

Creative Arts 3

Body of Work



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Cover image: Creative Arts student, Christine Gutsell

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Before you start

Welcome to *Creative Arts 3: Body of Work*. You'll have worked hard through the Creative Arts degree pathway to reach this point and along your journey you'll have developed skills and understanding within two distinct creative areas. During this final phase of your studies, you'll bring together these two areas of creativity to create one body of work. You'll have the opportunity to tailor your own projects, working almost independently, with the help and guidance of a specialised tutor.

Our aim is to boost your understanding of your creative practice and enhance the ways in which your creative activity can manifest itself in the development of a body of work. You'll need to develop a strong personal voice that will help you to confidently define your creative activity. As you begin to make your work, whatever form that takes, you'll need to think about what direction it's taking you in and how it speaks to you and the audience you intend it for.

How will you develop a body of work from two distinct creative areas?

The key here is to think about your area of research and how you'll interpret this using your chosen skills. You don't have to create a practice that incorporates two skills at the same time (although this is acceptable if you choose to do so) but rather consider the ways in which you can use your two creative areas to express your ideas. This approach will develop a strong working method that will allow your two practices to respond to each other as your work builds.

By this stage in your degree pathway you'll have had plenty of practice in writing a reflective commentary to assess your work, and contextualise your ideas in the current creative sphere, through the production of learning logs, writing diaries and essays, often alongside the creation of your practical work. We therefore ask you to start your *Research* course at the same time as this one. Our intention is for your research to fuel your creative ideas, and vice versa, and give you a strong foundation for your two creative areas to build on.

Structure your thinking!

To help focus your ideas for the development of your creative practice we'd like you to consider a theme of significant topical importance using historical and contemporary sources as a starting point. Our aim here is to focus your attention towards a specific idea that you can respond to whilst allowing you the freedom to express your ideas within your creative activity. It is important for you to remember that making a connection with a theme that resonates with you will help you to free up your creative activities. The notion of a theme of significant topical importance is explained in more detail in Part One.

The amount of time you take to produce your body of work will be longer than anything you've done at Level 2. It may be a new experience for you to develop one project over a sustained period and at times the challenges you face may seem daunting. But as you develop your initial ideas, you'll go to places you won't have thought of when you were focusing your efforts on a single assignment. This richness will hopefully be an enjoyable and deepening experience for you as well as having a positive impact on your end result. So try not to hold exact views of what your creative work will look like at the end of Assignment Five. That is to miss the point of the creative process that you're about to undertake. Develop your ideas, use them to motivate you, but don't let them rule you. Nothing is set in stone. Your work should evolve as you gain more confidence and take greater creative risks, so that your final body of work surprises even you.

Before starting

Make sure you've received all of the Level 3 course materials, including those for *Research* and *Sustaining Your Practice*. Have a look through them all because, as we've already pointed out, there will be crossovers between the courses and points of reference that you'll be asked to go to at various stages in your studies. Pay particular attention to the overall plan of the course structure at the beginning of each course and familiarise yourself with it so that you can begin to plan out your time management. Remember that you have a total of four years to complete your body of creative work, the 5,000-word research essay and, finally, your consideration of how you'll present and communicate your work to the public.

You'll be assigned two relevant specialised tutors – one for *Body of Work*, one for *Research* – both of whom will communicate with you prior to commencing your courses. One of these tutors will then go on to tutor you on the final stage of your studies for the course *Sustaining Your Practice*.

We are here to guide you through your exciting creative journey. You'll need to heighten your sense of awareness of the key concepts and skills that will form the backbone of your work. Use your intuition, passion, gut instinct and guile to guide you through this process of discovery. There will be difficult moments and challenges for you to overcome. During these times, maintain your focus on your line of inquiry and give yourself room to stand back from your work. Be kind to the work you produce and yourself, and you will build confidence in your creative output.

Course aims and outcomes

The aims of this course are to:

- support you to develop your understanding of your combined creative arts activity
- help you to identify your distinctive creative arts voice
- examine a theme of significant topical importance within your creative practice
- further develop your technical skills using combined approaches relevant to your practice
- extend your critical, evaluative and reflective skills.

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- show a sophisticated critical and contextual understanding of your subjects
- show proficiency in using your personal creative language to communicate ideas effectively
- demonstrate advanced use of analysis and creative thinking in interpreting and responding to self-initiated projects
- develop ideas through to a high level of creative and technically proficient outcomes
- critically review your own work and evaluate it against desired outcomes.

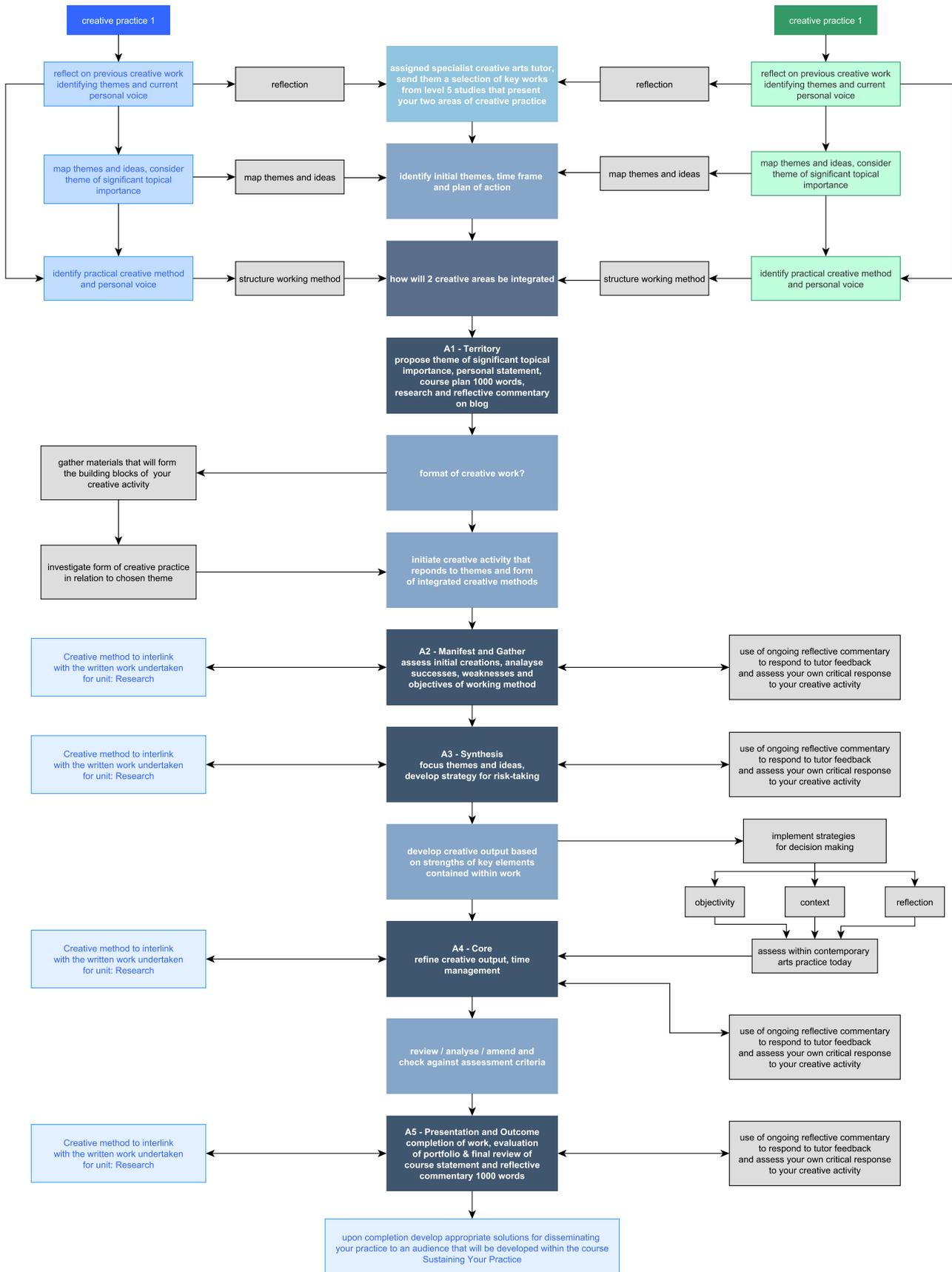
Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for *Body of Work* are listed below. If you're going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of them. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignments to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria; in other words, do a self-assessment, and see how you think you would do. Note down your findings for each assignment you've completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses and taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

- **Demonstration of technical and visual skills** – Materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills (30%).
- **Quality of outcome** – Content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas (20%).
- **Demonstration of creativity** – Imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice (30%).
- **Context** – Reflection, research, critical thinking (20%).

The course at a glance

Creative Arts Body of Work Overall Plan April 2015



Initial tutor meeting

Prior to commencing any of the OCA Level 3 (HE6) courses you'll be assigned a tutoring team based on your previous creative areas and any recommendations that you've put forward to the OCA, in order to give you the best combination of tutors for your studies. The next step is to have a preparatory meeting with your tutor for this course over Google Chat or equivalent online face-to-face chat (e.g. Skype). This will help you to answer any early questions about the course and get you going in the right direction.

For this initial meeting please prepare the following and email it to your tutor:

- a selection of six key works from OCA Levels 1 and 2 studies, three from each of your two areas of creative practice – at least one of these should be a piece of writing
- your thoughts about how you might approach integrating these two areas and a brief statement of intent with associated images
- a synopsis of your ambitions for your final level of studies and beyond – this should be an update of your previous introductions to tutors
- your initial ideas about your theme of significant topical importance (see Part One).

Your tutor will discuss with you how they want you to submit your assignments.

Important note

You'll be responsible for managing your own deadlines. Your tutor will be working with a range of students from different levels so it's important that you stick to agreed hand-in dates for work. Your tutor can't guarantee to get feedback to you within two weeks if your work is late. If you think you're likely to miss an agreed deadline, let your tutor know as soon as possible so that you can negotiate a new hand-in date; don't leave it to the last minute to let your tutor know there's a problem.

Part One: Territory

Your first steps into the course will be to start thinking about your working method and whether or not you'll attempt to combine your creative practice into one art form or continue with two practices that will form one body of work. You'll consider your theme of significant topical importance and use 'mapping' methods to help you find and home in on your creative concepts. You'll put together a work plan to help you structure your working method. Finally, you'll write your initial personal statement outlining your creative method and personal voice. Nothing is set in stone at this stage: you'll amend all of these elements at various stages throughout the course.

You'll put all this together in an initial project proposal of at least 1,000 words consisting of: an outline of your theme of significant topical importance (150 words), your work plan (300 words), your personal statement (300 words) and a reflective commentary (of whatever length seems appropriate to express your ideas).

Part Two: Gather and manifest

This is where you'll respond to your tutor's feedback and assess at an early stage the successes and potential issues that might occur in your working method and how you can best move forward. You'll also need to start gathering materials to fuel your working method; these might be visual, physical or conceptual in nature. You'll then link your creative activity with the themes and ideas you're developing in the *Research* course.

Part Three: Synthesis

Part Three looks at focusing your themes and ideas and challenging your working method. You'll be encouraged to take risks and explore creative avenues in response to your tutor's carefully considered feedback. At this pivotal point in the course you'll need to make some confident decisions regarding your creative direction in order to focus your creative activity for the final leg of the course.

Part Four: Core

At this point in the course you'll be looking for your work to come together and refining your creative output. The focus here is on your ambitions for the course and making sure you're on course to meet them. You'll also need to be aware of your amended work plan and make sure you're on track with your timescales.

Part Five: Presentation and outcome

In Part Five, you'll complete and present a final portfolio of carefully selected work together with an introduction and an evaluation; this portfolio will form the basis of your presentation to an audience in *Sustaining Your Practice*.

Expectations at Level 3 (HE6)

The course is designed to take around 400 hours to complete. At this level of study, though, you may find that you have to go over and above the suggested time to achieve the outcomes you're aiming for. Progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 will be a challenge and you'll be expected to raise the level of the work you produce and demonstrate professionalism in what you do. We expect you to demonstrate a thoroughness and in-depth knowledge and ability and be able to apply this new learning at an advanced level. With the support of your tutor, you'll be setting your own project proposal so you'll define your own direction and processes over the duration of the course. At this level, though, there's a particular emphasis on building and taking ownership of your own work as well as the choice of working methods. For this reason, this course guide is much smaller than those you've been used to at Levels 1 and 2. At Level 3, you don't need a course guide to tell you in step-by-step detail what to do: you'll decide this for yourself with your tutor's specialised help.

In preparation you'll need...

Notebooks Write down your ideas every day. Use your notebooks as a place to filter your thinking so that you can extract key nuggets of inspiration that may contribute towards your direction and your personal creative voice. This is personal and not for your presented learning log or public blog.

Time Don't rush the process. Give yourself time to mature and learn more about your creative activity and the ideas you want to explore and create.

Space Finding a space for working and thinking is extremely important for focusing your mind and creative output. Remember to turn off all distractions like mobile phones and the internet when you enter your creative space. Look also to find spaces in the outside world that can help you explore your creative ambitions – a museum, a local library or simply a café where you can sit and watch the world go by.

Finally, remember some of the key research tools that have helped you link up with the creative arts world and continue to maintain your connection with the contemporary sphere of your working practice: journals, exhibitions, performances, lectures, seminars, film, etc. Use your learning log, blog, sketchbooks, writing diary to reflectively engage with this world.

Immerse yourself and enjoy the process!

Creative Arts 3

Part one

Territory



Carol Smith, OCA student (paint and pen and ink)

Introduction

We live in a time I think not of mainstream, but of many streams, or even, if you insist, upon a river of time, that we have come to delta, maybe even beyond delta to an ocean which is going back to the skies.

(John Cage)

What kind of creative artist are you? Do you combine the words on the page with the brush on the canvas? Are you a musician interested in integrating your sounds with your ideas for a film? Do you make beautiful textiles as well as applying yourself to the rigours of photography? In Part One you'll try and answer this question with the aim of setting out on your way to creating your body of work.

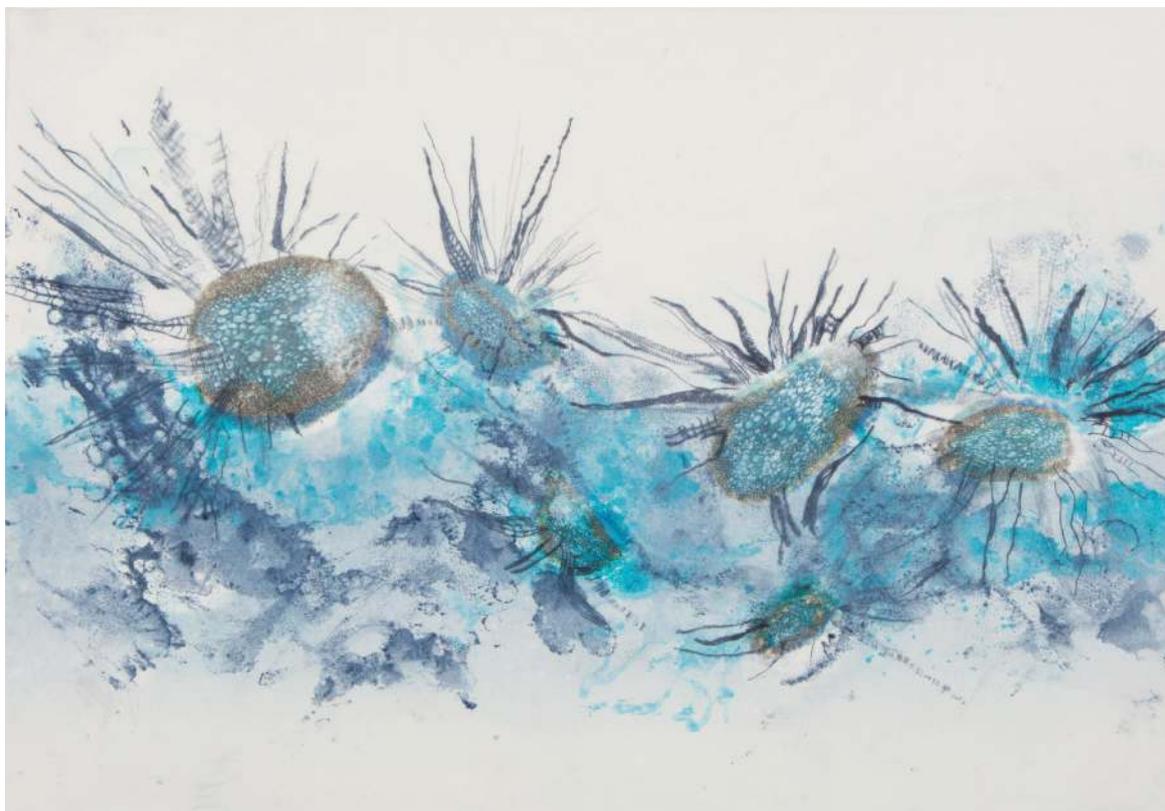
Part One looks at answering the fundamental question of how are you're going to approach this course in terms of both your working method and your chosen theme of significant topical importance. You should work on this course alongside the *Research* course and in so doing you should notice points along the way where the two courses cross over and feed into each other. Our aim is for your research to critically reinforce your body of creative work and vice versa.

These initial three sections will set your mind thinking about how you'll bring your two creative areas together and how you'll apply them to your theme of significant topical importance. By this we mean that we would like you to consider the time we live in (sometimes referred to as the human epoch). The way that contemporary life is evolving and affecting us presents many perspectives for us to explore. Look around at the way your life is affected by political, economic, scientific, technological, environmental and cultural changes on both a local and global level. Our aim is for you to consider the importance of something significant that is happening in contemporary life and use this to fuel your theme, which in turn will focus and create a point of view for your combined creative activity.

Here are some examples of contemporary creative artists using themes to address topics of significant importance to them:

- **Theaster Gates** explores themes of race and history through sculpture, installation, drawings and performance. His work aims to respond to the deterioration of his home town through the assembly of these works and its use as a force for social change.
- **Doug Burton** considers the theme of humanity at the end of time, perceiving the geological materiality of our civilisation as a fragment to be extracted and questioned in relation to our existence.
- **Carol Smith** explores a theme of consciousness in relation to her creative activity and considers the work being undertaken in theoretical physics, especially in relation to the idea of creation that she is developing in her critical research and printmaking.
- **David Batchelor** gathers up the by-products and left-overs from our consumerist world to act as starting points for his structural creations. His significant thematic book *Chromophobia* (2000) assesses societies' view of the new industrialised colour in our material world and allows this research to reflect back into his creative practice.

Carefully chosen, your theme of significant topical importance should provide you with a vehicle for integrating your two subject areas and also the work you're doing in the *Research* course. Take a look at some of the titles in the reading list at the end of this course guide if you're stuck for ideas.



Carol Smith, OCA student (monoprint)

Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on your previous work in relation to your two practical creative areas.

You may already have an idea of how you'll combine your two creative practices or you may be wondering how on earth you're going to approach this task. This exercise will help you assess your creative outcomes to date and identify the strengths and weaknesses you've shown at OCA Levels 1 and 2. By working through this exercise you should be able to identify your key areas of interest and how you've applied them to your creative practices up to now. You can then start to consider how you might integrate these two practices in the creation of a body of work.

1. Identify relationships between your two creative activities.

To begin with, take a sample of your strongest work from Levels 1 and 2 – around six pieces each from your two creative areas. Give yourself plenty of room to set your work out; make sure there is a clear division between the two creative areas. Can you begin to see relationships between your two distinctive activities? Look for common themes that may not have been apparent to you at the time but may now seem more evident as you stand back from your work. At this stage also begin to think about how you might either combine these two activities or work with them separately to create one body of work.

If you're struggling to uncover the relationships within your interdisciplinary work, try to answer the following questions:

- Is there a specific aspect of the creative arts that inspires you?
- Are there any creative artists working in this field that you've researched to date that might help to inspire you? Look back over your learning logs and research to find a particular painting, performance, design, writer, etc. that might unlock a link between you and your creative output.

2. Reflect on your creative output to identify your personal creative voice.

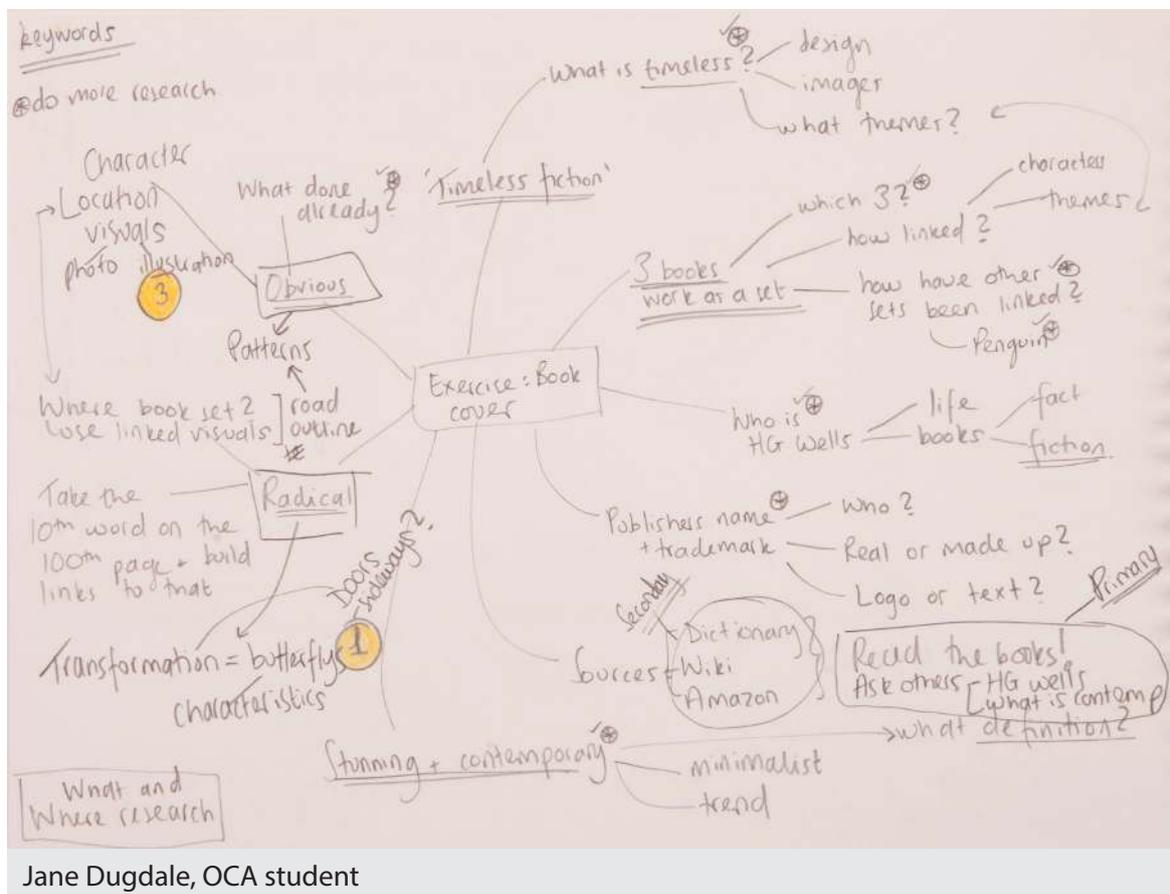
Now you've spent some time thinking about your previous work, start to focus on aspects that you might be able to develop into your personal creative voice. You should be familiar with writing reflective commentaries from your previous studies. To begin with, look, listen or read your selected work; begin to write down some notes, or speak into a camera or audio recorder. Try to engage with the aspects of your creative work that seem to have an original character, perhaps something identified as particularly successful by you or a previous tutor. Look for work that might share a common theme or reflect on an aspect of research that proved a potentially fruitful area. Finally, reflect on the skills and techniques you've acquired and think about how you might use them creatively to enhance the strengths of your working practice.

Bring your notes together into a reflective commentary in your learning log or blog. Add images and/or audio or written extracts as reference points for your commentary. You can use any medium you wish to create this reflective commentary: digital slideshow, blog, written, film, etc. This reflective commentary will form part of your submission for Assignment One. We deliberately haven't set a word limit for the reflective commentaries you'll write in this course because we want you to feel free to express your ideas. Your tutor will let you know if they feel you're writing too much or too little.

Theme and work plan

Now consider your theme of significant topical importance (your 'theme') and how this will relate to your parallel work in the *Research* course. You should also develop a timescale for your work and develop this into a provisional work plan. Your theme and your work plan will be the main drivers for your creative work on this course.

1. Create a mind map or concept map to investigate and develop the ideas emerging from your reflections so far. Refer to Part One of the *Research* course for information on how to do this. You're free to do any type of mapping exercise you wish. You can make it as elaborate and creative as you want – just so long as you get all those ideas bouncing around inside your head out into the open. You have a lot to wrestle with at this early stage of the course and this mapping exercise is an excellent way for you to lay out all your thoughts and then cut away and focus in on your key theme of significant topical importance, as well as seeing how your ideas connect with your combined creative activity.



Jane Dugdale, OCA student

2. Form a work plan setting out your timescales and targets to meet. You may have already formed a work plan for the *Research* course – or be in the process of considering how you’re going to manage your time for each of these courses. We recommend that you take your plans and look at them together. Try to pace yourself and move along the two courses at an even pace, rather than working intensively on one and then swapping to the other. This more measured way of working will allow your research and creative practice to feed off each other. At this stage of the course we don’t expect you to create a finalised plan that you’ll rigidly stick to; rather, think of it as a structured brief that will evolve as your ideas and working method develop. Carefully consider what you think is realistically achievable in the time you have. You’ll have completed a number of courses with the OCA so you should be aware of how your creative work fits in with your day-to-day activities. Try to give yourself realistic goals in your work plan, but also bear in mind that this is your final level of study on the way to completing your degree, so you should aim to be ambitious with your expected outcomes. From the reflection and mapping exercises you’ve done so far, you should be in a position to give yourself some headings to work from and expand upon within your areas of interest.

Remember that the work you’re doing in the *Research* course should give you a strong critical underpinning for your subject area. You should develop your research hand in hand with the creation of your body of work in order to reap the benefits in your creative activity (and vice versa).

Personal statement and structuring your working method

Your next task is to identify your creative method and consider how your choice of theme will develop your personal voice.

Take a moment to look back at your work as you were asked to do at the beginning of Part One. You should now have a better idea of how your two creative practices will interrelate. In order for you to structure your working method you now need to think about how your two creative practices will respond to your theme of significant topical importance. Our aim is for you to balance your time with both practices and allow one to inform the other in the creation of your work. Your initial chat with your specialist tutor should have helped you define your approach at an early stage, but if not, consider the following:

- What form would you like your creative output to take?
- How does your theme impact upon your working method?
- Which contemporary creative artists influence you? This could be a creative writer who illustrates (Audrey Niffenegger), a sculptor who use textiles (Richard Tuttle), a photographer who incorporates painterly abstraction (Wolfgang Tillmans), etc.

Write down your thoughts. Begin to form a structure from which to develop your working method and integrate this writing into your personal statement.

Your personal statement for *Body of Work* should set out your theme of significant topical importance and working method in a coherent manner; it will eventually form the front page of the presentation of your work. Imagine that someone is coming to look at your work for the first time. How would you explain your theme and your interdisciplinary practice to them? Your personal statement should cut to the heart of your practice and ideas. Nothing is set in stone at this stage and you'll make adjustments to your statement at various stages throughout the course. For now, though, be relaxed, write naturally and concisely, and communicate what you've learnt from Part One so far.

Your personal statement should include the following information and should be around 300 words in length:

- your defined approach to integrating your two creative areas
- your theme of significant topical importance
- how your creative method will respond to your theme of significant topical importance
- the form your body of work will take
- any influences from creative practitioners that inspire you.

Assignment one

Send to your tutor an initial project proposal, to include:

- your reflective commentary
- a clear indication of how you'll integrate your two creative practices into your body of work
- an outline of your theme of significant topical importance, linked to the *Research* course (150 words)
- a work plan setting out your timescales for completing work (300 words)
- your initial personal statement (300 words)
- a reference to your mind/concept map – this can be photographic or physical.

Once you've completed all the elements for Assignment One, save them as Word documents or as PDF files. Provided you've pre-booked the hand-in date with your tutor, you can now submit it. Please find out from your tutor how they would like to receive your files as they may want them posted and emailed, or added to your blog.

Please don't email large files to your tutor. PDFs are a good format as you can reduce the size of the files. Provided your hand-in date has been pre-booked with your tutor, and you have met the deadline, your tutor will aim to give you your feedback within two weeks.

Reflection

Check your work against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide before you send it to your tutor and make some notes about how well you believe your work meets each criterion.

Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you've done and why as this will demonstrate responsiveness and learning to the course assessors.