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Reflect, connect, understand and plan: an Integrated Learning Portfolio

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Learning Journal Themes and Example Entries (from 220 total entries)

Challenges

- **Self management/organisation**

Today it hit me at how I already feel like I'm falling behind...But, I have always found managing my time effectively difficult and it's a difficult habit of mine to break, focusing more time on things I enjoy as opposed to paying a lot more attention and time to the subjects I find more tricky... Each separate subject wants 100% from you, and I fear that I don't give that 100% to all areas of the course and I need to work on that. It's not a deliberate choice of mine, I just realise it as deadlines are looming or tutors ask for work I haven't completed to the standard I feel I'm up to completing... To help me with this worry of mine, I have devised a homework timetable. I am going to fill in the areas I know I am most likely to receive work to do outside of University and when these exercises are likely to be required for marking. If I keep to this timetable, all the areas of the course requiring attention will be met, so I give myself enough time to devote my time equally and not to the last minute. Even though I feel I work better under pressure, I know it does stress me out in the long run, making me panic and under achieve!

Making up this timetable has made me realise how I should have made it a lot earlier! But if I stick to it, I should be giving plenty of time to my different subject areas. I don't want to stress out or appear as though I'm not putting in the effort, because I know I can do well at this particular course and I am enjoying it on the whole. I suppose it's still acclimatising to the new surroundings and ways of working that university gives in comparison to A' Level working.

I am more determined than before to be more organized with my work load, as the first term proved that this has been my let down. I know that I like my work to be the best it can be, and I will not move on until it is. This is a big weakness, as I could be producing a lot more work and getting a better grade. I need to learn to move on, produce more of what I am good at, such as drawings and not be distracted, which is easily said but must be done. I have proved that I can improve my grade, as last term I got a C- for my first brief, then a C+ and finally a B-. Therefore my aim for this project is to get a B, ideally a B+. I know that I need to work hard, however with money tight I cannot go out at night as much with friends as last term, and so this will be more achievable. I need to be able to balance work and social, as being cooped up in my bedroom will make me unhappy, as will staying out all hours with friends when I fail.

Throughout this year I feel time management is the main issue which has let me down on projects. Even though I succeeded in meeting all of my deadlines, I have found myself pressured into getting things done in a short amount of time. Within the first term, I don't feel my work was up to standard, due to only having four weeks for each brief and getting into the feel of things too late. For example, the last rotation area for me was printing which had different overall requirements compared to the previous briefs. Just as I had began to understand what was generally required from me. I was pleased with my designs and how things had worked out but I found the final presentation of my work took priority over the other project requirements.

I approached the second term with more confidence; I decided to create myself small aims throughout each project, to help me keep on top of what I wanted to do. I wanted to learn from the mistakes I had made on previous projects so I felt under less pressure. Having two six week projects enabled me to play around and develop ideas more thoroughly but having aims made sure certain requirements weren't getting priority over others. Using this method helped me produce a better quality of work compared to the previous term. For example, the knit project I produced before Easter was based on a sixties theme and I wanted to incorporate the use of buttons, which is quite time consuming. However, as I was keeping on top of my work using aims, I had the time to experiment and incorporate the idea throughout my project.

Experiencing troubles with time management has allowed me to personally learn how to approach projects

and I have found setting myself targets/ aims has proven successful. This is something which I will be keeping in mind for the future to stop me falling into previous bad habits.

• Transition

Whilst studying at Art Foundation Level, I was only used to doing one project at a time, whereas at Huddersfield this last term we have had over 4 projects to complete, and some of the deadlines being at similar times. I found this very hard to cope with as I'm not very good at organizing my time, and if I'm enjoying one of the projects in particular, I tend to neglect the other.

Today I had an appointment with my year tutor to go through difficulties with me and the course. How university is proving a big change to what I'm used to, the course being a lot different to what I was doing at college... I might prefer the college atmosphere and close contact, but probably will get to like University more if I make myself a life there. Now I'm focusing on the future and getting things done now, when I can, looking forward to things instead of giving up. I'm glad I had this talk. I need to stop letting myself down and keeping a barrier between things. I need to break the wall.

I suppose I realise this is where University differs from A' level, there's a lot more to experiment with and tutors are keen to let you be the one in control, as opposed to telling you what you need to do. I really like that; it makes me feel like a proper designer! But at the same time it leaves me feeling a bit blank (if that makes sense) as there's just so much one can do, I don't know where to start! So it takes me a while to get started.

This term I have found the way I work has changed, as I now feel I am more aware of what is expected of me and what I can achieve! However this doesn't mean that I handled my time very wisely. I thought I was doing well at first to get every thing done and looking coherent. but, during the middle part of this term, I had a creative block and really struggled to get much work done, and the things I did create I didn't like! I really worked hard to over come this and realise that it was because I had chosen my own subject and wasn't happy with the direction it was heading. So I took an overview and wrote a spider diagram of thoughts and ideas of my topic, this helped me to add part to what I had already put into my book and also start up linking ideas to my sketch book furthering my overview. Once I was in full flow in my sketch book everything else seemed to come together much more easily, as all the ideas popped out of my book. So my initial thoughts of the project changed and i started to enjoy what I was doing. Hopefully this will be evident in my grade.

If I was faced with this situation again of a mental block I don't think i would do much differently apart from react faster and do something quicker to overcome it. if I was completely stuck I would turn to my tutors to help or even get advice or ideas from another student.

• Technology

My key weakness is CAD, so I decided I was going to base my project on CAD even though I could hardly use it! Risky! However, I spent countless evenings in the library and the CAD room in our building trying my hardest to understand it and thankfully... I did!

Throughout the first two projects I have not used much CAD within my work. The reason for this is I struggle with CAD. I have recently got Photoshop on my laptop and this will benefit me as I can experiment within my own time to improve my skills

• Motivation

During the first term, I found it hard to be inspired by the project briefs that had been set. After doing art foundation the year earlier, I had been used to choosing my own themes that I was enthusiastic about and therefore excited to develop and complete... I am aware that when working for a company you have no choice but to work to the designated brief, so needed to come up with an idea to help me be inspired by a project brief that I am not used to.

The way that I did this was to do as much research as possible, relating both to the subject of Magna, but also branching off on ideas like rust for texture and colours such as red. I also decided to research other artists who created works that would inspire me, I did this when visiting the "Stitch and Creative Craft Show" in Harrogate.

Overall, getting out there, talking to other designers/artists about how they have created certain effects, buying medium to create these effects, really got me excited about the possibilities of me creating my own unusual pieces of textile art, and therefore I was able to approach such projects as Magna with the same enthusiasm as I had with the projects I had created at art foundation when I had chosen the theme of myself.

Recently I have found it hard to be motivated; I used to really look forward to receiving project briefs. I don't find Huddersfield town centre very exciting, and the fashion that is available in the shops is uninspiring. The other Friday a friend from my course and I decided to go to Leeds, people watching and taking photographs of anything that we found interesting. I found this to be a big help, and I felt enthused to continue to work hard and create the best possible project to my ability.

Because I didn't really know what I want to do when I leave University I didn't have much drive, so when we found a little boutique in Huddersfield where the woman who designed the clothes was very enthusiastic about fashion, listening to her and all that she had achieved since leaving University made me realise my own dreams and gave me a goal to work towards.

When starting research on a new brief, I am going to visit bustling Cities like Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and maybe even London, just to people watch and to collect together images of things that I find appealing. Also find out if there are any exhibitions on or local art galleries that related with the theme of the brief, so that I can get a broader outlook of what I should be doing, but mainly to exhilarate me and make me look forward to doing the work rather than thinking of it as a chore.

Achievements

• Enjoyment

...It was a really good term and I enjoyed it so much and I can't wait to really get stuck in with the next project and take on board comments given to me by tutors and just be more creative and have fun.

I have actually enjoyed completing the essay, after gathering all of my information on Japonisme and modernism and semiotics and so on and so on... :):)

During the second term of my course I feel I have been more organised with certain projects at university. I've particularly enjoyed a project I did during the knit rotation, in which I focussed on the children's book The Very Hungry Caterpillar. I think that my sketchbook for this project flowed a lot more than most of my others have in different rotations because I really enjoyed the way I could be so experimental and use

bright, childish colours. My own natural style really showed through.

• Self awareness

In this blog I mainly want to discuss the presentation I gave because it went really well. Because of my age and my previous experiences I am fairly confident at speaking to a group, but because I had lost some focus during this project I really wanted to make sure that I came across well during the presentation. I wanted to make sure that whoever was assessing me knew how much I had delved into history and my own past to find inspiration, and that I had thoroughly researched my target market. So after putting my work on the wall, which I always find helps me focus on the project as a whole piece, I went to the cafe to settle down and think about what to say. I wrote a plan out starting with my inspiration, leading onto how I found my target market, my enthusiasm for this market and why I think my designs would do well here. I think that because I had given the time to thinking and writing about my work, when it came to speaking, the words flowed and I think I engaged my small audience. I am hoping this will be reflected in the mark I get.

It has come to the end of the second term and I am pleased with how the past few weeks have gone. I have received my grade for the recycling fashion accessories project and I am satisfied with my grade and feel that it reflects the amount of effort I put into the work completed, but looking back now I feel I should have explored more the possibilities of using recycled materials and eco friendly techniques. This would have really fulfilled the project requirement and reflected the recycling aspect. I think I improved on identifying my market more accurately as instead of just saying my designs were for fashion accessories of any kind, I focused my designs on a particular accessory which was obi belts as it fitted in well with my theme of folk costume. I think I will probably take this through into my future projects as it really helped to narrow down my market and it gave me an outcome to fully focus on. Overall I enjoyed the project and was happy with my designs.

Overall I am extremely happy with the result of this project, I think it is the best one I have done to date and the one I am most proud of too. I got a B grade for the project, I had hoped to improve to a B+ as my last weave project was a B but on reflection I think the grade is probably fair and I feel happy as this was the first project we were required to do a theme board, market board and market file and I don't think any of these things were quite good enough to justify a higher mark. I am going to go into my next project for Knit with a better understanding of all of these elements so I hope that I will be able to bring everything together for that project.

To sum it up:

Good Points:

- Final Fabric Designs
- Technical File
- CAD designed patterns for my weave presentation boards
- It was interesting to look at a country I definitely wouldn't have chosen had the choice been down to me.
- I really enjoyed the whole process of setting the loom up (even if I did let myself down at the end)
- My mistake didn't ruin the project

Not so good points:

- I was too hasty which led to mistakes
- I think my market file is lacking
- I would have liked to spend more time on my visualisations
- I think my sketchpad could have been better thought out

- I shouldn't have led the mistake with threading the loom put me off weaving which resulted in me not having enough time at the end of the project.

.... So in conclusion throughout both projects I have come to find that:

I struggled with time management but have succeeded in balancing in out. I need to expand on my ideas and be more creative and experiment more and my work is always changing and is becoming more individual by each project.

I started this project with the intent of using metal as a harsh material and creating something delicate and pretty in a contrast. Half way through during a tutorial I was told to do something more garish and scary and I have realised the importance of variety within my portfolio...Now we are nearing the end of design projects I can definitely see an improved standard of work from foundation and as well the first projects of the year. I have been more experimental and have enjoyed creating tactile and textural pieces comprising of several layers. I still feel I am struggling with CAD but now I have it on my laptop and am able to practice in my own time. I feel the reason why I dislike it is I prefer hand made pieces as I think an important element in my designs is touch. I like to create things that people want to touch to see how they feel and this is what interests me in other designers' work and pieces

I learnt a lot about myself through this project. I learnt that you can just be adventurous and be as creative as you want because that's what people look for, you don't have to stick to the page you can make things bigger and better and more interesting. I learnt that you also need to really go away with your ideas and try out everything not just stick to the first thing you come across because it's the safe option, however that when you get that idea to stick with it and then pull everything in together. I felt my time management was good but could be improved and should, when it comes to the last week, be put in a plan so every aspect is covered. I also learnt to just have fun and try out new things not just stick to what I feel is comfortable and me.

• Action planning

I think in future i will take more care with what I am creating on Photoshop and make sure that I follow the instructions and ask for more help when needed and also be more prepared with my own imagery related to my project.

In future projects I will develop my ideas in my sketch book more so as to get more ideas for my final designs. I will also plan my time better so I can get more work done and will not have to rush my work at the end of the project.

This project involves a lot of experimenting with recycled materials. However I came to a point when I felt I had no where else to go that I had reached a dead end. I was unsure of the next step or which direction to follow.

So to try and get back on track I looked at the key words on the project brief given. I then got a large piece of paper and then put the word recapture in the middle, this then led me on to recapture a certain experience I'd had recently. After more key word searching I've settled on key words which are going to be combined to create my project.

By doing this I felt that I had moved away from the main body of the project and opened my mind to current things which have happened and it helped me to see various paths which could be taken. ***I felt that this could've been done at an earlier stage, maybe right at the beginning so that I had a theme to run with which could've then been the main basis for my exploration of techniques. I feel that in***

future I will do mind mapping at an earlier stage or do it more often so that if i feel to involved and lost within my project. It gives me chance to stand back and see what other options I could take instead of returning to the same one.

Now that I have created this mind map, I will now go and write a first draft of my project brief so I have a clear understanding of my project and what is to be done and then start to pull out various techniques and apply them to the theme as well as explore the theme through drawing and manipulation of recycled materials.

Reflection on a presentation

To improve the situation for next time:

I will prepare bullet points, so I know what I am going to talk about
I will find items of work that I want to highlight, before the talk
Make sure I am ready to answer questions about my work
Prepare a list of questions that I wish to ask my peers and tutors

Overall, I thought the best part was finding out the feedback. The items of work that I was unsure about got analysed and the feedback I got made me a lot more positive about my work. I enjoyed seeing what other people thought about their own work too, as things they thought of as flaws, or mistakes, were not always seen this way by others.

• Achievement/Pride

This has been a very constructive term and I am delighted to have finished my final self directed project, with a high grade! Although I am determined to do even better next time, this had given me the encouragement I need to push myself further and boost my confidence. This blog has helped me reflect on the ups and downs of this term and highlight my strengths and weaknesses, which I can only hope to improve in the future...

It's a good feeling when you complete something you initially find very hard to start. It's always that first sentence, the introduction, which I struggle with. But once I got that done, I was on a roll! I think though, it was extremely hard to keep it to 1000 words!!!! After gathering all my information, and reading so many different sources, I had so much to write but not enough space... I think this links back to when I did Sociology at College though, because I used to just write and write, there was never a word limit, and so I got everything down on paper, I wasn't selective, whereas this time, I have had to be selective. It's not a bad thing, though! It has actually taught me to re-read every sentence in order to determine whether it is relevant or not! It's helped me to remove irrelevant text and so I've been able to keep it within the word limit :) very proud!