

· **Have you identified a sub-question, theme, keyword, or concept to develop through practice?**

Yes. Through my practice, I aim to explore the sub-question:

“How do audiences from different cultural backgrounds interpret the same narrative moment in films of the same subject but from different national cinemas?”

The key concept is “interpretation as a reflection of cultural identity”. My theme centres around audience interpretation of national cinema, using the figure of Mulan as a comparative lens.

· **Does your practice test variables, how many?**

Yes, my practice tests multiple interrelated variables across both the film text and the audience response dimensions.

On the film side, I test:

1. Two versions of the same film subject (Mulan, US vs. China), which differ in:
 - Duration and narrative pacing
 - Plot structure and character arcs (including dialogue, psychological development, and relationships)
 - Aesthetic design (costume, makeup, mise-en-scène, spatial setting)
 - Audiovisual language (use of music, sound design, cinematography)
 - Atmospheric construction (through score and visual tone)
2. These variations are treated as textual variables that may influence how viewers interpret the same narrative moment.

On the audience side, I test:

1. **Audience cultural background (Chinese vs. non-Chinese)**
2. **Audience interpretive approach, including:**
 - The type of information they focus on (textual vs. emotional vs. symbolic)
 - The logic and cultural frameworks used to explain a character’s motivation

· Can you link a variable to other research, practices, influences, experiences, or something you've read?

Yes. Each variable in my study is informed by existing theoretical frameworks and prior research in both film studies and cultural interpretation.

For the film-side variables

(e.g., visual aesthetics, narrative structure, character development):

I draw on theories of film form and narration from David Bordwell, and on screenwriting models such as Robert McKee's notion of character arc and psychological motivation. These inform my analysis of how differences in characterisation, mise-en-scène, and audiovisual language may influence meaning construction. The concept of national cinema as culturally encoded filmic expression supports treating these differences not just as stylistic but as culturally meaningful variables.

For the audience-side variables

(e.g., cultural background, interpretive logic, focus of attention):

I link my work to:

- Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory, which positions meaning as constructed through cultural frameworks;
- Reception theory, particularly the idea of "interpretive communities" (Fish, 1980);
- My own application of Gestalt psychology and cultural completion, which helps explain how viewers fill narrative gaps based on internalised cultural schemas.

These frameworks collectively support my hypothesis that national cinema cannot be understood solely through production or content analysis, but must include the audience's interpretive behaviour—which itself is shaped by background, exposure, and value systems.

· Have you documented how these influences, experiences, or readings have shaped your thinking and evolved your practice?

Yes. In Week 3's presentation, I applied this thinking by showing two film versions of Mulan created in different national contexts (China and the U.S.) and guiding audiences to reflect on a shared narrative moment: why Mulan joins the army. Their interpretations, influenced by memory, values, and cultural associations, helped shape the next phase of my inquiry. I also reflected on how immersive elements (3D, Dolby 5.1) might affect audience reception and emotional engagement.

· Have you experimented with design, for example, by creating visuals, sounds, or concept art?

Yes. I curated an immersive viewing environment using a multi-screen setup with naked-eye 3D and Dolby 5.1 sound to enhance sensory engagement. I intentionally placed the Chinese version of Mulan first, with more implicit narrative cues, to test whether immersive effects can assist in decoding culturally embedded messages. This experiment serves as a design prototype for the final exhibition version of my project.

·Have you identified what information you are gathering from the audience, how you will gather it, and what you hope to discover?

Yes. I am gathering qualitative responses to three key questions regarding Mulan's motivation for joining the army, and how audiences understood that motivation.

I want to identify what information they drew on — whether from within the film or from their own cultural memory — and how they rationalised their interpretations.

My goal is to uncover whether audience interpretations reveal consistent cultural identity traits, and whether differences between Chinese and non-Chinese viewers point to divergent decoding frameworks. This will help evaluate whether national cinema can be effectively analysed from the perspective of film form + audience interpretation, rather than production-side alone.