddhist insight meditation practice of reflective observation of the intrinsic Truth of nature, basically based on the power of the concentrated, peaceful state of mind gained from Samatha practice.
- This experiential learning approach of Buddhist Dhamma/Truth through artistic creation of acrylic painting and video art, could thus be an innovative path towards the understanding of Buddhist Dhamma/Truth besides the traditional meditation practice.

## References

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