

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification**  
**Course Title: Aesthetics in Creative Practice**

*Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2025-26 Academic Year.*

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| <b>Course Code:</b> | <b>HECOS Code:</b> | <b>Academic Session:</b> |
| PELC202             |                    | 2025-26                  |

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| <b>1. Course Title:</b>         |
| Aesthetics in Creative Practice |

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|-----------------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>2. Date of Approval:</b> | <b>3. Lead School:</b> | <b>4. Other Schools:</b>   |
| PACAAG August 2023          | School of Design       | This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective. |

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| <b>5. Credits:</b> | <b>6. SCQF Level:</b> | <b>7. Course Leader:</b> |
| 20                 | 11                    | Dr Fiona Anderson        |

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| <b>8. Associated Programmes:</b>   |
| This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective. |

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| <b>9. When Taught:</b>                             |
| Stage 2, taught as a blended postgraduate elective |

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| <b>10. Course Aims:</b>   |
| <p>The overarching aims of the stage 2 electives are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices;</li> <li>• Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory;</li> <li>• Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism;</li> <li>• Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study.</li> </ul> <p>This course aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce students to a range of theories of aesthetics;</li> <li>• Encourage the student to frame conceptual investigations in this area through verbal reasoning, practice, and historical empirical research;</li> <li>• Facilitate cross-disciplinary debate and practical connections, by bringing together students on different programmes of study;</li> <li>• Enable students to conduct and manage their own self-contained research projects;</li> <li>• Explore the relationships between aesthetic theory and creative practice.</li> </ul> |

**11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:**

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Debate and analyse a number of aesthetic positions from a critical perspective;
- Demonstrate how ideas and practice interrelate in this area;
- Develop and defend an aesthetic position based on independent research.

**12. Indicative Content:**

- Beauty in practice: introductory session (discussion of one's own discipline and values, with examples)
- Beauty and its opposites
- Purity and danger: aesthetics, disgust and the body
- Referencing the past: tradition, quaintness and the out-of-date
- Orientalism, Colonial and Decolonial Aesthetics
- The Politics and Aesthetics of Landscape
- Aesthetics, Displacement and Migration
- Most embarrassing: aesthetics in practice (discussion of personal examples)
- Common people: beauty, bad taste and social class (self-chosen field trip)
- Aesthetics in practice (the work of other practitioners)

**13. Description of Summative Assessment Methods:**

| Assessment Method  | Description of Assessment Method  | Weight % | Submission week (assignments) |
|--------------------|---|----------|-------------------------------|
| Written assignment | 3500 word visual essay (5 options of format/outcome, e.g. imaginary exhibition rationale) | 100      | Week 11, Stage 2              |

**13.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:**

Students are required to choose one of 5 options of format for their written assignment. E.g. Imaginary exhibition rationale. Students may also select their own format/outcome (that may not be included in the list of 5 options) but this should be discussed and agreed first with the tutor.

Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to:

- Conceptualise and present the problems of this topic;
- Utilize appropriate methods and tools when conducting research;
- Situate their research and practice within a field of critical debate relevant to this subject;
- Demonstrate a level of depth in the analysis of works, practitioners, ideas and/or debates appropriate to postgraduate level.

**14. Description of Formative Assessment Methods:**

Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement.  
Week 5.

**14.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:**

At the mid-point of the course there is a reflection point to aid consolidation.

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| <b>15. Learning and Teaching Methods:</b>                     |                                |
| <b>Formal Contact Hours</b>                                   | <b>Notional Learning Hours</b> |
| 20  | 200                            |
| <b>15.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Methods:</b>     |                                |
| Timetable: 2 hours weekly for 10 weeks, taught on Wednesdays. |                                |

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| <b>16. Pre-requisites:</b>              |
| Successful completion of PGT Semester 1 |

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| <b>17. Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?</b>              | Yes |
| <b>18. Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?</b>   | No  |
| <b>19. Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?</b>   | No  |
| <b>20. Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?</b>                | No  |
| <b>20.1 If yes, then please enter the names of the other teaching institutions:</b> |     |
| N/A   |     |

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| <b>21. Additional Relevant Information:</b>   |
| <p>'Ugly' and 'beautiful' are terms that clients and viewers use freely, often without much thought. This is part of their role as consumers. By contrast, practising artists and designers have trained themselves to avoid such statements. In theory, practitioners have voracious eyes; all kinds of sources are supposed to feed creativity. In actuality, the truth is that lurking inside most work there are some strong but unacknowledged value judgements. This does not just apply to what might be considered safely tasteful, but also includes a bank of clichéd over-used ugly strategies (punk is arguably a case in point). Anne Hollander's description of design in modernity as 'committed to risk, subversion and irregular forward movement' (1994: 14) outlines this tension between ugly and beautiful in contemporary practice well. How can something that was considered beautiful ten years ago now simply be an embarrassment? How do aesthetic judgements collide with choices about using references to the past to inform your work? This online course invites participants to interrogate both their own practice and that of others in order to find how and why aesthetic judgements operate in specific contexts. At the same time it also raises the uncomfortable question of the relationship between so-called 'cutting-edge' creative practice, and the imperatives of fashionability in a consumer-driven market.</p> |

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| <b>22. Indicative Bibliography:</b>  |
| <p>Bataille, Georges 'The Formless' from <i>Critical Dictionary</i> (1929-30) quoted in <i>Art in Theory 1900-2000</i></p> <p>Beckley, Bill, ed (2001) <i>Sticky sublime</i> New York: Allworth Press</p> <p>Bois, Yves Alain (1987) <i>Formless, A Users Guide</i> Zone Books, New York</p> <p>Cosgrove, Denis, 'Images and Imagination in 20th Century Environmentalism: From the Sierras to the Poles', <i>Environment and Planning</i>, Volume 40, Issue 8, (2008) pp1862-1880.</p> <p>Creed, Barbara 'Introduction' and 'Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection' in <i>The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis</i>, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-15</p> |

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Tunstall, Elizabeth (Dori), 'Decolonizing Design Innovation: Design Anthropology, Critical Anthropology and Indigenous Knowledge in Gunn W. Otto, T. and Smith, R.C. Eds. *Design Anthropology: theory and practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp.232–250.