



# Seeing Slowly: Embedded Visual Literacy Workshops for Fashion & Textiles Students

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Hello, great to meet you!

University for the Creative Arts  
– a specialist for creative arts,  
technology and business  
located in South-East England.

My role as Liaison Librarian  
supports School of Fashion &  
Textiles and Business School  
for the Creative Industries.

Embedded workshops to  
support research, underpinned  
by visual & information literacy.



UCA Fashion Zines



**How do Fashion & Textile students generate ideas?**



Fashion (and textile) designers are...

“obsessive collectors, always on the hunt for new and exciting things to inspire them. So, the need to gather and source material in the creative process is essential for feeding the imagination.”

Fashion (and textile) designers research...

“can be conducted at any time and involves observing the world around you, collecting and recording objects, images and ideas that inspire you.”

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(Sorger & Seivewright, 2021; Mbeledogu, 2022)



UCA BA Fashion Atelier & Tailoring

Exploration, play, experimentation, serendipity...

Fashion & Textile students conduct research from multiple sources...

Books, Zines,  
Magazines,  
Lookbooks



Artist/Designer  
websites, Music,  
Film, Exhibitions,  
Trend Databases

Social media  
(Instagram, Tik Tok),  
AI image  
generators, original  
photographs





# **Practising ‘Slow Looking’? The 5-step approach**



1. Slow looking is an important counterbalance to the natural human tendency towards fast looking.
2. Slow looking tends to be under emphasised in general education.
3. Looking closely is a shared human value.

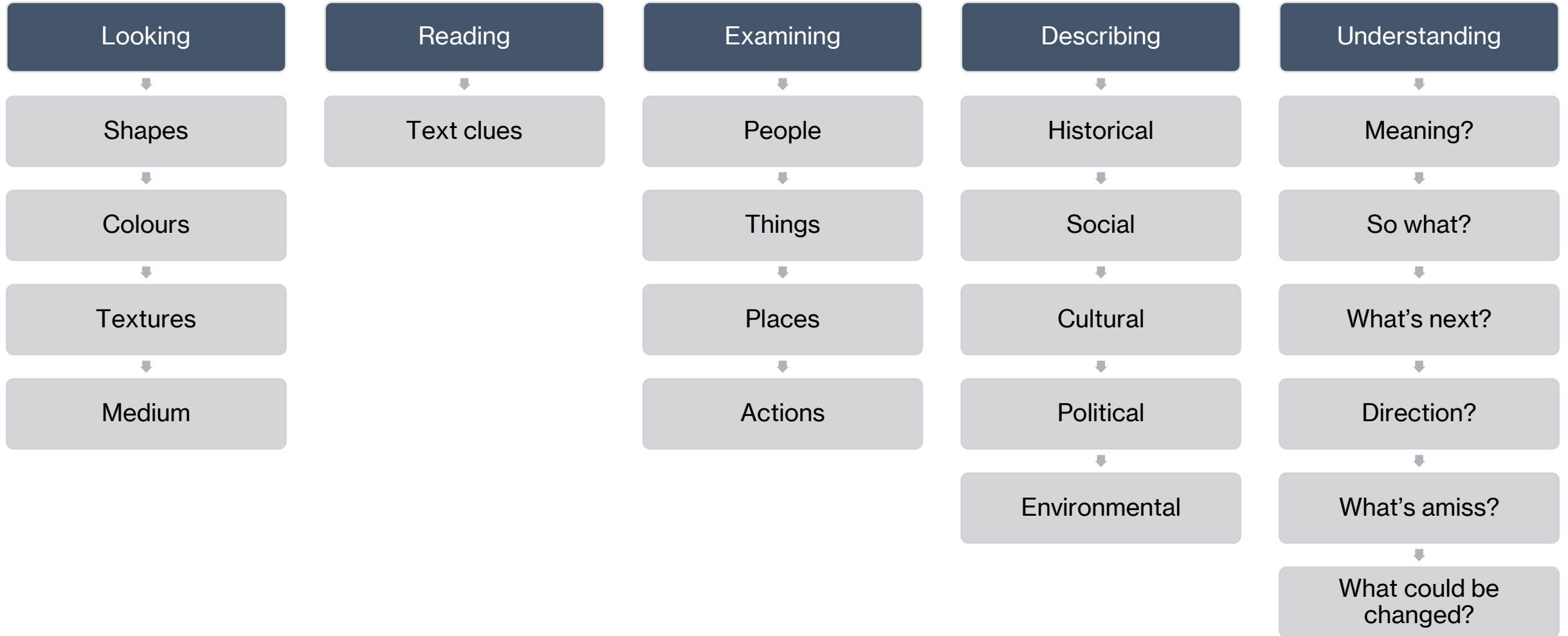
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(Tishman, 2018)



Eye (Microsoft 365 stock image)

# Interpreting and analysing images – a 5 step approach







O'Neill (2022) At: <https://graziemagazine.com/articles/balenciaga-spring-summer-2023/>



#### Step 4: Describe

What does this mean? Describe the image and its subject. Think about deeper contextual, social, political, cultural, environmental ideas...

#### Step 1: Look

What do I see? Look at the image and articulate what is going on.

- KANYE WEST AT THE BALENCIAGA S23 RTW SHOW.
- STAND ALONE IMAGE
- THE JACKET IS THE FOCUS OF THE IMAGE INSTEAD OF HIM. - OBSCURED
- FOCUS OF THE SHOW WAS WAR.
- SETTING IN MUDDY TRENCHES WAS STRIKING.
- CAMO COLOUR PALLETTE
- FOREBODING, SYNCHRONISED.

#### Step 2: Read

What does the text tell me? Read any textual information that accompanies the image and consider what else it tells you.

OPTIONAL: Scan QR code at top

"SECURITY"  
 ↓            ↓  
 WAR        PROTECTION  
 ↓            ↓  
 UNIFORM  
 TAKEN FROM GRAZIA MAGAZINE.  
 BLOG STYLE REVIEW.  
 [WAR] - PERSONALISED FOR THE DESIGNER.  
 BRAND REINFORCEMENT  
 "BALENCIAGA"

#### Step 3: Examine

What do I see now? Now that you know more, examine the image again.

- NON WE KNOW THE PERSONAL ASPECTS RATHER THAN A PUBLICITY STUNT.
- PUTTING A STORY INTO IT.
- SETTING IS THE STRONGEST VISUAL ELEMENT.

#### Step 5: Check understanding

What else do I need to know? Generate new questions based on your findings. What other ideas could you research from this image?

WHY WAS THE SHOW IN THIS SETTING? - IS THERE A STORY BEHIND IT?  
 WHAT CONNECTION DOES BALENCIAGA HAVE TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE?

#### Reflect.

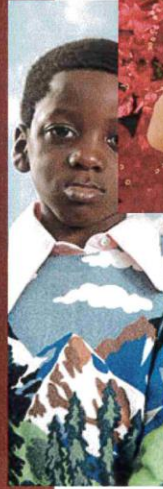
Scan your answers, what words, descriptions or questions have you got that could help you with searching for further information?





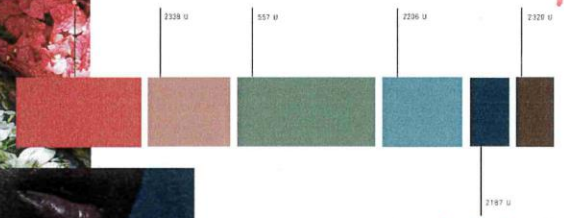
Designers adopting a multifaceted approach to embed feminine clothing for menswear too.

Stoicism is not masculinity



→ outside landscaping (flowers, T-shirt (Alyssa Carter with Reminiscing))  
→ Branded Photoshoots.

→ earthy natural colours.  
→ These could be considered genderless and not push gender-associated stereotypes



- Different people being photographed having different stories
- Lot of male energy
- Red used in more than one image, flowers
- Staged elements
- Red symbolising power and confidence

- ~~No textual inform~~ Masculinity rebranded: Title
- Breaking male stereotypes
- Portray complexities of manhood
- Using male models of different nationalities to portray diversity
- Made for society to be more open-minded about men changing their identity perspectives.



**Why 'Slow Looking'?**





# Generative AI and visual dis/misinformation



Xavier, P. & Midjourney (2023)

A.I. generated photo of Pope Francis in a white Balenciaga puffer jacket. Recently went viral on social media, fooling thousands of people.

The rise of generative image AI raises many questions and implications for visual literacy.

Visual dis/misinformation relies on just the right amount of the outrageous and the benign to trick people into credulously sharing it.

# Generative Fashion & Textiles ... a new type of artist/designer



Raphaël Garsault, Devante Parks, Charlie Charp, DreamingDigitally [GIF]

Generative spaces extend beyond the library into industry.

Slow looking may be a useful tool to interrogate practice, process, and even the bias/ representation of AI or digitally created images.

‘Slow looking’ may be a way to impart the value of **research**, **process**, and **questioning**.



# Visual literacy workshops as generative spaces

Facilitating an open space for students to create new ideas or practices and interrogate the meanings and relationships with images/visual culture, and their potential to challenge existing cultural, social ideas.

Creating a space to have open discussion about points of difference and similarity between what we see and what we understand.

As fashion and textiles curriculum adopts new creative artificially intelligent technologies, students will be immersed in new digital generative spaces that will equally need critical thinking to evaluate visual information and the provenance of images.



# Thank you – any questions?

Let's collaborate! Stay connected...

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Liaison Librarian

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# References

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