

## Unit 201: 7. Design module evaluation

### Objectives

To effectively evaluate something, you need to have set objectives to be able to review the outcomes at the end of the process.

I would say that my primary objective for the Design Unit was:

1. To complete all of the tasks in the Design Unit by the December classes.

I also set myself some personal objectives to set out how I would approach the Design Unit:

2. To complete all of the Design Unit tasks without judging the outputs and being overly critical (slay the 'it's not good enough monster').
3. To use up as many of the hoarded arts and crafts products I have accrued over the decades and either never used or used once and then not tried it again.
4. To involve my little boy in trying out the exercises alongside me and model constructive behaviour around regularly practicing work in order to achieve outcomes.

### So how did it go?

I really loved the Design Unit and I think that was mainly down to the objective of no judgment and not caring if it 'looked good' or met expectations (not even sure whose expectations I'm trying to live up to either).

Giving my inner critic a sabbatical was really liberating.

Prior to starting the course, I'd been listening to a podcast by Canadian photographer and writer David Duchermann called *A Beautiful Anarchy*. He covers so many creative topics but has several great sessions about 'Starting Ugly' as he calls it.

The premise is that no one starts out with masterpieces. The first attempt/ draft/ edit is always generally going to be 'bad'. But it's just the starting point that can then be learned from, improved and/ or refined until you get to the outcome you want.

No one would expect to go out and run a marathon today because they were good at running at school, but a lot of us, me included, expect to pick up their chosen medium and produce good work after no recent practice.

The best thing about the Design Unit was applying this advice and practicing it through the portfolio whilst doing the tasks. The more of tasks I completed, the less precious I was about the aesthetics.

I stopped comparing my book to the (rather intimidatingly good) books that the Level 3 students kindly shared with us. I realised that those books reflected their creators.

I wanted to include the colour, chaos and influences of my life at the present time.

I also wanted to bring some of the sense of fun and exploration from the many, many toddler books I've read with my little boy. So, I've taken this influence and applied it here by using flaps, fold outs and pouches to present my work.

## **A note on high/ low relief and branch weaving**

Initially I was really struggling with the high/ low relief, what to do and how to have some fun with it. I started this exercise after our November class, realising that I needed to get cracked on with everything so that I would be able to finish on time.

I was looking on Instagram and Pintrest for some inspiration and came across branch weaving. I realised I could tick off quite a few things here: demonstrating weaves, high/ low relief, using texture, making something 3D from 2D materials.

I had a really enjoyable morning doing it. I got to try out the 3-rod wale, zig zag weave, over/ under, create deliberate void, put pom pom string and French plaits in for high and low relief. I also used some of the colour theory from the beginning of the unit to select yarns that would work together. Now I have a multi-purpose piece for the Design Unit evidence and a great little wall hanging at the end.

I realised at the end of the project I'd put the weft (I think it's called a weft) on wrong, as I've not done weaving before, which made it hard to finish off the ends and sew them. Next time I know better and will tie it up differently.

Some of the weaves and the experimental approach to a project can be applied to basket weaving.

## **How does the Design Unit relate to basket making?**

The specific take-aways for me that can be applied to basketry include:

- I learnt about colours and how to mix them and make use of them, what works together to complement each other or contrast.
- I know about using black and white images to look at baskets other people have made and see how they've been constructed without the distraction of colour.
- I learnt about line, shape and texture and how they can be used to vary the design of baskets.
- Overlays are a great way of looking at options in design to be able to make decisions about the final basket, without wasting material.
- Experimenting with no end result in mind is fun and, even if the final product of a 'experiment' doesn't come to anything meaningful, something from it might come in useful for a future project, such as discovering a new technique.
- Basketry techniques can be used with other materials that will flex and shape in a similar way to willow and other traditional weaving materials.
- Time management and planning to get the overall unit finished: getting started with creative projects can be hard but then once you get started everything starts to roll and then it can be hard to stay on track and make sure you do what needs to be done.

## **Key value of the Design unit to basket making**

For me, the biggest benefit has definitely been helping to reshape my whole attitude and belief system about approaching creative projects.

I've really fallen in love with painting with water colours – I'd bought some but never really had a go beyond a half-finished attempt started ten years ago. I will continue to paint with feathers because it's such a tactile sensation.

I now allow myself to think that what I am doing with a single project is just part of a much longer process of becoming good at a skill.

Something might not be exactly what I'd hoped it would be; but now I am able to take a step back and ask myself why not and where are the bits that I can improve on? Where are the bits that are good?

During the Design Unit I would start something and make myself 'finish' it, then leave it a few days before coming back to it, if I wasn't keen on it or thought I might not include it. I found that after some settling time, I was less harsh about work and most things have been included.

A good example of this is the plasticine basket experiment. I don't really like it or the page that it sits on, but it helps to meet some of the criteria for section 3 and 6, so I've included it.

Similarly, there are some notes saying where I wasn't keen on some of the mark making outputs.

I will now have a 'make it, leave it, critique it' policy, so that I am more open in my perception of my own work and see where it has value.

## **Summary**

So, to come back to the initial objectives set out at the start of this evaluation:

1. I have met my objective of completing the tasks and handing in the unit on time. It was a push at times and involved 5am starts to make the time in my family life/ work life/ personal life but has definitely been worth it.
2. Yes, I managed to change my mind set and push aside the critical voice. I think over time this will be the most valuable outcome of the unit.
3. No corner of the craft cupboards have been left unturned! In fact, I will have to buy some more acrylic paint. There are still loads of craft supplies, but I think I will be far better at just using them now.
4. I have to admit that this objective didn't turn out as I imagined. I got Freddie his own little portfolio book and he has helped with some hand printing, painting and unsanctioned scribbles. Where he couldn't use my materials (sharpies, alcohol markers, fine nibbed pigment liners), he just got in a paddy and refused to use the alternatives supplied. However, we have spent a lot of time together at the kitchen table doing activities side by side - he liked to do jigsaws or build his Lego while I did the Design Unit. He knows that I've worked hard on it and it's something I value.