

Unit 4: Contextual References in Art and Design

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

In this unit learners will develop the knowledge and skills needed to research and respond to historical and contemporary practice in art and design. Being able to undertake relevant research, and to visually analyse the work of practitioners, is a key skill when working in the creative industry. The knowledge and skills developed in this unit can support learners in approaching the research requirement in other units within these qualifications.

Learners will develop their research skills including identifying appropriate sources, selecting pertinent information, presenting the results of research, and using the information to inform practical activities. Learners will investigate historical and contemporary art, craft, and design practice, exploring how creative practitioners work as individuals or as part of key movements or cultures. Learners will develop the skills to recognise how work from the past has influenced contemporary practice, and will understand that creative practice builds on and develops others' ideas from the past and puts them into the contemporary context. They will learn that external factors such as cultural and creative trends will affect how artistic responses are received.

Learners will need to undertake appropriate research and use their findings of historical and contemporary practice to inspire their own work. They will carefully reference sources and present their findings in appropriate forms such as writing, photography, illustration or through verbal presentations. Learners will need access to relevant secondary research sources including the internet, books and journals. Learners would also benefit from the opportunity to engage in primary research through interviewing practitioners or visiting exhibitions where possible. Incorporating visits to galleries, museums, and exhibitions during the delivery of this unit could provide an opportunity for learners to experience the work of practitioners first-hand and be a valuable source of inspiration. It is also helpful to engage with professional practitioners, either through visiting speakers, or visits to workshops and studios, to explore how they work and how they are influenced by historical and contemporary practice.

Delivering the learning aims

The unit content is separated into three distinct learning aims and content areas that identify the types of knowledge and skills learners should demonstrate. While the unit content is separated into learning aims and content areas, these should not be viewed as completely separate elements. Art and design learning works best when it is approached holistically, and it is important that the learning aims are delivered as an interconnected continuum of learning.

For **learning aim A**, learners will undertake research into historical and contemporary art and design practice. When researching historical creative practice the focus will be on historical art and design movements, where learners must identify key ideas, messages, or approaches that defined each art and design movement, and the artists associated with the movement. When researching contemporary creative practice, learners should explore practitioners who inspire them and who they feel relate to their own creative practice. This part of the unit provides an

opportunity to invite local practitioners to discuss their work and working practices with learners to provide an opportunity for primary research.

If you do not have access to practitioners who could be invited to speak to learners there are a wealth of videos clips, podcasts and vlogs of practitioners discussing their creative process that could be used to help initiate discussions with learners. In addition, arranging for learners to go on trips to museums or galleries, could provide an opportunity for learners to experience work first-hand.

For **learning aim B**, learners should develop the skills to visually analyse the work of creative practitioners. By identifying formal elements and visual language within the work, learners will start to visually deconstruct the work. Through this process of deconstruction, learners will begin to decipher the meaning, message and/or feeling imparted by an artwork, as well as the creative intention of the practitioner.

Learners should examine a diverse range of different practitioners. After introducing learners to the techniques used for visual analysis, learners should be encouraged to apply the techniques to work they research for learning aim A. This will help learners to develop their skills, as well as supporting their understanding of the context of the historical and contemporary work they have researched.

For **learning aim C**, learners will apply practical skills in order to develop a creative response to the work they have researched. This learning aim could be evidenced through a series of practical outcomes produced over time, or through a single final piece produced at the culmination of the unit.

Initially learners may experiment with work 'in the style of' the practitioners they have researched. This could include using similar materials, techniques, and processes, or exploring similar ideas or themes. However learners should apply an iterative process to develop their own outcome. The final outcome should take influence from the work researched but should also reflect the learner's own creative practice.



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Investigate historical and contemporary creative practice	A1 Investigation A2 Historical creative practice A3 Contemporary creative practice	A portfolio of evidence produced in response to a brief to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of investigation into historical art movements and associated practitioners evidence of investigation into contemporary creative practitioners evidence of visual analysis of the work of creative practitioners researched initial ideas for own response to contextual research evidence of development of ideas for own response to contextual research a final outcome(s) in response to contextual research ongoing annotation reviewing and reflecting on work.
B Visually analyse the work of creative practitioners	B1 Deconstructing art and design work B2 Visual communication in art and design work	
C Develop and produce a creative response to contextual research	C1 Developing own response C2 Production of an outcome	

Assessment guidance

There are 60 guided learning hours assigned to the unit. Delivery must cover all the unit content and prepare learners to produce evidence to meet the assessment criteria.

There is an Example Assignment Brief (EAB) provided in the teaching materials section for this specification on the Pearson website. This provides a helpful vocational scenario and a breakdown of tasks to meet the assessment criteria. This EAB may be adapted for local use.

The work for this unit is internally assessed. The submission for assessment is a portfolio of work evidencing the work created in all activities in the most suitable format. The portfolio of work should demonstrate learners' ability against the assessment criteria.

Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction

This is one way that the unit may be delivered, showing the type of activities you might use to prepare learners with the necessary knowledge and skills for assessment. The learning aims combine to develop learners' understanding of ways contextual research can support their practical work.

Introduce this unit by explaining how and why developing and understanding of contextual references is important when working as a creative practitioner. This could involve a teacher-led discussion with learners that focuses on why it is important for creative practitioners to understand how art and design has developed over time, and how contextual factors can affect the work practitioners produce. This could draw from examples of key art and design work that are considered key moments in the development of art and design practice.

You could use the EAB for this unit provided in the teaching materials section for this specification on the Pearson website along with this delivery guide, or adapt it for local use. Trips and visits can be incorporated into the delivery of the unit as this can give learners an opportunity to conduct primary research, and also can be good sources of inspiration. Guest speakers can also be valuable at any stage of the unit to complement practical activities, and to give valuable insight into how practitioners' work.

Learning aim A: Investigate historical and contemporary creative practice

Learning aim A is designed to enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of historical and contemporary art and design practice.

- **For A1**, the process of investigation will form the basis of this unit, and learners will need to develop the necessary skills to research effectively. Initial teacher input should introduce a wide range of different sources of information including secondary sources such as books, journals and the internet, as well as primary sources such as interviewing practitioners and visiting exhibitions. Learners will need to independently identify relevant sources of information and be able to evaluate the validity of information. Initially you can direct learners towards appropriate information sources for their research. However, as the unit progresses learners should be set independent research tasks in order to develop these skills.

Learners will also need to develop the ability to select pertinent information when researching. Learners must consider the relevance of information selected and analyse the impact it has on their understanding of the practitioner or movement. To help them develop these skills, ask learners to identify relevant information from a given text and to justify their selection, identifying how the information impacts their understanding of the movement or practitioner being researched.

Primary and secondary sources should be used for investigation and it would be appropriate to invite guest speakers or to undertake visits to exhibitions, museums, or commercial studio spaces. Following this initial teacher input, provide learners with opportunities to expand their investigation by identifying additional practitioners or lines of enquiry they feel are relevant to the brief.

Learners will need to present the results of research in an appropriate format. This could include artist studies in a sketchbook, a screen-based presentation, a reflective journal, blog or other appropriate form. Presenting the results of research affords learners an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding, and you could develop learners' ability here through teacher-led workshops on presentation skills. For example, demonstrating how decorating and embellishing sketchbook pages in a way that reflects the aesthetic qualities of the practitioner or movement being researched, can demonstrate good understanding of their research.

- **For A2**, use a combination of teacher input, independent research, and practical experimentation for learners to explore a wide range of historical creative practice. Selecting the historical art movements to cover during the teaching and learning phase of this unit, should relate to the focus of the programme as well as the scope of the assignment brief being delivered. If you are delivering this programme with a focus on a specialist area of art, i.e. fashion photography, then you are free adapt delivery to complement that specialist area. It is also possible to study historic art movements from a variety of countries or cultures.
- **For A3**, introduce a range of contemporary art practices and discuss how these have been informed by historical art movements. Starting with an overview of the diverse areas of contemporary practice, including different specialist areas, such as fine art, craft and commercial activity. Investigating contemporary art practice, provides an opportunity for learners to independently select a contemporary practitioner that they feel inspired by.

Learning aim A provides a great opportunity for learners to develop their understanding of how creative practice has evolved and developed over time, and how the context of creative work is key to understanding its significance. Being able to recognise how creative practitioners are influenced by work produced in the past will also help them understand how their own work is influenced and inspired by both historical and contemporary practice.

Learning aim B: Visually analyse the work of creative practitioners

Learning aim B, prepares learners with the skills and techniques to visually analyse artwork in order to develop their understanding. Learners should be given multiple opportunities to practice this process in order to develop their confidence and skill. Drawing on the research conducted for learning aim A, learners will be able to analyse examples of practitioners' work with an understanding of the contextual factors, and historical precedents, that influenced the work.

- **For B1**, learners will need to develop the techniques used to visually deconstruct art and design work. Use teacher input to explain how these techniques work, to enable learners to identify how practitioners have used formal elements and visual language. It is likely learners will already have some understanding of formal elements and visual language in relation to their own work from the delivery of other units, or from prior learning, as these are fundamental in the creation of creative work. However, learners must now develop the skills to recognise and analyse how other practitioners use these elements.
- **For B2**, learners will need to use the results of the visual deconstruction undertaken for B1 to evaluate what the artwork is trying to visually communicate. By considering how the artists has used formal elements and visual language learners will need to start to infer the artists meaning, message or mood within the work. This process will also be

informed by learners' wider contextual understanding of when, where and how the work was produced gained through the research undertaken for learning aim A.

You could provide learners with an image of a piece of work and ask them to identify and evaluate how formal elements and visual language have been applied to communicate visually. Through this process learners will be able to develop a glossary of art terms that could be applied to analysis of any given piece of art. Drawing on established examples of how artwork has been visually analysed by scholars and critics, learners should apply the same techniques when looking at art and design work. Use whole class discussions or small-group work to undertake this process of visual analysis, to encourage learners to develop their skills. As the unit progresses, provide learners with the opportunity to undertake this analysis independently.

Part of this unit will also be about recognising the subjective element of visual analysis and recognising that alternative readings or opinions about the work do not invalidate the conclusions reached by the learner. The lack of a definitive right or wrong answer within this process of visual analysis can be challenging, and learners should develop the ability to justify their own opinions about work.

Learning aim C: Develop and produce a creative response to contextual research

Learning aim C is designed to enable learners to apply practical skills by developing and producing a response to their contextual research. Drawing on the skills developed in other units in this qualification, learners will need to explore media, materials, techniques, and processes related to their research. They will need to use these to develop and refine their ideas through application of the creative process.

- **For C1**, learners should undertake initial practical exploration of the media, materials, techniques, and processes used by the practitioners they are investigating. This will support their understanding of the art and design work they are investigating as well as providing an initial starting point for their own practical work.

A series of teacher-led workshops relating to the areas of research undertaken in learning aim A will allow learners to develop specialist skills and ideas related to their contextual research. For example, if learners are researching the Surrealist art movement, they could undertake a practical workshop experimenting with surrealist drawing techniques.

Initially, it is likely that the work produced by learners will be a pastiche of the practitioners they are exploring. However, as learners develop their visual analysis skills, they should be encouraged to consider the ideas and concepts behind the work to allow them to create their own practical work that responds to, rather than copies, the work they have researched.

Following initial teacher input, learners should be encouraged to undertake a process of iterative development. Learners should document their practical work through drawings, samples, photographs, and screenshots of the processes and presenting these in sketchbooks, reflective logs, or other methods of recording. Annotations detailing their creative decision-making should be added to support the refinement of ideas. Learners should take the opportunities inherent in the development of creative work by allowing the results of ongoing investigation and experimentation to guide the development of creative work, it is likely that through this process the project will evolve beyond the initial pastiche response to the work.



- **For C2**, learners will apply the knowledge and skills they have developed in order to create a final piece or pieces in response to their research. Learners could create either a single final outcome or a series of outcomes connected to different areas of their research.

Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit could be delivered in a combined assignment brief with units:

- Unit 6: Working with a Graphic Design Brief
- Unit 7: Working with a Photography Brief
- Unit 8: Working with a Textiles Brief
- Unit 9: Working with a Fashion Design Brief
- Unit 10: Working with a 3D Design Brief
- Unit 11: Working with a Visual Arts Brief
- Unit 12: Working with a Digital Art and Design Brief
- Unit 13: Working with a Design Crafts Brief
- Unit 14: Working with a Moving Image Brief.

Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International Level 2 Qualifications in Art and Design. Check the Pearson website at: (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources>) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Textbooks

Berger, J. *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin Books 2008) ISBN 9780141035796

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art* (Phaidon 2007) ISBN 9780714832470

Hodge, S. *The Short Story of Modern Art: A Pocket Guide to Key Movements, Works, Themes and Techniques* (Lawrence and King 2019) ISBN 9781786273697

Hughes, R. *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change (60th Anniversary Edition No 3)* (Thames and Hudson 2009) ISBN 9780500275825

Mirzoeff, N. *How to See the World* (Penguin Books 2015) ISBN 9780500600214

Rintoul, J. *Integrating Critical and Contextual Studies in Art and Design* (Routledge 2016) ISBN 9781138786950

Williams, G. *How to Write About Contemporary Art* (Thames and Hudson 2014) ISBN 9780500291573

Journals

Art Monthly <http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/>

A-N Magazine <https://www.a-n.co.uk/>

Art Review <https://artreview.com/>

Beauty Papers <https://beautypapers.com/>

British Art Journal <https://britishartjournal.co.uk/>



British Journal of Photography	https://www.1854.photography/
Creative Review	https://www.creativereview.co.uk/
Design Week	https://www.designweek.co.uk/
Fashion Studies Journal	https://www.fashionstudiesjournal.org/
Flash Art	https://flash---art.com/#
Frieze	https://www.frieze.com/

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for teachers to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that teachers bookmark useful websites and consider enabling learners to access them through the school/college intranet.