ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT:
VISUAL RESEARCH;VALUE AND VALIDATION
RORY MOONEY - 2025/26

How are notions of 'correct' visual research constructed, learned, and performed by students, and how can alternative, non-traditional visual research practices be institutionally validated to enable more dynamic narrative formations and critically engaged outcomes?

This action research project asks: How can a structured, multi-source research framework support diversity and inclusion by validating students' positionalities and expanding what is recognised as legitimate research within fashion education?

3×3 was developed in response to ongoing institutional and sector-wide commitments to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the decolonisation of the curriculum. The project was designed to challenge dominant, Eurocentric models of research that often privilege what is seen as 'good' fashion research and marginalise alternative forms of knowledge/references. By asking students to engage with three distinct and intentionally diverse research lists, the project foregrounds multiplicity, cultural specificity, and lived experience as valuable sources of knowledge.

Students were encouraged to draw on both traditional and non-traditional research materials, including screenshots, images from everyday life, personal archives, and social media. This approach actively disrupts hierarchical notions of "acceptable" research and acknowledges contemporary visual culture and digital spaces as legitimate sites of learning. In doing so, the project reduces structural barriers that can disadvantage students from underrepresented or non-traditional educational backgrounds, supporting a more inclusive and accessible research environment.

Within a social justice framework, the project aligns with decolonising pedagogical approaches by redistributing authority over knowledge production, allowing students greater agency in defining what is relevant, meaningful, and culturally resonant within their research. Professionally, the project reflects current creative industry practices, where designers increasingly engage with diverse cultural references, hybrid methodologies, and real-world contexts to inform design development, brand narratives, and ethical decision-making.

Fail to Follow the Rules.

Rules are made to be broken. Don't just bend them. Smash them. Blow them up. Destroy them.
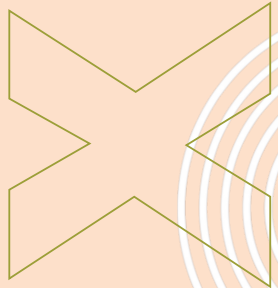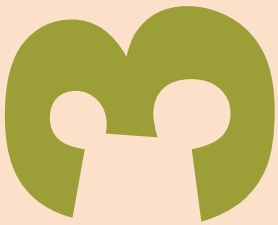
3x3   Year 1 BA Menswear Summer Project

Over your 3-month summer break, you are invited to engage with the 3x3 task:

3 months / 3 lists / 3 choices.

Explore at least one title from each of the following:

Reading List — Choose one book that resonates with you thematically or visually.

Film List — Watch one film and consider its tone, aesthetic, or social commentary.

Location List — Visit one place of design, fashion, or cultural relevance. Take notes, photos, or drawings during your visit.

You'll be asked to reflect briefly on your choices when you return in the autumn. There is no formal submission — just the expectation that your engagement will inform your second-year work, research practices, and design thinking.

Keep a small summer sketchbook or digital archive documenting what you read, watch, and see.

BA Menswear Film List
3x3 project
Summer 2025

Scorpio rising (1969) Kenneth Anger
Nanook Of The North (1922) Michael Flaherty
Man Of Aran (1934) Michael Flaherty
Pink flamingos (1972) John Waters
Paris, Texas (1984) Wim Wenders
Fireworks (1947) Kenneth Anger
Flaming creatures (1963) Jack smith
Gummo (1997) Harmony Korine
Kids (1995) Larry Clark
Fist Tank (2009) Andrea Arnold
Last Tango In Paris (1972) Bernardo Bertolucci
Eight And A Half (1963) Fedirico Fellini
The Brown Bunny (2003) Vincent Gallo
Buffalo 66 (1998) Vincent Gallo
Wild At Heart (1990) David Lynch
Tommy (1975) Ken Russell
Nosferatu (1922) F. W. Murnau
Metropolis (1927) Frtiz lang
Quadrophenia (1979) Franc Roddam
The wiz (1978) Sidney Lumet
The vvitch (2015) Robert eggers
The 5th element (1997) Luc Besson
Romeo and Juliet (1996) Baz Lurhman
Edward Scissor Hands (1990) Tim Burton
Grey Gardens (1975) Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Ellen Hovde,
Muffie Meyer
Great Gatsby (1974) Jack Clayton
Serial mom (1994) John Waters
Pillow talk (1959) Micheal Gordon
All About Eve (1950) Joseph L. Mankiewicz
Whatever Happened To Baby Jane (1962) Robert Aldrich
Bringing up baby (1938) Howard Hawks
Performance (1970) Nicolas Roeg
Rear window (1954) Alfred Hitchcock
American Psycho (2000) Mary Harron
The Birds (1963) Alfred Hitchcock
Leon; The Professional (1994) Luc Besson
The Colour Of Pomegranates (1968) Sergei Parajanov
The Holy Mountain (1973) Alexandro Jodorowsky
Howl (2010) Rob Epstein, Jeffery Friedman
Orlando (1992) Sally Potter
Orpheus (1950) Jean Cocteau
The apple (1980) Menahem Golan
Mad Max And The Thunderdome (1985) George Miller
Brazil (1985) Terry Gilliam
Female Trouble (1974) John Waters
Cry Baby (1990) John Waters
Pricilla Queen Of The Desert (1994) Stephan Elliot
Showgirls (1995) Paul Verhoven
In Bed With Madonna (1991) Alek Keshishian, Mark Aldo Miceli
Volver (2006) Pedro Almodóvar
Todo Sobre Mi Madre (1999) Pedro Almodóvar
Bad Education (2004) Pedro Almodóvar
I Am Love (2009) Luca Guadagnino
Harold And Maude (1971) Hal Ashby
The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari (1920) Robert Wiene
Querelle (1982) Rainer Warner Fassbinder
Carol (2008) Todd Haynes
Science Of Sleep (2006) Michel Gondry
Being John Malkovitch (1999) Spike Jonze

Man Who Fell To Earth (1973) Nicholas Roeg
Dali Un Chien Andalou (1929) Luis Buñuel
Spellbound (1945) Alfred Hitchcock
Blade Runner (1982) Ridley Scott
Aliens (1986) James Cameron
Kill Bill (2003) Quentin Tarentino
Ken Park (2003) Larry Clark
Saló (1976) Peir Paulo Pasolini
Barberella (1968) Roger Vadim
Kes (1969) Ken Loach
Red Shoes (1948) Micheal Powell, Emeric Pressburger
Farewell My Concubine (1993) Chen Kaige
In The Mood For Love (2000) Wong Kar Wai
Dolls (2002) Takeshi Kitano (costumes by Yohji Yamamoto)

BA Menswear Reading List
3x3 project
Summer 2025

Orlando - Virginia Woolf (1928)
A rebours (Against Nature) - Joris-Karl Huysmans (1884)
The Picture of Dorian Gray - Oscar Wilde (1890)
The Passion - Jeanette Winterson (1987)
Confessions of a Mask - Yukio Mishima (1949)
Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - Audre Lorde (1982)
The Left Hand of Darkness - Ursula K. Le Guin (1969)
Giovannis Room - James Baldwin (1956)
The Hours - Michael Cunningham (1998)
Season of Migration to the North - Tayeb Salih (1966)
The Shadow Lines - Amitav Ghosh (1988)
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man - James Joyce (1916)
Woman at Point Zero - Nawal El Saadawi (1975)
Ceremony - Leslie Marmon Silko (1977)
The Marrow Thieves - Cherie Dimaline (2017)
1984 - George Orwell (1949)
The Handmaids Tale - Margaret Atwood (1985)
Invisible Man - Ralph Ellison (1952)
The Master and Margarita - Mikhail Bulgakov (1967)
One Hundred Years of Solitude - Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1967)
White Teeth - Zadie Smith (2000)
Things Fall Apart - Chinua Achebe (1958)
So Long a Letter - Mariama Ba (1979)
Petals of Blood - Ngugi wa Thiongo (1977)
The Tale of Genji - Murasaki Shikibu (11th century)
Midnight's Children - Salman Rushdie (1981)
Snow Country - Yasunari Kawabata (1948)
The White Tiger - Aravind Adiga (2008)
Persepolis - Marjane Satrapi (2000)
The Prophet - Kahlil Gibran (1923)

BA Menswear Location List
3x3 project
Summer 2025

1. Victoria & Albert Museum (South Kensington) + V&A East Storehouse (Stratford)
South Kensington: Daily 10:00–17:45 (Friday late until 22:00)
V&A East Storehouse: Daily 10:00–18:00 (Thurs & Sat until 22:00)

2. National Army Museum Archive (Chelsea)
Deep archive of military uniforms—ideal for studying tailored construction and functional wear.
Galleries: Tue–Sun 10:00–17:30

3. Kettle's Yard (Cambridge)
Opening hours: House: Tue–Sun 12:00–17:00 (last entry 16:20) Gallery: Tue–Sun 11:00–17:00

4. Westminster Menswear Archive (University of Westminster, Harrow)
Opening hours: By appointment only (contact via email).

5. The British Library (St Pancras)
Opening hours: Mon–Thu: 09:30–20:00,Fri–Sat: 09:30–17:00,Sun: 11:00–17:00

6. Fashion and Textile Museum (Bermondsey)
Opening hours: Tue–Sun 10:00–18:00 (closed Mondays)

7. Goldsmiths Textile Collection & Constance Howard Gallery (New Cross)
Opening hours: Typically Tue–Fri 11:00–17:00 (check ahead or book appointment)

8. RIBA Collections (Portland Place)
Opening hours: Mon–Fri 10:00–17:00 (check ahead for collection access)

9. Sands Films – Rotherhithe Picture Research Library (Rotherhithe)
Opening hours: Mon–Fri 10:00–16:00 (no booking needed)

10. Pitt Rivers Museum Archive (Oxford)
Opening hours: Daily 10:00–17:00; archive access by appointment.

"Visual research methods recognise that everyday images—whether found in domestic spaces, public environments or digital and online contexts—are integral to how people experience, understand and construct social realities."
(Pink, 2013)

3x3 Summer Project — Student Feedback Form

Purpose:

This form aims to understand how the 3x3 Summer Project shaped your approach to research, creativity, and personal engagement with ideas. Your responses will help us reflect on how summer tasks can better support learning and inspiration across the course.

Section 1: Engagement and Experience

1. Which three elements did you choose to engage with? (Please specify: Book / Film / Location)

2. How much time did you spend on the 3x3 task over the summer?

3. How motivated did you feel to complete the task?

4. What encouraged or discouraged you from engaging more deeply with the task?

Section 2: Research and Reflection

5. Did the 3x3 task help you think about research in a different way?

6. Please describe how your understanding of research changed (if at all) through this task.

7. Did the project help you make more personal connections to your research or creative practice?

8. In what ways did your choices (book, film, or location) reflect your personal interests or identity?

Section 3: Broadening Horizons

9. Did the 3x3 project expose you to new ideas, aesthetics, or cultural references you wouldn't have otherwise explored?

10. Can you describe something unexpected or inspiring that you discovered through the project?

11. Did the project influence your creative direction or mindset coming into Year 2?

12. How have your 3x3 experiences (reading, watching, visiting) appeared in your current work, sketchbook, or research process?

Section 4: Reflection on the Task

13. What did you enjoy most about the 3x3 format?

14. What challenges did you face in completing it?

15. How could we improve or adapt this project for next year's students?

"Representation is a central practice in the production of culture. Meaning is not fixed in images themselves but is produced through cultural interpretation, making visual storytelling a powerful site for negotiating identity, difference and power."
(Hall, 1997)

ASK FOR A SLAP
IN THE FACE.

IF YOU show somebody a piece of your work and you ask them 'What do you think?', they will probably say it's okay because they don't want to offend you.

Next time, instead of asking if it's right, ask them what's wrong.

They may not say what you want to hear, but the chances are they will give you a truthful criticism.

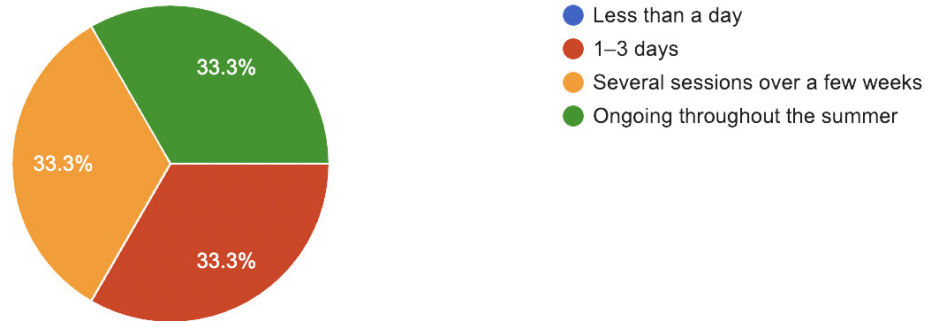Truth hurts, but in the long run it's better than a pat on the back.
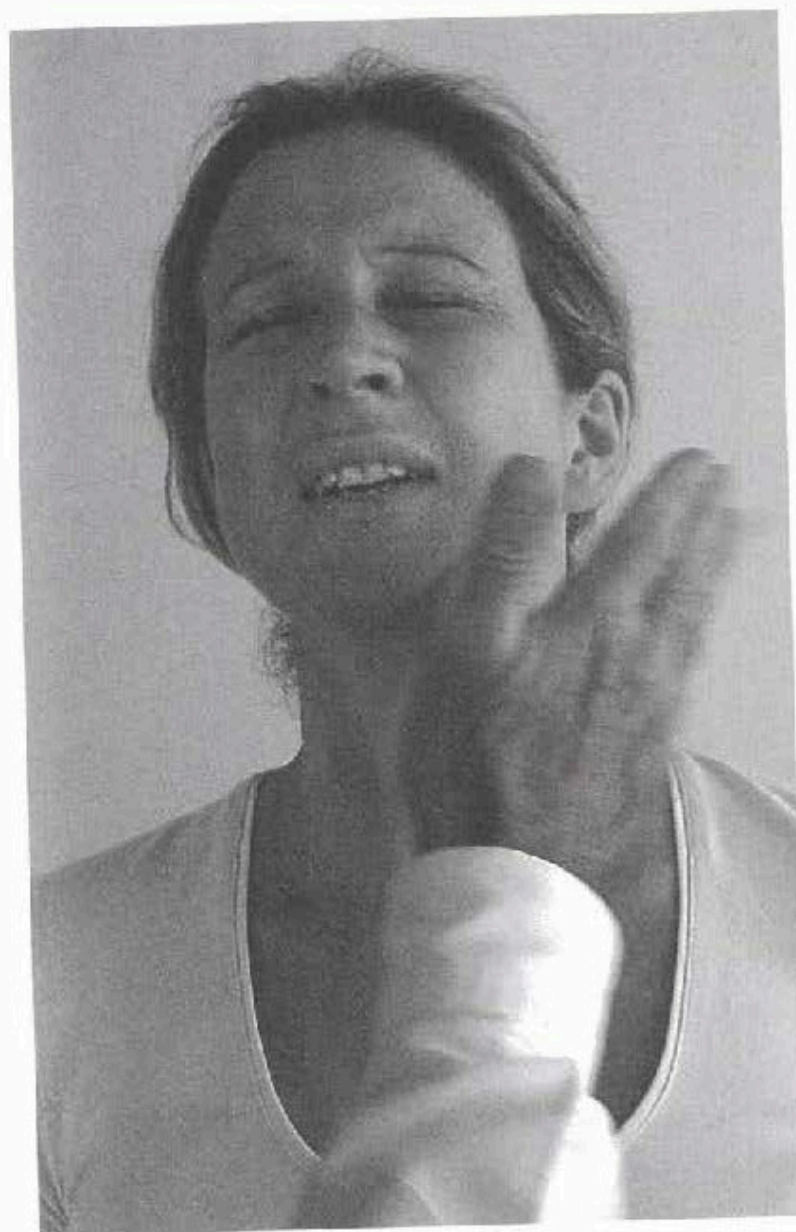
This will make you think.
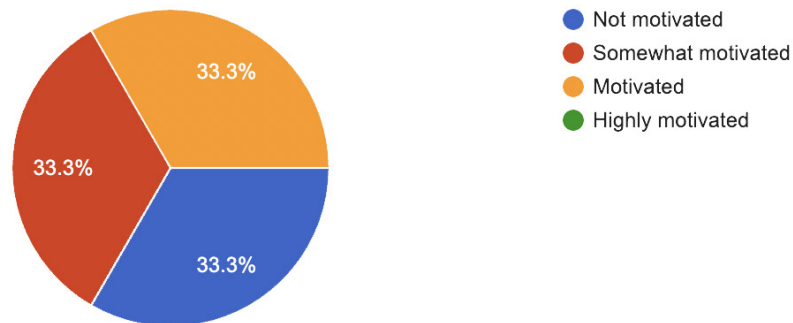
Move to project feedback

How much time did you spend on the 3x3 task over the summer?

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- ● Less than a day
- ● 1–3 days
- ● Several sessions over a few weeks
- ● Ongoing throughout the summer

33.3%
33.3%
33.3%

How motivated did you feel to complete the task?

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- ● Not motivated
- ● Somewhat motivated
- ● Motivated
- ● Highly motivated

33.3%
33.3%
33.3%

Engagement and Motivation

Student engagement varied significantly and was closely linked to clarity of purpose rather than workload.

Some students sustained engagement across the summer, while others treated the task as short and self-contained.

Lower motivation was often tied to uncertainty about how the project connected to Year 2 study.

Students who engaged positively valued the curated resources and the manageable scale of the task.

Research Understanding: Task vs Process

For some students, the project encouraged a shift from instrumental research to a more exploratory, reflective approach.

Others engaged with the task literally, focusing on completion rather than inquiry.

Differences in engagement appeared linked to research confidence, particularly around reading.

The project works best when supported by explicit teaching on how to engage with research "as a designer".

What encouraged or discouraged you from engaging more deeply with the task?

We had no knowlege of what this task was actually for and just felt like a 'mindfulness' task rather than actual research. if someone told us it was a denim project I would have actually found media that related to the brief.

Not a confident reader

encouraged - book and film list seemed interesting and diverse, getting it done didn't seem like a chore
discouraged - most of the locations were either inaccessible due to being out of the country or places i had already been to

Did the 3x3 task help you think about **research** in a different way?

[Copy chart]

- Yes, significantly
- Somewhat
- Not really
- No

33.3%

66.7%
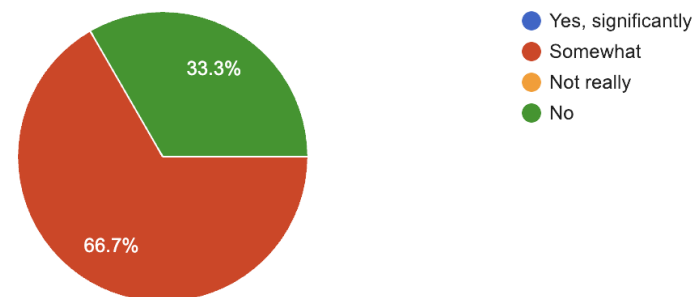
Please describe how your understanding of *research* changed (if at all) through this task.

the task was to read a book and watch a film. It didn't feel like in depth research really at all, especially as we hadn't been set a brief to respond to.

Not sure

encouraged us to look at research in different ways than first year which was mostly secondary research

Personal Connection and Identity

The 3×3 format supported personal and identity-led research for engaged students.

Students selected references aligned with personal interests, values, and lived experience.

The task permitted engagement with non-fashion references while remaining relevant to practice.

Even less engaged students identified moments of personal resonance.

Exposure to New References

The project expanded students' reference frameworks incrementally rather than dramatically.

Students reported modest but meaningful discoveries, including archives and unfamiliar films.

Responses suggested gradual shifts in perspective rather than immediate transformation.

This slow-burn approach supports sustained research development at Year 2 level.

Did the project help you make more **personal connections** to your research or creative practice?

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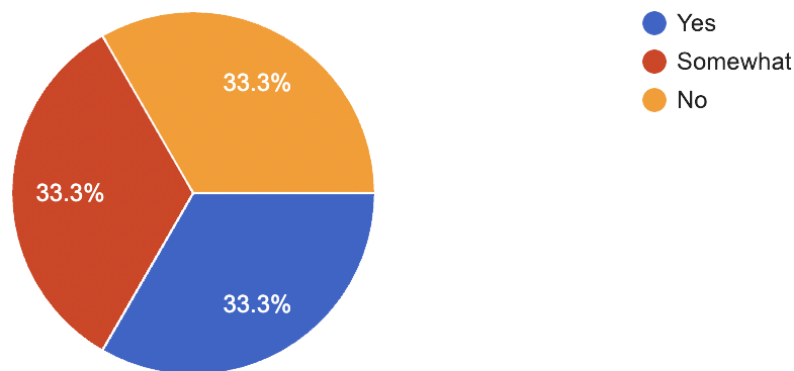
- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

33.3%

33.3%

33.3%

In what ways did your choices (book, film, or location) reflect your personal interests or identity?

chose 'Kids' to watch and I enjoyed the synical look into the darker and more sinister sides of youth culture.

read books and watched films that dealt with topics and themes i might have been interested in exploring in second year, topics that i may have personal cultural connections to, from filmmakers or authors i may have heard about and already liked

Translation into Studio Practice

**Students felt the project had unrealised potential to inform studio work more directly.**

Some indicated stronger impact would occur with clearer integration into early Year 2 briefs.

Others began to use reading as conceptual grounding rather than visual sourcing.

The project could function more effectively as a live research bank revisited in Term 1.

Did the 3x3 project expose you to new ideas, aesthetics, or cultural references you wouldn't have otherwise explored?

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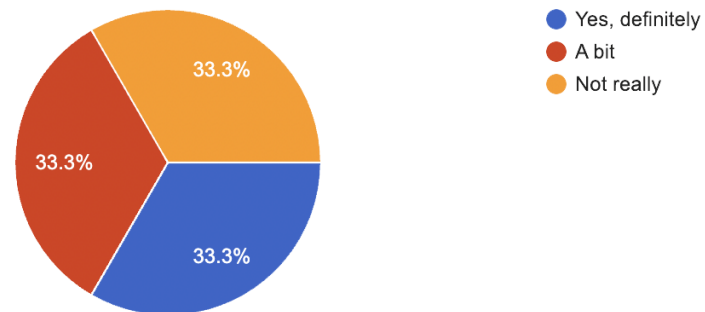
- Yes, definitely
- A bit
- Not really

33.3%
33.3%
33.3%

Can you describe something unexpected or inspiring that you discovered through the project?

visiting archives around london

Pushed me to watch films i wouldn't have normally

taught me different ways of looking at references to bring in to my own work

Barriers and Access

**Challenges were largely practical rather than conceptual.**

Location-based research was less accessible for international and non-London-based students.

Reading confidence acted as a barrier for some participants.

Greater emphasis on equivalence across research formats could improve accessibility.

Did the project influence your creative direction or mindset coming into Year 2?

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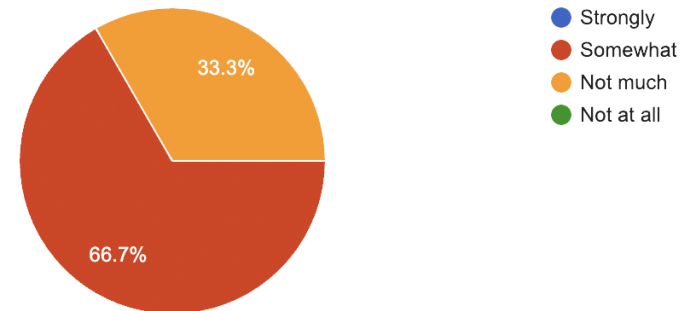
- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Not much
- Not at all

33.3%

66.7%

How have your 3x3 experiences (reading, watching, visiting) appeared in your current work, sketchbook, or research process?

I feel like it would have if we were given something to base our research off before the summer and this may have then been a valuable exersise.

Yes

some of the films i watched have been referenced in my current project

Overall Impact

Most students supported continuing the project despite mixed engagement levels.

Critical responses focused on clarity and comparisons with other pathways.

Positive feedback highlighted expanded thinking and renewed engagement with research.

The project is best understood as valuable but under-signposted rather than flawed.

What did you enjoy most about the 3x3 format?

manageable, easy to accomplish over the entire summer

What challenges did you face in completing it?

unable to visit museums if i was in home country

How could we improve or adapt this project for next year's students?

Womenswear were told to learn a new skill that they had never tried before, I know people who started jewelery design and things like saddlery (horses) and then they were told to apply these skills to a fashion project. feel like this is cool and personal and actually research. watching a movie / reading a book just isn't personal and we didn't know what lense to look at these forms of media through because we didn't have a brief.

Keep list updated

maybe give briefing for first term project before the summer so we have more context, tons of people just don't read and most of the better books on the list were quite dense

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In one sentence, how would you describe the overall impact of the 3x3 Summer Project on your thinking or creativity?

Being encouraged to to go archives was positive but apart from that it didn't really...

Pushed me to engage with things and not just waste time in holidays. Kept me in a creative headspace for when to return to school

the project has helped me approach research for second year in a more much more comprehensive and diverse way when compared to first year

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Would you recommend continuing this type of summer research task for future students?

Copy chart

- Yes — 66.7%
- No — 33.3%
- Maybe
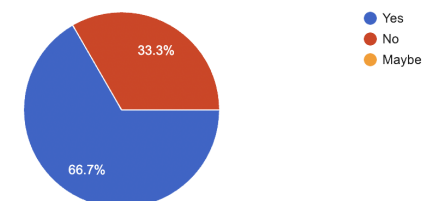
Moving forward: next steps/new projects

Tips for (remote) collaborative working:

1. Use one shared digital workspace
Keep all files in a single shared folder so nothing gets lost or duplicated.

2. Choose one main communication platform
Agree where you will talk daily so the group stays connected and responsive.

3. Hold a weekly group video check-in
A short, regular call keeps everyone aligned and prevents confusion.

4. Share ideas early, not perfectly
Post rough sketches and references so the group can build ideas together.

5. Divide tasks clearly
Assign roles so everyone contributes and knows their responsibilities.

6. Always respond to shared work
Comments and reactions keep momentum strong and avoid silence.

7. Create an open inspiration folder
Collect images, objects and textures in one place for shared creativity.

8. Work together in real time when possible
Use shared screens or collaborative documents to develop ideas live.

9. Label and date all files

Clear naming makes it easier for everyone to find and use materials.

10. Be upfront about your availability
Share your holiday schedule so the group can plan realistically.

11. Respect and trust each other
Collaboration works best when everyone feels valued and heard.

12. Celebrate small progress
Recognise achievements to keep motivation and group energy high.

13. Send brief summaries after meetings
Record decisions and tasks so the whole group stays organised.

14. Keep returning to the muse
Use your muse as the anchor for all creative decisions.

15. Enjoy the process
Share inspiration and stay playful to keep the creativity flowing.

Collaborative project 25-26
Ba Menswear
Winter Break Task

Over the Winter Break, your group will complete a short set of remote tasks to help you understand your chosen muse and begin building the world of your collection.

These tasks are creative, simple and can be done from anywhere. You will present your work when you return in January.

Outcome in January

• a sonic world
• a narrative voice
• a set of visual clues
• a collaborative rhythm
• a shared reference system
• an emotional and atmospheric grounding

Submission

All groups must assemble their Winter Break tasks into a shared digital folder and submit a link on the first day back in January. the first session in january will be a group discussion of this task.

1. Group Playlist
Create a playlist of 12 to 20 tracks that capture the mood, personality and atmosphere of your muse.
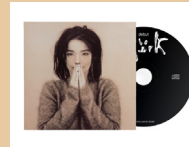

2. The Muse's Objects
Each group member should create one digital still life that shows the objects your muse might carry or surround themselves with. This can be a digital collage, a photographed arrangement, a scan or a simple composition on your phone. Choose objects that show identity, lifestyle or attitude.

3. Field Observation
Make one observation of someone in public who reminds you of your muse. This can be a photo, sketch, short video clip or a written note. Focus on behaviour, clothing, posture or atmosphere.
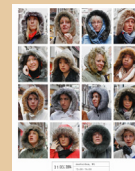
4. One Sentence Description
Write one sentence that summarises the essence or attitude of your muse. It must be under 20 words and should feel atmospheric rather than literal.

5. Group Mood Grid
Create a shared 12-image mood grid using Canva, Milanote, Pinterest, Figma or Google Slides.
Include:
 • 3 images of your muse
 • 3 related images that feel connected
 • 3 material or texture references
 • 3 unexpected images that express mood or character

MUSE

Collaborative Project 2026/Sartorial Muses:

Exploring identity, performance, and the construction of self through dress.

Throughout history, individuals have used clothing as a way to curate identity, redefine masculinity, and live inside an aesthetic of their own making. These sartorial muses show how dress, lifestyle, and attitude merge into one powerful narrative. Use them to inspire your group brand identity and muse development; Each example invites you to think about how personal mythology, culture, and self-presentation shape visual worlds.

Muse List

Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar II (1908–1961)
Global modernism and cross-cultural luxury.

Sergei Diaghilev (1872–1929)
Costume design and portraiture for theatrical masculinity.

Claude Cahun (1894–1954)
Androgyny, disguise, and duality.

Count Robert de Montesquiou (1855–1921)
Codes of decadence and controlled excess.

Sebastian Horsley (1962–2010)
Irony, tailoring, and rebellion.

Carlo Mollino (1905–1973)
Symmetry, sensuality, and design as performance.

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963)
Links between art and dress.

Le Corbusier (1887–1965)
Workwear and minimalist branding.

Prince Felix Yusupov (1887–1967)
Luxury and scandal.

Cecil Beaton (1904–1980)
Lessons in curation and self-mythology.

Quentin Crisp (1908–1999)
Colour, poise, and the power of non-conformity.

Ludwig II of Bavaria (1845–1886)
Ceremonial dress as expressions of escapist masculinity.

Yukio Mishima (1925–1970)
discipline, beauty, and nationalism intersect through the male body

Leslie Cheung (1956–2003)
Fluid interplay between gender, performance, and elegance.

Malick Sidibé (1935–2016)
Portraits for individuality, joy, and post-colonial identity through fashion.

Salvador Dalí (1904–1989)
Props, eccentricity, and control of image.

T.E. Lawrence (1888–1935)
Arab robes and military uniform as layered narratives of belonging.

Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915–2011)
Texture, patina, and storytelling through clothing.

Stephen Tennant (1906–1987)
Languid decadence and dreamlike masculinity.

James Baldwin (1924–1987)
Quiet, considered tailoring and portraits, clarity of silhouette, intellectual presence and understated elegance.

BA Menswear Collaborative Project 25-26

Exploring identity, performance, and the construction of self through dress.

In this project, you will work in groups to explore the art of sartorial dressing and the role of tailoring as a form of identity and storytelling. You will select a sartorial muse or a small group of muses from a curated list of historical figures whose lives, images and personal aesthetics offer rich foundations for design.

Your first task is to research your chosen muse in depth. Consider who they were, how they dressed, what they valued, how they lived and how they used clothing to communicate something about themselves. Look at portraits, photographs, writings, objects and environments connected to them. You should build a clear understanding of their identity and the visual world they inhabited.

This research will form the basis of your group's brand and design direction. You will then translate your muse's character into a coherent sartorial language. Think about silhouette, proportion, construction, fabric choice, craftsmanship, finishing, colour and attitude. Explore the expressive possibilities of menswear tailoring and design a collection that feels truthful to the spirit of your muse while also being contemporary and unified as a group.

Your group will produce a coordinated menswear collection that shows a confident approach to tailoring and design development. The project concludes with a group presentation in which you bring your brand world to life. You are encouraged to build a small set, cast models, create a soundtrack and stage your presentation with intention. Your final outcome should communicate your muse clearly and convincingly through the clothing and the atmosphere you create.

You will also produce a group lookbook and a design workbook that documents your full research and development process. The aim is to demonstrate a thoughtful understanding of identity, menswear craft and collaborative creative direction.

Key Dates:
Project start: Briefing 3rd December 2025
Review of Christmas break group task: WC 12th January 2026
Fittings: WC 23rd February 2026
Presentation day/submission: 19th March 2026

The structure and focus of the Winter Break task in the prvioius slides directly responds to feedback gathered from using the 3×3 Summer Project as part of the ARP, particularly around the idea of purpose, accessibility, and the need for stronger integration into studio practice. Students mentioned that engagement was highest when the value of research was clearly articulated and when tasks felt purposeful rather than abstract. In response, the winter task is explicitly positioned as the foundation for the Spring 26 collaborative project, with clear outcomes that feed directly into group decision-making, studio discussions, and assessed work.

Feedback also highlighted differences in research confidence, especially around reading-heavy or open-ended tasks. The winter task prioritises multiple modes of research engagement: sonic, visual, observational, and written, placing them on equal footing. This approach reflects student feedback around accessibility while maintaining conceptual depth, allowing students to contribute meaningfully regardless of preferred research method or location during the break.

Finally, feedback suggested that research became more meaningful when it was revisited and activated within studio contexts. The winter task functions as a live research bank that is explicitly returned to in January and carried through into the collaborative collection, lookbook, and presentation. This ensures that early research is not isolated or forgotten, but embedded as an active driver of creative and design decisions throughout the project.

END