

Reflection-R3 Tasks

I believe that the R3 assignment focuses on learning and exploring design theories, methods, and ways of thinking. It is a process that moves from reading to research, and finally to reflection on the overall learning experience.

In the manifesto task, I created my personal design manifesto by studying the *Conditional Design Manifesto* and reflecting on the differences between the workshop experience and my practice in Project 1. In the affordance task, I learned the theory of affordance through Don Norman's videos and books. Affordance refers to how the physical features of an object suggest its possible uses (YouTube, 2022). Through further research, I also learned about signifiers, which are perceptible cues that guide people in how to use an object (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016).

In the third task, *Letter to My Son*, I experienced speculative design thinking by reading Barbara Flanagan's letter to her future child and by writing a letter to my own future child. In the fourth task, I learned about prototyping through videos and gained an understanding of the processes and methods used in web and app design. After the Bristol trip, I told the story of this journey through a storyboard, which laid the foundation for storyboard production in Project 4.

The learning about empathy on LinkedIn Learning supplemented my understanding of UX design theory. I learned the importance of empathy, how to build it, when to use it, and how to apply it in design practice. This further emphasised user experience and user-centred thinking as key design approaches.

I do not see the six R3 tasks and the four projects as separate or independent. Instead, they support and complement each other. R3 focuses on learning and reflecting on theories and design methods, while the four projects apply these ideas in practice. I see the design manifesto as a concrete form of conditional design. A design manifesto reflects a designer's values and principles, and it also sets boundaries and directions for design, similar to how conditional design establishes rules.

Affordance can be seen as the application of conditional design in product design. Designers set certain conditions through the appearance of a product and leave visual cues that indicate how it should be used. For example, a door handle requires user participation. The designer focuses on the interaction process and sets conditions such as being easy to grip, guiding the user to rotate the handle, and encouraging a pushing or pulling action. The form of the handle is designed based on these conditions.

When conducting research for Project 2, I raised a question: *Why does it feel like doing affordance research?* During this project, I started from everyday designs that are often overlooked, such as Bluetooth and Wi-Fi symbols, or holes in chairs. I asked myself why these designs exist, what information they communicate, and why they

make the function easier to understand. For example, the hole in a chair is not large enough for a whole hand but fits two or three fingers, and the edges are slightly raised to make it easier to grip (Figure 1). The way the appearance guides usage is a clear example of affordance. In this project, I also created a short animation by deconstructing the affordance of sound in industrial products.



Figure 1. Project 2 research sketches. Author's own work.

In the third task, writing a letter to a future child helped me understand speculative design as a way of thinking. I believe the core of this design approach is critical thinking. It encourages designers to step outside existing environments and technological limitations, and to examine issues from multiple perspectives. It is a research-oriented, exploratory, and non-commercial design approach (Frayling, 1993).

In contrast, prototyping focuses more on efficient iteration and practical implementation in commercial interaction design projects. I see prototyping as a user-

centred design method that supports real-world application while reducing development costs (Apple, 2014). Sketching and paper prototyping (Google for Startups, 2016a) and digital prototyping (Google for Startups, 2016b) are both fast and effective ways to present ideas. In digital prototyping, detailed data collection and precise interface design are often simplified. The focus is placed on interaction logic and user flow. This allows users to experience the design and provide feedback without spending excessive time, energy, or money.

This learning refreshed my understanding of the interaction design process and encouraged me to reflect on my undergraduate experience with prototyping. During my undergraduate studies, I spent a large amount of time on sketching and digital prototyping. The design focus was mainly on functions rather than user experience. I also tried to make every step complete and polished, while ignoring how well the design matched the needs of specific user groups.

At the same time, comparing and combining these two design approaches raised an important question for me: how can critical thinking and practicality be balanced in design? There is no doubt that critical thinking is essential. It helps me break away from fixed thinking patterns and existing frameworks. It also allows me to identify and solve problems from new perspectives, which makes design more innovative. However, design must also return to reality. It needs to respond to real contexts and user experiences to remain meaningful and applicable. This balance between critique and feasibility is something I need to continue exploring and practising in my future design studies.

This was my first time integrating empathy with my professional practice. Compassion involves understanding pain points, while empathy is the ability to feel what others feel. Design, in turn, builds on these capacities to alleviate or even eliminate such pain points. One possible meaning of this new understanding is sincerity.

This reflection reminded me of a guest lecture in which Aya Haidar shared her experience working with the Deveron Project. She explained the importance of describing suffering rather than using it. She emphasised that it is essential to place oneself within a particular environment, to experience it firsthand, and to sincerely convey other people's stories (Aya Haidar, guest lecture, Communication Design MA, University of Southampton, 22 October 2025).

I consider this an example of how an artist can responsibly employ empathy and compassion. By entering the community, engaging with local networks, and communicating directly with residents, Haidar was able to understand their pain points. Through storytelling, her work inspires empathy in the audience and provokes reflection on the realities of war.

Regarding storytelling, I think this concept is widely used. For example, it appears in animation, literature, and performance. Animation mainly uses visual storytelling, literature uses written storytelling, and performance relies on body language to tell stories. I initially thought that storytelling and narrative were the same. However, through research, I found that they are similar but not identical. Storytelling focuses on describing events, while narrative focuses more on selection. It involves choosing which parts to tell and in what order (Howard, 2022).

In this task, I created a storyboard. At the beginning, the drawing process felt like a simple chronological record. I was only describing what happened and what I did. I realised that there were too many things that could be included, and telling everything would be boring. Therefore, I started to make selections.

I used location and the scale of events as references to structure the journey. I chose the museum and the art gallery as two key points and inserted personal experiences between them, instead of simply describing what happened. For example, in the first scene, I initially planned to draw the train station, as it was the starting point of the trip (Figure. 2). However, this would require another image to show the destination. Using two images for this purpose felt unnecessary and made the storyboard too long. As a result, I chose the train ticket instead (Figure. 3). It represents both time and travel, and it also works well as an ending for the journey.

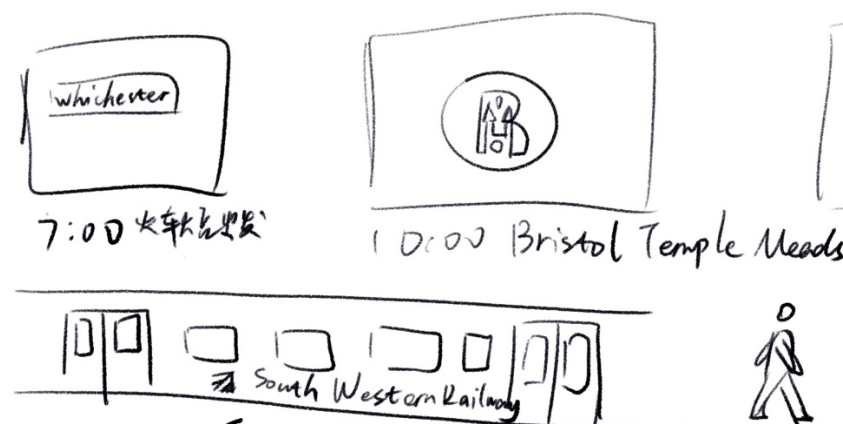


Figure 2. Storytelling sketches. Author's own work.



Figure 3. Storytelling-tickets. Author's own work.

During the process, I applied ideas learned in class, such as changing perspectives. I was also inspired by 99 Stories, which removes visual elements and focuses only on sound. I experimented with switching between first-person and third-person perspectives to describe the journey (Figure. 4). I think this was a meaningful improvement and a valuable attempt.

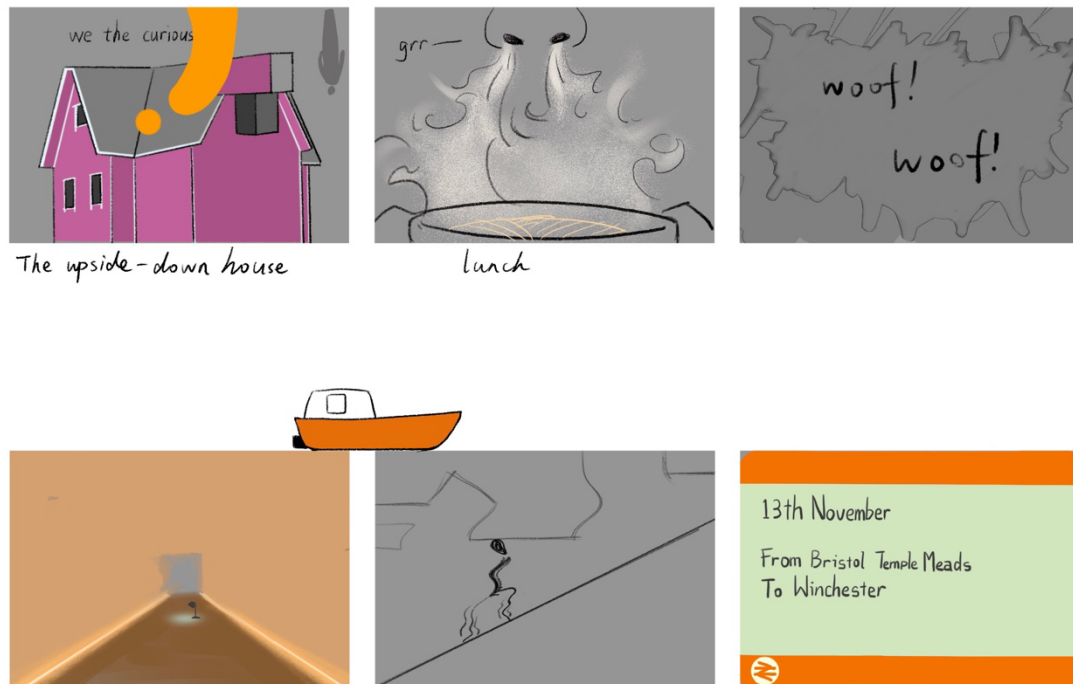


Figure 4. Storytelling - different perspectives. Author's own work.

This approach was also applied to Project 2. In that project, I collected sound information by focusing on hearing as the primary sense. By deliberately removing visual input, I explored the hidden information contained in sound.

However, there are still some limitations. The main issues are narrative focus and rhythm. Most events were given a similar amount of space, except for the museum, which occupied three frames. As a result, the other events felt fragmented and scattered. I think some scenes could be removed, and only one or two key events should be developed in more detail. In addition, inviting others to view the storyboard and give feedback would be helpful. Their responses could reveal problems in the narrative and help improve clarity and coherence.

Overall, the R3 tasks were not isolated exercises. The theories and methods learned through them effectively supported my design practice in the projects. They also led to a clear shift in my approach to design. My work moved away from static, self-focused experimentation and returned to real contexts and experiences. By changing perspectives and expanding ways of thinking, I began to reflect on design more critically and explore narrative from multiple angles.

This reflective process also helped me connect different pieces of knowledge rather than treating them separately. As a result, it enabled further development and iteration

in my design work. In future studies, I aim to continue balancing critical thinking with practical application. I will explore a wider range of perspectives and refine narrative logic, allowing theory and method to become stronger support for my design practice.

References

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Statement of AI use

This reflection only uses ChatGPT to assist in translation and grammar correction. All ideas and reflections are entirely my own.