



Utrecht Art Supplies Studio Craft: Productivity Secrets



"The Artist's Studio" Pierre Subleyras, 1740s

Ever wonder why some artists seem to flood their studio with an endless torrent of creativity, while others struggle to finish one difficult piece? It's probably not for lack of effort or hours spent. Simply put, some artists adopt an approach that helps them make the most of every hour at the easel, while others sabotage their own productivity through frustrating habits they probably don't even realize they have.

Show more of what you make

You're probably more productive than you realize. Most artists make many more paintings than they actually release. Thomas Hart Benton's wife used to sneak into her husband's studio at night to take finished paintings to the dealer because the artist was so reluctant to

show them. If you find yourself nervous about showing your work, get the advice of someone you trust about which pictures are ready to exhibit. Be prepared to take a deep breath and let them go.

Avoid overworking a piece

If you tend to overwork your paintings, there might be 5 or 10 great pictures hidden under the final image on top. Be honest with yourself when you're just picking at a finished painting when you should be starting a new one.

Work on several at once

Working on a number of pieces in parallel is a great way to increase your studio output. Work up 3 or 4 at a time, and move from one to another according to whatever schedule makes sense for you. Set a time limit for each piece, or just switch whenever you get stuck or the surface gets too saturated with paint. Before you know it, you'll have an impressive suite of new works to show!

Keep a sketchbook

Highly productive artists make a habit of keeping a sketchbook full of concepts, sketches and notes that can form the basis for major works. Keep your sketchbook handy, because you'll never remember that great idea by the time you finally get to the studio.

Have a plan that includes an end game

Making art doesn't always have to be a free-form odyssey. An important part of productivity for an artist is having a plan to achieve your creative objectives, and knowing when you've reached them.

If you want to impose more structure on how you create your work, a focus on materials and technique is a good place to start. Sequence of application and the natural behavior of the materials can guide you toward an organized process that will make it possible to move naturally from one work to the next.

Accept the ebb and flow

It's a fact that not every day in the studio is going to result in a masterpiece- it just isn't. Sometimes you can push through a stalled session, but when it's just not happening, there's no sense in ruining a painting by working in a state of frustration. For those days, focus on studio maintenance: stretch canvases, clean your palette, take an inventory of colors. Sometimes just cleaning your studio is all it takes to come back fresh the next day.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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