

Placing Yourself in Context

Understanding who you are,
and how this impacts your
practice

Placing Yourself in Context

Within your practice as an artist or designer you will be expected to place your work “in context”, considering where your own work fits with current and historical approaches to art and design. This is a valuable skill and will support you in discussing, understanding and developing your practice.

To begin to place your work “in context” you will consider your own context, who you are, how you work, and how this impacts your practice.

Throughout your time at university you will be expected to challenge yourself, and question ideas you take for granted, and this session is no different. Following the activities in this workbook will begin to offer strategies for these kinds of challenges, and how they can benefit you and your work.

Warming Up

We're going to begin the session by getting comfortable.

As a group decide how you would like to arrange the classroom so you are comfortably able to work together.

Will you sit in rows? A circle? Small groups?

Discussion

Why did you choose this arrangement?

How has it changed the “feel” of the room?

Action 1: Communication

Throughout our classes this year we will be discussing our ideas and sharing our perspectives. To do this effectively, and make space for everyone to contribute, we will start by developing some guidelines for communication.

Use the acronym below to suggest some guidelines for our future discussions.

R

O

P

E

S

Discussion: Guidelines

Share your guideline suggestions with the whole group, explaining why you've chosen it and why you think it would be helpful.

Is there agreement on the guidelines we need? Where do we disagree?

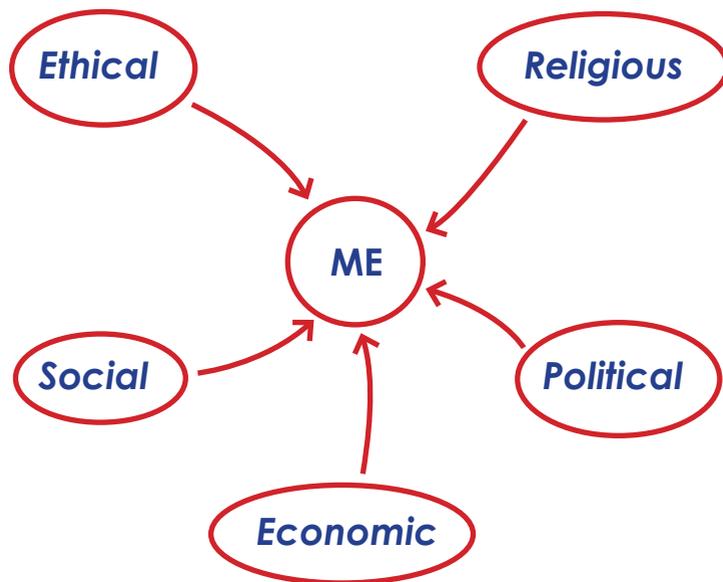
Use the space below to note down our agreed guidelines.

Action 2: Perspectives

Our personal perspective is informed by a huge range of factors, both big and small, and affects the way we think, act, and feel about every aspect of our lives.

It is easy to forget how much our perspective informs our decisions, and how our perspectives differ from one another. By recognising our own perspective we are able to communicate and collaborate more effectively with a wider range of people.

Use the following diagram as a starting point to consider how these factors influence the way you see the world.



Discussion: Perspectives

Make notes below about how these factors might impact on your perspective, ready to discuss in a larger group.

Social

Economic

Political

Religious

Ethical

Cultural

Action 3: Collaboration

Collaborative and group working is increasingly essential in creative careers. The creation and development of collaborative teams has been the subject of much study, with many different perspectives on how best to work as a team.

Dr Bruce Tuckman's forming-storming-norming-performing model of group development (1965), first proposed in the 1960s, provides a simple way to understand the stages of team working.

Use the space below to note down your perspectives on collaboration, where these might fit within the forming-storming-norming-performing model.

Forming

Norming

Storming

Performing

Discussion: Collaboration

Use your notes from Action 3 to inform a discussion on the positives and negatives of working collaboratively.

Some questions to consider:

- How can the positives influence your personal work?
- How could the negative aspects be improved?
- What would you like to learn to develop your ability to collaborate?

Action 4: Knowledge

We often take for granted what we know and how we know it, but throughout your time at university you will be challenged to reflect on knowledge and question assumptions about it.

This action gives you a starting point to think about these questions.

"the shape of knowledge is constantly changing"
bell hooks (2010)

What shape is knowledge to you?
A straight line? A circle? Something more complex?
Sketch out how you think of knowledge below.

Discussion: Knowledge

Write down your first impressions of the following questions, ready to discuss in a larger group.

What is knowledge?

Who decides what counts as knowledge?

Where can you find knowledge?

What isn't knowledge?

Action 5: Expectations

Like working in any job, being a student at a UK university brings with it certain responsibilities. These may be different to other places you've studied or worked, and will be different on each course and unit.

Note down here what you think your skills, knowledge and responsibilities will be during your time at university.

Skills

Responsibilities

Knowledge

Discussion: Expectations

Just as the university will expect certain responsibilities from you, you will have expectations of your tutors and the wider university.

Use the space below to make some notes on what you expect from these groups, ready to discuss with the group.

Tutors

Fellow Students

University Management

Going Forward

You should now be able to place yourself in context within the university, with an understanding of your personal perspective, your relationship to the university community, and what is expected of you in your time here.

Keep this booklet on hand with your work from this unit, to refer back to throughout the course.

For example, when researching historic art and design movements it may be useful to use Action 2 to understand their wider context and perspective, or to use Action 4 to consider why we are researching this particular movement.

Additional Support

Use the space below to note down any additional support services available at university that be useful to you.

References

hooks, bell (2010) *Teaching Critical Thinking*. New York: Routledge.

Tuckman, B. W. (1965) 'Developmental sequence in small groups.' *Psychological Bulletin*, 63(6) pp. 384–399.