Exploring Creative Practice
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Introduction

Welcome

About The Open College of the Arts (OCA)

OCA is a leading provider of flexible, open learning courses, a thriving educational charity, and part of the University for the Creative Arts (UCA). UCA are a leading specialist arts institution that have validated the educational quality of OCA courses for many years.

Founded in 1987 by Michael Young, Lord Young of Dartington, OCA’s charitable purpose is to widen participation in arts education. OCA achieve this through embedding values of openness and flexibility into how courses are designed, structured and taught. This means producing high quality learning materials that are open and flexible enough for all students to have meaningful learning experiences, and a teaching model that allows you to work flexibly, where and when you want. Supporting this approach are tutors, who are experienced educators and creative practitioners, also working flexibly, and at a distance.

About your course

Welcome to Interior Design 1: Exploring Creative Practice. The course unit is designed to introduce you to the various distinct specialisms, or ‘niches’, within the overarching discipline of Interior Design. Commercial, residential, leisure, retail or experiential design; you will research and learn about different design environments and use your findings to understand the key differences and similarities between each of these. You will be introduced to the range of professional practices associated with Interior Design today.

You will also be introduced to the idea of merging these practices and begin to explore the ways in which different design environments can interact; understanding where, how and what factors make this process successful.

You will begin to explore the important concept of collaboration, using it as a tool both for your design development and as an initial step towards professional practice; and look at how the 3D design industry has changed and evolved through collaboration over the last 30 years - and is still changing today.

Using a ‘critique’ or ‘negotiation’ method to challenge your findings, you will be expected to set yourself a relevant brief in the context of multidisciplinary
practice and represent your findings in the form of a spatial design project. You will use the skills you have developed in the earlier units to challenge and explore the brief in relation to your findings.

As a Level 1 (HE4) course unit it introduces you to higher education study, and encourages you to develop a rigorous approach to acquiring a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

“The idea of design and the profession of the designer has to be transformed from the notion of a specialist function into a generally valid attitude of resourcefulness and inventiveness.”

In: László Moholy-Nagy, Vision in Motion (1947)

The course unit was written by experienced academics and creative practitioners in collaboration with OCA and aims to:

- Introduce you to the concept of multidisciplinary practice and allow you to explore and research the differences and similarities between practice specialisms. To understand how these differences and similarities impact on design outcomes.

- Allow you to explore, record and analyse your research and, using precedent examples, make a proposal for an imaginative cross-disciplinary intervention. Present your proposal in a creative and relevant way.

- Allow you to explore and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of collaboration as a core design tool. To develop innovative spaces that incorporate the application of your research and analysis.

- To develop your ability to challenge your research, and use it to create imaginative and thought provoking design.

The course unit is divided into Five Parts, each with a series of projects, research tasks, exercises, and assignments.

In **Part One** you will look at what defines a ‘Creative Practice’ in Interior Design and learn about the broad spectrum of different spatial design fields available in the professional world. Firstly looking at specialisms or ‘niches’ within different types of design practice, and then taking a contrasting approach to that of ‘niche’
practice - investigating a multidisciplinary approach - and exploring the different ‘shapes’ that a multidisciplinary interior design practice can take.

In Part Two you will focus on specific spatial design niches to develop your understanding of different specialist fields of interior design. You'll explore the idea of a polymath and hybrid designer, to help you understand your own personal skill set. You will then look at redefining your personal skill set to see which additional skills or tools you might want to add to your repertoire. You will also be looking at the physical context of spatial design to better understand how this can relate to the act of designing itself.

In Part Three you will be looking at the idea of merging different interior design practices and exploring why and how an Interior Design Practice can become multidisciplinary. You will look at examples of collaboration with other practitioners, combining different skill-sets, to help further your understanding of the importance of collaboration as a core tool in effective design problem solving.

Part Four looks at how the history of design practice can be directly related to the broader context of politics, economy, and culture. Understanding these contexts, and making connections between them and the notion of creative practice, will help you identify key factors of change. It will also help you identify key skills designers must develop and hone to work in this field. You will do this by researching and then analysing the history and context of design practice.

Finally in Part Five you will focus on one niche practice - Exhibition Design - in detail; to identify the practice envelope for this specialism; challenge the defined concept of an ‘exhibition’ and examine how different tools and specialist skills can be used to explore spatial design in this particular context. The final assignment will be a culmination of everything you have learnt throughout this unit, about working within the boundaries of one particular spatial design niche; working from your own defined brief you will be designing a narrative exhibition, and an additional space to complement it.

You will be supported through the course unit by receiving formative feedback from a tutor, to help you develop your work. At the end of your course unit, if you are working towards a qualification, you will be able to submit for summative (formal) assessment.
The learning outcomes for the course unit are:

- Establish basic research methods that identify and demonstrate different areas in creative spatial design practice.

- Demonstrate thorough research of your chosen design environments, and an understanding of how these environments can be merged to begin to explore your own creative design practice.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the use of collaboration as a core design skill, and develop creative skills and techniques that incorporate collaboration in a fundamental way.

- Begin to critically reflect on your own creative practice. Challenge your research and development to create imaginative and thought provoking design outcomes that demonstrate your creative and collaborative skills, and ability to practice in a multi- or cross-disciplinary way.
Getting started

If you are new to OCA and to distance learning, the following research tasks, tips, and exercises will help you get started. If you have already studied another HE4 or Foundation course with OCA, you may want to use this section as a refresher.

The research tasks and further reading signpost resources you are likely to use throughout the course, and tips provide useful pointers.

The seven short exercises establish the groundwork for your course unit by setting up a learning log, considering your working space and study schedule, preparing for your initial contact with your tutor, and saying hello to fellow students.

You should be able to work through these activities reasonably quickly, and the time invested will help you throughout your studies.

Being an OCA student

As a distance learning student you receive learning materials that take you through the content of each course unit. Your materials provide case studies, links to resources and suggested research, and are typically structured into five parts covering a number of different topics. Each part contains research tasks, exercises, and projects that encourage you to undertake your own research, make work, and reflect on your progress.

Work your way through one part at a time in chronological order, undertaking any tasks and documenting your work as you go in your learning log. These tasks are designed to be as accessible as possible, so all students, regardless of their circumstances can participate. There is usually room to adjust tasks to suit your needs and this is something OCA can support you with. Once you complete a given part, you will submit a selection of your work and your learning log to your tutor, who will review it and provide you with formative feedback.

Research task: Study tips

Visit OCA’s WeAreOCA blog and read through the study tips section: https://weareoca.com/category/students/study-tips/

These posts are regularly added to, so keep an eye open for new additions. You can also comment on existing posts, or contact OCA if you would like to see new posts on a specific topic.
Research task: Student handbook

You will have received a current Student Handbook when you enrolled. Read through it to find out more about how OCA works and what it can offer you. Refer back to your Student Handbook if you have any questions at a later date.

Research task: Online resources

OCA Learn will be a key facility throughout your time studying with OCA, therefore, we strongly recommend completing the Getting Started: An Introduction to OCA Study course. Once logged into your OCA Learn account, you'll find this in your 'My Courses' section.

For more information on OCA Learn, including information on how to sign in and access your course material, please watch the OCA Learn General Introduction video or by using the following link, https://oca.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=df98e6f1-e6f8-4c8c-ba2b-aa9d00b13fee.

The OCA Discuss site [https://discuss.oca-student.com/] helps to connect OCA students together for subject related discussions and mutual support.

Feedback from your tutor

Tutor feedback can be verbal or written, or a combination of both, depending on what you would rather receive. Written feedback will be in the form of a PDF tutor report. Verbal feedback will be provided online through Google Meet or by telephone with a summary written by your tutor. All tutor feedback will be timely, well-grounded, constructive, and challenging. It will reflect on the work you have produced and provide pointers on how you can improve. Tutors provide feedback at the end of each part of the course unit.

Research task: The role of the tutor

You can find out more about the role of your tutor through watching this short video: [https://vimeo.com/180282269]

You may also want to find out what kind of practitioner your specific tutor is by looking at their profile: https://www.oca.ac.uk/our-tutors/
Tip: Reflecting on your feedback

It’s important to reflect on feedback in your learning log, identifying what you feel are the key themes and areas for development. This will help you develop a better understanding of what you are taking from your tutor’s feedback, help you develop a reflective approach to your studies, and help your tutor in how they tailor their feedback for you.

If you’re using a public facing blog, and want to quote from the feedback, please refer to ‘your tutor’ rather than by naming them personally. You should act on this feedback as you progress through the course unit and can rework any elements prior to submitting for assessment.

Assessment

Once you have completed each part of the course and received feedback from your tutor, you can submit for summatve assessment to one of three annual assessment events. For assessment you’ll need to submit a cross-section of the work you’ve done on this course unit, as outlined in your assessment guidelines.

You can access both Assessment Guidelines and Assessment Criteria via the Assessment Guidance section available on OCA Learn. https://learn.oca.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=201

If you’ve any questions regarding assessment, please speak with your tutor.

Further research

While it’s useful to know how you are being assessed from the start of your course, there’s plenty of time to prepare. Further information about assessment can be found in your Student Handbook, and more detailed information in your Student Regulations. There is staged information throughout to help guide you through the assessment process.
Supporting your learning

Alongside providing learning materials and access to a tutor, OCA supports your learning by providing access to key texts, an online library, and other online resources.

Throughout the course unit you will be asked to undertake research into the work of other creative practitioners or to conduct your own research. Use the library and other resources available to you. You might also want to access other reliable online resources.

Research task: Accessing the library and key texts

As an OCA student, you have online access to UCA's online library resources. To find out how to log on, and what resources are available, please visit: OCA Learn - Academic Support: Library.

Research task: Harvard Referencing

By Level 2 you should be familiar with the Harvard referencing system to cite any research you undertake. The system can be applied to books, quotations, images, scores, recordings, films and any other work you wish to reference. Through written citations it helps locate work and prevents any accidental plagiarism.

You can familiarise yourself with the Havard referencing system by visiting the Getting Started: An Introduction to OCA Study course, and access any relevant documents under the Harvard Referencing heading.
**Exercise 1: What do you want / need from the course?**

At HE Level 4, the course unit aims to introduce some of the main ideas and practices of your creative discipline, and for you to begin to explore how you can creatively and critically respond to these. Level 1 is very much about exploration, so it’s a good starting point to consider what you might want or need to explore. To help you think about this, consider what you want and what you might need from the course unit? For example, whether there are areas you are keen to explore for the first time, gaps in your knowledge you would like to develop, areas you would like to expand, or study skills you would like to brush up on. **Write a short paragraph or around 5 bullet points identifying what you want and what you might need from the course unit.**

To help support your learning it's also useful for your tutor to get a sense of your own creative background, your expectations of the course unit, motivations for this level of study, and any other information you'd like to share. **Write a short paragraph or 5 bulletin points summarising what you’re bringing to the course unit.**

**Tip: Sharing your needs**

Exercise 1 may be a good opportunity to consider any personal or health issues that might impact on your ability to study. Contact Learner Support to make them aware, and to access guidance and support: [learnersupport@oca.ac.uk](mailto:learnersupport@oca.ac.uk)
Learning logs

As an OCA student you need to keep a learning log as a way of documenting your creative responses to course activities, your reflections on your progress, and as a way of sharing your work with your tutor.

A learning log should be a summary of your creative process, documenting the various stages you have gone through, with visual examples, and a brief explanation and reflection on your creative process and outcomes. It is helpful if your learning log makes reference to each part of the course unit including any exercise titles or research tasks.

OCA students choose to keep their learning log as an online blog, notebook, or as a digital file. One advantage of using a blog is that it allows you to document your work as you progress, in a format that is ready to submit to your tutor. It makes sharing your work simple, especially if you have a lot of digital elements. Keeping one blog per course unit makes it easier for your tutor and assessors to access.

You may also find it useful to have notebooks to support their blog. For example, to take notes at gallery visits which can then be typed up with any photos onto your blog afterwards.

Some students use their mobile phones to flick through sketchbooks to add to their blogs, rather than posting them. Alternatively, you can produce short audio or video logs (vlogs) to record your reflections on your blog.

Tip: summarising your learning

Whatever form of learning log you decide to use, get into the habit of going through what you've produced and summarising your key learning for your tutor. See this summary as a signpost to your learning, so you're pointing out key moments or blog posts. This will save them having to read, watch, or listen to your entire log to find out what's been important to you. It also encourages you to be more reflective and succinct in your approach.
Exercise 2: Setting up your learning log

You can create your own learning log using OCA Spaces. For information on how to do so, please complete the ‘Documenting Your Work’ section of the Getting Started: An Introduction to OCA Study course. Alternatively, you can watch the Using OCA Spaces video, available on the OCA Space help page.

If you're not using a blog, establish how you might use digital folders or files for your learning log.

From your experience on previous OCA courses you may already have a learning log that you want to continue to use. If so, you will need to establish a way in which to clearly indicate when your old course ends and your new one begins, for example by tagging your posts and setting up a new menu for each course.

Further reading

You can find more information on how to use OCA Spaces by completing the Getting Started: An Introduction to OCA Study course; including guides on how to begin creating your own blog. The OCA has also produced music specific templates, available for use on OCA Spaces.

Additionally, the OCA has also produced Listening and Learning Log Music guides, which you can access in the Resources section.

There are many blog posts on weareoca.com about learning logs. Do some research to see how other students have approached theirs. [https://weareoca.com/?s=learning+log]
Exercise 3: Analysing and reflecting

This quick exercise is designed to introduce the idea of analysing and reflecting on the work of others, and to give you some material for your first learning log entry or blogpost.

Here’s a selection of creative practitioners that you will encounter during this course unit: Charles & Ray Eames, Constance Adams, Buckminster Fuller, Camille Walala, Philippe Starck, Studio Weave and Snøhetta.

1. Choose one of these names and find a piece of work they’ve produced. Remember to reference the works you have chosen using Harvard Referencing, so it’s clear what you are looking at, who made it, and when.

2. Pick one of the pieces and briefly describe it. Consider its qualities by trying to describe it. What are the different elements within the work and how do these elements work together? What do you think the work is trying to communicate? Imagine you’re describing the work to somebody over the telephone. Try to do this in no more than 50 words.

   For image based work, what you’re doing here is analysing the formal visual language of an image. This is known as visual research or, sometimes visual analysis. Writing can be a useful tool in visual analysis, but you can also annotate images with notes.

3. Using the same piece, briefly write about how you relate to this work. Do you like it or hate it, find it intriguing, influential or outdated, and if so, why? Does the work connect to wider ideas or other creative practitioners? In other words, what’s your opinion on this work? Don’t worry about ‘getting it wrong’ or ‘missing the point’. Perhaps your reflection raises more questions than answers. Again, try to do this in no more than 50 words.

4. Use the text you’ve generated to create your first blog post or learning log entry. You may also want to be self-reflective by considering your experience of doing the exercise. Did you find it an easy or difficult task? Did it raise any interesting issues or areas you want to develop further? Write a sentence or two picking up on any of these points in your learning log.
Managing your time

Your course unit requires around 400 learning hours which can be undertaken flexibly, part-time, or closer to full-time study, depending on how quickly you want to learn. You have a maximum of two years to complete these learning hours, but if you spread your learning over too long a timeframe it’s easy to lose momentum. With this in mind, you might want to aim to complete this course unit within 12 months (working approximately 8 hours per week), 8 months (at 14 hours per week) or at a full time rate of around 4 months (at 28 hours per week). These timeframes will depend on how much time you can commit to study, so it's good to be realistic about what is manageable for you.

Allow around 20% of your learning hours for reflection and keeping your learning log up to date.

During the course unit your tutor will suggest dates by which your next assignment is due based on which of these time frames you want to work within. Deadlines can be renegotiated in discussion with your tutor, so long as they fit within the overall maximum time frame for the course unit.

Allocating regular time for your studies will help you balance your course work with the rest of your life. It’s important to be realistic about what you can achieve. For example, don't try to undertake the course full-time, while working full-time, and juggling everything else you do. You'll end up seeing the course as ‘another thing to do’ which won't be useful for your motivation or creativity. It's much better to give yourself some breathing space to enjoy the challenge of your studies.

Tip: Pomodoro technique

The Pomodoro references the popular tomato-shaped food timer. Developed by Francesco Cirillo as a technique to help manage working time, the technique simply structures your focus on a task into 25 minute blocks with short breaks in-between. It can help with concentration and focus, and promotes a sense of accomplishment by breaking tasks into short chunks of time. In other words.

1. Identify the task to be done. For example, doing a drawing or reading a text
2. Set a timer for 20-25 minutes (it doesn't have to be a Pomodoro!)
3. Work on the task
4. When the timer goes, have a short break.
5. Then set the timer and start again

After more than four cycles, take a longer break
**Tip: Asking for help**

Remember that if you have difficulty with any of your deadlines please get in touch with your tutor. Additional support is available from OCA Head Office:

- **Student Services** [studentadvice@oca.ac.uk]
  if you have queries around study resources, time frames, finance and funding, or any general enquiries.

- **Learner Support** [learnersupport@oca.ac.uk]
  if any personal or health issues begin to impact on your ability to study.

**Exercise 4: Managing your time**

Depending on your circumstances, you might allocate time in different ways - a day a week, an hour a day, larger blocks of time such as weekends or holidays, or a combination of approaches.

Ask yourself the following questions?

- How much time you can allocate to study each week?
- What is my most/least productive time of the day?
- How well do I manage time?
- What is a realistic schedule to undertake Part One (around 80 learning hours) and when might you set your first deadline?

Make some notes in your learning log and discuss your schedule when you talk to your tutor.
Resources

To get the most out of your study you will need to access OCA's online and social resources, and develop your own physical resources and working/study space. These will differ depending on what subject you’re studying.

Try not to feel limited by the resources or space you have available at the moment, creativity can flourish anywhere and there's plenty of time to acquire the equipment you need. Working at a distance can have advantages to working in University studios and classrooms as the resources you develop over time belong to you and meet your specific needs.

General resources

You may need drawing and writing tools, paper, sketchbooks.

Having some photography equipment is an advantage when working at a distance to help document your work. The camera on your phone will often be fine. If you have an SLR Camera even better. A tripod or ‘gorilla grip’ style flexible mount (for camera or phone) will be really useful. You won't need professional lighting but make sure you have a few sources of ordinary lighting, both to make sure you work in decent light levels at all times and to use for documenting your work.

Digital resources

Here is a list of digital resources and software you will need:

- A personal computer you have reliable and regular access to, and is equipped with up to date software and has this operating system installed.

- Google Drive, which is a free service provided by Google. It is an online file sharing system based on the cloud, so you can access it from anywhere. You will be expected to upload files from your computer and share them with your tutor, and submit documents for assessment using Google Drive.

- Google mail, this service hosts all OCA email addresses as a free service through Gmail. Personal email addresses should not be used for OCA studies.

- Online learning logs are recommended as a way of keeping your supporting studies up to date. The OCA recommends using its OCA Spaces platform; any online blogging platform may be used but please avoid...
platforms which require viewers to create an account as this can cause issues at assessment.

Some courses require the use of specialist software, so along with a computer, you will also need to download and install these applications. Where possible we have highlighted ‘freeware’ options, that are available free of charge, as well as industry standard software you may want to purchase.

Course resources

Here's a general list of what you may need for this specific course unit:

- a computer or laptop with internet connection
- access to CAD drawing applications such as VectorWorks or AutoCad
- access to graphic presentation software such as PhotoShop and InDesign
- sketchbooks or notebooks of your choice
- good quality paper at A4 and A3 for presentation work
- drafting paper at A3 and A2 for technical drawings
- layout paper or detail paper for design development
- technical drawing equipment including pens, pencils, metric scale ruler
- a 5m metric tape measure
- coloured pens, pencils, chalks, paints
- Model making tools including a scalpel, cutting mat, metal ruler
- Model making materials such as card, paper, balsa wood, foamboard, PVC sheet, glue, masking tape, double sided tape etc..

Think about any other materials, tools, or other resources you might need, as well as items from the above specialist subject-related equipment that would be useful.

Tip: Student discounts on software

All students enrolled with OCA are encouraged to register for an NUS card. The card entitles you to discounts on thousands of products including software and apps, as well as buying materials in local art shops.

Your working space

You will need a space to make your work, be it the kitchen table, a spare room or an existing studio space, somewhere to work on your learning log or work digitally, access to a computer, and space to read and reflect which could be much more flexible and also slot into other times, for example reading on the train on the way to work.
Exercise 5: Identifying resources

Prepare a list of the equipment and other resources you might need to use. What do you currently have and what might you to get? Don’t worry if you don’t have everything now, there's plenty of time to build your resources as you progress through the course unit and degree. If you’re not sure of what you need, then prepare a list of questions to ask your tutor.

What space or spaces are you going to work in? Consider where you will do most of your study, and prepare it so it’s an environment you’ll enjoy working in and you are able to store your equipment and resources.

You may want to take a photo of your studio space to share with your tutor via your learning log.

Social resources

While it might often feel like you’re studying on your own, it’s worth remembering that there are lots of other OCA students doing the same. Your fellow students can provide fresh perspectives, feedback and encouragement, and creative opportunities for collaboration or sharing.

You can make contact with fellow students through our OCA discuss site: [https://discuss.oca-student.com/]. You’ll find a welcome section here: https://discuss.oca-student.com/c/welcome-introduce-yourself-here

You can also talk through your email group, which you were added to when you enrolled onto your course unit. Its purpose is to make it easier for students studying the same course unit to talk to one another, upload images and critique one another's work. Through these groups you have access to the experience of students who are further along in their studies who can offer advice and guidance and you can take comfort in knowing there are others at the same point as you, who may share the same worries or concerns. These course discussion groups utilise ‘Google groups’ to operate.

There are also discussion spaces on the BA (Hons) Fine Art area of OCA Learn, where you can talk to other students and tutors.

Remember to communicate respectfully and responsibly with other students and OCA staff online. You can find more information on Netiquette by completing the Getting Started: An Introduction to OCA Study course, or via the Discuss Form heading.
Research task: OCA Student Association (OCASA)

OCASA [www.ocasa.org.uk] is available to you as a student. One of their activities is organising joint study visits with OCA tutors. Visit: https://weareoca.com/category/study-visits/ to identify any study visits you would like to attend, either virtually or in person.

Exercise 6: Saying hello to your fellow students

Get in touch with other students to say hello, and to share something about you or your practice. Use the OCA discuss site and/or the email group. For example, by sharing your online learning log URL, your work on Exercise 3, or a photo of your studio space.

Exercise 7: Say hello to your tutor

For your final exercise, get in touch with your tutor to arrange a 15-20 min conversation. This is an opportunity to say hello to your tutor and put a voice to a name. It’s also a chance to discuss how best to schedule your time, document your work, and share it.

The previous exercises and research tasks will have helped you prepare for this conversation and identified any questions you’d like to ask. Use your notes from these exercises as a starting point.

Reflect on this conversation in your learning log as a way to identify any key points and as a starting point to refer back to later on. Don’t forget to refer to ‘my tutor’ online rather than by name.

Finally, you may want to reflect on doing this introduction as a whole. Has it been useful and are there things we could do differently? Make some notes in your learning log and feel free to get in touch with OCA directly or use the forums to help us improve our support if you have any ideas.

Starting your course unit

You should now be ready to start Part One of your course unit. Don’t worry if you are still getting to grips with using your blog, adjusting to this form of learning, or don’t have all the resources you need. There’s plenty of time to develop these as you progress. Remember that if you get stuck along the way there’s support available from OCA and encouragement from your fellow students.

Enjoy the rest of your studies!
Exploring Creative Practice

Part One: Defining a Creative Practice

Image redacted due to copyright.
Introduction

In Part One you will look at what defines a ‘Creative Practice’ in Interior Design. Beginning by learning about the broad spectrum of different spatial design fields available in the professional world, you will investigate specialisms or ‘niches’ within these different types of design practice. You will then look at a contrasting approach to that of ‘niche’ practice - a multidisciplinary approach - exploring the different ‘shapes’ that a multidisciplinary interior design practice can take. Using creative mind-mapping to explore your ideas you will refine your thinking and produce a Statement of your initial understanding of what a multidisciplinary interior design practice could be.

Taking case studies as a starting point you will conduct different types of research to further understand the term ‘multidisciplinary’ in an interior design context; exploring the differences and similarities between different practice specialisms. You will investigate in order to understand how these differences and similarities impact on final design outcomes in practical built work. As part of this investigation you will establish basic research methods that demonstrate and identify these different specialisms in a creative spatial design practice.

At the end of Part One the first Assignment is a summation of your research work. You will collate and edit your findings into a professional presentation document exemplifying what you have learnt throughout this initial part of Exploring Creative Practice.
Project 1: Creative Practice

What is a ‘Creative Practice’ in Interior Design and how do we define ‘Creative Practice’?

Creative definition: 
*adjective* - producing or using original and unusual ideas.

Practice definition: 
*noun* - something that is usually or regularly done, often as a habit, tradition or custom.

So Creative Practice - as an act - could be repeatedly or habitually producing original or unusual ideas.

A creative practice - or Creative Interior Design Practice - is a group of spatial design professionals who habitually produce original ideas.

Learning to be creative

The idea of a broad-based, or truly creative, way of practicing design is not new.

In 1919 Walter Gropius, founding director of the renowned design school *the Bauhaus*, devised an approach to learning that was very different from its more traditional contemporaries at the time. The educational programme embraced a broad spectrum of different arts, trades, crafts and disciplines; and it was thought that by learning all of these together - taking a multidisciplinary approach - the work of each student would become richer, more meaningful and more creatively diverse.

Catherine Byrne, Bauhaus programme of study diagram.
The school had tutors with wide ranging experience including architecture, sculpture, photography, industrial design, typography, graphic design and painting; but it was Oskar Schlemmer who brought music, theatre and dance into the mix - using them as a way to inspire creative versatility in the work of the Bauhaus students.

“He taught multidisciplinary classes that integrated kinetic motion studies, figure drawing, and philosophy. And Der Mensch, the human being, was always at the core of his instruction.”

Looking at the diagram for the programme of study above - and working from the outside circle towards the centre - all students had to complete a preliminary year of broad-based study which encompassed different disciplines.

Once this was completed students were then able to continue, and whilst still exploring a diverse range of arts subjects, gradually refine and define what they learnt. It was said that only the very best students ever attained the objective of studying the central theme - building, or architecture, of spatial design. You can only think that the broad scope of understanding gained throughout the earlier years of study would have greatly enhanced the breadth of their experience before they even considered how to approach the design of a three dimensional space.

**Things and Connections**

The Bauhaus students gained experience in a lot of different areas. They gained experience of a lot of different **things**.

**What are things?**

- Things can be **experiences**.
- Things can be **ideas**, your own or other peoples.
- Things can be **objects** that you like, objects that you don’t like, **buildings or spaces** that you like, buildings or spaces that you don’t like.
- Things can be single **words** or groups of words.
- Things can be **colours, smells or sounds** that you experienced somewhere, or those that someone else experienced and then wrote about or drew, painted or sculpted.
- Things can be **old, new, long forgotten or even undiscovered**...
- **A thing can be an experience of anything.**
“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesize new things. And the reason they were able to do that was that they’ve had more experiences or they have thought more about their experiences than other people.”

Steve Jobs.

**Synthesize** definition:

*verb* - to make something by combining different things. To combine things in order to make something new.

A vital part of being creative is the act of making connections between things. The more things that you have to connect (the more experiences that you have or research that you do) the broader your choices when making those connections. As a spatial designer you need to develop methods, or ways-of-doing, to help you make sense of, and track, your things.

In order to be creative your methods or ways-of-doing should be fun and enjoyable; if they are fun and enjoyable then they won’t create stress or pressure - thinking whilst under stress or pressure is a sure-fire way to stifle any creativity. Your methods are ways to practice creative thinking, to practice making the connections between your things.

Enjoyable methods will enable your mind to wander so that you can doodle with your thoughts. This is exactly the same as when doodling with a pencil, where the pencil almost moves itself and the drawing is not consciously ‘directed’, rather the thoughts emerge subconsciously as the pencil moves.

Something interesting happens when you put things together that you might not think of usually having a direct connection. Is an apartment always made from bricks and mortar? Can you make a rigid technical drawing of something as free as a dance? By opening your mind to many other possibilities, you give your design process much more creative potential.

Oskar Schlemmer, *Diagram for Gesture Dance* (1926)
The method of mind-mapping that you explored in the first Interior Design unit is a form of mental doodling - it is a less stressful, or less directed, way of making connections between disparate bits of information or things. You can use this method to make connections between things that you may not have previously thought of as having a direct connection.

![Diagram](image)

Catherine Bryne, *Things and connections diagram.*

**Specialisms**

Within the umbrella term ‘Interior Design’ there are many different specialised fields or niches that designers may work within; these are slightly varied versions of interior design where the outcome of the designed space will be of a particular type.

An interior design practice, office or studio, may become specialised in one particular field - either by choice or by experience. When it is by choice they may choose to decline the jobs/projects that do not ‘fit’ with their practice ethos. Where the definition is made by experience they may only be offered jobs/projects that ‘fit’ within the field that they are already previously known for.

Some examples of *particular* types, niches or fields of interior design practice are:

- **Leisure** interior design: Spas, cinemas, sports venues.
- **Residential** interior design.
- **Retail** interior design: shops, malls, retail parks.
- **Hospitality** interior design: Hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars.
- **Healthcare** design: hospitals, surgeries, clinics.
- **Education** interior design: schools, universities, colleges.
- **Civic and Cultural** design: libraries, museums, galleries.
- **Experiential** design: themed environments, exhibitions and interiors driven by a narrative.

If you analyse any one of these niches can you pin-point exactly what makes it particular to its own specialism, type or field? For example if you look at Residential Interior Design, how can you define what makes it different to Cultural Exhibition Design?

What knowledge, skills, or experience do you need to have to be a Residential Interior Design specialist as opposed to one specialising in Exhibitions?

**Research Task: Are there more niches?**

Conduct some online or library based research and find as many different fields, types, ‘niches’, specialisms or facets of Interior Design as you can.

Include those mentioned above and make a list in your learning log. For each specialism listed **write a single sentence, or 3 or 4 bullet points**, to help you understand and define the extent of each specialism. What makes one different from another? You will refer to this list in the next exercise.
Collaboration

In any creative project, collaboration is a vital part of the design process. Whether that is collaboration between the client and designer, or between designer and manufacturer, or collaboration between different members of a larger design team. Good designing is not often done successfully as a solo pursuit - it takes many ideas to achieve a creative outcome, and the broader the resource (things) you put in, the richer your final design will be.

**Multidisciplinary** definition:

**adjective** - combining or involving several academic disciplines or professional specializations in an approach to a topic or problem.

In interior design ‘multidisciplinary’ means where a single team is created with people from different practice ‘niches’ or specialisms. So when looking at something which is multidisciplinary we can say we are bringing together **difference**; merging it to make something new - a new team with different/diverse skills, a different ‘shape’ or different starting point.

Often when the input (ideas, research, experience) is more diverse, then the outcome will be more diverse and creative too.

Catherine Byrne, *Diverse input/diverse output.*

“A lot of people in our industry haven’t had very diverse experiences. So they don’t have enough dots to connect, and they end up with very linear solutions without a broad perspective on the problem. The broader one’s understanding of the human experience, the better design we will have.”

Steve Jobs.
Exercise 1: What do you think multidisciplinary practice is?

A guestimate without research.

You are going to give your initial impression, or understanding, of what multidisciplinary Interior Design practice is. You should do this without extensive research - we do not want to know what other people think this is; it is important that we understand what your own impression of multidisciplinary practice is.

1. Take the definitions of Multidisciplinary and Creative Practice from above and, using the list of different fields of interior design practice made in Research Exercise 1, produce a mind-map of what you think the term ‘multidisciplinary interior design practice’ means. Make connections between the different points to illustrate your understanding of the phrase and present your ideas as a hand drawn A3 sheet - please don’t use any graphic apps such as InDesign for this. The mind map should be mostly word based, but you can use images also if it helps clarify and communicate your understanding.

2. Once you have completed your mind-map you are going to analyse the information that you have found, and the connections that you have made, and distil this into a Statement that answers the question: What does Multidisciplinary Practice mean in Interior Design?

Your Statement should be a short paragraph of no more than 50 words. Make a record of your Statement in your learning log. Be sure to record your Statement and mind map together as we will come back to this exercise in Part 4 to re-examine your understanding and definition of multidisciplinary practice.

Once you have completed and recorded this exercise reflect on the process in your learning log.
Collaboration and Sequences

We have already seen that multidisciplinary practice is all about collaboration. In addition to this an important factor is the exact way in which the different specialisms collaborate. Is there a set order or sequence to the way that tasks are done or is the collaborative design process more organic than that?

The truth is that every design practice has a different ‘shape’. It will be made up of different people with different skills, strengths, weaknesses and personalities. These team members will also have differing levels of experience and responsibility - depending on the ‘shape’ of the job, project or brief required.

The ‘shape’ of each particular multidisciplinary practice can be defined by the sequences of the collaborations that it makes.

You could describe it as when one specialised field of design reaches beyond its own borders, and into another field of design.

The London based think tank, FutureGov, examined the nature of multidisciplinary design and came up with the following definition describing how one design discipline can extend beyond its own clearly defined boundaries:

“Multidisciplinary design is when different design disciplines are used together. Or, when design reaches beyond its borders to other fields in order to think laterally and enhance the way it solves a problem.”

https://blog.wearefuturegov.com/what-is-a-multidisciplinary-approach-to-design-b5f62a28b804 (assessed 02/07/2020)

Because a multidisciplinary design practice may take any ‘shape’ it can be hard to understand or define. Maybe a truly multidisciplinary practice defies definition? And maybe that does not matter.

If there is no single definition of what a multidisciplinary interior practice is - or what it does - then it may be helpful to look at some case studies in order to understand the idea a little better. Each practice is different - but they all have the underlying principle of collaboration at the heart of what they do.
Catherine Byrne, *Reaching beyond borders diagram.*
Case study 1: Studio Weave, London, UK.

Studio Weave is a small architectural practice based in East London. They employ architects and designers trained and specialising in spatial design, but also make clear that they are part of a ‘collaborative ecosystem’ which they describe as a “network of collectively motivated and actively engaged, productive thinkers and doers”.

You could describe this approach to team-building as organic. Rather than fitting each new brief to an already existing permanent workforce, there are different collaborators for each project - depending on the necessity of the brief. In this way Studio Weave can directly tailor the skills needed for each project, cherry-picking from different specialisms.

“We value idiosyncrasies, from the characteristics that make somewhere unique, to the particular skills of a master craftsperson.”

https://www.studioweave.com/about-us/ (assessed 02/07/2020)

It is this ability to morph and change from one distinct discipline to another that makes the scope of work in a practice such as this so broad. From The Longest Bench in Littlehampton, via the Camden Highline and a Roof Garden in London, to a hiking shelter Le Haut Perché in Bordeaux, France; Studio Weave have embraced difference and magpied skill sets from a diverse range of disciplines. Using combinations of different design skills, storytelling, craft skills and research based problem solving, they are able to enjoy a breadth of exciting and diverse projects unavailable to a ‘standard’ or singular ‘niche’ spatial design practice.

To find out more about each of these diverse projects have a look here:

- https://www.studioweave.com/projects/longest-bench/
- https://www.studioweave.com/projects/refuges-p%C3%A9riurbains/
**Case study 2: Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway.**

Snøhetta is a large multidisciplinary architectural design practice based in Oslo, Norway, with other studios in New York, Paris, San Francisco, Innsbruck, Hong Kong and Adelaide. They describe themselves as ‘trans disciplinary’ rather than multidisciplinary - but this word has a similar meaning. Snøhetta’s employees, drawn from different traditionally defined disciplines, work in a practice structure that crosses those different disciplines; where each has no more importance than any other, the studio structure is non-hierarchical.

They describe their team as being people who are ‘generous’, meaning that they are wanting to be part of a larger, more varied group. They have also described their team as “being singular in the plural” - meaning that they have their own individual ideas (training, experience, specialism) but are eager to share these ideas with other team members (with different training, experience and specialism) doing the same thing. They describe their method of working as ‘transpositioning’:

“Transpositioning” is the working method where participants are invited to break from their professional role and switch perspectives with others in the group. By releasing ourselves from disciplinary conventions for a short period of time, we can foster a greater sense of possibility, free ourselves from habitual thinking, and build empathy for others involved in the process. One can compare this to how some orchestras let their musicians rehearse on each other’s instruments in order to better understand the challenges and possibilities of other parts. Upon returning to one’s own instrument, this new knowledge elevates the collective quality of the performance.”

https://snohetta.com/ (assessed 02/07/2020)
Research Task: Snøhetta

Conduct some secondary research online and find three projects by the design group Snøhetta. Look for projects that illustrate three different design specialisms. You could start by looking at the link to their practice website (above) or watch some of this film to get an idea about how they work across different design disciplines: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3266&v=XnLYVBHfWlg&feature=emb_logo

Make an A4 illustrated page outlining the key specialist skills used for each project. Each A4 page should represent a different ‘suitcase’ of skills that would be used by Snøhetta for a particular project.

Hint: some of the same skills will be used in more than one project.

These first two case studies, of Snøhetta and Studio Weave, have looked at practices that are predominantly occupied with the task of design for the sake of physically making something: a building, a space, a built intervention of some sort. Multidisciplinary design practice can also include work that is research based, where the end result is not simply a built form, but is often a (bigger) conceptual idea or approach to problem solving. This happens more usually in architectural practice, but often occurs in other areas of spatial, product or industrial design practice too.

It sometimes seems as though this type of practice is beyond design, but this is often just where what we see as conventional design (the act of making something) is a smaller part of the whole.

Catherine Byrne, Multidisciplinary pie charts.

Is the amount of ‘niche’ interior design happening within a practice just a question of scale? The scale of the job or the scale of the practice?
Case study 3: A research based practice

The fundamental idea of a research based design practice is problem solving, where methods that are commonly used in design problem solving, or spatial problem solving, are used to explore problems ‘beyond’ that of a strictly design centred program. For example this method can be used to investigate a bigger, global or socio/political issue concerning the environment, poverty, or a scarcity of resources.

There are many of these design practices around the world - and as the spatial design and architecture ‘landscape’ develops and changes, there are more and more practices merging and changing too. These include different disciplines, personalities and skills to complement their own.

A couple of examples of large, international research based design practices are:

- Universal Design Studio, London, UK.
- IDEO, London, New York, Tokyo, Shanghai...

But there are many many more.
Exercise 2: Make your own case study

Taking one of the research-based multidisciplinary design practices named above, or researching another that you are interested in, find out as much as you can about their skill sets, and the ways in which they use different specialisms across design projects. Do they have particular ways in which to approach a problem - is there a one-size-fits-all method of working? Or do they change their approach depending on the problem to be investigated?

As we identified previously - a multidisciplinary design practice can take many - or any - shape. It does not necessarily need to be defined, and can change according to the project or brief given.

Present your case study as 2 landscape format A3 illustrated sheets.

Give a short biography of the practice identifying the different disciplines that they encompass; then conclude your case study with a list of the distinct skills (what is in their ‘suitcase’ of skills?) that they employ.
Connections and Collaboration

In all of the design practices mentioned so far some of the core skills required are collaboration, generosity, the ability to make connections, open mindedness and a willingness to explore beyond the boundaries of your own specific discipline. You could describe these as ‘soft’ skills - alongside the ‘hard’ skills of drawing, modelling, visualising and making.

Rather like the students studying *Bauhaus Vorkurs*, or ‘preliminary skills’, in the early 1920s; learning other skills and gaining experience outside of that defined by your own specialism, can deepen your knowledge and understanding of your design process, and make the work that you produce more creative.

A UK Design Council report, *Multi-disciplinary design education in the UK*, 2010, outlined the importance of the development of multidisciplinary practice in design, and elaborate on the benefits of what they described as ‘T-shaped people):

“In ‘T-shaped people’, ‘vertical’ specialist depth, developed mainly through undergraduate qualifications, is complemented by the ‘horizontal’ appreciation and understanding of other disciplines and professional contexts, often developed in postgraduate degrees and early career experience. Tim Brown, CEO of design firm IDEO, which has been a vocal proponent of the need for ‘T-shaped people’, describes these ideal employees as ‘specialists with a passion and empathy for people and for other subject areas’.”

So T-shaped people have a specialist knowledge in one area (for example residential interior design) but then add an appreciation and understanding of another discipline (furniture design or textile design for example - there will be many others) in order to expand their own thinking and ideas, and ultimately produce work that is richer and more informed.

A good example of a T-shaped person is the American architect and design innovator Constance Adams. Adams initially trained as an architect and so had a broad grounding in spatial design, construction methods, and architectural history and theory. She started her career working with highly regarded architects such as César Pelli and Kenzo Tange, before taking up the offer of working for NASA. She was known as a pioneer in the field of space architecture.
In the book *After Taste* there is a chapter about Adams’ work with NASA where she describes the alternative thinking necessary in order to be able to use the spatial design skills that she already had and apply them in a completely different environment - space. She also worked with others who had wildly different specialisms such as aerospace engineering, making connections between things, collaborating and using their collective experiences to design something very new.

In the interview she talks about having to think about designing interiors in a place with no gravity. As a designer yourself, take a moment to imagine everything you might have to anticipate if our feet didn’t stay on the floor when we walked into the next room.

There are many many T-shaped people working in the field of spatial design today; you could be one too. Remember that to do this you need to keep your mind broad, and be interested in everything.

“I think the more things you study, the more clearly you will be ready when you know what it is you want to do.”

Constance Adams (2017)
Exercise 3: Abstract spaces

In this exercise you are going to analyse three different interior spaces to identify the particular skills that were used to design them.

Ask yourself questions about each of the images: What things were considered when designing these interior spaces? Who uses the spaces? What do they contain? Are they available to all? Is there anything special about them? Who did the interior designer need to collaborate with? What knowledge, additional to that traditionally considered to be Interior Design, was needed? What impact does that additional knowledge have on the design of each space?
For each image you should list the disciplines (professional specialisms) that could have been involved. These can also include specialisms outside the realm of interior/spatial design; for example a museum curator may be part of the team in an exhibition design project. The curator brings intimate knowledge of the ‘story’ of each object to be displayed, and also ideas about how each object relates to the others; the connections between these objects can - in turn - help to define the shape of the space that houses them.

Once you have listed the specialisms identified in the images, make copies of each image (either printed on paper or digitally if you prefer) and analyse which particular skills were used in each part of that space. Label your images accordingly.

Think about your own involvement (as the designer you are today) in this project - what skills do you already have, and where would you need to draw on the skills of others? Using the list of skills that you have defined, try to assign each
skill to its specialism. Is there any overlap? Do some skills ‘belong’ to more than one specialism? Which ones have a singular ‘home’? Finally you should define a tool kit, or ‘suitcase’, of skills for each of the 3 images. You can use the skills that you identified in Exercise 2 as a starting point.

When you have finished the exercise upload your findings to your learning log. Reflect on the information you have defined.
Project 2: Exploring different research methods

Throughout your career you will use many different research methods to analyse and understand the spaces and sites proposed for your design projects.

So far we have looked at research as a way of finding out things that are general or already known about a project, site or client; you are familiar with secondary research - that which is done through recognised publications, online resources, maps, photos and additional published information. Through work done in previous units you are also familiar with primary research - physical and atmospheric analysis carried out directly within the space or at the site proposed. What the space feels like, what senses or emotions it evokes.

This type of research will answer a lot of questions - but often it won't answer all of our questions. Sometimes we may have particular queries that only relate to one particular project. We may need to ask specific questions in order to get useful answers that will help shape our design brief, and help us to understand the scope of a project.

Different research methods will be useful, or relevant, in different projects; depending on the brief, site or client involved. Of course the aim is always to do as much research as possible, but this should never be an endless list. The research must be relevant to the project.

Where there is a specific problem to explore you may find that there is no relevant secondary research or information available. In these cases it is necessary to carry out more specific primary research. You can also use this primary research to help refine any secondary research that you have already gathered.

This more specific primary research is where you - as designer - gather information by asking questions of the client or an end-user group. Ensuring that you ask relevant questions, you can use this information to help you define or refine your creative brief, and develop a solution to the relevant problem. Sometimes this type of research is done in stages; gradually refining the questions asked, and gradually defining the brief very exactly.
Many designers find it helpful to hold workshops with client groups (sometimes referred to as 'focus groups') as a way of gathering thought/opinion and information about factors which have relevance to the design problem.

**For example:** if the brief is to redesign an existing playground and café, the design team would prepare a list of questions to be answered by the people who currently use the playground and café. The answers can help to identify which elements of the brief/proposal may have the most value to the clients or end-users. This information can then be used to help shape, or define, the brief before progressing to the development stage of the design process. Refer back to the work done in previous units around the Double Diamond design process, and remind yourself how the technique of gradually re-defining the brief is an integral part of the designing process as a whole.

An example of this type of primary research gathering was done for the design of the Golden Lane Play Space, part of a housing estate adjacent to the Barbican in the City of London, designed by Muf in 2019. The architects worked with children from the local primary school; those that would be the ultimate ‘client’ or end-user of the space upon completion. The older school children took the role of ‘researchers’ and observed how the younger students played, feeding back their research data to the architects. The children also helped to develop models
of the play space, exploring possibilities and putting their expert, user based ‘play knowledge’ into the final design proposal.

You can find out more about the Golden Lane Play Space project here:

- [http://muf.co.uk/portfolio/golden-lane-estate-play-space/](http://muf.co.uk/portfolio/golden-lane-estate-play-space/)

**Gathering project-specific information**

Another way of gathering project-specific information is to conduct client based research. This is often done by means of a client, customer or end-user research questionnaire.

At some point in the past you may have been approached - usually in a public space, a shopping centre, a market, at an event - and been asked if you’d be willing to take part in a survey, or perhaps to answer a few questions about something? If you agreed to take part in the survey you might have thought that the questions were worded in a slightly odd way, or that they didn’t really seem to have any relevance (to the product being sold, event, or planning proposal in question). These types of questionnaire are worded in such a way as to elicit the specific information that the questioner is looking for - the questions are very specifically directed. There won't often be a question which is so broad that it can have many different answers.

To gather project-specific information in a design context, you may need to write your own questionnaire. Have a think about the information that you would like to gather.

To provide **useful** information the questions should be **specific**.

**Specific** definition:

**adjective** - clearly defined or identified. Precise and clear in making statements or issuing instructions.

In order to make sure that your questions are specific you need to consider the following:

**Is your objective clear? What are you trying to find out? Is your question clear?**

**Use a short, simple sentence of roughly 20 words.**

Don’t use ambiguous words or phrases - use the question to guide the respondent’s answer to make sure that they can be short and simple too. Use
neutral language throughout your questionnaire. Don't use emotive words or phrases. Try to be as objective, rather than subjective, as possible.

When asking a member of the public for information - whether you think the questions are personal or not - they are, because it is someone else's opinion. And it is because of this that you have to think about how, and what, you are asking. There are ethical issues around what you can and cannot ask a member of the public in a questionnaire.

To provide usable information the questions must be ethical.

**Ethics** definition:

*noun - moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.*

In order for your questions to be ethical you need to consider the following:

**Any personal information about the respondent (name, address) must remain confidential.** By ensuring confidentiality you will build trust with the respondent, this will encourage them to give more honest answers to your questions. You should also respect the respondent's privacy and ensure that the tone of your question is not invasive.

**You should anonymize the data gathered;** the names of each respondent are not relevant to your information, and so do not need to be included in your findings. Personal data such as age, gender or physical characteristics, however, may be relevant to your design project, and can be used if the information that you gather is anonymous.

**You need to gain informed consent** so that the information gathered can be used in the way that you would like to use it. This means that the respondent should be aware of (and give permission for) the consequences of how you will use the information - ie. will the information be just for private use - within the confines of your own practice, or will you publish the data; will it be used in a report or public display?
Exercise 4: A different research method; specific primary research

You are going to conduct some specific primary research to find out relevant information about a space that will be redesigned. The redesign will involve a change of use. You can choose whether you would like to situate this exercise in a public space - where you will ask questions of strangers and the people currently using the space. Or you can choose to situate this exercise in a private space known to you - where you will ask questions of people that you know, the people who are currently using the space.

You are going to write a user-survey, or questionnaire, about this space. You will question the users of this space, and then use their answers to help define a design brief for a project.

Option A: Take a room in your home or the home of a friend or family member. Your design task is to change the function of this space. For example, if the space is a bathroom - your brief is to redesign it as a room with a different purpose (bedroom, kitchen, living space etc.).

Option B: Take a small defined public space, for example a small shop, restaurant or cafe. Your design task is to change the function of this space. For example, if you have chosen a retail space then think of a new use for that space. If the space is a cafe - your brief is to redesign it as a bookshop etc., if the space is a clothes shop - your brief is to redesign it as a restaurant etc..

For your questionnaire - what is your clear objective? What are you trying to find out? Taking your space, you are going to propose a choice of three different options for the redesign of the space.

For example:

Option A: Your space is the spare room of your sister’s house. You could change it into a living room, a study or a bathroom.

Option B: Your space is the cafe on the highstreet. You could change it into a gallery, a vintage boutique, or a library.

Once you have defined the clear objective you can begin to write your user-questionnaire.

You cannot change the overall dimensions or size of the space, but you can change the internal shape of it and make new openings (windows, doorways) if your brief requires that.
Write a list of questions that will help you define your brief. You need to find out what new space your user group would like (living room/study/bathroom or gallery/boutique/library). How will they use the new space? What physical requirements will there be (furniture, fittings). Remember that you must really focus on each word that you use to ask the questions: the more specific your question the more specific, and therefore useful, the answers will be.

For example: If you ask questions such as: What do you like about this space? What do you not like about this space? - these would give you very vague, open ended or unquantifiable answers. This will not help you to define your brief. However, if you word the question in a specific way:

Q. Do you like the entrance door to this space? - This is specific.
A. Yes/No - It makes the answer specific.

If you then want to go further and add a why/what question to gain more information:

Q. Why do you like/dislike the entrance door? - This is vague/subjective
A. “Because I don’t like the colour blue” - Will give a more subjective answer

Once you have gathered all the data from your user group, sort it into categories and use it to help you write a defined brief for the change-of-use and redesign of your chosen space.

You should present your brief as a written document of between 250 and 500 words. Upload your questionnaire, the data that you collected using it, and your finished briefing document, along with any additional comments, to your learning log.

Conclusion: it’s all about choosing the right tools.

To sum up what we've learnt, we can say that there are many different types of Interior Designer. Some Interior Designers stick to practicing one particular thing, and others choose to merge and move between different specialisms, taking a more ‘pick and mix’ approach to the skills that they use.

As you develop your own design practice, and choose where you would like to place yourself within the broad spectrum of niches available, you might like to consider which skills are fundamental (have to have) to all spatial design disciplines; and which can be seen as ‘niche’ to a particular type or specialism of practice.

To help you do this you are going to do one last quick exercise.
Exercise 5: Spot the difference

You are going to define different types of interior design practice by the ‘tools’ that they use.

Each niche practice will have several fundamental skills, or tools, that are common across all disciplines; and then they will have additional tools (skills) that are specific to their specialist practice.

- **Leisure** interior design: Spas, cinemas, sports venues.
- **Residential** interior design.
- **Retail** interior design: shops, malls, retail parks.
- **Hospitality** interior design: Hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars.
- **Healthcare** design: hospitals, surgeries, clinics.
- **Education** interior design: schools, universities, colleges.
- **Civic and Cultural** design: libraries, museums, galleries.
- **Experiential** design: themed environments, exhibitions and interiors driven by a narrative.

Look at the list of different specialisms (above) identified at the beginning of Part One. Choose three, and use each as a heading to list the skills (tools) employed by each interior design specialism.

Once you have done this have a think about your own design practice. Are any of the skills that you have learnt so far more or less enjoyable to you? Do you have any skills, tools or experiences ‘outside’ what you see as purely ‘Interior Design’ that you think would enhance your own practice?

Make a list, as you did for the three specialisms above, of your own skills or tools. You can use these to help you define your own design practice.
Assignment One: What is a Creative Practice in Interior Design?

Your first assignment is to make an A3 illustrated presentation document that shows your understanding of a Creative Practice in Interior Design.

Your presentation document should be at least 5 pages but no more than 8 pages.

The first page should include your Statement from Exercise 1 as part of a title/introductory page to the rest of the document. Please do not ‘waste’ one of your pages on a separate ‘title’ page with just a title - the page limit/estimate given is to allow for a comprehensive presentation of the information gathered in your research work. Use the remaining pages of the document to show the product of the primary and secondary research done in the remaining exercises, to support the Statement that you have made.

Think carefully about the layout of each page. Every word and image that you place should be important and considered. Also think about how each image, text block or caption relates to the one adjacent to it. Choose appropriate fonts and colours for your document, making them both legible and relevant.

Upload your completed assignment to your learning log, and submit a PDF to your tutor for feedback. You may need to make sure that your document is suitable for emailing (ie. not too ‘big’). If you find that your PDF is too big to upload then you may need to compress the file or reduce the size of some of the images used.

Reflect on this first part of the course, and the work you have done, in your learning log.

Your tutor may take some time to come back to you so continue with the next part of the course whilst waiting for your feedback.