

MA 3DCA A Guide to Creativity:



Creativity, what is it and can I have some?

(Created 12-12-2016) (Revised 13-01-2018)

How can I get the best out of the assignments and demonstrate my individuality and creativity within the confines of what is expected from the briefs?

Common terminology used in this document.

Assignment = a task, or job of work allocated.

Brief = A set of instructions referring to an assignment.

Yorkshire Pudding = A traditional food item made mainly from eggs and flour.

Your own creativity and what you perceive as really interesting can be, and usually is, very different to that of your friends and colleagues. One of the things that makes the world special, is that you, as an individual, have a unique perspective on the world. You may not think you do, but your creativity can show others a new picture or angle on the world that no one else may be aware of.

You should aspire to represent the world in new and original ways in order for your work, no matter how mundane the subject, to be enlightening and interesting to others.

This may seem like a “tall order”, “a big ask”, “too much to expect”, but it really is all about finding your own voice and putting “your spin”, “your stamp”, “your impression” on the work that you produce.

Most employers in the creative industries, are looking for people that are highly competent, skilled and who communicate well with colleagues but added to this, they are looking for creativity in their work force. Without creativity, output can become unsustainable and stagnant.

Don’t be put off by the word, it doesn’t just mean artistic creativity, it can come in all sorts of forms. A new way of implementing a process which makes it more efficient or effective is an example of creativity. Writing computer programme which uses a new approach can be creative. Any act of problem solving with regard to a process or system of communication is a demonstration of creativity.

Masters students should be highly creative:

As Master students, you must try and find your own voice.

Creativity is like a conversation, it has to be two way. The project brief or assignment demands that you fulfil its specifications, but you can speak to it too and place your own spin on top of those specifications by bringing your own life experience into play.

Your cultural differences can also be used creatively to enhance the brief.

The assignment makes demands of the designer by laying out specifications and the elements needed to fulfil the assignment.

The designer fulfils assignment by implementing what is specified and building the elements needed but also provides additional elements or a new framework or structure which makes the project more communicative, informative and memorable.

(We could include “more entertaining” and “more interesting” but these are subsets of being more communicative, informative and memorable).

The Yorkshire Pudding Video:

How, in practical terms, can creativity be demonstrated? The easiest way, is to look at an example.

Once upon a time there were three students, Student A, student B and student C. Each were given the same assignment.

The Yorkshire Pudding Video Assignment:

Make a film demonstrating visually, the process of making a Yorkshire pudding. The basic process must take no longer than 1 minute 30 seconds to portray and must be suitable for an international audience whose age is 10 and older.

Two of the Students Portray the process of pudding making in the same way:

Student A and student B divide the process of making a Yorkshire pudding into three basic stages.

The measurement and description of the ingredients.

The mixing of the ingredients.

The cooking of the puddings.

All three students, however, include the same nine shots to show the process.

SHOT INDEX	Description
Shot 1	Start with some typography “How to make a Yorkshire pudding” but each student uses a different background.
Shot 2	Cut to a kitchen surface where we see some flour being spooned out of a bag onto weighing scales.
Shot 3	Cut to a CU view of measurement dial which clearly indicates the weight of 250 grams.
Shot 4	Cut to a CU of an empty mixing bowl where we see the flour being added.
	We see a tea spoon of salt added to the flour.
	Three raw eggs are cracked and added
	A measuring jug clearly seen to contain 20 millilitres of milk is, poured into the mixture.
	The contents are mixed together
Shot 5	Cut to a wider shot of the pudding mixture being spooned into an oven pudding tray.
Shot 6	Cut to a shot of the oven into which the pudding tray is placed and the oven door closed.
Shot 7	Cut to a CU of the oven thermostat control knob which we can see is set to 250 degrees centigrade.
Shot 8	Dissolve, to denote the passage of time, to the view of the oven. The oven door is opened and the pudding tray is removed.
Shot 9	Cut to the kitchen surface where the pudding tray is placed. We can see that the pudding tray contains beautiful brown Yorkshire puddings ready to eat.

Student A's Approach the Film

Student A is keen to show his creativity.

He starts the film with typography "How to make a Yorkshire pudding" set against a nice still photograph of a woodland scene.

Eager still, to make a creative impression and to make sure the audience understands each part of the process, he adds a commentary soundtrack as follows:-

Shot Number	Commentary
1	"How to make a Yorkshire pudding."
2	"Measure out 250 grams of plain flour into a mixing bowl."
4	"Add 5 grams of salt then, add three eggs, then 20 millilitres of milk. Mix together"
5	"Divide the mixture into the pudding tray ..."
6	"Then place into a pre-heated oven set at 250 degree centigrade."
8	"After 10 minutes, remove the pudding tray."
9	"Here are your finished Yorkshire puddings."

His final film duration is just over 2 minutes long which allows for the extra creativity he has added.

Student B's Approach the Film

Student B is also keen to show his creativity but knows that if he does not fulfil the brief or deviates from the brief specifications, he could even lose marks.

He starts the film with typography "How to make a Yorkshire pudding" set against a still photograph of a single finished Yorkshire pudding.

He keeps the length of all nine shots to an average length of nine seconds each so that he is sure of keeping the film within its time limit.

Eager to make sure the audience understands each part of the process, he adds graphic overlays in the top left hand corner as explained below and uses metric and imperial measurements in case some of the audience are over the age of 50:-

Show Number	Icon overlays
-------------	---------------

2	An icon of a weighing scale with the following typography “250 grams / 8 oz”
4	The weighing scale icon is replaced by an icon of a salt cellar with the following typography “5 grams” and an icon of a heaped tea spoon next to it. These icons are then replaced by an icon of a chicken and three distinct egg shaped circles denoting eggs times 3. These icons are then replaced by an icon of a cow and a water tap (denoting a choice of either milk or water) and a jug with the following typography “20 mL / 4 fluid oz.
6	An icon of thermometer with the following typography “250 C / Gas Mark 7”.
8	An icon of clock with the following typography “10 minutes”

His final film duration is 1 minute 25 seconds.

Student C’s Approach the Film

Student C is also keen to show her creativity and wants to complete the brief exactly as specified but add her own mark and experience to the final film.

She starts by carefully analysing the brief.

“Make a film demonstrating visually, the process of making a Yorkshire pudding”.

She realises that the word “visually” means she cannot rely on using sound but she decides that some soft slow music may help the pace of the film.

“The basic process must take no longer than 1 minute 30 seconds to portray”.

She also realises that her film could go over the limit of 1 minute 30 seconds providing the actual process of making a Yorkshire pudding stays within that limit.

“and must be suitable for an international audience”

She realises that she too must rely on iconography in order to communicate across language barriers.

“whose age is 10 and older”.

For the younger viewers she realises that the film should be concise with an element of fun. For the older viewers the iconography should be very clear and include imperial measures as well as metric.

Basic Research:

Student C has a younger 11 year old sister so she will ask her what would appeal to her in film about how to make a Yorkshire pudding.

Student C will also look on-line to see if there are any examples of Yorkshire pudding videos. She makes a note of the URLs of the videos that are most relevant so that she can include them later in a research section of her presentation.

Student C is not happy with the basic structure that her colleagues have used, so she decides on six basic sections instead of three, plus one special fun demonstration at the end

What equipment you will need.

What ingredients you will need.

The measurement of the ingredients.

The mixing of the ingredients.

The cooking of the puddings.

The final roast cooked dinner including your own Yorkshire puddings.
The special fun demonstration of the Yorkshire pudding print.

In addition she will add a rolling, right to left strap line, which continues all through the film, explaining in English, the history of the Yorkshire pudding and one or two facts about Yorkshire puddings like, “Henry the VIII used Yorkshire puddings for cleaning his boots after the daily stag hunt”

Student C portrays the process very similar to student A and B but uses an average shot length of around five seconds. This allows her time to introduce the equipment needed like the mixing bowl and the spoon OR an alternative electric mixer. It allows her time to introduce the ingredients and the recommended measure of each in both metric and imperial, also that plain flower is preferable to self-raising (a big red cross through this one) and that water can be substituted for the milk. She achieves this all through use of photography and iconography.

She starts the film with typography “How to make a Yorkshire pudding” set against a background of a repeated pattern of colourful splodges.

The film then explains the equipment needed and the ingredients before proceeding through the process. Like student B, she clearly portrays the cooking time necessary but uses both an icon of 10 minutes in analogue form and in digital. The penultimate shot is of the Yorkshire puddings in context on a plate which includes meat, vegetables and a hand pouring gravy over the meal.

The final shot then demonstrates what to do with the spare puddings which the children can use by dipping them in water based paint, and make pudding print patterns on old lining paper, just like potato prints. This finale puts the opening typography in context. “How to make a Yorkshire pudding” is set against the very same pudding print.

The Assessment of the Yorkshire pudding films:

How do you think these students got on in their assessments when they presented their Yorkshire pudding films?

Student A actually lost marks because he couldn’t explain the relevance of the woodland scene behind the opening typography. If a Yorkshire pudding was made from wood, then it might have been relevant. He didn’t lose marks for including commentary in the sound track but it was a waste of his time because the brief made no mention of audio being part of the process of explanation. He lost marks for not including any extra visual means of understanding the process and did not portray quantities and ingredient measures visually either. He also lost marks because his portrayal of the process was too long in duration.

Student B fulfilled the brief in full without losing marks and has taken a few opportunities to show his creative potential. Using an image of a Yorkshire pudding behind the opening typography was a good idea and his use of imperial measurement in addition to those of metric along side cleverly designed icons, does show some creativity. The demonstration of choice between the use of milk or water using the iconography is also a good idea.

Student C fulfilled the brief in full without losing marks and has taken a full opportunity to show creative potential on multiple fronts. She has teased us with an opening image which makes no sense until we get to the end of the film. She gains marks for

researching the topic and looking at alternative frameworks to the film's structure. She gains marks for carefully explaining in visual form, and in isolation, the equipment and ingredients needed. She gains marks showing the pudding in its final context, the plated meal. She gains marks for a clever and creative ending which will make her film memorable. She gains further marks for clearly explaining why she has made certain decisions. For example, why she decided to use a profile of sprung kitchen scales for the icon denoting weight, instead of a simple balanced beam icon. She states that the balanced beam icon can be confused with representing "Justice" and not "Weight". She also gains a nominal mark for the addition of appropriate music which suites the action of her film. The addition of the historical strap line, with text running along the bottom of her video, also provides extra value

Her final film duration is 2 minutes but she is not penalised because the duration of the actual process falls within the time limit. It is always worth reading the brief two or three times to make sure you don't miss details.

Summary:

When you look at an assignment, think about what you can do, to make your version very special, without deviating from the specific requirements requested in the brief. In using your creative head, you will deliver a better and more memorable product and in the real world, away from college, it will help to make your career sustainable.

Improving Your Creativity:

If want to improve your creativity there is lots of advice available. You can do this by looking online or buy or borrow a book on the subject.

Here are three examples:-

Leonardo da Vinci

How to Think Like a Creative Genius

Creativity in Management by John Cleese

Leonardo da Vinci:

A writer called Michael Gelb has studied Leonardo da Vinci.

Leonardo is considered to be one of the most creative minds of all time. Gelb has listed what he feels were the most important attributes that made Leonardo so creative.

Attribute Name	Explanation
Curiosity.	He was curious, and wanted to know about everything in the world.
Independent thinking	He wanted to listen to those who thought differently to him and not those who would just agree.
Sharpened senses	He made time to appreciate beauty in all things including nature.
Embracing of uncertainty	He was not afraid of uncertainty but welcomed it.
Balancing of logic with imagination	He was capable of using the logical side of his brain in equal measure to his imaginative side.
Balancing of body with mind	He was great athlete and believed that a healthy body enhances the mind.
Making of new connections	He thought freely with an open mind allowing his thoughts to make new connections or associations.

How to Think Like a Creative Genius:

This is an abridged version of an article written by Valerie van Mulukom, research associate in psychology at Coventry University, which was published in the "i" newspaper of 11th January 2018.

When children engage with creative content or watch others be highly creative, they become more creative themselves.

There are two phases to Creative Imagination. "Divergent thinking" is the ability to think of a wider variety of ideas, all somehow connected to a main problem or topic. It tends to be supported by intuitive thinking which is fast and automatic. You then need "Convergent thinking" to help you evaluate ideas for usefulness within the main problem or topic. This process is supported by

analytical thinking - allowing us to select the right idea. The first requirement for selecting the right idea is exposure and experience. Making mistakes is also a requirement.

Micro biologist Louis Pasteur said "Fortune favours the prepared mind". For many people becoming completely absorbed by an idea is key to finalising a successful creative project. For that you need something scientists call a "Fantastical Imagination". It is associated with increased creative imagination, narrative ability, and perspective taking (using alternative perspectives). Participation in pretence play and role play can increase proneness to higher levels of fantasy. "Episodic Imagination" is similar but predominantly makes use of real (Episodic) memory details rather than imaginary (semantic) details when visualising events in our minds eye. This helps individuals better imagine alternative pasts and learn from their mistakes, or imagine their futures and prepare for them.

Research so far indicates that individuals with a higher capacity for visual imagery experience more sensory details when imagining their future. Moreover, through years of self improvement books suggest to "imagine it and it will happen", this is actually the opposite of what you should be doing. The best preparation for the future is paradoxically to imagine the process - not the outcome - of your desired future event. One study showed that when students imagined desired outcomes (good grades for an up and coming test) they performed significantly worse than students who imagined the process getting to the desired outcomes (imagining studying thoroughly).

Creativity in Management by John Cleese:

An abridged version from a Video Arts film, shot at Grosvenor House Hotel on 23rd January 1991

A sculpture, when asked how he had sculpted a very fine elephant said that he had taken a big block of marble and knocked away all the bits that didn't look like an elephant.

Creativity is not a talent but a way of operating.

It is not something that you have or don't have.

It is not dependant on IQ.

It is based on a capacity to play and play for its own sake.

People function usually in one of two modes, "Open" and "Closed".

Creativity is NOT possible in the closed mode.

Closed mode is about being purposeful with lots of things to be done, being under pressure, about tension and stress, there is usually no humour,. Creativity can not exist in this mode.

Open mode is being relaxed, expansive, less purposeful, is where curiosity for its own sake can operate, being playful.

Being playful and where we are not under pressure to come up with solutions or to solve problems.

Example, Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin, had previously organised some culture dishes so that they could grow some cultures upon them. The next day he noticed that cultures had grown in all the dishes except one. He must have been in open mode because his interest focused on the dish with no growth. If he had been in closed mode he would have focused on the others on which the culture had grown and simply thrown away the one where there was none. His openness and natural curiosity enable him to find one of the greatest medical discoveries on all time.

Alfred Hitchcock is another example where he would insist on changing the subject and tell a story if planning meetings got too intense.

Once a solution or an idea is found in the open mode then the closed mode must be adopted to carry it out. Focus must be narrowed and the decision stuck with. We need to be able switch from open to closed, back and forth until the solution or idea is refined. We generally spend too much time in closed mode.

Getting into open mode needs five conditions:-

Space

Time

Time

Confidence

Humour

Set the boundaries of space and time to achieve an Oasis of quiet. The first dose of time is used to turn away from thinking about all the things you should be doing. Once in the Oasis of quiet, use the second dose of time to stick with the problem longer even if you have found one solution. More pondering time produces more creativity so maximise the amount of pondering time. Confidence is needed to give weight to your pondering, and you cannot be spontaneous within reason. Spontaneity has to be unrestricted.

Humour helps us to keep in open mode, solemnity only serves pomposity and has a negative effect on creativity.

Humour is the essential part of spontaneity and essential part of playfulness and essential part of creativity

Keep your mind resting against your pondering and you may get a reward from your unconscious

Work in groups with friends you trust and like, and always be positive towards them.

Creativity is like humour. In a joke the laugh comes at a moment when two different frameworks of reference are connected in a new way,

The joke below is an example of a connection between two separate ideas that generates new meaning.

"A woman doing a survey into sexual habits asked an airline pilot when he had last had sex. He replied nineteen fifty eight. The woman is surprised and queries this. The airline pilot, equally surprised, looked at his watch and replies that it is only twenty one ten now".

The connection of two separate ideas that generates new meaning.

Juxtapositions can be tried between two ideas or frameworks.

Try crazy ideas referred to as Intermediate impossibles by Edward De Bono who discovered lateral thinking. These can be used as stepping stones to find new and meaningful pairings of frameworks or ideas.