

## **TERRAIN + METHOD + INTENTION**

This is an exercise to help formulate a practice through the perspective of design. Goals, backgrounds, projects, and skills combine in infinite configurations and shift over time, so establishing a practice or process creates a flexible structure to guide your actions. Having a practice is very personal, the only 'correct' way is to align your actions with your goals and regularly reflect critically on your progress.

While this exercise is in the form of a text document, approach this as a mapping exercise and visualize it in a way that is most helpful for you. That means you can do notes on the wall, collage, graphs, drawings, whatever you know helps you get organized. As long as you can clearly document and translate it for others, feel free to do it in any form or language that works best for your brain. Don't skip this step! It might not feel like an important enough exercise to take photos or audio notes, but knowing what you did and were thinking at each step of the process will make your practice stronger.

Take this moment to reinvent yourself! Combine what you have studied/worked in the past and what you want to be a part of in the future. Try to imagine how you want to represent your practice. Don't do what you think you're *supposed* to be working on, work on what you *want*. Nothing about this exercise is about closing doors, so generate as much as possible and be honest with yourself.

### **Step #1 : TERRAIN**

Locating where you want your practice to take place creates a context that grounds your practice. You aren't just a lone creator, you exist in an ecosystem of people and ideas. Clearly identifying your ecosystem can help inspire you and give you a sense of belonging. Your Terrain doesn't have to fit neatly into a box, feel free to draw from multiple fields and create a surrounding environment that fits your uniqueness the best.

1.A : Look through your media collections and other creative repositories searching for work that inspires you. Explore the portfolios of creatives that interest you and note down the pieces that really stand out. Feel free to search magazines, websites, galleries, or any other source that will lead you to interesting work.

1.B : Now do the same thing but for *ideas* instead, like circular economies or degrowth. Find writing or talks that speak to interesting concepts that influence you from books to academic articles to podcasts.

1.C : Arrange all of the above into groups, such as a form, theme, genre, or field. Be specific, if you keep things general, the labelling won't be useful reference points. A work or idea can, and most likely will, be in multiple groups. Pay attention to patterns and consider if you want to explore any deeper.

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

What pieces look most like the kind of work you would like to do?

What genres or fields already have your interest?  
What ideas are outside your comfort zone but still fascinating?

### **Step #2 : METHOD**

In order to function, every process must identify *how* it works. Depending on the creator, different practices exist on a range from spontaneous to formal, but no matter where you fall, you need to know what are the things you must do in order to produce the work you wish to create. Think of this as building a toolbox, what the things you need in order to do the job you desire to do?

2.A : First review all of the professional and academic material you've learned so far in your life. What are terms or tools that you still find useful or want to explore further? Think of all the *hows* you've already practiced and things you have heard of but haven't tried, and list them out. Then look back over your Terrain and see if you can find how creators made the things that inspire you and add those in as well.

2.B : Now you're going to do that again, but this time for lenses, or specific perspectives that help you look at what you work on in different ways. For example, a feminist perspective looks at how gender influences a piece, or a biological one will view something as a living organism. These perspectives aren't literal, but conceptual tools to help us understand an issue from multiple angles. Feel free to also combine perspectives into something new if it suits you!

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

What concepts have challenged your understanding of your own work?

Which perspectives are often missing from the discussion of topics that interest you?

What other mediums have unexpected commonalities with your skills?

### **Step #3 : INTENTION**

Along with where you are practicing and how you practice, every process also needs *why* you practice. There is a wide array of Intentions, social impact, profit, and experimenting being examples. This is a time to be brutally honest with yourself, don't just say 'saving the environment' when you know your main concern is making money. It is better to figure out how to manage multiple realistic intentions than create a noble image you can't maintain.

3.A : List out what your practice *needs* to do in order to sustain itself. Are there certain skills you need to maintain for the kinds of jobs that will support you? Must certain features be involved to keep you happy and healthy? Do you need to help family members? Make sure you recognize that you're a human being with needs, not a robot.

3.B : Now list out your *ideals* or wants, such as specific kinds of social justice, artistic excellence, or technical experimentation. While your needs motivate you physically and psychologically, your wants and desires drive you intellectually and emotionally. Think of the

reasons why you've chosen design & technology as a place to practice.

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

Can you combine any needs and wants in novel ways?  
 What are underserved topics or issues that relate to your skills?  
 How can you respond to current events with your interests?

**Step #4 : 2x2**

This part of the exercise is to help you combine the previous elements together to form design questions that motivate your practice. Framing the creative making process as investigating a series of questions will help you scope and focus on the next important step in creation.

4.A : Chose the two most interesting notes from each category, two from Terrain, two from Method, and two from Intention.

4.B : See below for a 2x2 template and make one for each Intention you chose. Formulate a question for each pairing in the 2x2 that would represent a research path you can pursue. An example: for the Intention of "embodiment in VR," the combination of the Terrain "olfactory installation art" and Method "cognitive behavioral training" might yield the question "How can scent be used to help new players adapt to a VR experience?"

4.C : Take a final look at all your notes and see if any would contribute to the questions you came up with, iterating on the questions until they become research questions you want to pursue.

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

What are unusual combinations underrepresented in your chosen profession?  
 Which works, concepts, and issues do you most strongly identify with?  
 What is the information you need to make your first step in designing?

**2x2 Template**

<b>Intention</b>	<u>Method 1</u>	<u>Method 2</u>
<u>Terrain 1</u>	T1 + M1	T1 + M2
<u>Terrain 2</u>	T2 + M1	T2 + M2

**mattie's 2x2**

<b>Consent in relationships</b>	<u>Bleed (LARPs)</u>	<u>Queering (Queer Theory)</u>
<u>Marije Vogelzang's Sharing Dinner</u>	How can tableware be turned into artifacts that remind people about discussions of consent?	How can a dinner be appropriated for communicating taboo topics about relationships?

<u>performances for 1 audience member</u>	How can a person's environment be designed in a way to encourage new relationship practices?	How can the home be turned into a performance space for blurring traditional relationship roles?
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You might have noticed that I used 'how' questions for my example 2x2. While this is not strictly required, I find it useful because when you are trying to design for a how question, it is active. Prototypes often are the answers to 'how,' but there are benefits to all sorts of questions. Just make sure your design question isn't answered with a yes or no, and requires you to be creative. You shouldn't know the answer already, the question should spark your imagination and motivate you to create. Not all of the questions in the 2x2 are perfect, but at least 2 should be questions you'd consider motivating your practice. Repeat this part for different Intentions until you have two 2x2s you feel really good about.

Come to the first class and talk over the documentation of this exercise. Think of it as narrating your thought process so others can understand how you arrived at your design questions. This is fun, personal, and casual, not a formal presentation, only about 5 minutes. You can show it from your laptop to the TV screen (bring your HDMI adapter) or bring in a physical rendition if you made it physically.

Feel free to email me with any questions, I'm mattie@newschool.edu.