

## Textiles 1

# Ideas and Processes



Open College of the Arts  
Michael Young Arts Centre  
Redbrook Business Park  
Wilthorpe Road  
Barnsley S75 1JN

0800 731 2116  
[enquiries@oca.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@oca.ac.uk)  
[weareoca.com](http://weareoca.com)  
[oca.ac.uk](http://oca.ac.uk)

Registered charity number: 327446  
OCA is a company limited by guarantee and  
registered in England under number 2125674.

Cover image: Sandra Flower, *Knitted broom*  
Course written by Sandra Flower

Copyright OCA: 2014

Document Control Number: TX4IAP\_260916

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise - without prior permission of the publisher (Open College of the Arts)

# Contents

<b>Before you start</b>	4
<b>Part one Ideas</b>	
Project 1 Initiating ideas	14
Assignment one	32
<b>Part two Research</b>	
Introduction	34
Project 2 Visual research	38
Assignment two	57
<b>Part three Research and practice</b>	
Introduction	60
Project 3 Critical reflection	62
Project 4 Exploring textile processes	64
Assignment three	83
<b>Part four Personal research methodology</b>	
Introduction	86
Project 5 Context	88
Project 6 Context	92
Project 7 Critical essay	95
Assignment four	99
<b>Part five Synthesis</b>	
Introduction	102
Project 8 Review and refine	103
Assignment five	106

## Before you start

### *How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?*

(E.M. Forster)

Welcome to *Textiles 1: Ideas and Processes*. As the title of the course suggests, this is a course about ideas. Where do they come from? What processes do they suggest? How can you translate an idea into a piece of textile work?

Ideas can come from a broad range of stimuli. In this course, you'll investigate the development of ideas into textile pieces in two main ways. You'll look at the work of other artists and designers to see where their ideas and themes come from and how they use these to stimulate, promote and develop new work. You'll also develop work in response to some different themes suggested by an interview with the artist Edmund de Waal. Some of these themes may be new to you; so may some of the working practices they suggest. You'll draw these two strands together in a critical essay that explores how the work and research processes of other contemporary visual artists relate to and influence your practice.

Later in the course, you'll be introduced to a personal research methodology that encourages you to apply critical thinking techniques to your practice and use your findings to refine and develop your work. You'll apply this to the work you've done earlier in the course to produce a final synthesised collection of textile samples that demonstrates how your research has informed the development of – and new approaches to – your own practice, as well as demonstrating your understanding of where your work sits in relation to contemporary textile practice.

If you've previously completed Level 1 courses *A Textile Vocabulary* and *Mixed Media Textiles*, we expect to see you build on the technical and thinking skills you developed on these courses to help you get the most out of this course.



Howard Hodgkin, *Summer*, 1997

## Course aims and learning outcomes

Take a moment to read the aims and learning outcomes for the course.

The course aims to help you to:

- understand the creative process, using research to broaden your understanding and knowledge
- explore a range of approaches to drawing and mark-making to realise ideas and investigate textile techniques that generate texture, tone, composition and line
- establish basic skills in research, analysis and critical writing
- develop skills in recording and evaluating your personal progress.

On successful completion of the course, you'll be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of a broad spectrum of textile techniques to inspire creativity
- demonstrate skills in generating ideas through drawing and mark-making and textile techniques that illustrate a range of texture, tone, composition and line
- demonstrate basic skills in research, analysis and critical writing
- reflect and analyse your own personal development and creativity.

This Level 1 course represents 400 hours of learning time. Allow around 20% of this time for reflection and keeping your learning log or blog (see below). The course is divided into five parts, each of which builds upon the previous part and requires approximately 80 hours of study. The course should take about a year to complete if you spend around eight hours each week on it.

As with all OCA courses, these course materials are intended to be used flexibly but do keep your tutor fully informed about your progress. You'll need to allow extra time if you decide to have your work formally assessed.

### Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria listed below are central to the assessment process for this course. If you're intending to have your work assessed at the end of the course to gain formal credits towards a degree, please ensure that you refer back to these criteria on a regular basis to make sure that you meet each criterion and that you can articulate where, and how, you meet them.

You'll send your work to your tutor for review on completion of each assignment. Before submitting your assignment, allow yourself time to do a self-assessment in which you assess your work in relation to each of the assessment criteria, to see how you think you would do. Note down your findings in your learning log; this will be useful for your tutor to see and will help you to prepare for assessment. This is an important part of the learning process. As well as identifying your strengths and weaknesses, you should also highlight any areas or skills that you've worked hard to improve, stating how you've improved and whether there is still a need for further development. You should realise that this process is about much more than simply ticking boxes. Your reflective thinking and critical analysis on this course will provide the assessors with evidence of the academic thinking that is essential to successful completion of the degree programme.

It is important that you allow time to familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria, as they will be referred to throughout the course and in feedback from your tutor.

Criterion	Weighting
<b>Demonstration of technical and visual skills:</b> Materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.	40%
<b>Quality of outcome:</b> Content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts and communication of ideas.	20%
<b>Demonstration of creativity:</b> Imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice.	20%
<b>Context:</b> Reflection, research and critical thinking.	20%

## Your tutor

Before starting the course, introduce yourself to your tutor by writing a short introductory email telling them about your previous experience of working with textiles, and any other courses you've studied. You should also tell them your reasons for starting this course and what you hope to achieve from it. You might want to include information about any other interests and experiences as this will help your tutor get to know a little bit more about you. Which contemporary artists and designers excite you the most? What materials and processes are you particularly drawn to?

At each assignment point you'll send your work to your tutor for review and receive detailed feedback on your work and your progress. This will be instrumental in helping you to improve your skills and move forward. You're encouraged to reflect on your tutor feedback and, where appropriate, to revisit some of the exercises and make adjustments in response to your tutor's comments. This will demonstrate your responsiveness, and your learning, to the course assessors which will help you to improve your final mark. If you are unclear, or would like clarification about any aspect of your feedback, do send your tutor a short email and they will be happy to help.

Label the work you send to your tutor carefully and present it in the correct order so that it is easy for your tutor to navigate. You're encouraged to work on a variety of different scales. If any of your work is too large to post you should record it through good-quality photographs in your learning log. Please photograph the work as professionally as you can; aim to show both the shape and structure of the whole work, as well any small details. Photograph work against a plain white background, to show it to best advantage. There is more detailed information about how to prepare your work for feedback at the end of Part One.

Your tutor is your main point of contact for support, and information relating to your progress, throughout the course. Your tutor is supported by the Course Support Advisors, who are happy to answer any questions relating to the course documentation or OCA systems 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. For more information about the tuition system and the Course Support Advisors please refer to your Student Handbook.

## **The student website**

The OCA student website will be a key resource for you, so before starting the course do allow yourself time to familiarise yourself with it. Note also the online forums where you can meet other OCA students, see examples of other people's work, share ideas and follow or take part in wide-ranging discussions.

If you're new to studying with OCA we suggest that you work through the free online induction course, *An Introduction to Studying in HE*, before you start work on this course. You can find this on the OCA student website.

## **Your learning log/blog**

Your learning log or blog (which we will refer to as the 'learning log' from now on for ease of reference) is the record of your journey through the course and forms an integral element of every OCA course. This is where you visually document your research and experimentation, and continually reflect on the development of your work and your learning. You should document your creative decision-making process in your learning log throughout this course. This process will help you to develop your critical skills and enable you to make clear links between your own work and that of other contemporary visual artists. Your learning log is also the place where you collate your written and visual research, and record your response to gallery and museum visits.

Setting up a blog is free and can be done through websites such as Tumblr or Wordpress. This format is an effective way to visually document your work and make connections between your work and that of other contemporary artists. Alternatively you can keep your learning log in a notebook or file; select whatever format suits your way of working. The most effective learning logs will be focused and analytical and will contain good-quality visual images and succinct annotation describing what you've achieved. Your learning log will be a useful reference that you can return to again and again as you progress through the degree programme as many of the themes will be revisited in later courses.

You'll find study guides to setting up learning logs and blogs on the student website.

You'll generate a wide range of written and visual research during this course. Your learning log will have three main strands:

1. Practical research and the development of processes, i.e. your practical work, including drawings and samples.
2. Critical analysis – the evaluation of your work and that of other practitioners.
3. Contextual research – your research into the work of other artists/designers.

These three areas feed off each other in a continuous process of development; for example, your research may stimulate new practical work which in turn suggests further research, and so on. Organise your learning log in the way that works best for you, but make sure that it is easy to navigate and that you have made the necessary links between the different elements contained within it. You may need to spend some time thinking about how best to do this.

## Research

At key points in this course we'll ask you to examine the work of relevant artists and designers and encourage you to make links between their work and ideas and your own. As well as undertaking the specified research tasks you should also do your own research. Independent research into the work of other relevant artists and designers is an integral part of any creative arts degree course, so aim to adopt an inquisitive and proactive approach towards learning more. As well as broadening your knowledge of your subject area, your research will inspire you and help you to generate a wide range of ideas for your practical work.

Collect research notes and information from a wide range of different sources: museum and gallery visits, books, magazines, TV programmes, podcasts, websites, etc. Use the reading list at the end of this course guide as a starting point. Don't ignore other useful sources of information such as ideas and images from different disciplines, as this can also be a valuable stimulus to the imagination. Record and reflect on your research in your learning log.

Always reference your research findings accurately so you know where the idea, image or information came from. It is important to make a note of the author and source of any information you record, including visual imagery as well as found quotes, ideas and other text. This is good academic practice. When the course assessors look at your sketchbook and learning log/blog they will know which ideas are your original ideas/original imagery and which have been created by others. It's also a good research habit for you, as you never know when you might want to find that article, book, image or magazine again. Read the OCA guide to academic referencing for more information. You'll find this on the student website.

Annotate all the research information you collect along with all your creative work so that there are clear links between all areas of your practice – samples, sketchbooks, learning log – and your work is easy for your tutor to navigate. This will also be helpful to you when you come to write your critical essay in Part Four.

## Sketchbooks

A sketchbook should be full of rich and exciting raw material that reveals your personal interests, ideas and self-expression. It's a place for activities that help you to record, think, experiment and reflect. Your sketchbook, along with your learning log, can become your most valuable resource.

Interpret the word 'sketchbook' as broadly as you can. Carry out observational drawing, collage, stitch and mixed-media work using a wide range of media and materials. Use paper in a range of sizes, colours and textures and have a roll of wallpaper liner to hand for larger-scale work. Practise using techniques like blind continuous line drawing, using the less dominant hand, using an extended arm or stick, or working with splashes and dribbles. Your sketchbook work should be exciting, lively, expressive and added to regularly.

You may find it useful to have both A3 and A5 sketchbooks. Whilst A3 is ideal for working at home, an A5 sketchbook is easily portable as a visual notebook to record objects, colours, images, thoughts, etc. on the train, in the gym, or anywhere else, on a day-to-day basis.

Your sketchbook might be new, hand-made, adapted from an old book, or a collection of loose pages. It doesn't need to be planned, designed or decorated. Allow the book to develop organically, following your thoughts and lines of enquiry and documenting the development of your ideas. Don't censor or remove work from your sketchbooks. Leave everything in. What you deem to be of no interest may be of great interest to your tutor, who may be able to pick up on lines of enquiry or themes that you perhaps hadn't considered. The idea is that your sketchbook becomes indispensable; you take it everywhere and jot down observations, thoughts and ideas wherever you go.

Your sketchbook can include some, or all, of the following:

- sketches, both at home and away
- media experimentation
- writing, e.g. thoughts, notes, lists, creative writing
- your responses to exhibitions
- quotes from artists/designers, etc.
- diagrams, doodles, photographs, found images (e.g. photocopies), digital images (e.g. scanned and manipulated artwork)
- experiments with composition or placing of work.

You'll find a study guide to keeping sketchbooks on the student website. Also take a look at the following link for some ideas about the sort of work that might go in your sketchbook:

[www.sketchbookproject.com/library/16727](http://www.sketchbookproject.com/library/16727)

## Health and safety

Any practical research activity contains potential risks. As a creative practitioner, you need to actively risk-assess any activity you undertake, from using a sharp scalpel to carefully craft a collage to working with dyes or potentially hazardous chemicals. Use safe and appropriate equipment at all times, wear protective clothing where necessary and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Formal assessment

At the end of the course you'll have the opportunity to submit your work for formal assessment, in order to gain credits towards a degree. If you're intending to do this, make sure that you read the section on assessment in your Student Handbook at the beginning of the course so that you have a good understanding of what is required.

Textile students are recommended to send all of the work they have developed throughout the course for assessment. This allows the assessors to gauge your progress and to review the full breadth and depth of your work. If the work is too large or too heavy to post, photograph it carefully for the assessors to see.



OCA student Julie Bancroft, Exploration of collage

## Course structure

The course is in five parts, divided up into projects and exercises. It is important that you complete the exercises in the correct sequence as each builds on earlier work. You're encouraged to take a lively and experimental approach to the exercises. Think of this course guide as a framework within which you can develop your own exploration and really push the possibilities of your own practice.

- In Part One, you'll use an interview with Edmund de Waal that appeared in the Nov/Dec 2015 issue of *Crafts* magazine as a starting point to investigate ways of using different types of research material and different themes to generate creative thinking and making.
- In Part Two you'll develop this work by generating visual research in response to the themes identified in Part One. You'll also collect information on how contemporary artists use drawing to generate ideas, and develop themes generated from personal experience.
- In Part Three, you'll develop the work you've generated by focusing on research and practice. You'll begin to develop a concept that has personal relevance and start to apply critical thinking to your work, whilst engaging with relevant craft debates and developing new skills. You'll investigate a range of textile processes, using your visual research and ideas from Parts One and Two to generate a new series of work.
- Part Four will introduce you to a practical research methodology and give you the opportunity to apply this to refining aspects of your work by following a cyclical approach to making and critical evaluation. You'll also start to plan your critical essay (1500 words) which you'll submit with Assignment Five. In your essay, you'll consider how other contemporary artists generate ideas and discuss the processes they use to translate these ideas into practical outcomes. You'll critically evaluate your research from Parts One to Three, consider the impact this has had on your work, and discuss the parallels between your own practice and the work of other contemporary artists and designers.
- In Part Five, you'll review your work and select work for further refinement into a final body of textile samples that demonstrates how your research has informed the development of your work and made you aware of the key issues surrounding your own practice. You'll then develop a statement that communicates the concerns and boundaries of this new work.

At the end of each part of the course you'll collate your work from the projects, exercises and research points as directed in the assignment brief. Your tutor's feedback on each assignment will serve as a tutorial point, allowing you room to further review your work, build a conversation about it with your tutor, and revisit and refine aspects that you feel would benefit from this.

## Planning your resources

Read through the whole course guide now to get an overview of the course, annotating as you go. You should then read through each part of the course carefully before starting any work so that you understand what is required and can plan your time accordingly. In particular, consider what materials and tools you'll need in addition to the general list below. Allow yourself plenty of time to source materials with specific qualities and properties.

As a minimum, you'll need the following materials and tools for your work on this course:

- loose sheets of paper in varying sizes (from A5 to A1) and colours, including found papers, cartridge paper, card of different thickness, etc.
- different types of paper, e.g. wallpaper, old envelopes, pages from old books, graph paper, garment pattern paper, packaging, etc.
- a selection of B grade graphite pencils and graphite sticks
- willow charcoal sticks and compressed charcoal sticks
- black water-soluble ink
- PVA glue and glue stick
- masking tape
- acrylic paints (System 3, or similar)
- a selection of brushes
- pencils/pens/biros/felt tips
- charcoal and putty rubber
- ink
- household bleach
- several sheets of A4 acetate.
- scissors
- a range of soft and stiff brushes for acrylic paint, glue and ink
- Tipp-Ex or white paint
- thread and wire for stitching
- craft knife and cutting mat or board
- a palette or acrylic sheet
- jam jars
- a work table with protective plastic sheeting
- a camera.

You'll need access to a photocopier or scanner. You may find it useful to have a working knowledge of Photoshop (or similar) although this is not essential. It would also be helpful if you could access a sewing machine.

Your material choices may change as your ideas develop and you begin to master new techniques and materials. Your choice of materials and techniques, and the way in which you use and then refine them, is what will make your work unique. Be experimental, take risks with your work and keep an open mind to all the possibilities that present themselves. Remember to record your experiences, and all of your creative decision-making process, in your learning log.

## Textiles 1: Ideas and Processes

# Part one Ideas



Sandra Flower

## Project 1 Initiating ideas

On the course website you'll find an article in which Edmund de Waal talks about craft as practice and where he feels it sits within the range of visual arts disciplines. In the article, de Waal comments eloquently upon his own practice and gives clues as to where some of his ideas come from and what influences his practice. The exercises in this project use the article as a catalyst to suggest themes and approaches to creative practice and to suggest to you how ideas can emerge from a broad range of creative engagements.

Read and absorb the whole article, making notes in your learning log and annotating the document as you go. Once you've done that, read through the exercises and start compiling a list of what you'll need during your work on Part One. We've provided a basic list in the introduction to this course guide, but you'll probably want to add your own selection too.

### Exercise 1.1 Identity and labels

*Craft is the great otherness in our culture. It's little understood. It's extraordinarily relevant and powerful. It goes deep into people's lives. It's catalytic. It changes the world. It reaches deep into unknown histories that we are only beginning to understand. It crosses identities and genders and ethnicities in incredibly powerful ways. So it's in profound need of celebration and critical celebration. I talk about myself as a potter. I always do. I don't care about what other people talk about me as. So I don't believe in the lagoon. And I will always, always, always stand up and champion my early experiences: making things, making a mess, doing things at school, apprenticeships, keeping going the need for art colleges, and the strangeness of craft within a culture that wants to make everything glossy.*

The extract above expresses de Waal's irritation at the notion of a craft 'lagoon' and highlights and celebrates the meanings attached to the word 'craft'. De Waal is not afraid to align himself with the word craft and refers to himself as a 'potter', going on to say 'I don't care about what other people talk about me as'. His comments provide a useful point from which to consider the nature of labels and boundaries between disciplines. You'll start by looking for examples of visual art that you feel cross boundaries or resist a label. Obviously de Waal's work does this in that it positions itself simultaneously in both the craft and fine art fields of practice; the same is true of Grayson Perry's work and you should be able to find others. Is a Philip Treacy 'hat' fashion or sculpture to be worn on the head, for example? And how can you use the notion of crossing boundaries to explore new directions for your own work? Think about this in the first exercise.

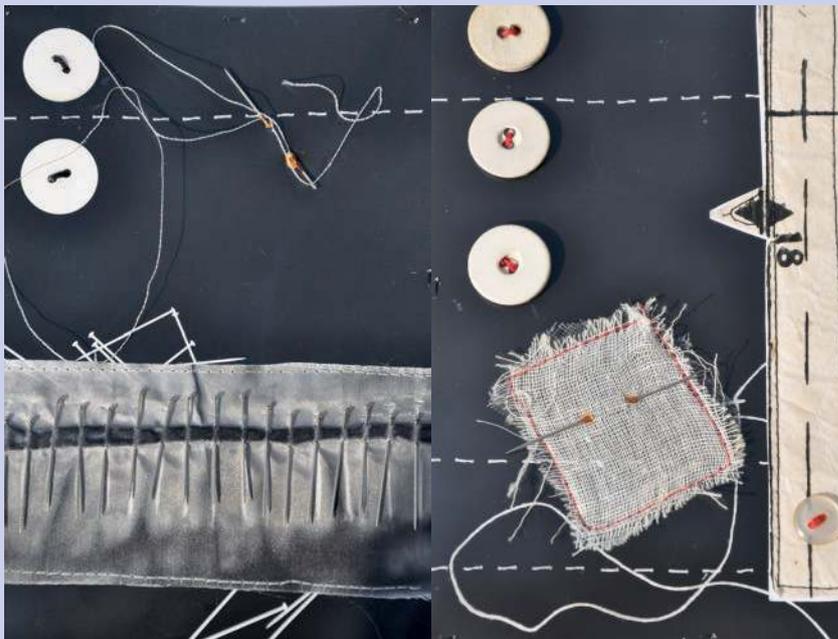
Start by collecting at least four images of works that challenge conventional labels and write a personal response to each. If you have previously completed the *Mixed Media Textiles* course, you should have some examples of work that combine textiles with sculpture, for instance. Write around 200 words for each image. In what way do your chosen examples cross boundaries between disciplines? Is it useful to your understanding of the work to give it a label?

Next, if you can, identify up to four examples of your own work that do one or more of the following:

- cross boundaries between disciplines
- resist labels associated with categories of visual art
- change the viewer's understanding of the work by giving the work a contrary label (e.g. a wedding dress titled *Prison*).

Write a short critique of 50 words for each example saying why you feel it fulfils these criteria. Were you conscious of crossing boundaries when you made the work or did it just happen? If this was a deliberate decision, why did you decide to work in this way? It may be that you can't find four examples (or any examples) within your work. If this is the case, reflect on the reasons for this in your learning log.

Now make a new piece of work that draws on two or more visual art disciplines in its production. Imagine a simple wooden sculpture painted over in pointillist style (as in the work of Georges Seurat, for example), a textile hanging that you have attached lino cuts to, or a painting with buttonholes stitched into it. You may have done similar work previously in *Textiles 1: Mixed Media Textiles*. Work to a minimum size of A4 for this part of the exercise. We're looking for a sample piece rather than a fully finished work at this stage so work quickly – think sketching or mark-making rather than careful drawing. It's the thinking and experimentation that matters here.



Sandra Flower

Complete this exercise by writing a short analysis of the new work in your learning log. Write around 200 words. How has this work influenced your ideas about the usefulness of labels?

## Exercise 1.2 Personal experience

*I spent a life thinking about porcelain but I didn't know it. I knew bits of it. It was a journey of genuine discovery, of finding the people and places who I need to understand and then going to journals and poetry and narrative and topography and objects. Of course it means it ends up fragmented and broken up. And it weaves that into my own autobiography of learning how to be a potter, learning how to be a public potter. It meant that it had to be a patchwork, not a seamless narrative.*

This exercise is about using personal experience as the basis for an art work. Autobiography is an accepted literary form, so why not translate this into a visual art form? Most, if not all, of Picasso's works have at their core a particular experience of the artist, be that his relationships with women or his reaction to international events; *Guernica* was painted in response to events in the Spanish Civil War, for example. If we put Picasso's works in chronological order they would plot his life in much the same way as a biographer would. As Picasso himself commented:

*The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web. That is why we must not discriminate between things. Where things are concerned there are no class distinctions.*

Take a journey. It need not be far; a walk around the house or garden will do, or the local park or town centre. Take a bag, camera and sketchbook. Don't plan ahead too much, just allow intuition and chance to guide your route. Clear your head of preconceptions before you start so that you can respond to stimuli as they present themselves. Collect as you go, but don't be indiscriminate: collect things that have a personal resonance for you. And don't confine yourself to visual stimuli – use all your senses and collect information in different ways. You might pick up a feather, make a rubbing from a surface, record an overheard conversation, word or sign, or photograph something that catches your eye. Vary the ways you collect the information on your journey. Use your sketchbook to create a personal response to 'out there'. Your journey could take a day or just an hour. You decide.

When you get home, print out your photos then arrange your various responses (your research) on the floor to create a timeline or narrative of your journey. Record this photographically in your learning log. Spend time reflecting on your timeline. Do any common or dominant themes emerge from your collection, for example? Is there a dominant colour – or a lack of colour? Have you gone for natural or man-made objects, soft or hard-edged objects? What does your collection say about you? To what extent is it autobiographical? What does it suggest about your feelings on the day? Write 300–500 words in your learning log.

Now think how you could re-arrange the narrative. Is the order in which you collected things an important part of the collection? Or can you divide the objects into groups of related things? Be experimental and playful with your groupings and remember to photograph and record your outcomes in your learning log/blog. What effect does re-arranging the objects have on the narrative?

Draw a map of your journey. This could be as simple as a bus route or as complicated as an Ordnance Survey Map, but it needs to be big enough for you to place each piece on the location it derived from. You have now combined two pieces of information – the geography of the route and the objects/information you found there. What do two types of information give us that the single elements can't? For example, the date 13.6.16 tells us date, month and year. Take one element away and it's not as specific. The artist John Constable recorded the time of day next to his sketches to give them added meaning and context.

Take a photograph of your map with your collected data on it, and place this in your learning log along with a written reflective response to this piece of work (up to 200 words).

Now create a new mixed-media work entitled 'My Journey' to communicate the important elements and experiences of your walk. This is an experimental sample, not a final piece; it is about the communication of your ideas above 'finish' so be exploratory and take risks. Reflect upon this sample in your learning log. Have you captured the essence of your journey? Does the sample work in aesthetic terms? Have you learnt anything new from this process?





### Research point 1.1

In Tracey Emin's work *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995*, the tent and appliquéd names come together to create a powerful image. It also plays with the connotations of 'slept with' by including her mother and father.

See [www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/somethings-wrong-tracey-emin](http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/somethings-wrong-tracey-emin)

Martin Creed's work *Mothers* (available to view on YouTube) consists of the word 'Mother' in 3D on a huge boom that spins/revolves in the gallery space, filling the space and forcing the viewer to duck.

Simon Patterson's *Great Bear* (1992) is based on the London Tube map but, in Patterson's version, each line represents a particular group of people (scientists, philosophers, etc.) whose names replace the stations.

Can you find any more examples of artworks, especially textile artworks, that make direct use of words to convey meaning? Record your findings in your learning log.

### Exercise 1.3 Single words

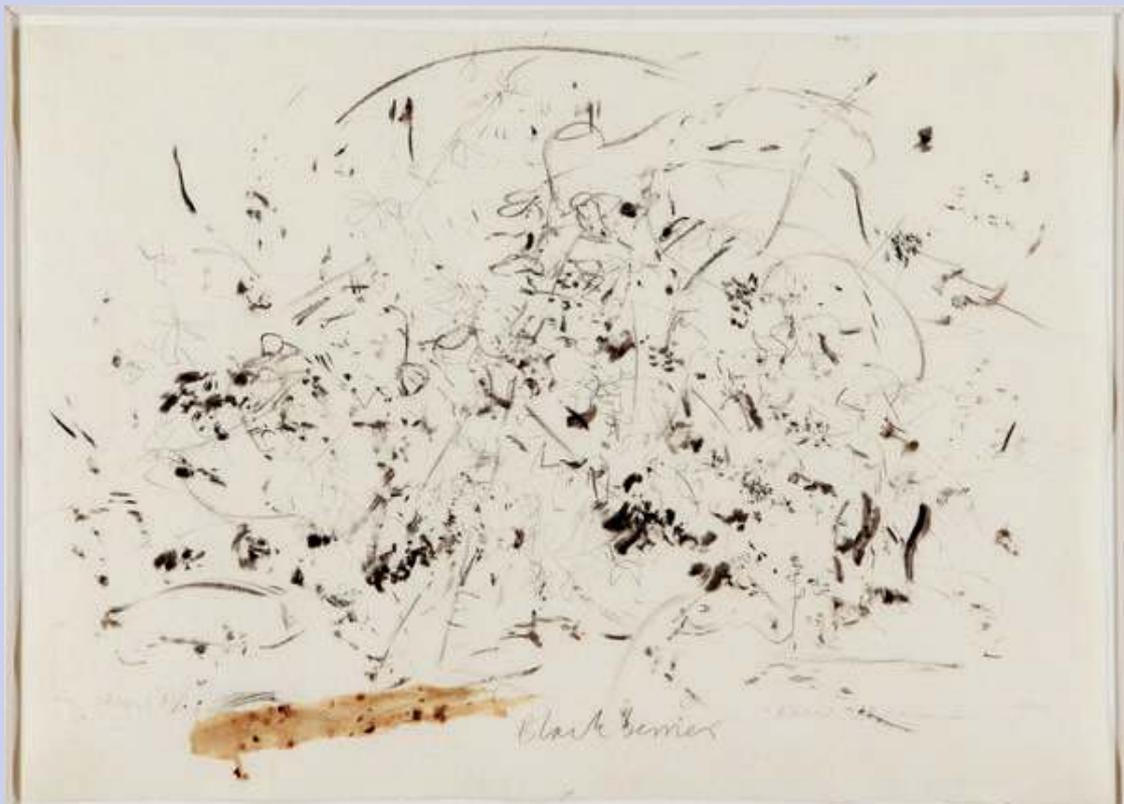
Revisit the map you made in Exercise 1.2. Did you collect any words as part of this exercise? If not, what words do the elements of your map conjure up for you? Make a list of these words and then edit them down to two or three, choosing words that you feel are particularly relevant or resonant. Draw the words in a larger scale and try to use a font that is sympathetic to the word

#### 'HARD' soft? **STOUT**

Now use each of the words you've chosen as the dominant element for a drawing. Remember that the 'space between' is also an important element. Work at A3 size or larger.

Make your drawing communicate as much as possible the sense of your word. For example, imagine the word 'mist' or 'vague' on tracing paper overlaid over other words. This would be using the transparent quality of the paper to convey some sense of the word. Think carefully about the quality of the paper you use, its texture, weight and, particularly, its colour – think about 'the space in between'. Think about media too – dippy inks, smudgy pastels, fat paint brushes. Use all these to help you imply the word or reference its meaning.

Can you use a drawing technique and /or material that helps convey the word? The artist David Nash has used blackberry juice in this drawing of brambles, for example.



David Nash, *Blackberries*, 1981

## Exercise 1.4 Poetry, prose, lyrics

*I will knit you a wallet of forget-me-not blue for to keep the money warm.*

(Nancy Probert in *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas)

Poetry and prose has often proved an inspiration to visual artists. In England there is a tradition of illustrative narrative: artists William Blake and Samuel Palmer drew on the *Book of Psalms*, and John Constable the poetry of Thomas Hood, for example.

Choose a piece of poetry, prose or song lyrics (these could be traditional or pop) and use it to inspire a drawing. You might find it useful to look at some LP covers for inspiration. These offer much more scope for artwork than smaller CDs and are now making a comeback for this and other reasons. The artwork on LP covers seeks to convey the contents of the album in a single image. For example, the Rolling Stones used the artist Andy Warhol to create some of their LP covers, including the cover of *Sticky Fingers*, which featured a full frontal of Mick Jagger's jeans with working zipper fly. The image was banned in Spain and replaced with a less risqué image of a tin of molasses. You could be more subtle, perhaps using collage and drawing as in Peter Blake's cover for the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Be experimental and have fun. Remember, drawing in this instance is a loose term; study the writing carefully and use materials that add something to the subject and contribute to the meaning of your chosen poem, prose or lyric.

Do around 10 rough sketches at A5 or A4 size first so that you're not tempted to just go with your first response. One of the challenges will be to get the linear narrative of the prose/poetry/lyric onto a single picture plane without simply producing a sequence of individual images in linear order. Medieval stained-glass artists were masters at telling a story in the one image and, as in their work, your 'picture' may have to dispense with 'normal' western notions of perspective: think Japanese print or willow pattern plate. Marc Chagall does much the same thing in his *The Myth of Orpheus* (1977).

See [www.marcchagallart.net/chagall-207.php](http://www.marcchagallart.net/chagall-207.php)

We can see all the elements of the tragic story in this picture, but Chagall has treated the imagery loosely. The dark oval (top centre) represents Hades (the underworld) and the majority of the canvas uses dark tones so that we need to adjust our eyes to the gloom to read the image, much as we would in a semi-darkened place. The figure with the harp is most definitely Orpheus charming the gods with his music, but is it Eurydice lying before him or Persephone, the queen of Hades?

Once you've completed your 10 rough sketches, photograph them and place them in your learning log. Select one that you think has potential for further development, explaining your reasons. Which sketch best captures and conveys the essence of your selected text? Why? Remember this is your personal response.

Develop your chosen image further at A3 size or larger. What other elements can you bring to the image to support the communication of the text? For example, you might introduce colours to convey emotion (e.g. red evokes danger or love), or use blurred images to give a dream-like quality or suggest a watery, damp atmosphere.

What is important is that your finished image plays with the words and brings some extra meaning to them. Reflect on the final outcome in your learning log.

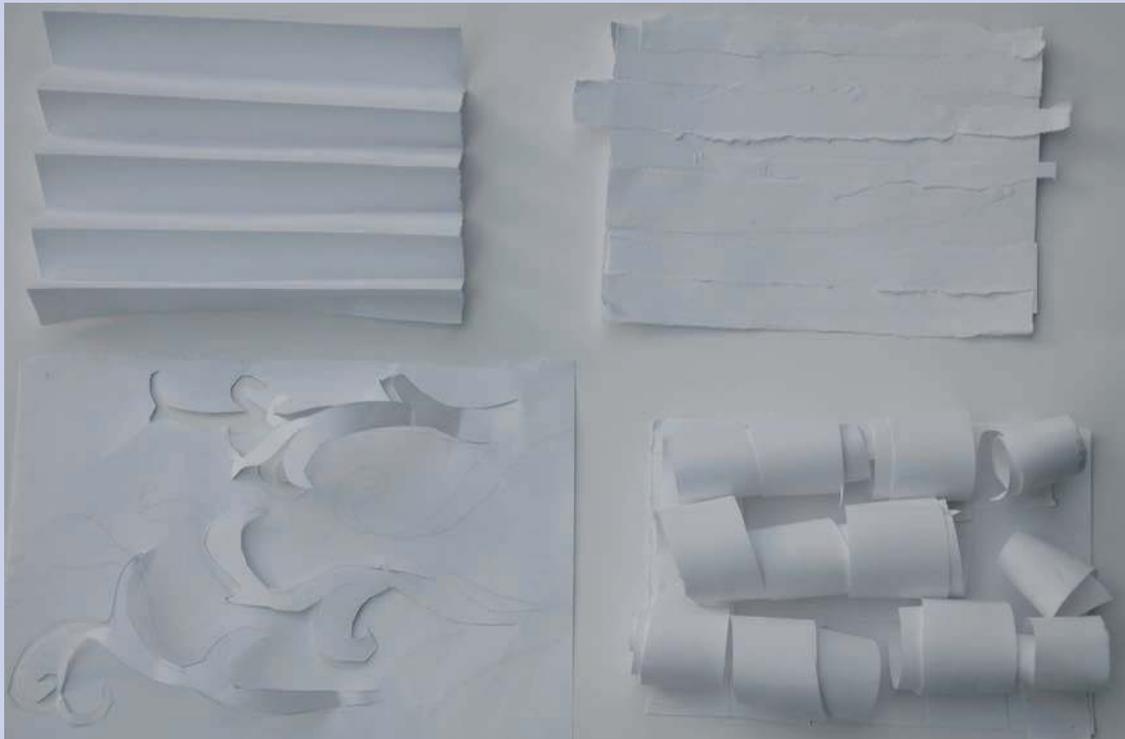
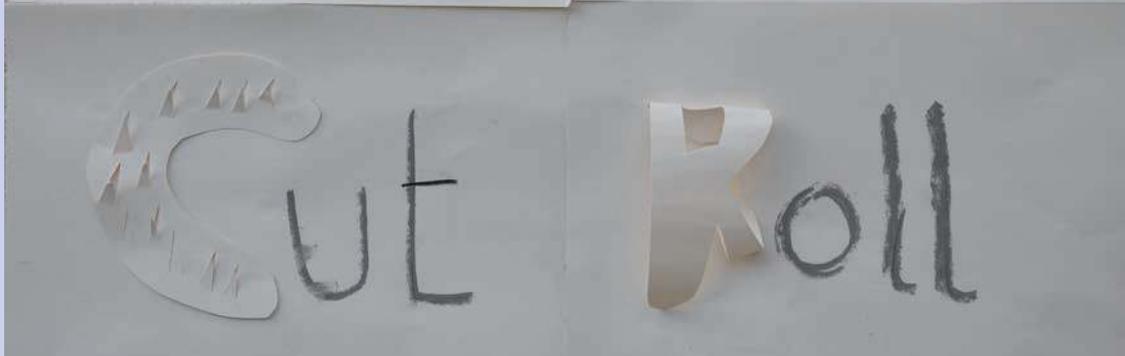
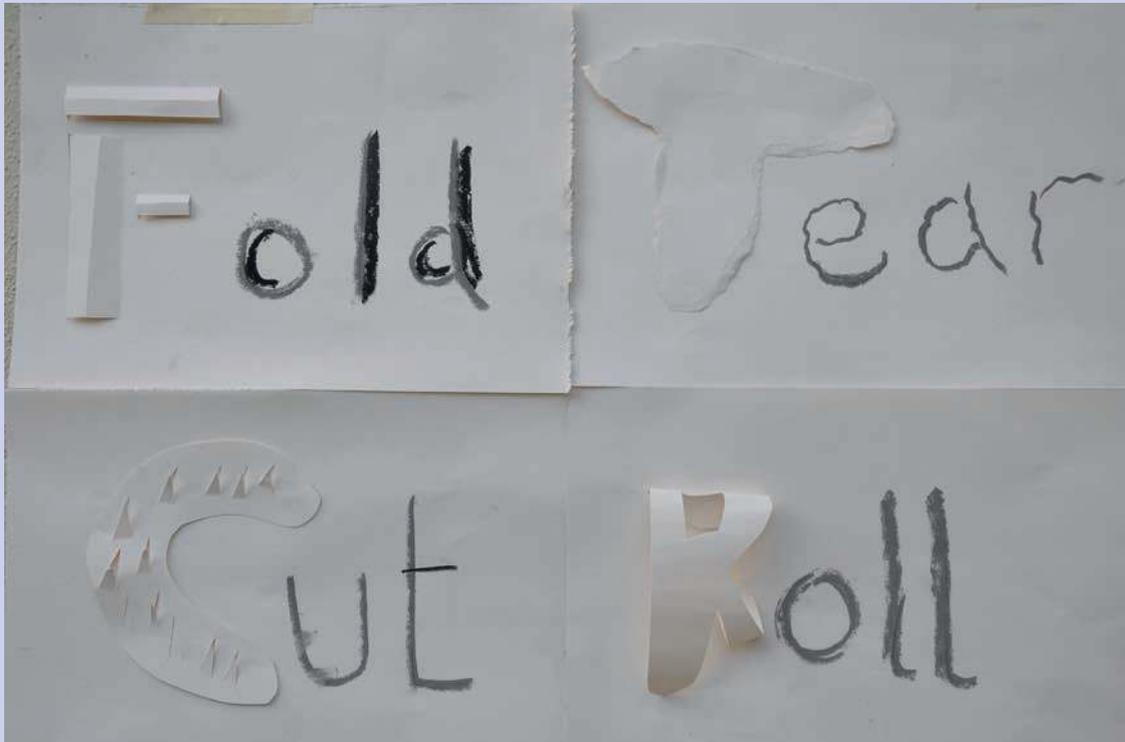
### Exercise 1.5 Action

For this third activity using words to inspire further creativity, you'll look at some words that inspire action. The list below was created by Richard Serra and placed on his studio wall. It was there for inspiration when, as all artists do, he reached a mental block.

Richard Serra, *Verb List Compilation: Actions to Relate to Oneself*, 1967-1968

to roll	to curve	to scatter	to modulate
to crease	to lift	to arrange	to distill
to fold	to inlay	to repair	of waves
to store	to impress	to discard	of electromagnetic
to bend	to fire	to pair	of inertia
to shorten	to flood	to distribute	of ionization
to twist	to smear	to surfeit	of polarization
to dapple	to rotate	to compliment	of refraction
to crumple	to swirl	to enclose	of tides
to shave	to support	to surround	of reflection
to tear	to hook	to encircle	of equilibrium
to chip	to suspend	to hole	of symmetry
to split	to spread	to cover	of friction
to cut	to hang	to wrap	to stretch
to sever	to collect	to dig	to bounce
to drop	of tension	to tie	to erase
to remove	of gravity	to bind	to spray
to simplify	of entropy	to weave	to systematize
to differ	of nature	to join	to refer
to disarrange	of grouping	to match	to force
to open	of layering	to laminate	of mapping
to mix	of felting	to bond	of location
to splash	to grasp	to hinge	of context
to knot	to tighten	to mark	of time
to spill	to bundle	to expand	of carbonization
to droop	to heap	to dilute	to continue
to flow	to gather	to light	

In this exercise we ask you to work only with paper. Take five of these verbs and interpret them by manipulating the paper in the way the verb suggests – ‘fold’ for instance. Explore folding the paper in two or three different ways, then repeat the exercise with another word from the list until you’ve responded to five verbs and made two or three samples for each. Don’t just pick the obvious verbs – be ambitious. How could you interpret ‘to dilute’ or ‘to spray’, for example?



Paste your samples into your sketchbook underneath the verb heading for each collection. You now have a dictionary with hand-made definitions of your chosen words – a visual vocabulary of textured paper. You'll use this dictionary as a resource later in the course (Exercise 3.2).

Remember to record all these exercises in your learning log and to annotate your images and samples with your thoughts. Make connections between the different exercises. Are you working with particular colours? Do certain themes or artists recur? Are your responses to the exercises becoming more lucid? Have you invented new ways of working? Record all these findings in your learning log. Use your learning log to continually review your progress, record new insights and highlight your strengths and weaknesses.

## Exercise 1.6 Music

*[De Waal has] also joined forces with the Aurora Orchestra to create three events across the capital, including the performance of a new piece composed by Martin Suckling, which 'explores the role of white in the world'.*

*When we meet, de Waal has yet to hear the new piece but says of the collaboration: 'They are really crossing over between poetry and performance and art. And that seems to be really natural. I'm amazed it doesn't happen more often because making is very close to music.' How so? It's obviously performative. There's a sense in which you make music and you make art. For me, there's also the thing that my installations are a bit like scores – they have pulses and rhythms and repetitions and gaps. So it is frozen music for me.'*

There are countless examples of artists inspired by working in collaboration with musicians or composers. David Hockney has worked on scenery projects for many ballets, for instance. For *The Rake's Progress*, Hockney used Hogarth's etchings as a visual prompt, exploiting the black line on white background and the various etching techniques (cross-hatching, etc.) to give the scenic backdrops an empathy and relevance to the production. (Note that Hogarth's series of paintings inspired the ballet, then the ballet inspired Hockney, thus creating a triangle of inspiration.) Grayson Perry too recently turned to Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* to inspire his own embroidered version. In the early twentieth century, Picasso worked with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, creating scenery and props for many of his ballets. More direct inspiration from music can be found in Anselm Kiefer's *Parsifal* cycle, from Wagner's music of the same name.

See [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kiefer-parsifal-i-t03403](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kiefer-parsifal-i-t03403)

The Cubists used musical elements visually as elements of montage, for example violins, guitars and sheet music.

De Waal sees similarities between art and music, describing both as a 'performative' act. In this exercise we want you to translate the notion of the performative act quite literally.

Set up a still life in a room in your house where you can also listen to music. Limit your still life to three to six simple everyday objects. Look at Giorgio Morandi's still lives, for example.



Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1956

Morandi keeps the objects modest and uses the edge of the table to give structure to the picture (as Dan Reed does with shelves below). The way light falls on his arrangements is also important.



Dan Reed, Still life created from objects made out of folded paper  
Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

Once you have set up your Morandi-inspired still life, get comfortable and draw at least three A2 sketches of the arrangement from different angles. Use charcoal, pencil, ink, coloured crayons, pencils, watercolour or any combination of these media.

Choose the sketch that you feel works best. Pin it to the wall and remove the original still-life arrangement. Working from your chosen sketch alone, do three more A3 size versions. Each version (performance) should be inspired by a particular piece of music chosen by you. Choose something from your personal music collection or have the radio tuned into a station of your choice, classical or pop. These should be three very different pieces of music.

Allow the music to influence your drawings. Does the music have a colour? What's the rhythm of the piece? Are there heavier and lighter moments? What moods come from the piece? Does the music suggest the movement of a hand across the drawing surface? Is this fast, slow, staccato, etc.? Ask these questions for each of your three drawings. Let yourself be influenced by the music to produce three very different still lives, each a 'performance'. This task is about your own interpretation; there is no right or wrong here. This exercise is about building skills and taking risks rather than producing finished outcomes.

## Exercise 1.7 Place

*Place is a key role in The White Road. I was intrigued by de Waal's writing of his move to Sheffield from the Herefordshire countryside in his mid-20s and his move from working in stoneware to porcelain. It seems like the pivotal moment in his career. 'It was such a big break for me', he agrees, 'that idea of shedding the rural thing and setting off to be a grown-up really. I wanted to be in a place where people worked. And that's an irony because Sheffield had catastrophic unemployment. So it was a very peculiar and difficult time to be in the city. It was very grim. Why make pots? It's the most ridiculous, redundant, pointless thing to do. No one wants pots in the city. They want jobs. But I was trying to work at who I was and what it was to be working by yourself, making something that had some value. I realise that if I'd stayed up my mountainside in Herefordshire, I'd probably still be there. There was a zone of safety that I needed to get out of.'*

The final exercise in this project asks you to consider location as a theme. It will also ask you to use some familiar techniques in different or unfamiliar ways to reflect the location you've chosen. You may find this uncomfortable or even a little difficult to begin with, and the work you produce may be less refined than work you've produced through more familiar ways of working, but stick with it. The purpose of this exercise is to take risks with working techniques whilst exploring a familiar landscape or location as source material. This may sound contradictory but, by exploring a familiar geographical location in a slightly different way, we hope you come across something new, perhaps a new working practice or a new way of seeing.

You can probably think of many examples of artists who worked from a particular location over and over again. We've already talked about Morandi who set up still-life arrangements in his personal studio. Claude Monet made series of work in several locations, including the lily pond at his home in Giverny and Rouen Cathedral. Paul Cézanne worked extensively at Mont Ste-Victoire.



Claude Monet, *Nymphéas*

Each of these artists sat again and again in their chosen location, rendering it over and over and using it as a constant source of inspiration. In all these examples, the works gradually become more abstract – less about the ‘subject’ and more about the practice. Monet’s later lily ponds are so abstract that we might struggle to recognise the subject without the title. For these artists, the location has become a starting point for a journey of discovery about their craft and way of seeing.



Terry Flower, *'It's near you'*. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

The image above shows a footpath crossing a field and ascending to a copse and bridleway.

It is overlaid with a map of the area (New Ash Green, Kent). The image was produced as part of an artist residency and the object of the collage was to show residents of the 'new town' that the countryside was within easy reach. The place names on the map would be familiar to the residents as places they pass through on their daily commute. The landscape and footpath illustrate the local landscape surrounding the new town.

Choose a location – inside or outside – that inspires you. Spend time there and get to know it really well. Record it using your sketchbook and camera. You might want to collect things such as rubbings, natural objects, fragments, smells and sounds. Imagine that this collection will be used to communicate to others what the location means to you – its magic, its essence, its specialness. These are positive emotions but it would be equally valid if your location had more negative connotations. The poet Philip Larkin was master at conveying the negativity of place. For example, in his poem 'Here' he contrasts the gloom of town with the lightness of countryside.

Now choose three techniques that you have some experience of, perhaps from the *A Textile Vocabulary* or *Mixed Media Textiles* courses. This could be hand stitch, free machine embroidery, mono print, casting or moulding, fabric manipulation techniques, etc. Prepare to take risks and try new ways of working with these techniques.

Be brave about your choices: risk is an important factor in learning and as long as you are safe you should find something new and even perhaps an empathy and ability you never knew was there by stretching the technique further.

Produce three (A5–A2 size) works all based upon the one location but using three different techniques. What does each technique bring to the location? Think hard about the qualities inherent in your technique and how they can be used to convey something about the location. For example, watercolour can be used in a very dry way or using a more fluid application. Imagine a beach scene where you drag paint over the paper to suggest the dry sand/pebbles, then use wetter paint to convey the fluidity of the sea.

Record these works in your learning log and justify the appropriateness of the techniques you've chosen by writing your comments alongside the images. Remember these exercises are about recording your thinking as much as doing.



Anne-Marie Jacobs. Ceramic and the aerial photograph of the coast (Mersea Island, Essex) that inspired it. Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

## Assignment one

You should now send all of your work to your tutor for feedback, including your sketchbook and your learning log or a link to your blog.

You'll have produced outcomes in various formats and sizes, both written and as practical samples. Now think carefully about how you're going to present your work for feedback. It's up to you how you do this, but you must:

- label every piece of work with the project and exercise number
- make clear links between the different elements – your samples, your sketchbook(s), any loose drawings, mark-making, etc. and your learning log.

Include a contents list if you think this will help your tutor to navigate your work.

A useful tip, especially for assessment, is to put your strongest work at the top of your submission – a good first impression is always helpful.

If any of your work is too large or too fragile to post, send good photographic records, carefully labelled, instead. Show the complete work as one photo and individual details in subsequent photos, all clearly labelled.

Sketchbooks are by their nature sequential, but you should still reference the project and exercise number on each page. Your tutor can then relate their feedback to the relevant work, and make comparisons between different works without any confusion.

### Self-assessment

Before sending work to your tutor for feedback, please refer back to the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide. Self-assess your work in relation to each of the assessment criteria and see how you're doing. Note down your findings in your learning log; this will be useful for your tutor to see and will also help you to prepare for assessment. This is an important part of the learning process. As well as identifying your strengths and weaknesses you should also highlight any areas or skills that you've worked hard to improve, stating how you have improved and whether there is still a need for further development.

### Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor you are encouraged to revisit some of the exercises and to rework them in response to the feedback, where appropriate, especially if you are intending to submit your work for formal assessment at the end of the course. If you do rework any exercises, make sure you reflect on this process in your learning log.