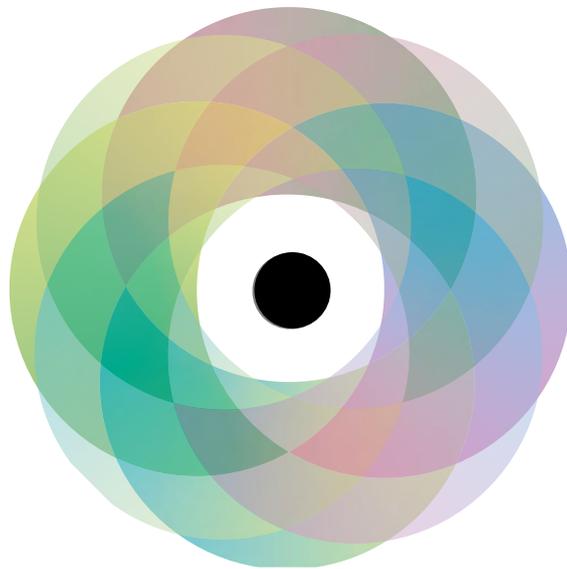


THE ART OF SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

**The Prismatic Gaze within Creative Research
and Design Education: a Discovery Compass**



Cindy Mirande, June 2025

**“Attention is the
rarest and purest form
of generosity.”**

- Simone Weil



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This thesis reflects more than my effort alone; it carries the echoes of many voices, moments, and shared acts of care. I'm grateful for you all.

O. PREFACE

Throughout my life, I've learned how much is lost when we overlook the quiet, the small, the misunderstood. This kind of neglect leaves marks. It erodes care. It weakens our sense of responsibility, to each other and to the world we move through. Take something as ordinary as a discarded flower on the sidewalk. Most walk past. I see poetry.

This act of noticing, of paying attention to what often goes unseen, has become the foundation of this research. Over time, I've come to understand that attention is not just a practice, but a way of becoming. It threads through everything I do, as an artist, an educator, and now, as a researcher and a reflective practitioner.

As an artist, I'm drawn to the small signs: the light shining through a water bottle, the sky reflected in a puddle. These moments ask to be noticed. As a teacher, I see my students in the same way, brimmed with potential, shaped by emotion, and full of quiet signals. Noticing them is a choice. It means paying attention not just to what they produce, but to what stirs underneath: their questions, hesitations, emotions, and creative sparks.

Working across disciplines and learning environments, I've become a cross-pollinator of ideas, people, and perspectives. Helping students navigate their creative journeys feels like a symbiotic relationship, one that brings deep fulfillment. I often compare my students to flowers, each filled with different colours and possibilities. Like the compound eye of a bee, I seek out their unique qualities and offer different ways of looking at their design questions.

This attentional stance eventually became the seed of what I now call the Prismatic Gaze. A way of being in relation, of seeing, sensing, sharing, and shifting.

Paying attention takes effort. It asks us to be present, open, and willing to care. This means staying with what's unclear, listening beyond words. Because when we ignore what is difficult or uncomfortable, we risk erasing what matters most.

This thesis is my way of paying attention with care, offering a prism through which to notice more carefully, relate more deeply, and to see the value of the overlooked.

CONTENT COMPASS

This thesis explores how a prismatic gaze supports creative and critical discovery in design education. It consists of four chapters: the seeds (introduction), the climate (theory), the soil (practice), and the harvest (outcomes).

1. THE SEEDS

What is being overlooked in design education?

This introduction traces back and explores how educational structures and personal habits shape how we notice, what gets lost in the process, and what needs to be revived.

1.1 The seeds of the prismatic gaze

1.2 The climate it grew in

1.3 The roots of the problem

1.4 The questions that shoot

1.5 Mapping the terrain

From page 10 to 17

2. THE CLIMATE

What factors influence and shape the prismatic gaze?

This literature review explores the contexts and abilities that influence and shape how we notice, and what we overlook.

2.1 Educational context

2.2 The Ecology of Attention

2.3 Attentional Abilities

2.4 The Harvest:

What shapes the prismatic gaze?

From page 18 to 35

3. THE SOIL

What practices support or hinder the prismatic gaze?

This practice base research examines how arts based practices support shared meaning-making.

3.1 Research Approach

Methods & instruments

3.2 Prototype 1:

See(d)ing the Unseen

3.3 Prototype 2:

Art & Gifts of Nature

3.4 The Harvest:

What to keep and what to trim?

From page 36 to 69

4. THE HARVEST

How to master the art of shifting perspectives and become gardeners of attention?

This final chapter reflects on my role in co-creating space for attention, care, and navigating change.

4.1 From Prism to Practice

The final test & Evaluation

4.2 From Process to Pedagogy

Critical reflection

4.3 The Harvest:

Conclusions

4.4 The Discovery Compass

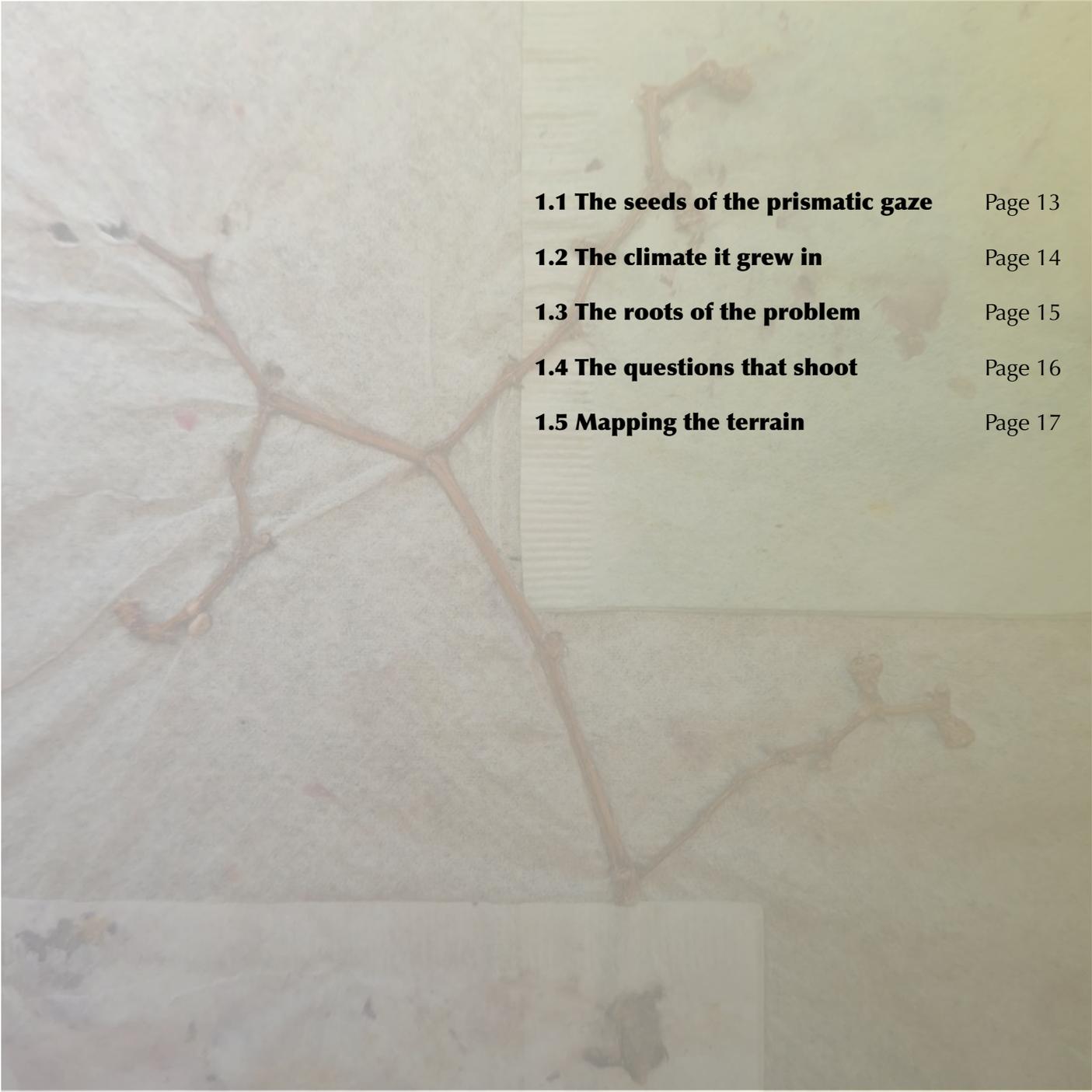
Recommendations

4.5 Moving forward

Future ambitions

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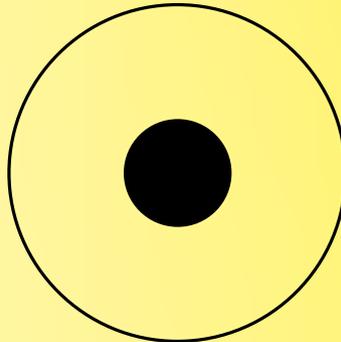
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What is being overlooked in design education?

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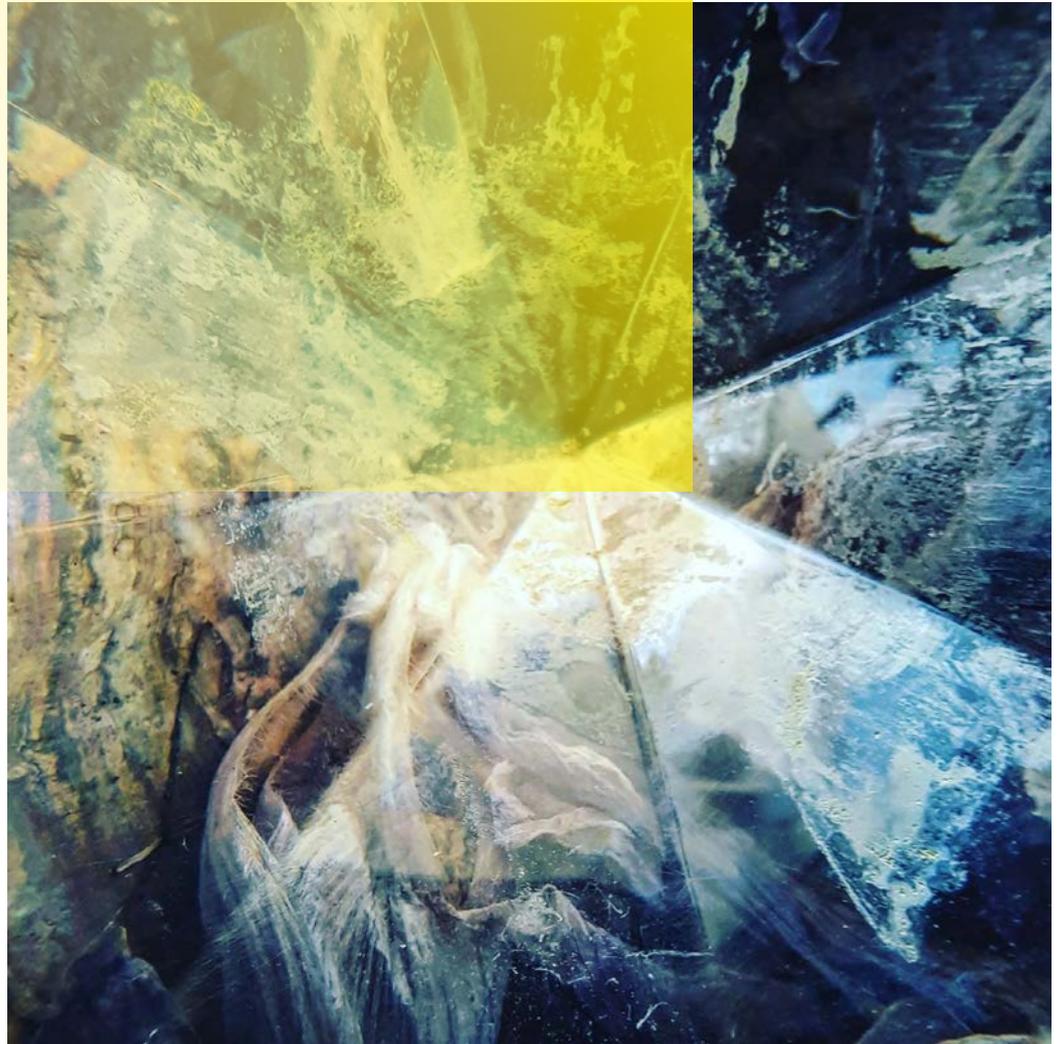


A

ATTENTION

Notice taken of someone or something; the regarding of someone or something as interesting or important.
The action of dealing with or taking special care of someone or something.

- Oxford dictionary



Artwork Cindy Mirande, 2025

1.1 The Seeds of the Prismatic Gaze

How we pay attention shapes what we value, and what we miss. Too often, we take things at face value: what's right in front of us, what's easy to explain. But there's more to discover if we look from different angles and stay with what's unclear.

I call this way of seeing the prismatic gaze, open, curious, and tuned to what's usually overlooked. I developed it through this practice-based research, shaped by tensions I experienced as an educator: between speed and presence, delivery and discovery.

These frictions are especially sharp in design education, where performance often outruns reflection. From this, I asked: *what becomes possible when we start paying attention?*

My artistic practice is rooted in observation. I photograph decomposing flowers in water through a macro lens, capturing images that resist easy interpretation and invite the viewer to ask: *what am I looking at?* I call them 'search pictures'. They invite a different kind of looking, where seeing becomes sensing, and attention becomes inquiry, a way of staying with what's not yet visible.

Over time, I came to understand attention as an act of care, presence, and transformation. Jan Masschelein (2020) writes that educating the gaze is not about reaching a critical view, but about displacing our view, about paying attention. His words gave form to what I was experiencing: attention is not passive. It's a pedagogical gesture.

What does it take to cultivate this kind of attention with others? Yves Citton (2017) describes educators as "gardeners of attention." We don't control where attention goes, we plant the seeds and create the conditions for it to grow.

But the institution and the outside world sets the climate. Deadlines, deliverables, and outcomes act like weather systems. Whether there's room for deep discovery depends not only on our values, but on the systems we teach within.

1.2. The Climate it grew in

For fifteen years, I've worked with Academy Artemis, a private institute in Amsterdam, offering a Bachelor in Creative Concept Development. As a freelancer, I helped shape the research curriculum, gave policy advice and wrote learning outcomes for all cohorts. I now primarily coach students in research and concepting during their third and fourth years.

Over time, through conversations with colleagues, I noticed a recurring pattern: students often struggle with close observation and critical reflection. Their work is visually strong, but often lacks depth, especially in relation to cultural, ecological, or historical contexts. An external member of the exam committee confirmed this during last year final exams.

At first, I thought the problem was with the students. Then I blamed the curriculum. But over time, I realised I was part of it too. I had been prioritising outcomes, clarity, efficiency, structure, reinforcing the very pressures I now critique. That realisation marked a turning point that sparked my research.

In 2024, the climate at Artemis changed. New leadership came in. We moved to a different location. Technology and business partnerships took center stage. The tempo sped up. Exploration gave way to efficiency. These shifts echoed a wider trend in design education: faster, leaner, more productive. To meet accreditation standards, schools must prove their value through outcomes, data, and job-market relevance. Education is pushed to become clearer, quicker, more measurable.

That same year, I was asked to expand a creative research module within design thinking. Third-year students felt overwhelmed by the number of research tools. They felt rushed through the discovery phase, with little time to explore or define the real problem. The phase meant to foster curiosity had become a checklist.

On a study trip to Berlin, these same students visited James Turrell's Chapel of Light, a space that asks for quietness and attention. Many found it boring. The silence made them uneasy. That moment reminded me: slow observation doesn't come easy, it needs cultivating.

B

BLIND SPOTS

Identifying our blind spots is key to critical reflection, it expands the range of perspectives considered in creative discovery.

Later, in a case study research module, a fourth-year student called luxury travelers “ethical consumers” because they cared about sustainability, despite their high-consumption habits. The contradiction surfaced only during the assessment. The problem wasn’t just in her reasoning; it was structural. If we don’t build reflection into the process, it gets left out.

1.3. The roots of the problem

These moments pointed to a deeper issue. Design education often names critical reflection as a core skill, but in practice, it remains vague. For some, it means improving the creative process. For others, it means questioning systems, values, or bias. Without shared clarity, reflection often gets squeezed out by speed.

Thomas Morris (2020) offers the term critical reflective observation: a combination of perception (what we notice), reflection (how we make sense of it), and criticality (how we situate it in broader historical, ecological, or ethical contexts). In practice, this means asking students not just how their design works, but why it matters, to others, to the world around them.

For educators, it means looking at our own blind spots. Not pretending to have all the answers, but noticing more: how fast we go, how present we are, and where power shows up. It made me question: *How can creative research help us reflect more deeply, as students, but also as teachers? How do we practise presence and care in systems that often reward speed?*

This brought me back to the discovery phase, often treated as a quick start within design thinking. *But what if discovery isn’t a stage? What if it’s the heart of creative research?*

1.4 The Questions That Shoot

From these early questions, the Prismatic Gaze began to take shape, a pedagogy grounded in attention and presence. At its core is the act of paying attention: not just to what is visible, but to what is sensed, overlooked, or resisted. Within ourselves, and within society.

Rather than offering a fixed method, it proposes a relational and flexible way of engaging with the discovery phase, where ideas and design questions are still forming. It invites us to ask: *What are we noticing? What blind spots are we missing? And how might our perspectives shift in response?*

C

CREATIVE RESEARCH

Creative research focuses on discovery and new perspectives rather than finding fixed answers.

It encourages exploring emotions, experiences, and new insights through creative expression (Kara, 2020).

These guiding questions became the roots from which my central and subquestions grew, shaping the inquiry that follows:

Central Question:

How can design educators cultivate a prismatic gaze in the discovery phase of creative research?

The discovery phase is where attention is first activated, where curiosity grows, and meaning begins to take shape. If we rush it, we risk missing what matters. The Prismatic Gaze begins here: as a way of lingering in the in-between space of not-yet-knowing. It offers four distinct ways of engaging with creative research: observing closely, making sense of experience, connecting with others, and shifting perspectives. Like a prism, it refracts attention: revealing not just what we notice, but how and why it matters.

From this, more subquestions branched out:

SQ 1. The Soil – Where does the Prismatic Gaze take root?

In what educational, cultural, and teaching contexts is it situated?

SQ 2. The Climate – What influences its growth?

What internal and external factors affect how attention and reflection unfold in creative research?

SQ 3. The Elements – What shapes it?

What attentional abilities support critical reflective observation?

SQ4. The Conditions – What helps or hinders it?

What artistic, relational, and pedagogical practices create space for it to support the discovery phase?

1.4 Mapping the terrain

Chapter 1: The Seeds

This introduction explored how systems shape how we notice, and what blind spots we are missing.

Chapter 2: The Climate

This literature review explores the contexts and abilities that influences and shapes our attention and the Prismatic Gaze.

Chapter 3: The Conditions

This practice based research examines how arts based practices support shared meaning-making within diverse contexts and publics.

Chapter 4: The Harvest

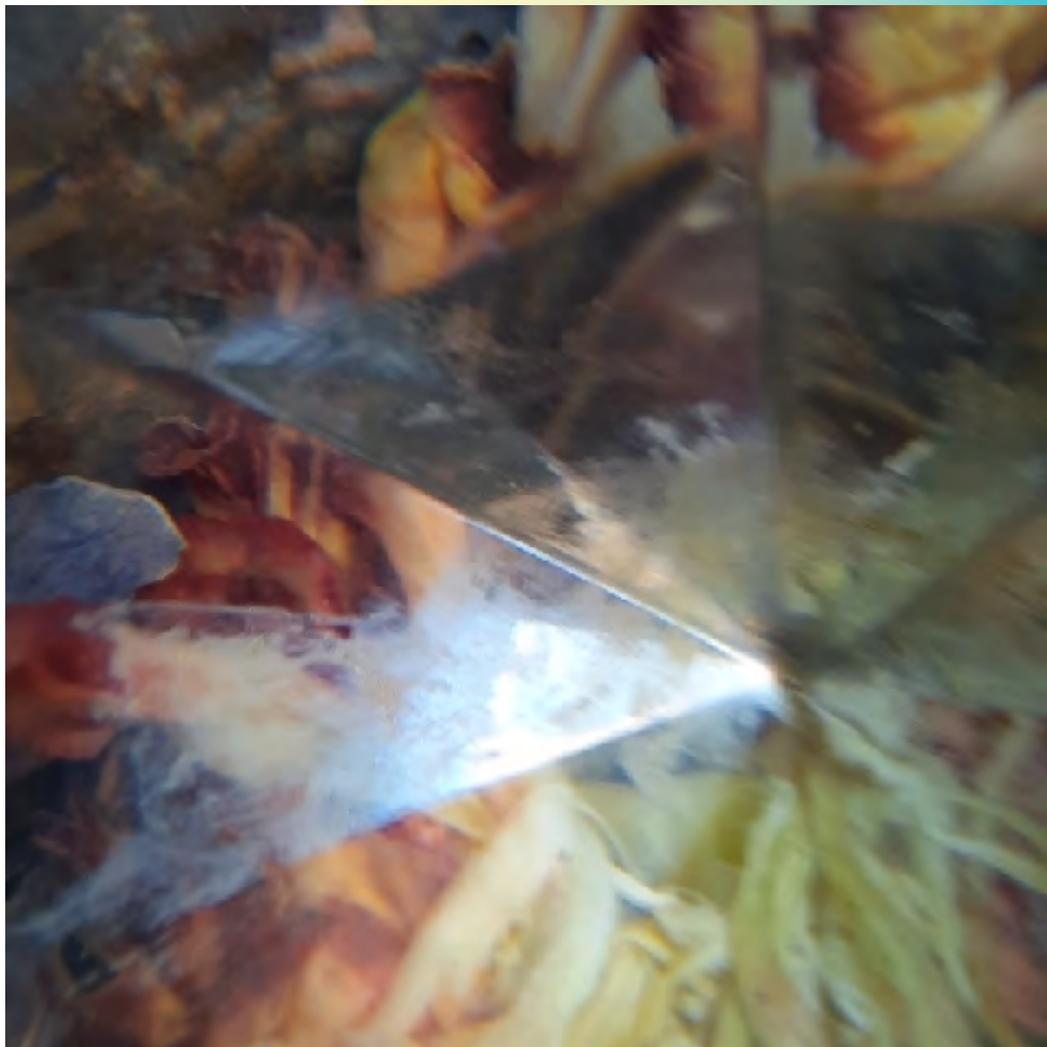
This final chapter brings all the fragments and pieces together. What needs to be composted and what needs to be nurtured?

D

DISCOVERY

The process of noticing or uncovering something that wasn't seen or understood before.

CLICK FOR A SHORT PAUSE >



Artwork Cindy Mirande, 2025



2.1 The soil

In what educational context is the prismatic gaze situated?

Page 20 - 26

2.2 The climate

What external and internal factors influences our ability to pay attention?

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2.3 The elements

What conditions and attentional abilities support critical reflective observation?

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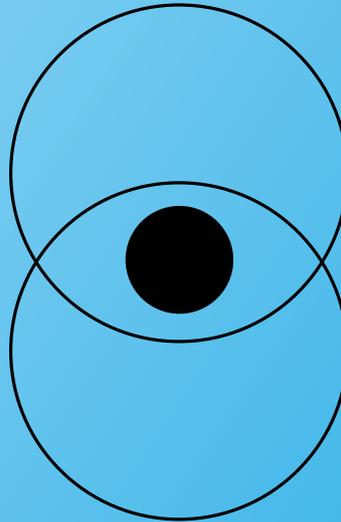
2.4 The harvest

What shapes the Prismatic Gaze and why is it important?

Page 36 - 37

THE CLIMATE

**Where is the Prismatic Gaze situated,
how is it influenced, what shapes it and
why is it important?**



C

CONTEXT

The environment that shapes what we notice and how we understand it. In design and education, it influences what we pay attention to, what we ignore, and how bias shows up.

D

DESIGN THINKING

Design Thinking (IDEO, 2015) is a creative problem solving process consisting of the phases empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test.

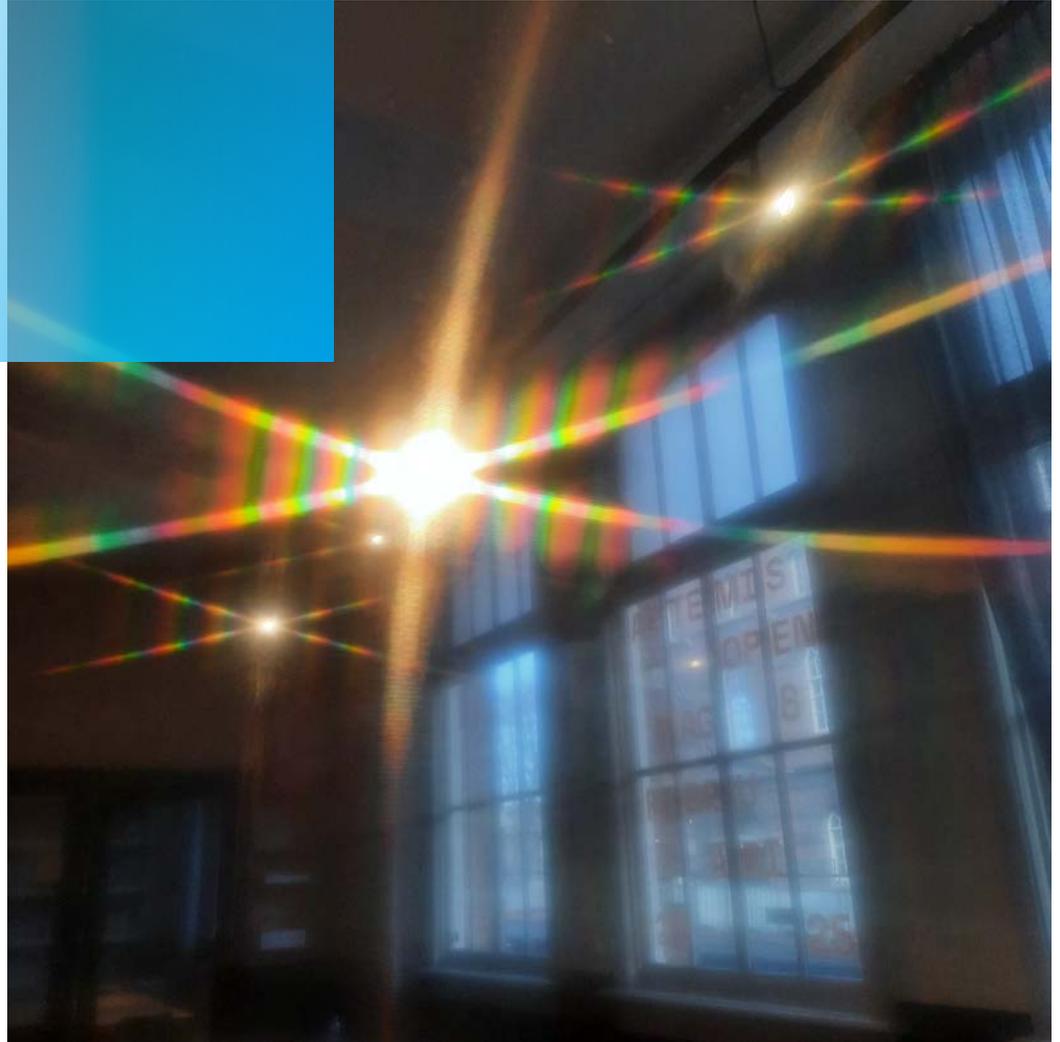


Photo Cindy Mirande @Artemis Academy

2.1. Educational Context

This paragraph looks at the teaching approaches that shape the context of this research. At Academy Artemis, Experiential Learning and Design Thinking are the main frameworks. But their step-by-step models don't always match the messy, unpredictable nature of creative work. The ideas of John Dewey and Thomas Morris, influenced the Prismatic Gaze as a more flexible, responsive, and reflective way of learning by doing.

E

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984) is a learning process that moves through four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

2.1.1 Experiential Learning

At Artemis, Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) structures the process of concept development as a sequence from research to concepting, creation, and communication. But this kind of creative processes rarely follows a straight line, it loops, overlaps, and resists these tidy stages. John Dewey (1934), considered as the founder of experiential learning, offered a more fluid approach. For Dewey, learning was a continuous exchange between the learner and their environment. Reflection wasn't separate from action, it was embedded in experience. He placed nature and aesthetics at the heart of education, seeing them as ways to deepen perception, feeling, and awareness.

I build on this in my own practice research. I don't treat art and nature as subjects to study, but as invitations and environments, to become present and notice the subtle signs they are sending. That's not easy in a fast, distracted world. It asks for a shift in how we pay attention.

Reijo Miettinen (2000) critiques Kolb for oversimplifying the ideas of Dewey. Kolb seems to reduce reflection to a single step in a fixed cycle, while Dewey saw it as inseparable from action, context, and purpose. Miettinen reminds us that learning is always situated, shaped by the learner's goals and surroundings. Without that, reflection loses its meaning.

Thomas Morris (2020) proposes a revision of Kolb's model. For him, learning begins when students are actively engaged, not passive observers. Knowledge is shaped by time, place, emotion, and identity. It becomes most meaningful when tied to real-world issues and involves some level of risk, emotional, social, or intellectual. Not because risk is the goal, but because stepping into the unknown opens space for insight. At the center lies critical reflective observation, not as an add-on, but as the bridge between what happens and what it means.

In order for critical reflective observation to take root, we need to slow down to deepen our understanding. When processes move too fast, reflection becomes an after-thought. Slowing down weaves reflection into the heart of discovery, allowing students to notice, sense, and question what might otherwise be missed. Insight doesn't always arrive on schedule, it often emerges in the pause.

2.1.2 Design Thinking

Design Thinking has slowly progressed into “design sprinting”, where the creative process is compressed, ideas are rapidly prototyped, and reflection risks being rushed or remain on the surface. In other words: thinking is replaced by sprinting. It mirrors the fast pace world we live in, and it's exactly what my research invites us to pause and question. Ironically, I was the one who introduced this method in the first place.

First, I introduced Cultural Probes (Gaver et al., 1999), a generative research method designed to explore how people live, sense, and experience their environments, beyond what they simply think or do. These open-ended tools supported the empathize phase of Design Thinking by centering lived experience. Over time, I positioned them within the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, 2005), blending sensory, exploratory methods with more structured design phases to support further concept development.

The framework brought structure and clarity, but now passed the mark. It was used to divide the process into time-bound phases: first research, then concepting, then creation. Creative work rarely follows these clean fases. Lucy Kimbell (2011) also critiques this binary between thinking and doing, showing that design is a situated, embodied practice, not a tidy sequence. That echoed what I was seeing in my classroom.

In 2024–2025, I was asked to expand the design thinking module with more formal tools: interviews, observation, ethnography, and desk research. The goal was to build rigour, but in practice, it created overload. *Mea Culpa*. Students moved from task to task without time to reflect or make deeper sense of what they found. Discovery became a checkbox, not a space to inhabit.

2.1.3 Connecting inner and outer worlds

During the redesign process, I explored shifting from human-centered to life-centered design thinking, not to add another framework, but to ask a deeper question: *how can education help us attend to the world more fully?* Though not fully implemented,

this question reframed my view. If we want students to see the systems they're part of, we first need to create space for noticing.

Masschelein's pedagogy of attention (2020) creates the conditions for something to appear, without steering it toward critique. It opens a space of presence, where teachers and students attend to what is there. Critical reflective observation builds on this by asking: What does this mean? Why does it matter? In this way, attention becomes the starting point, and reflection becomes the bridge between perception and deeper understanding.

If noticing is the first step, then transformation begins with how we relate to what we see. Colonna (2019) calls this 'metanoia': a change of mind that reshapes how we understand ourselves and the world. In my research, this idea became a quiet undercurrent. Slowing down, paying attention, staying with discomfort, became personal practices of shifting perspectives. The Prismatic Gaze, then, is not only about observing others or the world; it's also about noticing the inner terrain, and how change begins there.

2.1.4 Moving with attention

Masschelein's work brought me back to the present, to the idea that creative discovery begins with attention. Slowing down to notice what we see, sense, and relate to. Thus opening up space where something unexpected might unfold.

He and Simons (2013) call this *scholé*: a suspended space, free from pressure or utility. Not preparation for a system, but a shared experience. In a time when AI speeds everything up, *scholé* offers a vital pause, a place to breathe, reflect, and ask better questions. But that space is fragile, easily crushed by deadlines and external demands. It takes effort to hold this space open.

In my research, I asked participants to imagine smells and sounds in still images. Many felt unsure. That friction revealed how deeply we're wired to resolve things fast. This method resisted that urge. It asked us to stay with what's there. To shift from control to encounter, from knowing to being-with.

When we do, attention becomes more than a skill, it becomes a way of becoming. Noticing becomes relational, sensitive, and easily lost. In that light, the educator is not a guide with answers, but a companion in the art of noticing.

***“We need to become
gardeners of attention.”***

- Yves Citton

E

ENVIRONMENT

Environment refers to the full set of conditions, physical, social, sensory, and emotional, that shape learning.

It's not just a space, but an active force that influences what we notice, how we feel, and what becomes possible.

In experiential learning, the environment is a co-participant in the process.



Photo Sandra van Veen, @Art of Nature Midweek

2.2 The Ecology of Attention

Attention is a condition shaped by context. It's influenced by the environments we teach and learn within. This part explores attention as an ecology: something embedded in rhythms, social conditions, and pedagogical choices. Drawing on thinkers like Yves Citton, Jan Masschelein and others, I explore how educators might cultivate more spacious, relational forms of attention in design education.

F

FOCUS

Focus is influenced by habits, tools, and the learning environment. In design education, it often goes to outcomes, not the process.

The prismatic gaze invites a shift in focus, toward noticing more and seeing differently.

Yves Citton (2017) frames attention ecologically, as something shaped by systems and structures, not just individual willpower. Educators, in his view, should become gardeners: tending to the conditions where observation, reflection, and slowness can take root. It values intuitive, relational, and affective forms of attention, ways of being that unfold slowly that resists easy measurement.

Citton warns that we've let capitalism steal our attention. He invites us to reclaim it, not by focusing harder, but by changing the environments that shape how we attend. Creating these conditions means building a kind of counter-environment. One that prioritizes presence over output, and wonder over certainty. In this approach, learning shifts towards tuning in: to materials, to context, and to what surprises us.

Jan Masschelein (2020) speaks of a 'liberated gaze', a way of looking that's not connected to tasks or outcomes. It's an invitation to let things appear on their own terms, without rushing to frame or explain. Maschelein cites Walter Benjamin's attention to the everyday: the fleeting gesture, the overlooked window, the quiet life of the street.

This inspired me to invite my students to walk the city, gathering what caught their eye, assembling '*cabinets of attention*.' These became collections of resonance, practices of presence. A reminder that insight doesn't always start with intention. Sometimes it begins with simply opening our eyes, our hearts and our minds.

Simone Weil offers perhaps the most radical reframe: attention not as effort, but as generosity. To attend, she writes, is to empty oneself. To suspend judgment. To make space for the other. In this light, assisting discovery becomes more about acts of care.

I find this deeply inspiring, but often hard to hold. In the classroom, I feel the pull to offer more: tools, suggestions, direction. Yet something meaningful may happen in the space between offering and withholding, between knowing and not-knowing.

Holding that in-between space, between action and stillness, structure and openness, is where discovery begins. But that space is never neutral. It's shaped by who's in the room, and how they experience the world. Attention is not equally distributed. It's shaped by context, identity, and power.

2.3.2 Attentional modes

Students bring many ways of being, bodies, histories, and needs. While I try to nurture deep, receptive attention, I'm also aware of the fragmented rhythms many students (and I) live within: fast timelines, shifting media, competing demands. Though some institutional models might view fragmented attention as a failure, I've begun to understand it as a reality worth working with, not against. Different forms of attention can coexist. Citton (2017) advocates for forms of attention that resist commodification. He names modes like free-floating attention: a non-utilitarian openness, linked to creativity and aesthetic experience.

Katherine Hayles (2007) contrasts deep attention, focused and sustained, with hyper attention, fast-switching and reactive to media-rich environments. I see both in my classroom. Hyper attention often dominates, not because students lack depth, but because their environments demand constant responsiveness. Hannah Breslin (2024) calls for neurodiversity-affirming education that respects these varied attentional rhythms, rather than pathologizing them.

This shows up in my practice. Some students I work with live with ADHD or sensory sensitivity. Their attention is often fragmented or flooded. In practice, this means finding balance between modes of attention. Deep focus needs space and the possibility to return. Hyper attention is easier to trigger, but risks overstimulation.

What I now try to offer is rhythm: short moments of depth, repeated over time. Attention becomes durational, not a fixed state, but something we revisit. Invited through rhythm, repetition, and trust. It moves with the learner and the situation.

This work is fragile, but essential. Because real learning begins in shared attention: co-created and shaped by the emotional and spatial dynamic of the group.

One moment stands out: a student noticed light refracting through a water bottle. We all paused. For a second, we shared the same gaze: colour, movement, surprise. That fleeting moment became a collective act of noticing. Presence, made visible.

G

GAZE

Our gaze is guided by culture, experience, power, and habit. It influences what we notice, how we interpret it, and what we ignore. It shapes who we design for, what we consider a problem, and what stories get told.

Creating this kind of attentional field, built on curiosity, safety, and responsiveness, feels vital. It's not about directing focus, but allowing it to gather. Together. In creative research, attention doesn't always move toward clarity. It can linger in what's partial, messy, or unresolved (click to view the video).

H

HUMAN-NESS

The emotional, relational, and embodied aspects of being human. It includes empathy, intuition, care, and lived experience.

In the prismatic gaze, human-ness shows up through presence and dialogue.



2.3 What constitutes the Prismatic Gaze?

So far, I've explored how attention is shaped by culture, environment, and educational contexts. But understanding that ecology isn't enough. We also need to ask: what conditions must be in place, and what abilities must be cultivated to support critical reflective observation? And how do we, as educators, walk the talk?

Through my practice-based research, four attentional abilities began to surface: ways of attending, sensing, reflecting, and shifting perspective. These became the core of the Prismatic Gaze that supports critical reflective observation, understood here as the interplay of perception (what we notice), reflection (how we make sense of it), and criticality (how we situate it in broader historical, ecological, and ethical contexts). These abilities help both students and educators stay present, hold uncertainty, and navigate the messiness of creative discovery. Every word became a part of the prism to look through.

- **SEE(K): to observe with attention**
- **SENSE : to engage our senses and emotions**
- **SHARE : to situate reflection with others**
- **SHIFT: to change our perspectives**

These four abilities each shape different conditions for creative discovery. Like a prism bending light, they blend and redirect our attention, revealing gestures, moods, and meanings that might otherwise go unnoticed. Through my research, I explored how each of these abilities could be activated: through images, materials, spaces, rhythms, and gestures. They became invitations to engage.

This also stirred up tensions. Every invitation to observe, reflect, or shift perspective brought discomfort. Observation could be blocked by overstimulation. Sensitivity could overwhelm. Reflection triggered self-doubt. Perspective-shifting could feel destabilizing. *Are these problems to fix? Or do they mark the in-between space where transformation begins? What if these tensions became our teachers?*

This aligns with Donald Schön's (1983) idea of the reflective practitioner, someone who thinks in and on action, responds to the unexpected, and learns through doing. Teaching, in this sense, becomes a co-creative act: noticing, questioning, and adapting together. Especially when the path isn't clear. The Gaze offers orientations, a way of moving and pausing with others through creative discovery.



INSIGHTS

A clear understanding that reveals something new.

It often comes from noticing, reflecting, and seeing things from a different perspective.

Insight grows over time, not all at once.

**'The art of teaching is the art
of assisting discovery**

- Mark van Doren



Artwork Cindy Mirande

2.3.1 SEE(K): Observing with Attention

SEE(K) asks us to notice, not just to scan or categorize, but to open our gaze. Our habits, experiences, and biases shape what we see, what stands out, and what stays hidden. Observation is not neutral; it's an active, ethical act. Citton (2017) talks about reflexive attention, which means becoming aware of what we pay attention to. And how this is influenced by ourselves, others and our environment.

Jan Masschelein (2013) describes attention as a pedagogical gesture: interruptive, public, and open-ended. In this view, the educator doesn't direct attention but arranges encounters, settings where perception can unfold on its own terms. The task is not to point things out, but to make space for something to appear.

Shari Tishman (2018) deepens the idea of attentive observation through slow looking, the practice of sustained, open-ended observation that lets complexity surface. As co-creator of the See–Think–Wonder routine at Harvard's Project Zero, she emphasizes that insight emerges not just from what we see, but from how long and how openly we stay with it. She also reminds us that deep attention doesn't always require long stretches of stillness; it can emerge through return, brief moments of presence, layered over time.

This connects directly to my artistic practice, where I watch discarded flowers collapse, rot, and transform. Decay became my teacher of presence and slow time, showing me how time is needed to decompose our thoughts. This kind of observation isn't just visual; it's relational. This is what Citton calls joint attention, which requires patience and trust. The same applies in the classroom. Observation isn't just looking, it's presence. Letting the eyes wander, letting questions surface, and creating space where noticing becomes possible.

It also means recognizing what gets overlooked, what we're trained not to see. What happens when we shift our gaze, even slightly? Observation then, becomes a form of unlearning, making space for different ways of seeing, and for things we didn't know we needed to notice. It helps us move beyond our default settings. By placing different observations next to each other, this joint attention reveals what lies beyond our individual frame.



JOINT ATTENTION

Where attention becomes collective, co-created, and relational.

2.3.2 SENSE: Engaging with senses & sensitivities

SENSE moves beyond vision. It brings in our whole body, touch, smell, sound, intuition, and asks us to attend not just to what we see, but what we feel. Real learning doesn't happen at a distance; it happens when we're affected. This is what Citton (2017) calls affective attention, guided by moods, emotional climates, and atmospheres. Sense making here is about feeling our way through an experience. It's how abstract ideas become alive, through the body, our emotions, the senses.

In design education, sensory awareness sharpens perception, but it also connects us to emotional undercurrents, uncertainty, joy, pain, memories. Sensing takes us beneath surface behaviors, into stories that often go unnamed. It slows us down, helping us notice the affective atmosphere of a moment, a room, a conversation.

This kind of sensitivity needs safety. bell hooks (1994) reminds us that learning cannot happen without care. *"To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students,"* she writes, *"is essential."* That care isn't abstract, it requires vulnerability from educators, too. We can't ask students to be open if we remain guarded ourselves.

Jan van Boeckel (2022), drawing on Dreyfus, echoes this: *when teachers show emotional presence, their doubts, stakes, and reasons, students are more likely to let their own learning matter.* Still, this is delicate work. True sensitivity means holding space, not taking over. Supporting without steering. Being present, without performing presence.

It goes against the grain of the idea of 'professional distance,' which suggests emotional presence risks overstepping our role. And it's true, we're not trained as psychologists. But we are relational practitioners. We work with people, not just projects. That means attuning to the emotional texture of learning, not to diagnose or fix, but to notice, respond, and stay human in the room.

SENSE asks us to show up fully, to teach not just from the head, but from the heart. Through my practice, the simple question of how an image made somebody feel revealed a spectrum of emotions that would not have surfaced when asked directly. It demonstrates the power of these exercises, where the wordclouds made the unseen felt. These clouds became symbols of the feelings and moods of the people in the classroom.

K

KINSHIP

Reminds us that learning is actively relating to materials, ideas, and each other.

2.3.3 SHARE: Situating Reflection

SHARE sees reflection as a way to understand how we relate to others and the world around us. Reflection here is less about finishing thoughts or writing neat conclusions, but more about noticing together. This is what Citton (2017) describes as joint attention: 'I attend to what you attend to.' It's how we build trust, resonance, and collective presence.

John Dewey (1933) described reflection as something that begins when things don't quite make sense, when something familiar is disrupted and we're asked to pause and think again. But that pause doesn't happen in a vacuum. It's shaped by where we are, who we're with, and what's expected of us. That means reflection is not just personal, it's also positional. It shows how we relate to what's happening around us.

SHARE builds on this idea. It reminds us that reflection isn't only about the self. It's also about our place within shared time, space, and experience. We don't reflect in isolation, we reflect in connection. Even silent reflection is shaped by the room, the people, and the energy around us. Situating reflection means asking: *What am I noticing, and why? Who is here, and how does that shape what I see or say, or don't say?*

In many creative education settings I've worked in, reflection is often treated as an individual assignment, written quickly, formalized, or reduced to bullet points. SHARE offers another way. It asks educators to reflect alongside their students. To be part of the moment. To resist the urge to wrap things up too soon, and instead stay with what's unfinished. Sometimes this means talking, but not always. It can also mean listening more deeply. Sitting with silence. Noticing the mood of the room. Letting attention settle.

Insight doesn't always show up in words. It might be in a pause, in a gesture, or in a material someone lingers on just a little longer. The role of the teacher isn't to extract meaning, but to help students find where they are in the experience, ethically, relationally, and reflectively. SHARE reminds us that reflection is never just personal. It's shaped by how we stay together, by how we share our attention, and how we respond.



LIMINALITY

The moment when we pause, question, and reflect, between what we know and what we are about to discover.

2.3.4 SHIFT: The art of shifting perspectives

SHIFT is the lever that helps us rethink and rearrange what we assume to be true. It creates a pause, a space where something unexpected can surface. This is where change begins: not through control, but through openness. Here, discovery unfolds more like a poem than a plan, told in fragments, returned to over time. It echoes what Yves Citton calls interpretive attention: the kind we use when meaning is unclear, emotional, or layered.

Ursula K. Le Guin offers a powerful image: stories as carrier bags: soft containers that hold scraps, gestures, and leftovers. Stories, she writes, are about what we carry, not what we conquer. Learning, too, is not always about clear answers. Sometimes we gather what we can, carry it with care, and keep walking.

In one prototype, I asked students to take sensory walks and collect textures, sounds, and images. In another, they used collage to rearrange bits of research into visual, intuitive stories. The goal wasn't clarity. It was to notice what moved. What shifted. This approach became a kind of prismatic poetry, where meaning doesn't land in one place, but stays in motion.

SHIFT invites us to rethink not just how learning happens, but when. It challenges the idea that insight arrives on command, neatly timed to fit a schedule or a slide. Instead, SHIFT sees learning as a continuum: something that unfolds over time, across moments, conversations, and returns. A thought planted in week one might only sprout in week six, during a walk, a quiet moment, or a chance encounter.

In practice, this means making room for slowness. For letting a student return to an idea they once abandoned. For revisiting an image, a journal entry, or a question, not to finish it, but to see what's changed. Sometimes this means closing a session without closure. Letting discomfort stay. Letting ambiguity speak.

Holding space for the layered, the unresolved, the poetic. Not to solve it, but to walk with it, over time.



METAMORPHOSIS

When ideas are broken apart
and transform into something else.

2.4 The Harvest: What constitutes the Prismatic Gaze?

The Prismatic Gaze builds on Masschelein's idea that education begins with attention, and draws from Dewey's belief that learning arises through experience and reflection. But it adds something more: an invitation to notice not just what we see, but how it feels, what it stirs in us, and how it connects us to the world. It offers attentional modes that foster care, presence, and curiosity in creative exploration. In this way, art and nature function as counter-spaces: spaces that resist distraction and speed, and invite us to flip our screens, slow down, and re-engage with the real.

The ideas of Yves Citton helped me articulate what I had already been exploring in practice: that attention is shaped by emotional, social, and ecological forces. His typology of attentional modes resonates deeply with the Gaze:

- **Reflexive attention** underpins SEE(K): noticing not just what we see, but how and why we see it.
- **Affective attention** anchors SENSE: tuning into emotional and sensory atmospheres.
- **Joint attention** comes through SHARE: focusing together, noticing-with, learning as a group act.
- **Interpretive attention** fuels SHIFT: making sense of ambiguity, letting meaning unfold over time.

The next chapter translates these theories into a framework that can be practiced. It brings these ideas into motion: through sensory walks, slow looking, journaling, collage, conversations. It engages the body, invites emotion, and slows perception. It becomes something students and educators can do. Together.

In this way, the Gaze supports critical reflective observation as a lived attentional practice. It helps us notice closely, stay with the unclear, and reflect in relation to ourselves, others, and the world around us. Reflection becomes not just personal, but ethical and contextual.

In the end, the Prismatic Gaze is shaped by both the ideas we carry and the spaces we hold. It is a practice of attention, care, and shared discovery: a way of asking, again and again: *What am I seeing? What does it mean? And how does it matter beyond me?*

“It is about simple awareness, awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, that we have to keep reminding ourselves, over and over: This is water, this is water.”

- David Foster Wallace (2009)

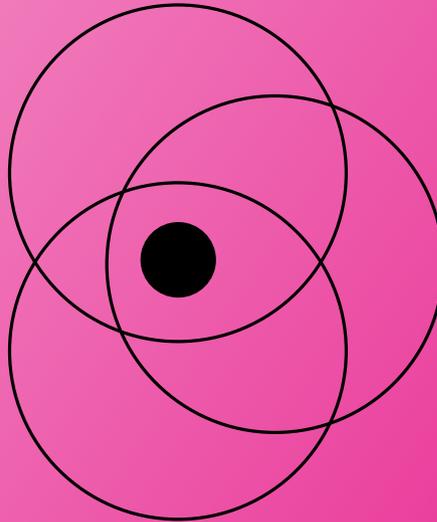
CLICK TO LISTEN >



Artwork Cindy Mirande

3.1 Research approach <i>Methods, instruments and</i>	Page 38 - 41
3.2 Prototype 1 <i>See(d)ing the Unseen</i>	Page 42 - 57
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How might the prismatic gaze grow through practice?



O

OBSERVATION

Reflecting on how students, educators, and participants engage with creative experiments and prototypes.

It is the foundation of the SEE(K) element of the Prismatic Gaze.

3.1 The research approach

This research followed a practice-based and arts-informed approach (Candy, 2006), where knowledge emerges through doing. Ideas were shaped through workshops, exercises, and prototypes, all of which directly informed the development of the Prismatic Gaze framework.

Rather than separating theory from practice, I treated creative practice as a method of inquiry: a way to explore how attention, reflection, and presence function within real educational settings. As Candy notes, in this kind of research, outcomes arise from what is made and what happens. This describes my process well.

The Gaze took shape through making, sensing, and reflecting, by staying with uncertainty, responding to what emerged, and allowing ideas to evolve over time. Theory and practice weren't separate steps, but part of a continuous loop. It was a living inquiry: observing how attention moved through the work, and how the Gaze itself kept shifting in response.

3.1.1 Research Methods

This approach blends visual and sensory ethnography (Pink, 2013; 2015) with arts-based pedagogy, focusing on attention and relational meaning. I used creative methods, photo elicitations, poetic inquiry, and sensory prompts, not only to acquire information, but as ways to activate perception and reflection. Notes, images, and responses were interpreted through reflective and thematic analysis, staying close to the experience itself.

3.1.2 Research Instruments

Within my prototypes, images, objects, and environments were used as invitations for observation, association, interpretation, and creative expression. Prototype 1 examined how guided sensory prompts could shift attention and expand interpretive range. Prototype 2 explored how embodied, material engagement might deepen contextual awareness and reflection. These instruments were adapted in response to the moment, the group, and what emerged.

The research was expanded through several overlapping activities:

- Analyzing the curriculum to identify pedagogical gaps
- A literature review
- Designing, testing, and adapting pedagogical prototypes
- Reflecting on my own facilitation across multiple settings
- Gathering and interpreting participant feedback

P

PROTOTYPING

Prototyping within creative research and design education is the iterative process of developing, testing, and refining ideas, methods, or materials through hands-on experimentation. This can be a tool, a method, a learning activity, or a piece of art, so that students and educators can explore, test, and improve upon them in real-time (Burns et al., 2006)

3.1.3 Participants & Contexts

Participants came from diverse educational and public contexts, ranging from peer researchers to students. Each brought a different relationship to observation, reflection, and inquiry. This revealed how identity and environment shape attention, especially between open-ended community settings and curriculum-bound classrooms.

3.1.4 Prototype 1: See(d)ing the Unseen

This prototype explored how sensory prompts in observation influences meaning-making. Participants engaged with ‘search pictures’ and responded to prompts inviting them to imagine different sensory experiences (sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound). Responses were gathered through a digital Mentimeter survey, generating real-time word clouds to visualize the diversity of interpretations and associations.

Testing Rounds & participants:

Round 1 & 2: 17 participants (MEIA Community)
Round 3: 2 participants (Post-Humanist Research Group) and one private session of poetry crafting
Round 4: 17 third-year students Artemis Academy

3.1.5 Prototype 2: Art and Gifts of Nature

This prototype moved away from digital methods towards material-based, embodied practices. Participants engaged in natural ink-making, reflective journaling, and visual poetry to explore connections with nature. The first 2 rounds included collaboration with Aoife McDonnell (MEIA Community) and expanded insights into embodied arts practices during the Art of Nature Midweek in Spain.

Testing Rounds & participants:

Round 1: 17 participants from the Meia learning community
Round 2: The general public at the Plant & Art Fair
Round 3: 2 participants from the Art of Nature Midweek

3.1.6 The Final Project

Insights from both prototypes shaped my teaching at Academy Artemis. It changed how I introduced observation, framed inquiry, and held space for discovery. Working with 12 fourth-year students on their final projects, I used the Prismatic Gaze to support a slower, more attentive approach to creative discovery. I introduced the Gaze through a series of exercises and evaluated its impact through student feedback, portfolio analysis, and observation, discussed further in Chapter 4.



QUEST

A journey or mission,
that involves challenges,
discoveries, and personal growth.

3.1.7 Evaluation & Reflection

In this research, evaluation and reflection were not separate steps, but woven into the process itself. Evaluation helped me understand what was happening; reflection helped me understand what it meant, to the participants, to the process, and to my own practice.

Three core strategies shaped my evaluation:

- **Observation:** I documented how participants engaged, what they noticed, avoided, or lingered on. I also reflected on my own role, noting how my presence (or absence) shaped the dynamic.

- **Participant Input:** Feedback was gathered through informal conversations, shared reflections, and tools like Mentimeter. These methods surfaced emotional and associative responses that standard evaluations often miss.

- **Iteration:** Each insight led to a next step. Adjustments weren't pre-planned but emerged through patterns, tensions, and questions. Evaluation became part of the design process itself.

Alongside this, I used the prismatic gaze to structure my reflection. I asked: *What was shared? What was seen and sensed? And what shifted, in the process, and in me?* This reflection helped me stay close to the core values of the prismatic gaze: attention, presence, and co-creation. In this way, the prismatic gaze remained not just theory, but was lived and practiced.

3.1.8 Success Indicators

Success indicators were closely tied to the four guiding questions of this research. I looked for moments where participants noticed something overlooked (SEE(K)), made sense of their experience emotionally or relationally through artistic expression (SENSE), situated their reflection to bigger contexts (SHARE), or adjusted their ways or thinking based on new insights (SHIFT).

This was assessed through portfolio analysis, observation, feedback and evaluations. These orientations functioned not only as a framework for discovery and reflection, but also as a way for noticing when and how my own learning moved. These indicators helped assess not only the participants' engagement, but also my own learning as an educator.

3.1.9 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with informed verbal consent and the right to withdraw at any time. Ethical guidelines were followed throughout. Responses remained anonymous unless participants gave permission to be named. Materials were treated as both data and lived artefacts.

As Banks and Brydon-Millers (2019) notes, ethical practice in creative inquiry demands attentiveness to power, care, and context. Ethics weren't a checklist but part of the process, negotiated in real time, embedded in facilitation, and inseparable from meaning-making. Masschelein (2018) similarly frames attention as an ethical gesture, one that requires presence, restraint, and care rather than intervention or control.

This research surfaced tensions around ownership and emotional safety. Who owns a collective word cloud? How do we hold space for trauma without intruding? These moments sharpened my awareness of the ethical demands of facilitation, especially when what's shared is not just visible, but deeply felt.

Artwork Cindy Mirande



***“It reminds me of my life.
All layers: The bright ones.
And the darker ones.”***

- Anonymous

R

REFLECTION

A process of making sense of experience through noticing, pausing, and responding. In creative research, reflection is often emotional, embodied, and iterative, revealing meaning over time rather than delivering quick conclusions.

3.2 Prototype 1: See(d)ing the Unseen

The first prototype evolved into a practice that invites noticing what is usually overlooked. Revealing words as clouds to read the climate of a classroom, creating stories from fragments and weaving meaning together.



*Feelings of
peace & calm*

- Amira

*A planet in
stormy weather*

- Ronald



*Blood on the leaves,
Song by Kanye West
Sample: Strange Fruit*

- Pamela



*Visual appealing, has move-
ment, sounds. When you close
your eyes you can still see the
photograph. Reminds me of
Mucha's painting, kinda
forces/pushes me to dive in
what I am feeling right now.*

- Kannah

*Underneath
Sticky
Tingly
Curling
Pink Floaters*

- Aoife



*Is it an insect or a flower?
Beauty in death?*

- Constança



Search Picture by Cindy Mirande,
responses by the MEIA community

WHERE: MEIA classroom

WHEN: May 2024

WHO: MEIA Community,
17 participants

WHAT: Collecting
perceptions through
artworks

3.2.1 Round 1: testing the waters

What was shared:

During the introductions at MEIA I brought my macroshots of decomposing flowers with me. I wondered: *What happens if I let others observe these images? What will they see? Will they get to know me, or will I get to know them?* I threw my photos into the circle like seeds, to see what grew from there. I asked:

- Choose an image that draws you in.
- Prompt it to AI, or simply say what comes to mind.

Few chose the AI path, most leaned into personal associations: stories, metaphors, memories. I began to see a pattern that would return later: observation often starts with feeling, not with thinking.

What was seen & sensed:

What we see is shaped by who we are, our memories, moods, values, and experiences. In creative research, observation isn't just about what's out there, but how it filters through our lens. When we notice how we're looking, we make space to reflect, shift perspective, and invite others to do the same. Responding to an image let participants share something personal without performance. That made it a powerful check-in, connection through resonance, not role. This session also revealed how often I stay outside the frame. My images were central, but I stayed hidden, guiding, not revealing. It works, but it raised a question: what do I miss by holding back? And what do students need to see in me to feel safe showing themselves? That day, I learned presence can matter more than explanation. The responses were spontaneous and emotionally alive, never forced.

What shifted:

These early observations made me want to go deeper, to connect what people noticed to a shared sense of meaning. I approached it like a crime scene: small clues, fragments, and questions coming together to form a collective story. One peer suggested zooming in on the images. That sparked the idea to use Mentimeter, allowing participants to explore the images on their phones. It also gave me a simple way to gather feedback through the word cloud feature, turning individual impressions into a shared response. This did not go entirely as planned...



SEEDING THE UNSEEN



"In the world of imagination, all things belong."



COLLECTING PERCEPTIONS



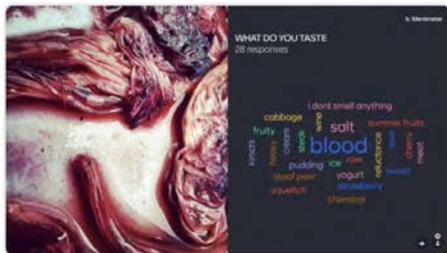
WHAT DO YOU SEE



WHAT DO YOU HEAR



WHAT DO YOU SMELL



WHAT DO YOU TASTE

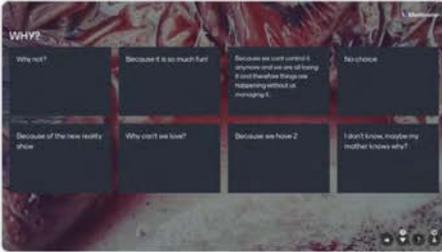


WHAT DO YOU FEEL

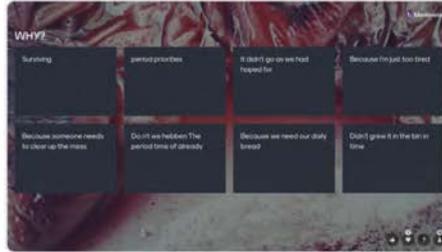


WHAT DO YOU THINK?





WHY? (Results 1/3)



WHY? (Results 2/3)



WHY? (Results 3/3)



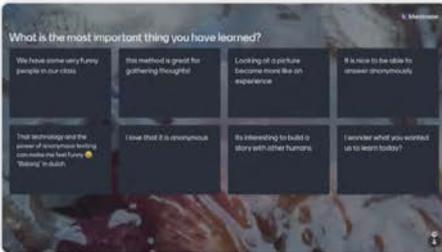
STORY SPORES



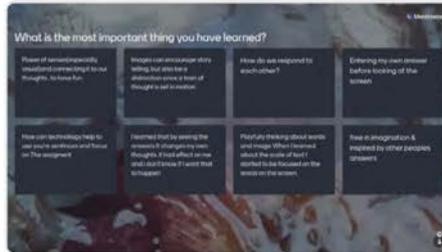
HUMUS



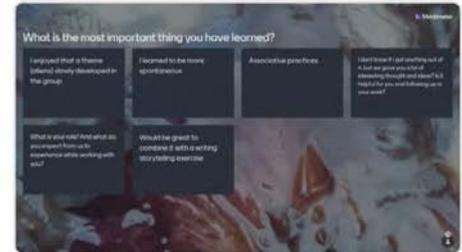
DARE TO SHARE



What is the most impor... (Results 1/3)



What is the most importan... (Results 2/3)



What is the most importan... (Results 3/3)



SHARE & SHIFT

WHERE: MEIA classroom

WHEN: September 2024

WHO: Meia learning Community, 17 participants

WHAT:

Search pictures
Mentimeter Wordclouds
Sensory prompts

3.2.2 Round 2: the trouble with time

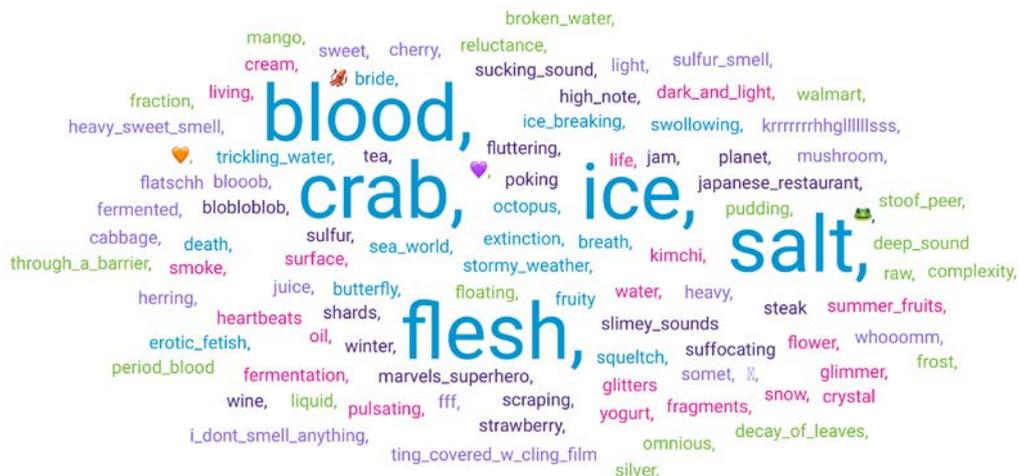
What was shared:

The exercise had two parts. First, I built on my earlier experiment by collecting individual perceptions, expanding it with sensory prompts. In creative writing, sensory details are often used to set the scene, so I borrowed that logic here. In the second part, I introduced the 5W1H method (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) to give the group a narrative collective structure.

The real-time word clouds from the sensory prompts were dense, strange, and poetic. Certain words echoed repeatedly: *blood*, *crab*, *salt*, *flesh*. Others were surprising: *walmart*, *period_blood*, *marvels_superhero*. These juxtapositions vividly demonstrated how personal, cultural, and emotional filters shape what we notice, and how quickly collective meaning can become messy.

The word clouds revealed often-hidden classroom elements: discomfort, humour, and mood. Yet the experience varied greatly among participants. One noted, “*I needed to know where we were going. More guidelines.*” Conversely, another felt liberated by openness, appreciating anonymity: “*I love that it’s anonymous.*” But anonymity also invited distraction. One participant remarked, “*The power of anonymous texting can make me feel funny.*”

Observation, I realized, is inherently relational, shaped by the tool, tone, timing, and the observer’s personal context. A careful gaze for one became overwhelming for another.



Word clouds by the MEIA community

What I saw and sensed:

Testing processes in real time made it difficult to define clear outcomes. What proved essential was clearly naming the experience participants were entering, not to control it, but to support it. Clear expectations help guide people through uncertainty.

I tried to do too much, too quickly. Hoping learning would catch up, I rushed, a common trap of mine. But reflection needs space. Insight can't be forced; it needs time to unfold.

After the sensory prompts, I attempted to remix the word clouds into a shared poem with the participants, an ambitious move that didn't land. The first exercise had already stretched participants' focus. By the storytelling phase, energy had dropped, laughter surfaced, and attention faded. A reminder: attention is fragile, and pacing matters. The momentum had passed, and time was up.

After the fact, I used AI to generate a poem from the group's words to demonstrate the potential in creative writing exercises:

ENTROPY'S ECHO

*Broken water, a planet's heartbeats pulsating,
Shards of surface, suffocating fragments,
Deep sound, a high note, swallowing, sucking through
Fluttering scraping, a heavy sweet smell of sulfur and oil.
Breath, smoke, and frost gas death, Blood and salt,
a chemical sour,
Meat and sweat, confused and pulled in directions,
Something crawling up, a hunger cramped and rotten.
Beginning, dissolving, breaking through a barrier.*

- A collective poem from the Meia Community X OpenAI

My aim was to demonstrate the poetic potential, but by stepping in, I removed participants from their own learning process. This poem also raised questions about authorship and authenticity. "Who owns this?" And: "I wonder what you wanted us to learn?"

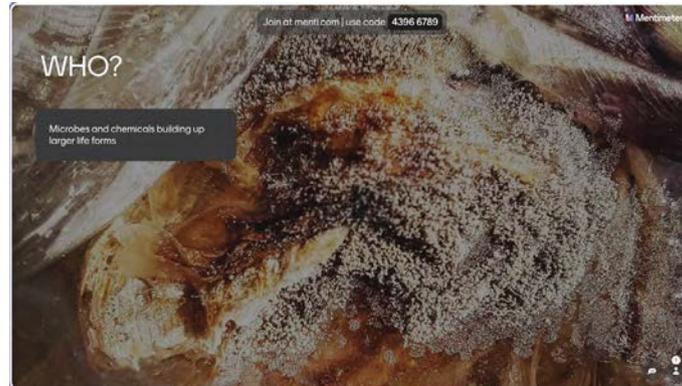
It reminded me: meaningful engagement must be experienced, not outsourced. One participant captured this tension: "Seeing the answers changes my own thoughts. It affects me, and I don't know if I want that." The response revealed a key dilemma in teaching, how to balance individual agency with collective meaning-making. Facilitation requires sensing when people are ready to share, and when they're not.

What shifted:

I revised the exercise by separating it into two clear phases:

- Phase 1: Silent, individual observation to allow space for personal reflection. Participants could now opt-out of viewing or contributing to collective responses if they prefer, balancing personal engagement with collective insights.
- Phase 2: Creating visual poetry using the generated word clouds, after a deliberate pause. Introducing this pause creates crucial breathing room, respecting individual attention spans and agency.

For the next round, I took on a time and space independent approach with 2 peers from the Post Humanist research group, as I was curious to see if this could inform a more life centered approach in the future.



- What is the most important thing you have learned?

Shades and pulsations and fractures do not have to involve pains, gains or motivations

- One thing that could be improved for next time?

Do not assume a traditional narrative structure

Where:

Time & space independent

Who:

Floor Basten & Caroline Kal
(Post Humanist Research
Group)

Private session with one
anonymous participant

When: August 2024

What: Restoring agency

3.2.3 Round 3**What was shared:**

To test this different approach, I introduced a more flexible, self-paced format with two peers from the Post-Humanist Research Group. This shift aimed to restore agency and reduce the pressure of real-time, collective interpretation. Responding to the storytelling prompts, Floor Basten advised, “Don’t presume a traditional narrative structure.” The disjointed, visceral language of the word clouds already held meaning, perhaps the openness and incompleteness were the method. A move from story to poetry.

Caroline Kal noted the presence of trauma in some responses. These weren’t just words or images, they carried memory, emotion, history. In one private session, a participant connected the exercise to ecological destruction and personal grief. This revealed a new ethical layer: what does it mean to open spaces that might touch pain?

CK: *“I work a lot with abused people in my life, your work seems to align with that. (?)”*

CM: *“Oh, how perceptive! The trauma of the planet that shines through here...Or the people who wrote the words? ... Or myself as a curator who has made certain choices?”*

What was seen & sensed:

This conversation brought me into the research as participant. During a MEiA workshop, I was overwhelmed by a resurfacing memory and quietly left the room. No one noticed. That absence stayed with me. What do we miss when we focus only on what is said? Silence speaks too. If I had been facilitating, would I have noticed? The moment exposed a tension between individual experience and group flow, how even unintentional neglect can leave a mark.

What shifted:

Removing narrative prompts created space for participants to shape their own meaning. The word clouds became poetic fields, unfinished, expressive, charged. Caroline’s feedback reminded me that poetic forms are not neutral; they carry personal histories. As bell hooks writes, education is a site of both rupture and care. This wasn’t just about agency, it was about care. About recognizing the unseen weight poetic work can carry.

For the next round, I took my prototype to the classroom, testing how my method would now hold within a classroom setting.

What is the most important thing you have learned?

Er zijn meerdere manieren om afbeeldingen te interpreteren

Je kijkt er op een andere manier naar

Dat abstracte beelden je heel veel kunnen laten voelen, zien, ruiken

Volg je zintuigen

Dat je zintuigen kan herkennen zonder ze daadwerkelijk te beleven

That my brain is disgusting exactly

Zintuigen zijn meer dan je denkt

Anders kijken naar beelden

Dat je dingen hoort en ruikt gebaseerd op je interpretatie

That you have to look at what you're inner voice is telling you without listening to other people

Dat ik beeld zie en ik al gelijk kan voorstellen hoe het voelt en smaakt

Niet alles is zoals het lijkt, sommige afbeeldingen ruik of hoor je beter dan andere. Een ander gevoel bij elke afbeelding

Leren kijken naar een afbeelding, intuïtief opschrijven wat er als eerste in je opkomt.

Beelden geven hele verschillende associaties per persoon. Het roept bij iedereen een andere emotie op.

One thing that was good about the experience

Handig format

Out of the box

Verwarrend

Verder kijken dan het oppervlakte

Mooie beelden

Onderzoeken

Think longer and watch longer to one picture

Inspiratie van de beelden, vind het ook leuk om in te zoomen

Dat iedereen toch ze eigen mening heeft

vernieuwend

Erg interessante en mooie beelden.

Een vernieuwde manier van onderzoek uitvoeren, overzichtelijk.

FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY: **REFLEXIVE ATTENTION**

Citton (2017) describes reflexive attention as “*Attention paid to attention itself.*” (p. 83)

In other words, it's when people don't just focus on what they see or feel, but also become aware of how they are seeing or feeling, what shapes their reaction, what they notice, and what they overlook.

The participants feedback show awareness of their own inner filters, of how meaning is formed, and how different that can be from person to person. That is reflexive attention in practice.

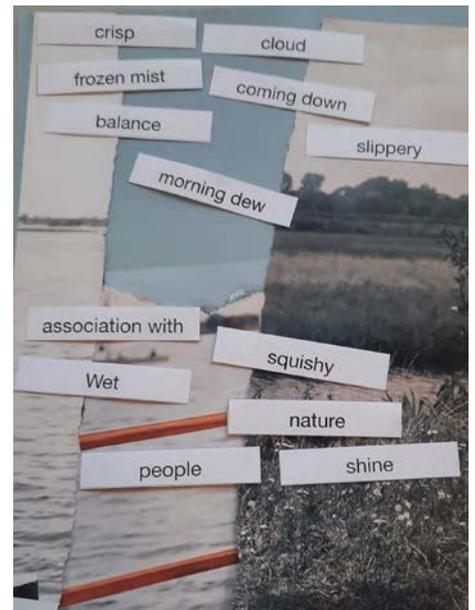
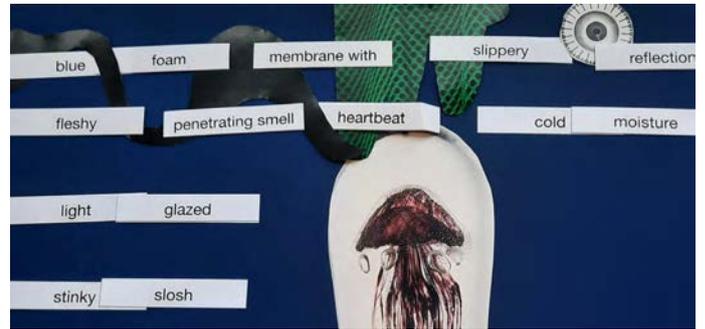
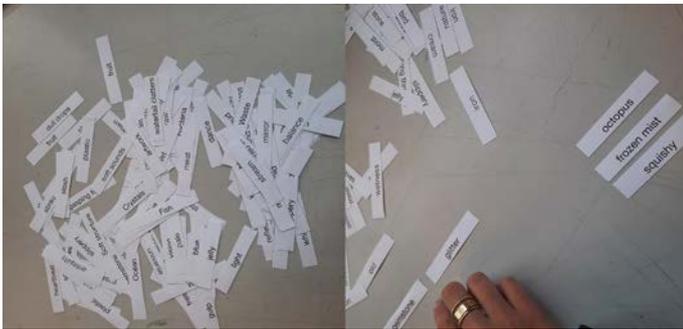
This shows that theory doesn't always need to be added from the outside; it can grow out of the experience itself. That supports the idea that starting with hands-on, sensory experiences can be a powerful way to develop deep and reflective ways of paying attention.

3.2.4 Round 4: Part 2: Collaging as Visual Poetry

What was shared:

For this round, I introduced a new variation of the poetry exercise. Students used the collective word clouds to create visual poems, reframing shared language into personal expression. This shift—from individual observation, to collective resonance, and back to personal meaning—followed a rhythm of seeing, sharing, and reframing. It offered insights into how people learn, make sense of experience, and the subtle role of the facilitator in holding that process. The images below show the students' responses.

Visual Poetry by third year students @Academy Artemis



Where:
Academy Artemis

When:
Oktober 2024

Who: Third year students
module creative research

What: Deepening reflection
and meaning making through
collaging

Participation was voluntary, and most declined. One student later admitted she felt “*guilt-tripped*” by my visible disappointment. I’d intended openness, but my investment shaped the atmosphere more than I realized.

Still, those who did join created deeply personal work. One explored vulnerability through a metaphorical creature. Another used the sea to reflect on emotional growth. Others evoked memories, the smell of salt, the hush of a misty morning. These weren’t just creative outputs; they became emotional anchors. Nature emerged as personal, symbolic, sensual, and socially shaped.

By sitting alongside students, the exercise became a rare moment of connection, something I’d lost in this module, overwhelmed by time pressure and group dynamics.

What was seen & sensed:

This session revealed how presence, real, relational presence, can reshape the dynamic of creative work. Sitting with students instead of standing apart shifted the tone from instruction to shared experience. I became aware of how much atmosphere I bring into the room: not just through words or structure, but through energy, tone, and even silence.

My disappointment was felt, and it changed the space. I saw how a facilitator’s unspoken emotions can shape whether students feel safe or pressured. Vulnerability in creative work doesn’t thrive under expectation; it needs care. What I learned wasn’t about the exercise, but about relational awareness. Attunement, openness, and restraint, listening for presence rather than guiding meaning, became central.

What shifted:

This experience underscored the fragility of personal connection, often lost under time constraints and performance pressure. I began to treat poetic inquiry less as a tool and more as a condition for shared reflection. This insight led me to explore this in the next prototype, Art & Gifts of Nature, where sensitivity, time, and the interplay between public and private space opened up new insights in how to guide this process.

FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY:
AFFECTIVE ATTENTION

Citton (2017) describes affective attention as “*attention that is less chosen than undergone, it touches us, moves us, envelops us*” (p. 115–116).

This session made that visible. Participation wasn’t just shaped by task or interest, but by atmosphere, my energy, my unspoken disappointment, the tone of the space.

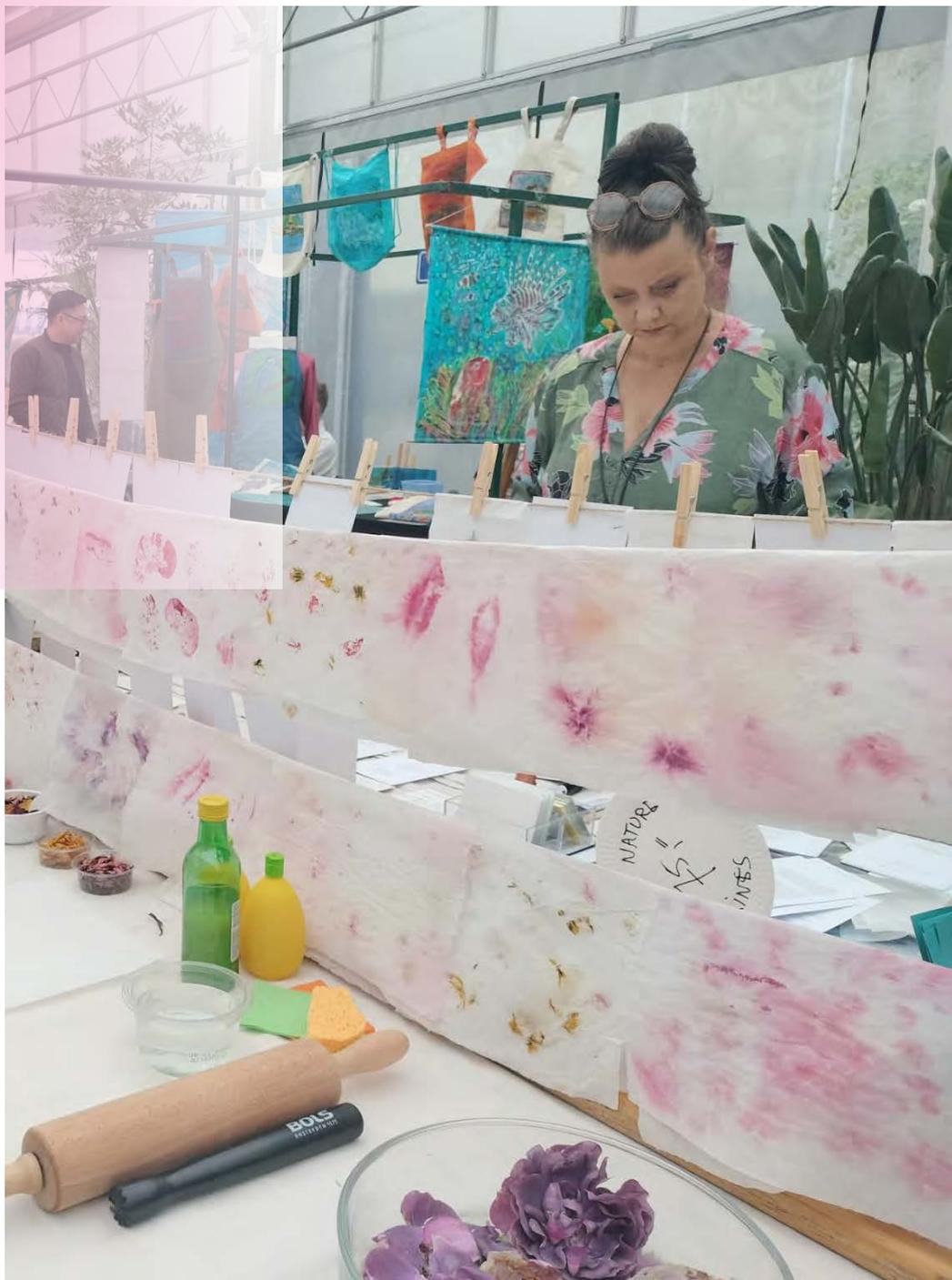
The students who did join created work that was emotionally charged and sensorial: memories, sea air, mist, creatures.

It shows how affective undercurrents shape what felt possible. That kind of attention can’t be forced or planned. It arises between people, in the space between intention and reception.

3.3 Prototype 2: Art & Gifts of Nature

In this prototype, I shifted
from screen to surface,
from seeing to sensing and
sharing.

This marked a transition
from digital prompts to
physical materials, from
digital observation to
embodied experience.





Photos: Aiofe McDonnal & Cindy Mirande

Round 1:

Where:

MEIA classroom

When:

29th May Rotterdam 2024

Who:

Meia learning Community,
17 participants

Round 2:

Where:

Art and Plant Fair, Hortus
Botanics, TUDelft

When:

30 - 31 May 2024

Who:

The general public

3.3.1 Round 1 & 2

What was shared in round 1:

The first round took place at MEiA, where we created a drop-in workshop table filled with natural materials: flower petals, hand-made ink, household paper, and reflective poetic prompts.

I worked alongside Aiofe to create an inviting atmosphere where doing preceded explanation. Participants were free to choose how they engaged with the exercise.

What was seen and sensed:

One participant stayed long after the others had left. She didn't speak, she simply made. Quiet, focused, absorbed. That moment stayed with me more than any feedback form. Others responded too: *"The materials were so beautiful, I just wanted to do something."* *"The evoking questions and how nature and memory are connected."* This was learning by doing, through rhythm and attention. Not directed, but felt.

What was shared in round 2:

We took the same materials to the TU Delft Art & Plant Fair. This time, the setting was public, loud, unpredictable. Children pressed petals into ink. Adults lingered over poetry cards. Conversations sparked with strangers. Some read and moved on. Others stayed, made something, and left without a word.

The materials became more than objects, they became gifts of attention. Many who connected deeply with the poetry were at a turning point: in life, identity, work. Poetry often emerges when ordinary language fails. Assembling gifts for them became a gift of attention, of being present with materials, memory, and each other. These workshops became a 'living laboratory', a temporary pause from speed and utility. The gestures were simple, but they held emotional weight. Holding space meant knowing when to step back and letting attention do the work.

What shifted:

These moments reminded me that not everyone enters through the same door. The same setup invited very different kinds of engagement, and that variety matters. What happens when slowness becomes the method? When participants have time not just to sense, but to dwell? That question led to the next and last round: The Art of Nature Midweek in Spain.



Photos: Cindy Mirande



Round 3:

Where:

Casa Gallinera,
Benissiva, Spain

When:

10 - 15 November 2024

Who:

Liesbeth de Fouw
Sandra van Veen

What:

Engaging the senses at
The Art of Nature Midweek

NATURE AS A MUSE

Are you ready for an inspiring escape to the Spanish Mountains that combines relaxation with learning from nature through artistic practice? Join host Madelena de Rooij and artist/educator Cindy Miranda for a transformative 'Art of Nature' midweek at Casa Gallinera in Spain, Benissivá, Costa Blanca.

Enjoy the comfort of this charming 'casa rural' amidst La Vall de Gallinera, a beautiful natural reserve between the mountains of La Marina Alta. Engage all your senses to explore nature in new, meaningful ways, fueling both your personal and professional growth. By the end, you'll leave rejuvenated with fresh insights, tangible artworks and lasting connections.



FREE RANGE ACTIVITIES

MORNING BREAKFAST & FORAGING
After breakfast you choose a personal or collective assignment that focuses on one of the senses. During the day, you will be foraging materials and ideas to work with in our afternoon workshop.

AFTERNOON LUNCH & WORKSHOP
Every afternoon Cindy Miranda will be hosting workshops where we engage with the collected materials to create tangible artworks, by using mixed media techniques. Think of collage-making, painting, audiovisual soundscaping, material experiments, making music and/or poetry and all other artists' expressions that will emerge.

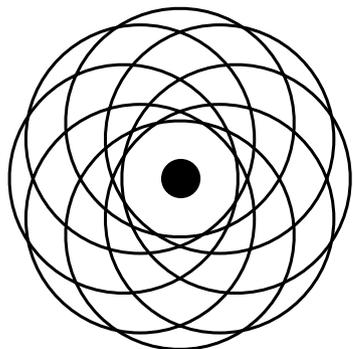
EVENING DINNER & OPEN STAGE
During the evening we will be reflecting on our experiences and share our insights and artworks with each other during drinks and tapas. We will engage you in masterclasses and reflective dialogue and give you the opportunity to share your talent or ideas on our open stage.



Photo by Liesbeth de Fouw



THE ART OF NATURE JOURNAL



This journal is your guide to explore and connect with nature through art.

Let your senses lead the way.
What do you hear, smell, see, taste & feel?

Start noticing the small signs -
the cracks in the bark, the whispers of the wind.
Look, listen and learn...

Fill these pages with discoveries, signs and moments...

Let nature be your muse.

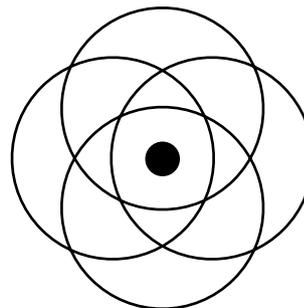
HOW TO DEVELOP A PRISMATIC GAZE

ZOOM OUT

broaden your perspective, see the bigger picture

ZOOM IN

notice the details that are normally overlooked.





Photos by Cindy Mirande @Casa Gallinera



3.3.2 Round 3: The Art of Nature Midweek

What was shared:

The Art of Nature Midweek offered a slower, more immersive rhythm. Set at Casa Gallinera in rural Spain, this iteration invited two participants, an interior architect and a nature guide, into several days of sensory exploration. Each day focused on one of the senses: touch, smell, sound, taste, or sight. Activities included scent associations, collage-making, walking meditations, and poetic journaling. These weren't tasks to complete, but invitations to be present. The aim wasn't output, but presence.

Each participant received an Art of Nature Journal, with prompts designed to connect perception to memory, imagination, and emotion. Their responses were deeply personal. At the request of participant S., her poetry is not enclosed, as it was not intended for publication.

What was seen and sensed

Over time, tensions surfaced. Someone sighed, *"I came to rest, not to go so deep."* The other felt overstimulated by the journal: *"I need to let this sink in."* Their honesty reminded me that presence cannot be engineered, and that even gentle invitations can feel like pressure when someone is already full.

Despite this, their engagement was sincere. The depth came not from productivity, but from the texture of attention. Yet combining deep sensing with creative reflection can easily tip into "too much," especially for those seeking rest.

Participant L.'s artwork 'Looking for Balance' quietly captured this tension. It reminded me: presence can't be rushed, and reflection can't be extracted. Slowness makes space for emotion, but also demands care. Sensory input and prompts must be offered lightly—inviting, not insisting. Sometimes stillness, not making, is the way in.

Senses and Sensitivities

One participant declined to take photos during a nature walk, saying it fragmented her experience, "I just want to sense." For her, documentation interrupted presence. For me, photography helps me pause and process. This reminded me that attention is personal; not everyone needs the same tools. The two participants moved differently, one quiet and inward, the other expressive and verbal. I tried to hold both rhythms but realized I was overmanaging. I assumed the quiet one needed protection, the expressive one attention, but both were self-aware. Their feedback reminded me: care sometimes means stepping back.

In a small, intimate setting, feedback lands differently. I had framed the week as restful and creative, but reality was more layered. One participant asked for more unstructured time in nature, and stronger links to art and architecture. Both requests were valid, and touched a tender spot in me. I wrote a poem that week to process the tension (see figure on the next page). I've since learned that when feedback challenges our care, it can also deepen it, if we let it.

What shifted

Next time, I'll be clearer about expectations. Participants will be free to write, sense, or opt out. Prompts will be fewer, lighter. Silence will be built into the design.

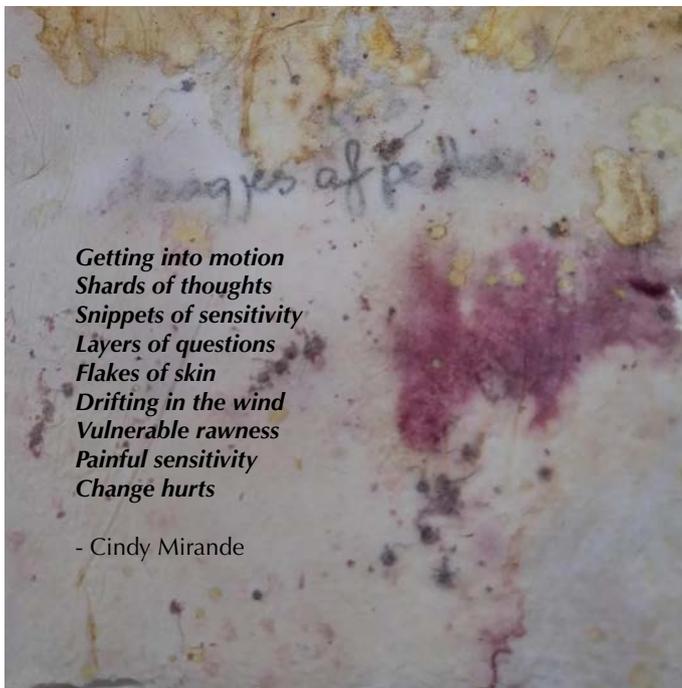
Reflection will not be extracted, but invited. I'll also be more honest about my role. Holding space includes holding myself, recognizing when I overextend, overcompensate, or overcare.

Caring for others also means caring for yourself, which I have to keep reminding myself. Feedback will be welcomed, but not swallowed whole. The more I design for presence, the more I must embody it, gently, honestly, and without rushing.



Artwork "Looking for balance" by Liesbeth de Fouw

13-11-2021
 IN BEWEGING KOMEN
 farden van gedachten
 snippers van sensitiviteit
 laagjes van vraagjes
 schilfers van huid
 dwarrelend in de wind
 kwetsbare raakbaarheid
 pijnlijke gevoeligheid
 veranderen doet zeer



*Getting into motion
 Shards of thoughts
 Snippets of sensitivity
 Layers of questions
 Flakes of skin
 Drifting in the wind
 Vulnerable rawness
 Painful sensitivity
 Change hurts*

- Cindy Miranda



Left colom: Poetry by Cindy Miranda
 Right colom: Artwork by Liesbeth de Fouw

3.4 The Harvest: what to keep and what to trim

What conditions help or hinder the prismatic gaze?

The Prismatic Gaze is influenced by time, attention, emotion, and communication, which appeared in every part of the discovery fase. Attention needs time. Communication stirs emotion. Emotion shifts what we notice. These conditions created the atmosphere where reflection can happen, not just through method, but through mood.

Each prototype revealed both strong and weak points. Based on my practice-based research, I found that the strongest moments occurred when space, pace, and invitation aligned. The open, sensory structure helped students slow down and attend more closely.

SEE(K) supported careful observation; SENSE invited embodied engagement without pressure to explain. SHARE enabled connection when students took ownership of reflection. SHIFT, especially when not rushed, encouraged new ways of thinking. These moments confirmed that the Prismatic Gaze can foster meaningful reflection, when the atmosphere is right. At the same time, clear patterns about my role emerged in the weak points. I often offer too much, too fast, with too much care. Beneath that lies a genuine desire to support, to open experience, to invite reflection, but sometimes, that generosity becomes overwhelming.

SEE(K) showed me how easily observation can become saturated: too many prompts, too many images. What I meant as openness became distraction.

SENSE revealed the risk in layering sensory input. The intention was attentiveness, but it sometimes crossed into assumption. Some participants needed space, not more stimuli.

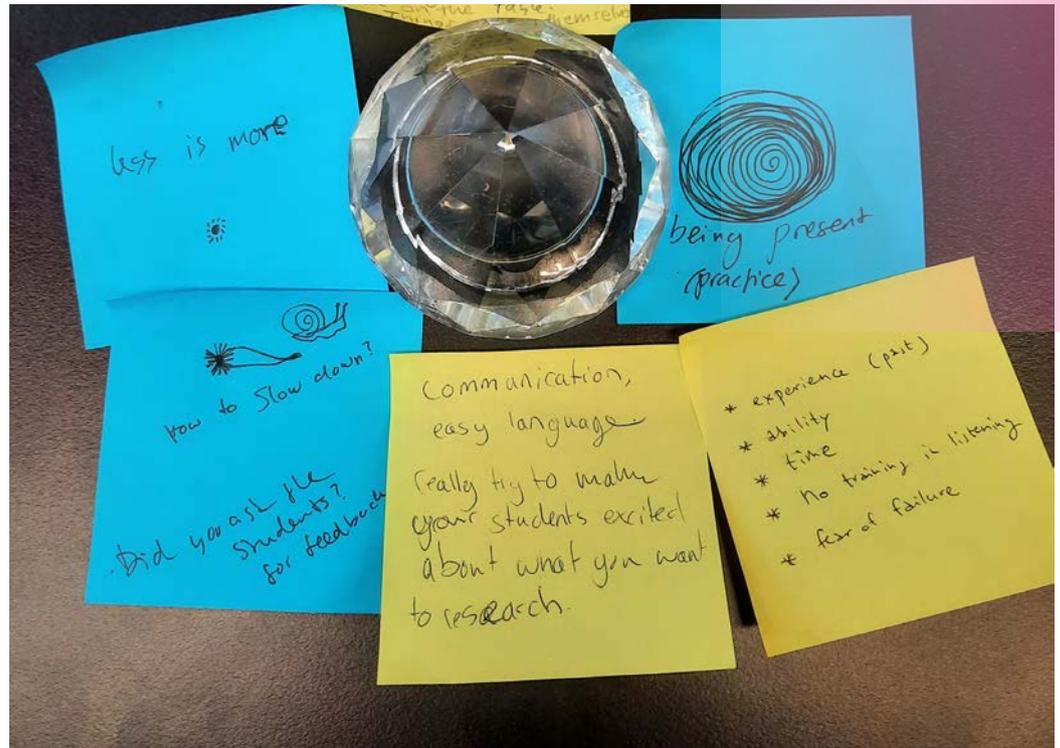
SHARE made me confront my own habits of reflection. I tend to overshare, too many tools, too many questions. In *The Art of Nature* journal, this left some unsure where to begin. In class, it left some inspired, but others overwhelmed.

SHIFT reminded me that change isn't about others. It starts at the edge of my own habits: speaking too soon, planning too tightly, hoping too hard. The call to reflect and slow down is one I'm still learning to hear in myself.

What shifted:

This research reframed my role as an educator. Masschelein's idea of a "poor pedagogy" stays with me, as an invitation to do less, and make space for more to appear (Masschelein, 2018). I've taken that further by embracing a practice of re-use and re-seeing: like the recycled flowers that became images, pigments, and paper pages for poetry. This process reminded me to work with what is already present. "Use what you have" became my motto. And sometimes, one image, one word, one pause, might be more than enough.

My peers from the MEIA community offered me the feedback I needed to move on and start slowing down. I tried to listen. With these insights (see next page), I return to the classroom, bringing the Prismatic Gaze and lessons learned into the final project at Artemis, the final testing ground.



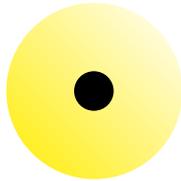
Important feedback from the MEIA community

3.5 The elements of the Prismatic Gaze

From theory and practice, I distilled the Prismatic Gaze into its core elements: key questions and abilities that support critical reflective observation. These have been shaped into simple prompts to guide attention and reflection in creative discovery.

SEE(K)

Reflexive attention that turns back onto itself, becoming aware of its own processes, structures, and conditions (Citton, 2017).



**“Why am I seeing this way?
What shapes the filters I see
through?”**

SENSE

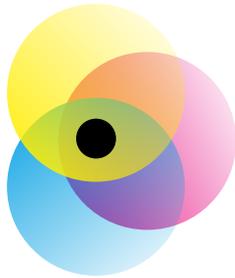
Affective attention that is guided by our senses and sensitivities. Evoked by our environment (Citton 2017).



**How do my senses and feelings
influence what I see or don't
see?”**

SHARE

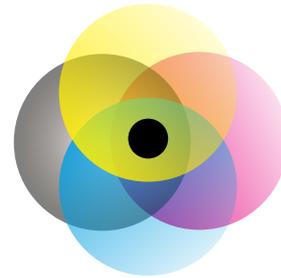
Joint attention that creates connection, understanding, and shared meaning (Citton, 2017).



How do others shape what we pay attention to?

SHIFT

Interpretive attention to make sense of something ambiguous, layered, or poetic (Citton, 2017).



How do other perspectives shift the way we look at the bigger picture?

4.1 From Prism to Practice Page 72 - 76
The final testing ground & Evaluation

4.2 From Process to Pedagogy Page 77 - 81
Critical reflection

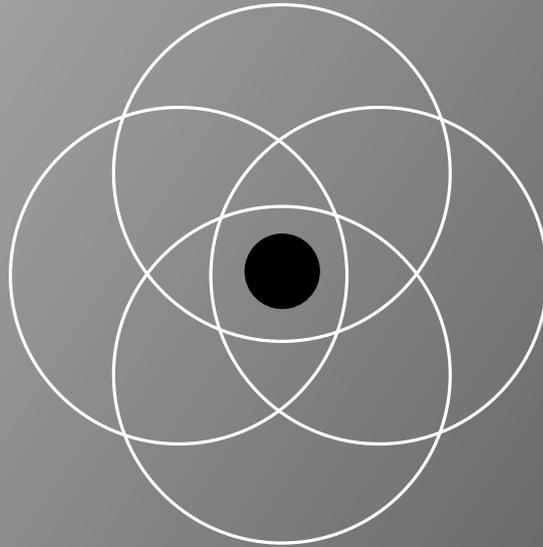
4.3 The Harvest Page 82 - 85
Conclusion

4.4 Discovery Compass Page 86 - 87
An invitation to become gardeners of attention

4.5 Moving forward Page 88 - 89
Towards life centered design

Reference list Page 90 - 92

THE HARVEST



How can design educators cultivate a prismatic gaze in the discovery phase of creative research?



[#concentration](#)
[@artemisacademie](#)

Evaluating and practicing the Prismatic Gaze in the classroom

Where:

Artemis Academy

When:

February 2024 - May 2025

Who:

12 exam students final project

What:

Final testing & evaluation

4.1 From Prism to Practice

In the final exam project, the Prismatic Gaze became the practice. It shaped how I introduced the discovery phase, how students explored their topics, and how I held space for presence, attention, and evolving insights. I became a researcher among researchers. A student among students. It changed how I listened and responded. I became more attuned to each student's pace, style, and emotional range. We weren't just designing concepts; we were navigating attention.

From the start, I asked students to step outside and collect overlooked items. The stories they brought back surprised me: an Y-shaped twig echoing someone's initial and childhood searches in the forest, a rock recalling a Friesland dairy logo, street noise that reminded someone of their father's hearing loss. These objects were inviting memories. Noticing became autobiographical. Observation became a way of meeting oneself and others. When I asked students to introduce themselves through items from their pockets, meaning deepened. A flip phone became a symbol of digital resistance. A rainbow pen stood for joy reclaimed. Identity, place, care, and relation surfaced through what they already carried.

Cabinets of attention

Students began making "cabinets of attention", gathering textures, sounds, colors, and memories. One gathered "little smiles" as a quiet protest against doomscrolling. As their focus shifted, so did their projects: a coffeehouse idea became a brand for alternative choices; a beauty concept evolved into sensory objects for highly sensitive people. Personal curiosity expanded into responses to social, ecological, and cultural questions. Private insights turned outward, becoming ideas with public meaning.

One student started by photographing yellow lichen on the street. Zooming in on these little signs of nature led her to explore overlooked life forms. Her concept evolved into making the human microbiome visible. I didn't tell her what to see; I helped her see differently, turning her toward artists, science, and places like the Micropia museum, not as models to copy but as new directions to explore.

Small acts of attention led to deeper insight. Working with each student's rhythm, observation became a repeated practice, looking again, turning the prism. I saw students move from passive noticing to active meaning-making. Their projects became more personal and authentic. They began to see their blind spots.

One student wanted to design a flower bag. I asked her about the impact of flower farming. She returned with a story: a girl who got sick from pesticide exposure. The project shifted, from convenience to care.

The Prismatic Gaze became a shared way of noticing. A way of holding space for difference, process, and complexity. Sometimes it began with a single image, object, or word. As educators, it asks us to trust these small shifts: a question reframed, a walk taken with intention, a design rooted in feeling. It's not about following steps, but about noticing what arises. A practice still unfolding. Just a prism, and some attention.

4.3.5 Evaluation:

What Was Seen, Sensed, Shared and Shifted

To evaluate the impact of the Prismatic Gaze, I invited students to reflect on their experiences across its four dimensions using a anonymous Mentimeter Survey. Their responses offered insight into what changed, how they looked, felt, related, and adapted throughout the creative process.

These questions guided this reflection:

How has your way of seeing changed, and if so, what triggered that shift? In what ways did your senses influence your perception and creativity? How did your personal interests connect to a wider context or audience? What role did others, and their feedback, play in your process? What assumptions or ideas did you let go of, and why? What was the most surprising or insightful moment for you?

The evaluation affirmed that the Prismatic Gaze not only supported student engagement, but invited real shifts in perception, emotion, and awareness. Students began noticing more intentionally, both in their surroundings and within themselves. They let go of assumptions, paused longer in the discovery phase, and opened up to new insights through sensing, sharing, and reflection.

The responses show that this was not about mastering steps, but about cultivating presence and personal connections. Small acts, a changed question, a moment of empathy, a new lens on the familiar, became turning points in the creative process. As an educator, this feedback confirms that holding space with care can nurture deeper learning. The Prismatic Gaze grew roots in these shared experiences, not as a method to follow, but as an invitation to stay curious, attentive, and open.

WHAT WAS SEEN:

“The prism helps you look at topics in a simple, yet still layered and expansive way... everything allows you to think more freely and openly.”

“Zooming out. I always have so many ideas that I often lose myself in the chaos. But when I take a step back and look at everything from a distance, things usually become much clearer.”

WHAT WAS SENSED:

“I think I’ve started to listen more consciously, and to feel what a certain environment does to me or to others.”

“I definitely started seeing differently. Being around others made me more aware of my surroundings, and I began to listen more to my own senses, what resonates with me.”

“For me, it’s also about the senses, I’ve noticed how much that helps. You start to perceive more and more.”

“Feeling and empathizing.”

WHAT WAS SHARED:

“I think that with creative ideas, it’s important to share them with others in order to gain new insights and to arrive at a strong and well-rounded concept.”

“By looking at my environment differently, more in detail, I’ve started to value and take more interest in what I see around me. This has had a meaningful impact on my process.”

“I was already aware of what I see, but now I also find myself thinking about how someone else might see the same thing. This has become something new I do in my daily life.”

WHAT SHIFTED:

“That I sometimes notice I still hold on too much to what “should” be done and don’t dare to experiment enough. I’m working on letting go of that perfectionist tendency, but sometimes I find it difficult.”

“I have started seeing differently, paying much more attention, especially to all the small signals that carried a message.”

“My biggest insight is how harmful coffee actually is for the environment, and how normalized it has become. This also inspired me to change my concept.”

I let go of my own idea of what the final concept should look like. This allowed me to enter the research phase with a more open mindset, making me more receptive to other ideas and insights.

What else would you like to share with me? Be critical.

“Very good and enjoyable way of teaching. Your openness is something I really appreciate. You truly think along, listen, and have an incredible amount of knowledge about the creative field. It encourages me to work with the same kind of open mindset.”

“You teach incredibly well. I always leave the class super inspired, and I actually look forward to going to school. I think that’s really important and valuable.”

“Cindy, you are a really great teacher. You really think along with the student and have a great attitude in class. That motivates me. I don’t have any negatives to mention!”

“Cindy helped me a lot and brought a lot of input to my current project. She thinks along very well and suggests realistic ideas.”

“Well, Cindy is good at rephrasing certain sentences and clarifying things again, giving some direction—that really helps me.”



Collage by Jane v.d. Marel, exercise See(k) on the street



4.2 From Process to Pedagogy

Critical Reflection

Here, I look back at how the Prismatic Gaze developed in practice. It reflects on the conditions that shaped it, the tensions it revealed, and the personal blind spots it exposed. It also considers how my role shifted, between teacher, facilitator, and researcher, and how those roles influenced the learning environment.

What started as a hunch, a need to slow down and notice differently, grew into a pedagogical practice grounded in presence, care, and inquiry. The reflections that follow trace this development. Together, these reflections reveal not just how the Gaze took shape, but how it shaped me.

What was shared:

In the early prototypes, I explored attentional practices that later turned into the concept of the Prismatic Gaze. It suggests ways of seeing, where art, nature and the city invited participants to notice with attention. Slowly, patterns appeared. Participants and I started to see differently. Some started weaving meaning across personal and ecological layers. That's when the Prismatic Gaze began to grow, as ways of looking in- and outwards.

Through feedback from supervisors, peers, and participants, the concept evolved into a reflective and relational practice, attuned to what the moment asked for. I tested it in this research as a model for reflection, and it worked. But it's fragile. Time is essential. I'm not sure how it will hold up under pressure. As discussed in Chapter 2, its strength depends on the weather, on the conditions we create. Still, it's versatile enough to support creative research and critical reflective observation. And that was the goal.

What shifted:

This research brought me back into the present. Instead of asking students to only look back or think forward, we started to attend to what was happening in the here and the now. As Donald Schön reminds us, reflection doesn't only happen after the fact, it can also happen in the moment. Small invitations helped us stay with that moment, adapt with care, and learn while we moved.

4.2.1 Tensions became Teachers

How contradictions became compost

As the research evolved, so did the tensions, between structure and openness, clarity and confusion, intention and response. I learned that these tensions weren't problems to solve. They are part of the same soil. Too much structure, and things felt tight. Too little, and people got lost. I now try to tend the learning space like a garden, prepping the soil, adjusting the light, watering less, watching what comes up. Some plants need stakes; others need room to sprawl. Clarity gave roots. Confusion, at times, cracked open new paths to growth. The real task was knowing when to prune, when to feed, and when to simply let things unfold.

What shifted:

Some of the most powerful insights came when things didn't land as I hoped for. This taught me to listen more carefully, not just to students, but to what the moment was asking. In See(d)ing the Unseen, I opened with a rapid sequence of images and prompts, hoping to spark curiosity and imagination. It did, for the most part, but some people also felt overwhelmed and disconnected. I had overwatered the flowers.

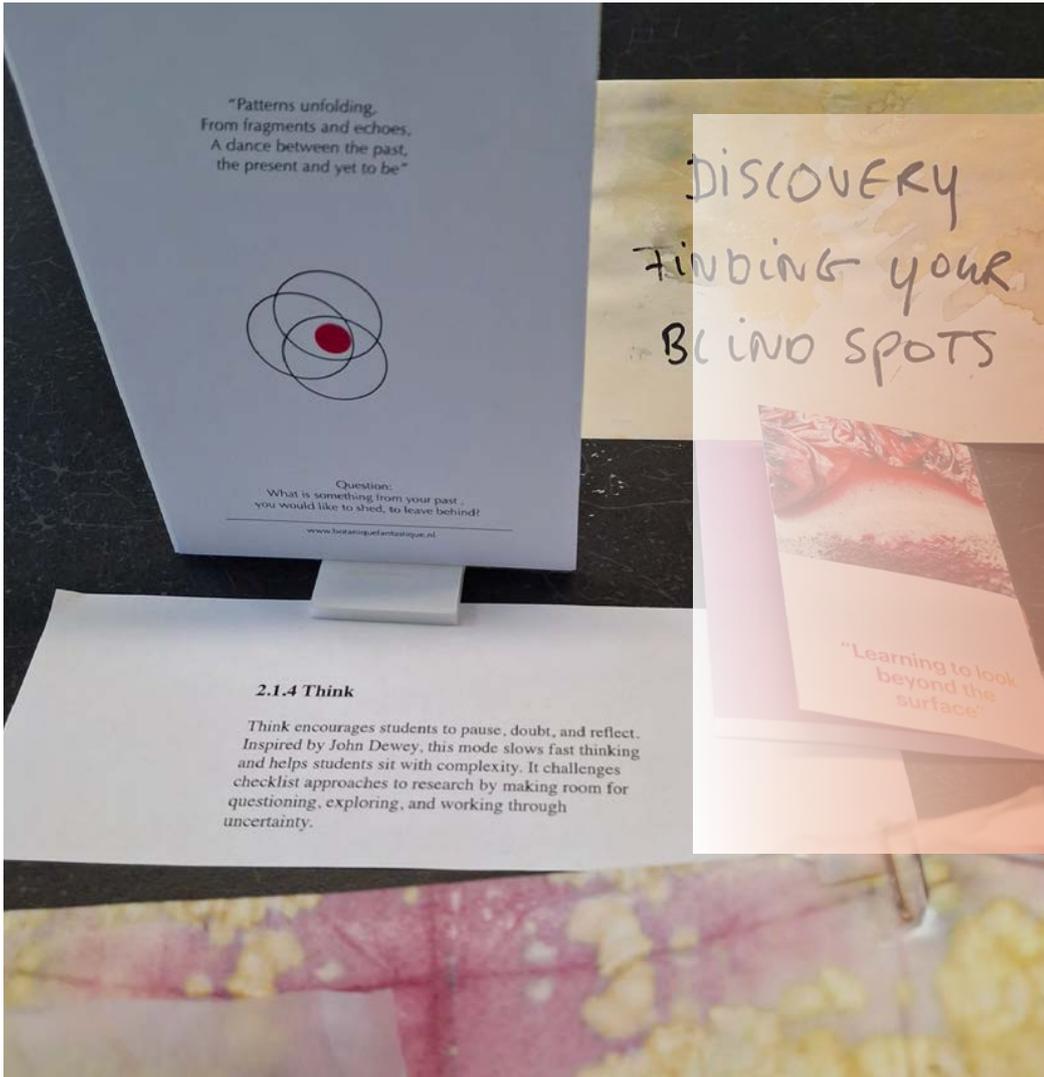
So I learned to strip down, one image, one question, one exercise at a time might already be enough.

4.2.2 The discovery of blind spots

This process confronted me with my own contradictions. I was asking students to slow down, to reflect deeply, to sit with uncertainty, yet I often did the opposite. I moved too fast. I filled silences. I overshared and overcared. In creating space for others, I sometimes forgot to hold space for myself.

Critical reflective observation, I realised, wasn't just something I needed to teach, it was something I needed to learn. I had the vocabulary, the values, even the tools. But embodying the practice? That was another story. This research taught me to turn the prismatic gaze inward. To walk the talk.

I learned that I'm ambitious and a perfectionist, always adjusting, rethinking, revising. Trying to solve the puzzle from every angle. At times, it felt like I was writing four theses instead of one. That drive wasn't just exhausting, it mirrored the very thing I was trying to unlearn: the push for more, faster, better. I'm learning that taking care of myself is not separate from taking care of others, it's part of the same ecology.



Picture taken during MEIA workshop

4.2.3 Shifting roles and positions

As a researcher, I often took on the role of a reporter, zooming in and out, registering what happened. But this shifting gaze wasn't always comfortable for participants. It raised questions: was I a facilitator, an observer, or both? Looking back, I see my movement through group settings as always in motion, zooming out, zooming in, turning inward and outward.

That's how this research felt too: at times uplifting, at other times like spiralling down a rabbit hole. The spiral has long been my metaphor. I move outward in groups, curious and connective. Inward when alone, reflective and introspective. Being a researcher deepened that inward spiral.

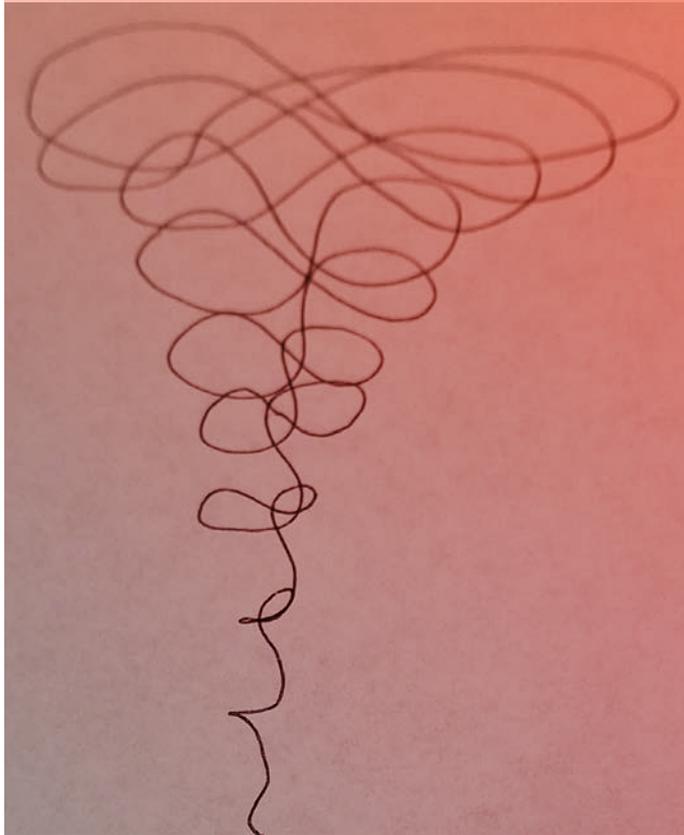
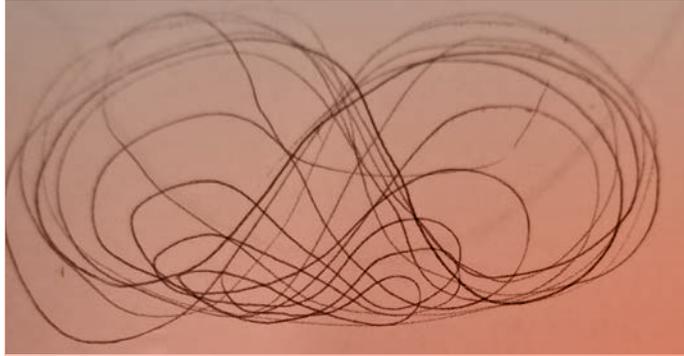
As a freelance educator, I see myself as a worker bee, flying in and out of learning spaces, cross-pollinating ideas. In class, I became more like a spider in the web, sensing tension, catching ideas, weaving meaning. For me, the prismatic gaze mirrors this way of moving: seeing, sensing, shifting, always in motion, always responsive.

These patterns have strengths. They create space. Students often feel seen, not steered. They appreciate the safety to connect personal experience with critical thought. But they also have limits. A spiralling wave can overwhelm. Without grounding it can confuse. And the bee's flight, if not framed, can leave others unsure where to land. I've seen this when students asked for more examples, or when care felt like unspoken expectation.

I'm learning: openness isn't always freedom. Structure doesn't stifle, it steadies. I try to find a middle ground. Not changing who I am, but naming how I move, so others can find their rhythm too. In flight, pause, or return.

And underneath or above it all my most important pattern of all: a quiet figure-eight. The lemniscate. An invisible rhythm of reciprocity, giving and receiving, offering and letting go. Bees know it as the waggle dance: a motion that points others to what matters.

Maybe my teaching is a kind of waggle dance too, not always neat, but moving, sensing, pointing. Toward presence. Toward connection. Toward the next thing worth noticing. And like the compound eye of the bee, the Prismatic Gaze gathers from many angles at once. Each facet catches a different glint of meaning. No single truth, but a pattern in motion.



4.3 The Harvest: What Did This Research Bring?

Conclusions

This chapter gathers what grew from this research. Not as a list of results, but as a reflection on what was cultivated, through practice, theory, and shared experience. What began as a question about attention became a process of learning how to hold it.

What emerged was a set of conditions, abilities, and practices that support a more caring, perceptive, and reflective approach in the discovery phase of creative research. Here, I trace the climate that shaped the work, the abilities it revealed, the practices that nurtured (and hindered) it, and the response to the central question that guided it all.

4.3.1 The Climate That Shaped It

What factors influenced and shaped the Prismatic Gaze?

Attention doesn't happen in isolation. It's shaped by culture, mood, rhythm, and setting. Thinkers like Citton and Masschelein reminded me that attention isn't something we manage, it's something we co-create. Teaching, then, becomes less about directing focus and more about cultivating the conditions in which focus can grow.

This shift became visible in practice. In early prototypes like See(d)ing the Unseen, participants explored search pictures through sensory association. What they noticed was shaped by mood, timing, and environment. Too many prompts, too fast, created overwhelm. Attention is fragile. It needs rhythm, space, and care.

Theory echoed this. Masschelein frames education as the arrangement of encounters, not content delivery. Citton describes educators as gardeners of attention, an act of resistance in a distracted world. I saw how simplicity, ambiguity, and even friction could invite deeper reflection, especially when I resisted the urge to overexplain.

In Art & Gifts of Nature, the shift from instruction to invitation allowed for presence. One student lingered long after the session, quietly working. That moment wasn't planned, it was held. It echoed Dewey's idea of experience as embodied and emergent, shaped by interaction and setting.

What I learned is this: attention doesn't begin with instruction. It begins with atmosphere, with how we arrive, how we slow down, how we tune in. Cultivating a Prismatic Gaze meant not just changing the task, but changing the conditions around it. The shift from method to mood, from outcome to openness, became essential. When held gently, attention became not just a skill, but a shared space where something unexpected could emerge.

4.3.2 The Conditions That Shape It

What conditions support critical reflective observation?

The Prismatic Gaze took shape around a tension in design education: the lack of time, space, and care to dwell, reflect, and stay with uncertainty. It offered a different way of paying attention, grounded in presence, relation, and slowness. It wove perception (what we notice), reflection (how we make sense of it), and criticality (how we situate it in broader contexts) into one practice.

Thomas Morris's idea of critical reflective observation shaped my initial approach. The attentional modes: SEE(K), SENSE, SHARE, SHIFT, emerged from the prototypes and the artistic methods I used. They helped participants stay with the discomfort of not-knowing and allowed insight to unfold over time. These weren't rigid stages but fluid movements: noticing, pausing, situating, adapting. Citton's book 'the ecology of attention' helped me understand the deeper meaning behind what I was doing. Evaluation of the final exam project showed how the Gaze shaped how students related, to their work, to others, and to the world around them. It helped them notice differently, care more deeply, and act with greater intention. Here, art and nature became counter-spaces, inviting us to flip our screens and our classrooms, and to re-engage with the real world more attentively.

4.3.3 The Practices That Cultivate It

How might artistic practices cultivate attentional abilities and critical reflective observation?

The prototypes became living laboratories. Through sensory prompts, poetic inquiry, and shared reflection, participants engaged in new ways of seeing, aligned with Shari Tishman's idea of slow looking, but responsive to different attention styles. The attentional modes as described by Yves Citton grounded my approach.

Often, the most meaningful moments came in the pauses, after the prompt, before the response. Teaching through the prism meant tuning into the room, sensing its rhythm, and adjusting. It meant listening not just to what was said, but to what was surfacing. In this way, theory and practice merged, as a living inquiry.

4.3.5 The Limits and Tensions

What hinders it

The Prismatic Gaze isn't a universal fix. Its strength depends on certain conditions, slowness, openness, and a sense of safety, that are often missing in fast-paced, outcome-driven contexts with too little time and too many students. Its openness can also overwhelm. Students often seek clarity and structure. When not framed carefully, ambiguity risks confusion. For some, it's a stretch too far. The Gaze itself is relational. It depends on how educators hold the space, on timing, presence, and perception. That's powerful, but also risky. Our own blind spots can shape what is seen or overlooked. The emotional labor required can be high, and the balance between guidance and letting go is delicate.

Naming these limits doesn't diminish the approach. It grounds it. It reminds us that care, presence, and reflection don't happen automatically. They ask for attention, again and again.

4.3.4 How to Cultivate It

How can design educators cultivate a prismatic gaze that supports discovery?

The Prismatic Gaze became a pedagogy of attention. It grew from noticing how attention is shaped, and how that attention shapes reflection and relations. Cultivating it meant shifting the classroom climate: from delivery to exploration, from instruction to invitation, from fast answers to slow inquiry.

The Ecology of Attention by Citton helped me see why attention can't be reduced to a single style or standard. It isn't one-size-fits-all, it's shaped by mood, context, and individual rhythms. In practice, this means adjusting the prism to meet the moment, tuning our approach to the kind of attention that's needed.

The final project showed that when students were offered trust, time, and clear-yet-open prompts, they began to see differently. From this emerged the Discovery Prism: a compass to help master the art of shifting perspectives.

*"Time changes
the colours of our stories
that waters the soil for
dormant seeds to come alive."*

- Cindy Mirande



4.4 An invitation to become gardeners of attention

Use the discovery prism as a color palet. Shift, bend, merge, mix to your own tasting and situation. Master the art of shifting perspectives, in your everyday practice, your research, your teachings and reflections on your own practice. After each exercise, don't forget to pause, and reflect together. The magic lies in the space in between. Here are some invitations to use:

SEE(K) invites you to slow down and become aware of what draws your eye, and what you ignore.

Step 1: Show a search picture (macro photo, abstract image).

Ask: "What do you see?"

Step 2: Create a word cloud with participants' responses. This can be digital or analogue.

Step 3: Observe: What rises to the top? What stays hidden?

Step 4: Ask: What did you notice first? What does this say about how you look?

SENSE invites you to engage your senses and emotions.

Step 1: Bring the outside in: trash, leaves, pigment, scents, and words from the word clouds. Lay them out as 'cabinets of attention'.

Step 2: Let participants choose and arrange materials freely. Let them create a gift of attention.

Step 3: Ask: What did you experience when you made this? What emotions surfaced?

SHARE invites you to share and connect with others.

Step 1: After creating, ask, 'How would you like to share this gift?'

Step 2: Ask: what stories or voices need to be heard?

Step 3: Let participants show, speak, or gesture their response.

SHIFT invites us to look again to gain deeper insight.

Step 1: Invite participants to revisit the process. Ask: What's changed in how you see, sense, or interpret this now?

Step 2: Let participants shift and reshuffle the results. Ask them to create a visual poem by making new combinations through collage.

Step 3: Now let time and attention do the work.

The Prismatic Gaze helps us to become present, to attend with care. Through that attention, we begin to transform how we design, teach, and relate.

SEE(K) invites us to question how we look.
SENSE asks us to listen with our whole body.
SHARE opens space for connection.
SHIFT welcomes transformation.

Let us become gardeners of attention, tending to what is quiet, small, and easily missed. That's where imagination takes root.

Reclaim time for deep observation, embodied engagement, and open-ended inquiry. Make room for students to dwell in questions before jumping to solutions. Use time-flexible tools, like reflective journals or platforms like Mentimeter, as check-ins or conversation starters. These tools foster presence and connection.

Incorporate practices like sensory walks, word clouds, collage, or prismatic poetry, not as add-ons, but as core research tools. These methods cultivate attention, intuition, and shared reflection. After each activity, create a pause to reflect together. Ask students how their understanding shifted. Sensory and reflective learning can be intense, frame clearly, check in often, and create emotional scaffolding to support the process.

This isn't a total solution, it's a discovery prism. A relational, reflective approach that helps us see what regular methods might miss. This also calls for personal reflection. As educators, we must examine our own gaze, learning to listen, feel, and notice without always fixing or steering. The Compass, then, isn't about delivering answers, but about redirecting attention, inviting learners to orient themselves toward what matters, what's present, and what's been missed.

4.5 Moving forward:

Preparing the Soil for Life-Centered Design

This research began with a question about attention, and ended with a garden. How we attend shapes what we grow. And what we grow reflects what we care about. Throughout this thesis, I've explored how a prismatic gaze can cultivate presence. From fast outcomes to slow observation.

These shifts echo a larger movement I believe is essential: a turn toward life-centered design. One that doesn't just respond to human needs, but acknowledges our entanglement with social, ecological, and more-than-human systems.

So the next question becomes: *How do we prepare the soil for this kind of design education?*

If we want to address ecological challenges, we need to make space for a receptive kind of learning, one that doesn't rush to conclusions, but stays with what's uncertain. That means allowing us to slow down and really notice, what the world around us is really asking for. This means making room for the emotional and the embodied, not as side notes, but as essential parts of how we learn, teach and design.

It means not smoothing over contradictions, but sitting with them. Letting the discomfort of an ethical dilemma teach something that a case study can't. Holding space where things remain unresolved, that's where insight begins.

And maybe most of all, it means shifting what we hope students become. Not just sharper thinkers or better makers, but more attentive humans. People who know how to listen. Who know how to wait. Who know that design doesn't always mean solving, that it can also mean witnessing, tending, and sometimes, letting go.

The Prismatic Gaze is one way to begin. The compass offers directions.

Final invitation

I offer this not as a finished framework, but as an invitation.
To my colleagues, peers, collaborators, and co-learners:

*How can we, as educators, become better gardeners of
attention?*

Let's start here. With presence. With patience.
And with whatever needs to grow.



**“The classroom remains
the most radical
space of possibility
in the academy.”**

– bell hooks

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