**Interview – Respondent 2
Held on 20 November 2024 – 1.45pm
Graduate from BA Graphic Branding and Identity course in 2022/2023 academic year
Currently doing an internship**

**RR:** Here at LCC, at UAL we take a PgCert course. Basically it's a one year course which is a postgraduate certificate in Higher Education in art and design, you kind of learn how to become better teachers. And as part of this process we do a kind of research project. It's called an action research project where we engage with an area of research that will help us improve our teaching. So my research project, as I've said in my e-mail, is about thinking about how students perceive CTS when they're outside of university, in the industry. You know when there's a bit of a time distance, I suppose from when you were studying. So I’m trying to speak to students across different courses to see what their experience is like and to then think, really, how can we, you know, how can we learn from you now that you're in the industry? What are the things that we could do to help us improve our teaching? So I have just a few questions to ask to understand your perspective a bit. So you graduated last year?

 **R2:** Last year, yeah.

 **RR:** Last year. So so in the summer of 2023. So you have, you've had at over a year out in the industry. So what can I ask what is your current role, where are you working at the moment?

 **R2:** OK, so I've been for seven months now been an intern at \_\_\_\_ [famous design agency].

**RR:** Wow. Congratulations. That’s amazing.

**R2:** Yeah. So I now work at \_\_\_. Just after uni, I worked at \_\_\_, which is a kind of luxury branding agency in London as well. And then I moved after three months. I moved to \_\_\_\_ and I've been there ever since.

 **RR**: OK, nice, right. Oh, great. And what are you, what are the kind of projects that you're working on?

 **R2:** Like, I mean, it's mainly cultural projects, a lot of cultural projects and like technology as well, but particularly working a lot with museums and art galleries and like theatres. So like we've got kind of relationships with the other companies as well. And right now we're working with \_\_\_\_ and yeah, I mean it's great.

**RR:** Nice. OK, great. So did you, did you also take a DPS year when you were studying for your degree or did you just do the three years?

 **R2:** I didn't, for a while I wished I did. And then it kind of turned out I didn't necessarily need it. Yeah, but I mean at that point, I kind of thought that it could be helpful.

 **RR:** Yeah. No, it's just it's a kind of curious thing because again, students who take a DPS year tend to or might have different views on CTS because they've had the year in the industry. So they approach it slightly differently to students who go directly into third year. So that's just kind of, you know, useful for context.

Ok, so looking back now, what do you, what would you say was the purpose of CTS within your degree?

**R2:** I mean, I think looking back, it's about the finer things. So like, the things that you don't necessarily get asked at interviews. Like I I haven't been asked at interviews how my knowledge of contextual and theoretical studies are, but it's about when you get into the industry and you work with especially cultural projects as I do, it's really important to have the sort of cultural and historical knowledge of design. That CTS really helped me with.
And I mean, yeah, it's about kind of knowing what periods are like and how design is seen in the world and stuff like that which is kind of again the more niche things that you don't necessarily need when you're applying for jobs but are kind of very essential when you're actually doing like real work with like real clients.

 **RR:** That's a really interesting point. So you feel like there's not something that you can kind of put on your CV in a way to kind of, you know, sell yourself but you think that actually when you are in the job having that background knowledge and having the kind of language to interact with what the clients are doing is really important.

 **R2:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah, yeah.

 **RR:** OK, so there's this knowledge of kind of different, design history, art history and kind of being able to position these different cultural institutions in the wider landscape. Are there any particular skills that you would get? Are there any transferable skills that you think you might have gained from CTS to enable you to be better at what you do?

 **R2:** I mean, I think \_\_\_\_is also really kind of unique in that way because we don't get to do thee strategy. I don't know if, like, fortunately or unfortunately the strategy is kind of already done before we jump onto the project as being designers. The other agency I worked with, we kind of were a bit involved with strategy, so I guess there aren't that many like, you know, hard skills, but it's about a lot about how you kind of relate and like refer to things. So when someone says I don't like this logo, it looks modernist or like maybe let's have some I know they call features like you have to know what those are, or how you refer to like seeing art and like observing and like commenting on art. It's more about in meetings I'd say. Like understanding what you're working on, on a deeper level, then per se, like writing or…

 **RR:** OK, that's a really interesting. Do you get to do you for example, do you do research? Are there any kind of research skill that you're able to use? Is that part of your job or is it just the nature of the role that you're currently in?

 **R2:** Yeah, I mean, definitely research and… I mean, it's hard. I really like CTS and it's hard to like see and like a kind of differentiate what, what part of it is from CTS and what part of it just kind of makes sense because yeah, obviously we do research. And now that that you ask me about it and now that I thought about it, a lot of like, how I look for things and like, how even I ask ChatGPT, it's about… I learned at CTS to do this thing. But I don't necessarily think of it as like, oh, I learned this specific thing from CTS. It's more about like how I view the world.

And like, what kind of words I use and how kind of it helped me, and also like resources as well. I know a lot of resources that my teacher \_\_\_ he gave me and like I still have them. He gave me an article from Eye design when I was doing my dissertation and I'm still reading their articles like there are things that have been embedded in the way I work and the resources I read and the materials that I use.

 **RR:** That’s really interesting. Well, \_\_\_ is amazing. So I will, I will definitely say this to him. He will want to know that things that he showed you resonated with you and have made such an impact. You mentioned it's shaped your perception, was there anything specific about the way you think about design that you did not necessarily get in the studio? You kind of seemed to suggest that it kind of opened your mind to a particular way of looking at design?

**R2:** I mean, yeah, CTS was great because we had a lot of different kind of people who were interested in very different things and everyone ended up coming up with, like, so many kind of questions, like interesting questions about feminism, racial biases, stuff in the design world and also how this has been interpreted throughout time and how they're interpreting now. But everyone has had such different ways of looking at CTS and so many different interests that it was quite hard to pick up on a particular thing. I guess that's why it was pretty much about the mindset it gave me because now thinking back about it and CTS was especially great for me in my third year. But I yeah, now looking back at it, it was pretty I would say all over the place, but not in a bad way like people just came with, like really interesting points and like we talked about them and we discussed them and I guess they all kind of opened up my view, but it wasn't necessarily a particular thing that that helped. Yeah.

 **RR:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the curiosity and having this kind of investigative spirit towards whatever thing you're looking at. Well, that's good. That's a really wonderful thing that if we were able to kind of leave you with that, I am pretty happy with that.

 **R2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

 **RR:** So how about CTS2? Did you enjoy being in mixed group with students because you were kind of picking up what everyone was interested in, in different things? Was that good? Was that challenging? Would you have preferred if you'd been with within your individual course?

 **R2:** Yeah. I mean, in a way that was what was great about it, like being in from such diverse courses led us to discover, like, what I've been saying about, like, curiosity and the explorative nature of looking within, like, behind the curtains of what we view as art and design and advertising as well. And I guess in that sense, it was great that we were from such different courses. But on the other side, as you said about getting something particular from it, I guess maybe if there were people from my course or just like maybe GMD as well I guess that could have been kind of narrower, but I'm not sure if that would have made a difference in the industry. I mean I'm quite happy with what I got even though it wasn't specific like it was just about engaging me and kind of picking my curiosity and I guess that was great. Also, because of how it was structured.

 **RR:** So if you could go back again, is there anything that you would change? What could we do better?

 **R2:** Yeah, I mean, I keep referring to CTS3 and I keep thinking about it as like my first year, it is basically because we started in COVID. So like my first two years of CTS were online, I didn't really like. I remember we had a teacher who was speaking very fast and with a fake British accent and I didn't really understand it.

And also being online, it was a bit of a bit of a hassle and I wasn't aware of what we were doing necessarily. It was also an hour every week and like there wasn't enough time to, like, fully engage with it. So I guess I didn't take that much from my first two years of CTS, which I guess I would like to think about what we learned, but sometimes I didn't even go because it was so kind of hard to be present, especially when we had online lessons and I guess this isn’t the case now. And definitely when we went there physically, it was much more engaging and also \_\_\_\_ joined us as our lead tutor for CTS and he was great. And I mean in our third year it all changed and it became much more interesting.

 **RR:** And do you think that was partly due to obviously \_\_\_ being a kind of an engaging tutor, and being in person it was more stimulating than just sitting in your room and trying to read things or engage with things online. But also was it, was it something to do with the fact that you were given the freedom to explore what you were interested in? Was there something about the particularity of CTS3, the fact that you were able to explore a project on your own?

 **R2:**  Yeah, I think that really helped because in my first two years I was being very, very focused. Now looking back, too focused for my own good. So like I was only focused on branding. I only did branding and like I didn't really care that much about other things. I know a lot of my colleagues used to be really interested in CTS and would do all the reading and stuff. I only used to do branding.

That directly impacted what I was doing and I would like ask tutors and only look for things that would help me in my specific career in branding. So I guess, yeah, it would have been helpful to have a bit more specificity, at least in the beginning on branding. I felt like we were kind of talking a bit too wide.

 **RR:** So maybe kind of the first year that introduces you a bit more to some of the kind of contextual ideas around your particular discipline, like what is branding, where does it come from? Yeah, I get that and that is kind of the direction where we're moving into.

**R2**: Yeah. Because, like, I remember we had in our first year, a lesson or like a course about the role of the museum world and art history world and I didn't really care for that. I was excited to start my branding course and my branding journey and like that felt just a bit out of place. But also, I wasn't really prepared for it. So, I can't blame it on CTS because I wasn't really up to learning as I was in my first year when it also got a bit more specific, we could choose the thing that we were doing, so we had that dissertation, which I really enjoyed, and I think it was also one of the only moments in my life when I actually had to do this sort of research like deep research inquiry, that like, right now, we're kind of we don't have that much time for research. We don't have time to think about what this all means and how this all, like we do fast research and design. And it was nice to go deep, but still within kind of a subject that I wanted.

 **RR:** The kind of the slowness, the slowness of research, it's kind of a luxury. You don't understand that when you're doing it. That's interesting. But I also really think it's interesting what you said about kind of entering and you probably had a session on like the Canon. And it was like art history, all of these movements. And you're like, I'm here to do like branding, what is this? But then, but what you said at the start now that you're working at \_\_\_\_\_, kind of all of that knowledge, knowing the kind of language of art history somehow seeping back though even though you couldn't necessarily understand its meaning maybe when you, when you were doing it. So I think that's the kind of challenge with CTS because sometimes it may become relevant later down the line. But then students struggle to engage with it.

 **R2:** Exactly.

 **RR:** So that's a bit of a tension. OK. And I have one final question and I'll let you go because you probably need a lunch break. So you've mentioned a bit about how it was valuable for your career and so on and how you know this sort of, the soft kind of intangible things, versus the more kind of hard skills. So I’m interested in this idea of intellectual development. Do you feel like you were able to grow whilst doing CTS intellectually or it could have been more challenging?

 **R2:** Intellectually, definitely. I guess personally it depends. Like I don't think it changed me that much personally, but also I ideally associate myself personally with my work. So like also if it impacted my work then it obviously and like my kind of intellectual knowledge then it obviously impacted me personally as well.

I'm trying to think. I guess maybe it could have been a bit tougher. I guess it allowed us and allowed me to kind of brush over it at the beginning, like it allowed me to just like, focus on something else and like, do like the readings kind of later on or like not be fully engaged. And I think it would have been more specific and like more specific to what we were doing. So people would have been more interested and then they would have like kind of maybe tie it with other courses as well. I feel like it was pretty separate, there were all the other courses and CTS which was like different and I mean yeah maybe tying it a bit altogether would have been helpful.

But I guess what I took the most from it was how intellectually stimulating it was. And like all the concepts I learned throughout CTS, which again aren't per se, that that useful now, but just in terms of how much I know, I know how I know these things. I know what these people are talking about. I can go and talk about art movements without thinking twice and like having to look online and just like when people are referencing modernism… I did my final essay on modernism, so OK, now I know a lot about it, but I guess that was also what was special, a bit like I made my essay on typography and modernism. Like, I think my essay was called, why is Helvetica Bad?

And some people took it into a completely different direction. So I guess that was also interesting that I in my third year, I could actually do something that was kind of more niche and more unique. So like what I know like now I know so much about modernism, which I use all the time in my personal development, my professional development.
But yeah, I'm just a bit sad I missed the first two years. They I think mainly because it was online like they didn't impact me as much as I would have liked to and now looking back, it was quite hard to even be present and I know very few people who are, like, really interested in museum curation and stuff like that. But generally I feel people weren't that engaged with CTS and it also probably was because it wasn't tied with what we were doing. We were already struggling to be present at this course, CTS seemed kind of just outside of it.

I don't mean this in a negative way.

 **RR:** No, I totally get itI'm with you on this. I think there are lots of reasons for this, why students don't feel as engaged. First of all, as they start, they're kind of trying to understand what their course is about. They don't see the connection with CTS and their course. And that's because of this structural issues that we're kind of teaching across the whole school. It is true that the COVID impacted it a lot. I get it. It was hard for us to teach online even harder for you to engage online.
Are you planning to do an MA at some point?

 **R2:** Yeah, I mean, maybe I would like to do animation, but like for something that is different like I wouldn't do branding like I kind of know branding if. I decide in the future to like kind of adjust my career in a way or maybe I want to learn something new. I do that like maybe art direction or product design or like something that is quite different than what I've been doing. Like right now, I'm focused on kind of working, but I'd really like to get back into learning at some point.

 **RR:** Oh, that's great. And you're happy with your overall experience of the course, do you feel like it has given you the knowledge and the skills that you need to work in the industry?

 **R2:** For CTS or GBI? That's yeah, I mean like, it prepared me fully for when I first got a design job, it was basically a pro. Like it was kind of the same thing where we're doing the same kind of presentations so I was perfectly prepared for the industry, whereas all the other people who didn't study at UAL, like other interns or like other people, didn't have the same experience at all. They had a huge learning curve when they first got in. But for me, it was so intuitive.