

Getting art and design students to write by stealth (Presentation)

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Getting art and design students to write by stealth

“Multiplication is vexation,
Division is as bad;
The rule of three doth puzzle me,
And practice drives me mad.”

(Traditional nursery rhyme)

Dr Simon Bell

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Why stealth, why the “rule of three”?

- Art and design students’ respect for writing
- Art and design students’ respect for form

The brief

- Produce a manifesto to summarise emerging studio practice
- 3 words
- 1 image
- Make it all fit inside an equilateral triangle (on a template)
- Do it in a week

Theoretical angles

- Essays “deepen” learning (OU)
- Visual writing “akin to creating a drawing” (Tonfoni)
- Short story writers “conscious of form” (Bayley)
- Six-word sagas’ “incredible inventiveness” (Leith)
- Creative process “unpredictable” (James)
- Creativity as reconciling the disparate (Koestler)
- Autonomy, auto-didacts (Parker, von Clausewitz)
- Verbal decentred? (Jewitt)

Is this manifesto an essay?

- According to some, no
- But it must depend upon what essay intends to achieve

This project's focus

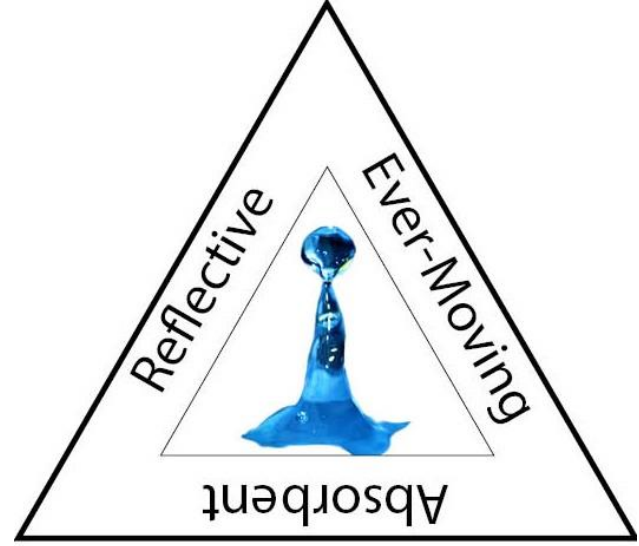
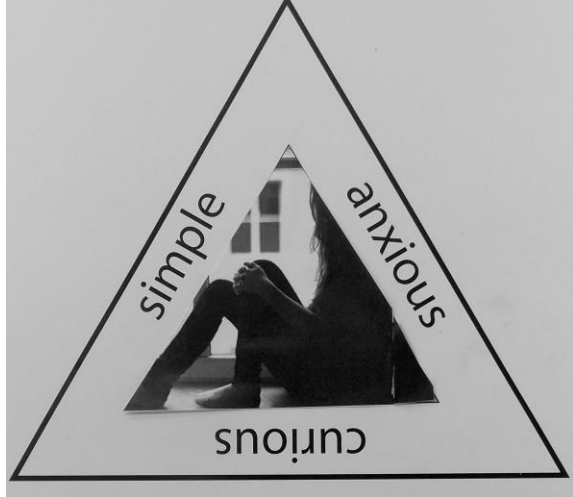
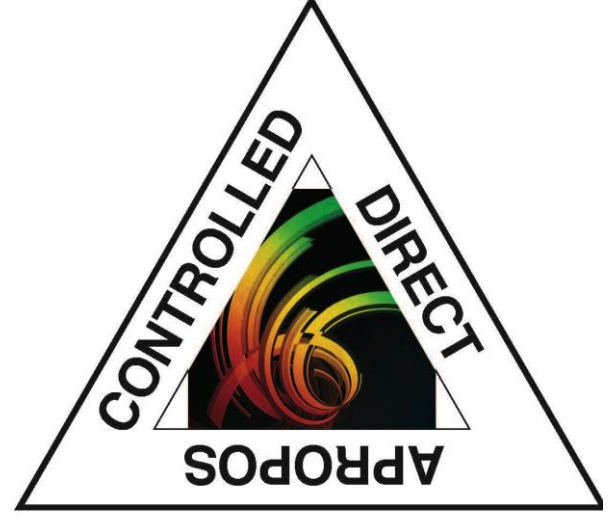
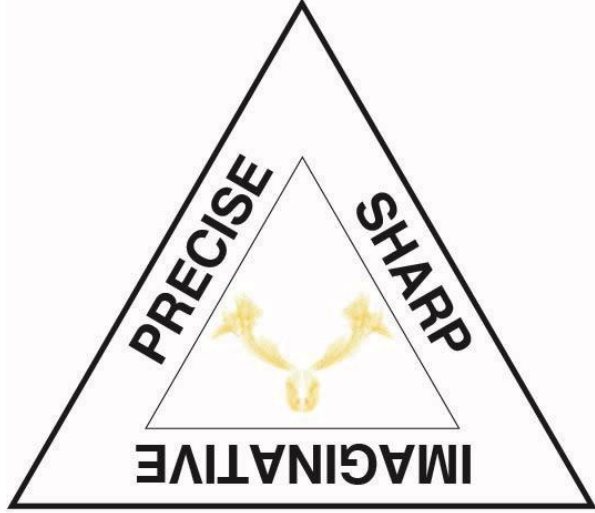
- The difference between an essay which is good because it answers the question well...
- ...and an essay which is good because students learn from it
- These are not necessarily the same thing
- The same essay can do both

The project's essays' learning

- Was intended to help reify students' self-awareness and identity as practitioners,
- **Came in short student reports,**
- **and 1-2-1 staff/student tutorials after the project...**
- ...and was the rest of the essays' "texts".

Essay considerations' outline

- Consistency
- Register
- Stand-alone words?
- Which words first?
- How would we know?
- Sequence
- Function of image – explain / unify / determine...?
- Multiple meaning



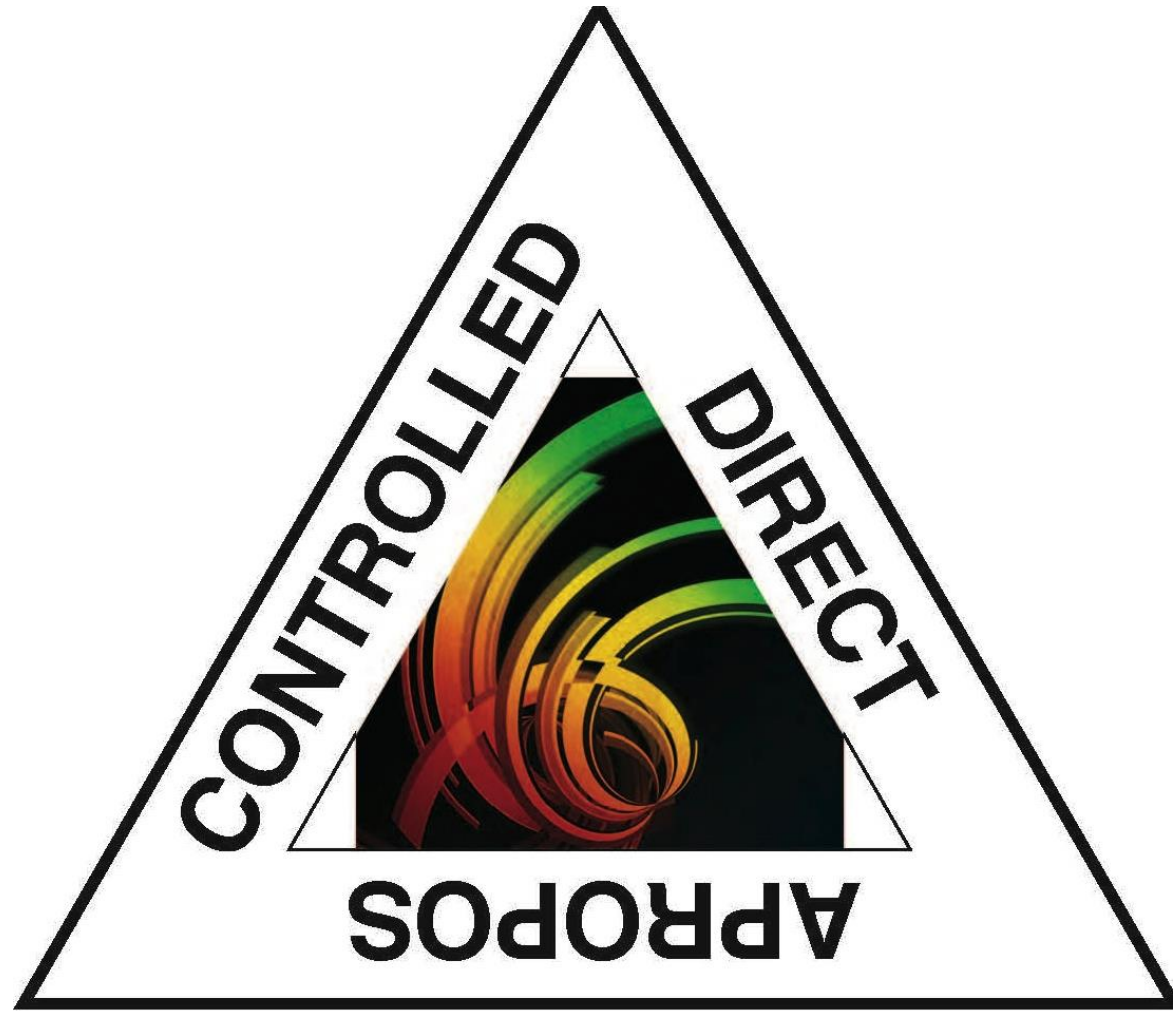
*“I am not the same
as my work*

I am very quiet

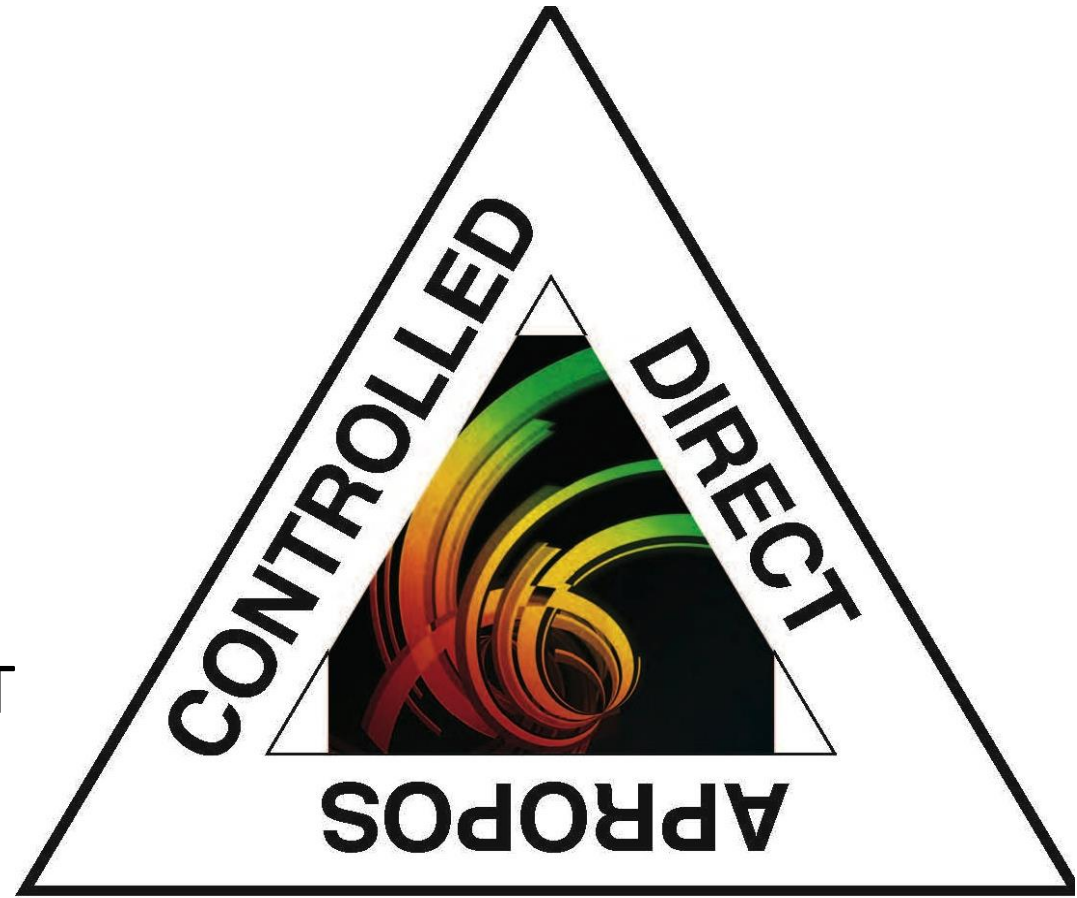
*my work [pushes]
boundaries*

*I suppose that is me
pushing the inner me*

*showing who I am
without being obvious”*



- Image concretises
- We might disagree
- Diffuses meaning
- APROPOS correct but unusual
- Draws in reader
- Same length as DIRECT
- Connects these more
- Capitals smooth out words' visual differences
- Connection even stronger
- Design relevance

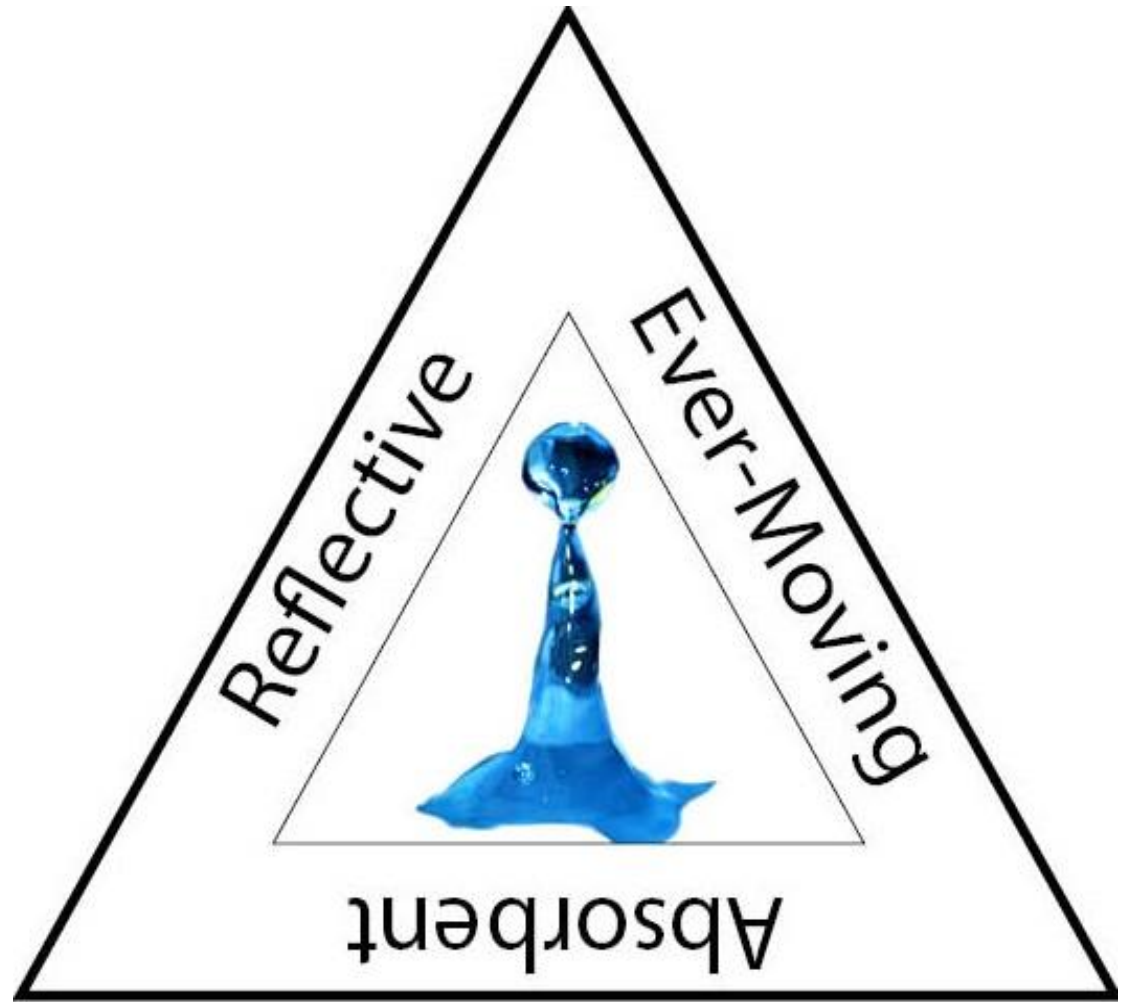


“Water often relates to my work [because it is] often influenced

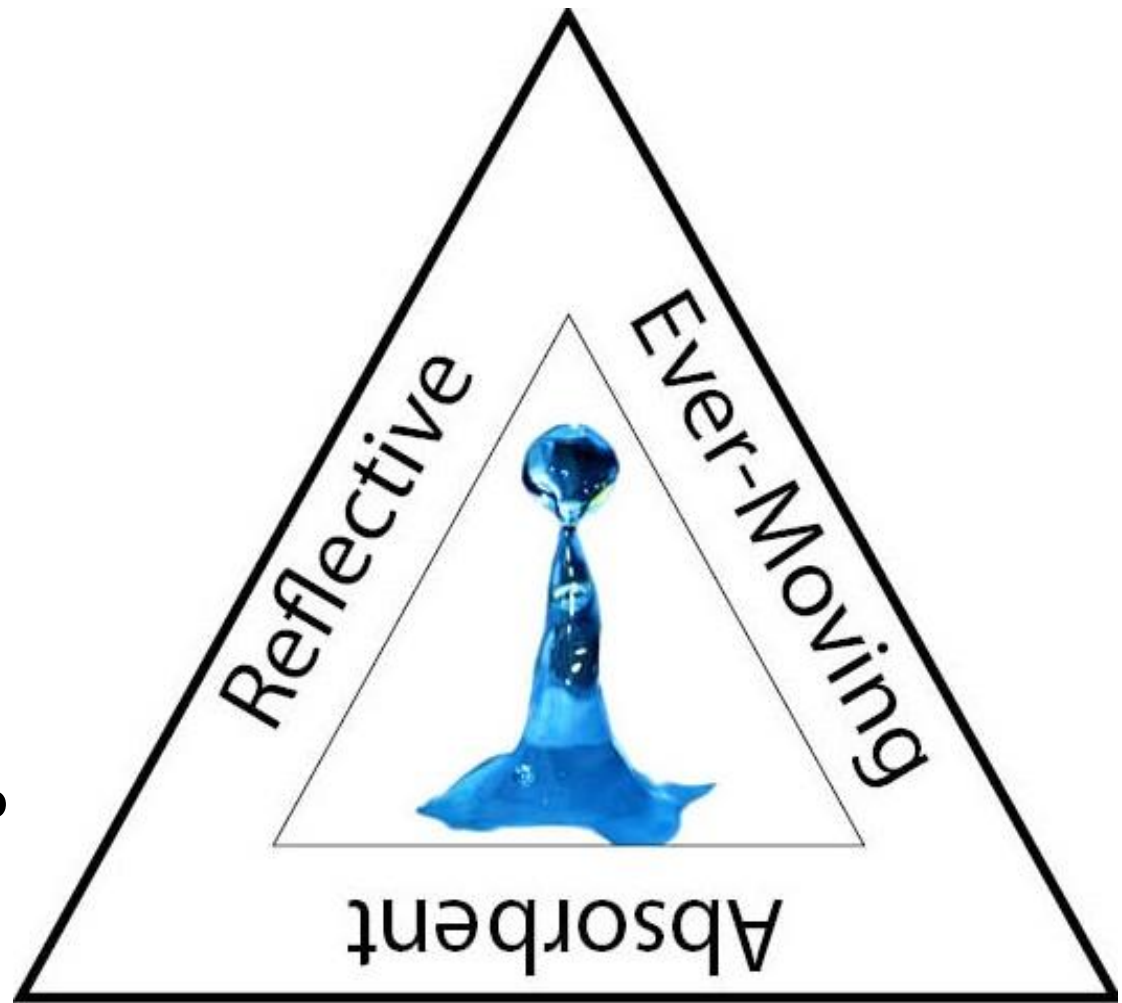
and ‘ever-moving’ like water ripples

‘absorbent’ [...] relates back to the other two words

I take in critique much like a water droplet on a surface ”



- But water ripples out from a disturbance
- Might suggest impact and resonance
- Is any creative work without influence?
- Mature and candid views on creativity
- Enigmatic ... **'droplet'**?
- Diminutive, fragile
- Or gently mocking?
- Are we all being fooled?
- Or is it just me?



Conclusions

- Mechanism to cope with gaps and frustrations
- Need to look at details **and** the bigger picture
- Interesting points raised
- Disingenuity; abdication; diffused meaning; suggestion
- Notions of creativity and visual sensibility
- Language and grammar – problems minimised?
- Inclusive – but three words hard
- Image – universal link ?
- **Focus on what essay does and not what it is**

Thank you!
Any questions?

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