# Drawing for Design

Exploring how Year 1 Graphic Media Design BA (Hons) at LCC engage with drawing and how visual mapping can support design exploration; fostering a deeper understanding of design briefs.

*'Until we can insert a USB into our ear and download our thoughts, drawing remains the main way of getting visual information onto the page'.*
Perry, G. (2009)

# Background and Context

GMD1 is a large diverse cohort with wide ability ranges and a high number of international students (ESL).

Students' previous art and design education/ industry experiences are largely unknown to tutors, prior to their studies on GMD1.

A number of GMD1 students appear reluctant and/or unconfident when asked to use physical drawing to think visually, as part of their design process.

*'The lack of drawing ability of design students… has its roots in a) use of computer and decline of hand-drawing practice; b) reduced drawing tuition in higher education'.*

Di Giovanni, M. (2024)

# Research Questions

### RQ1

**In what ways do students engage with drawing, and how do their prior educational experiences influence their attitudes and approaches?**

### RQ2

**How can collaborative visual mapping of the design process, support diverse students' understanding and engagement with design briefs?**

*'Co-exploration… fosters a sense of togetherness, keeping design teams open-minded and engaged. This engagement cultivates collective intelligence, enabling teams to actively share knowledge, build upon each other's ideas, and achieve outcomes beyond individual contributions'.*
Yeh, Frens and Jun (2025)

# Methodology

**Action Research Cycle:**

*Identify - plan - act - observe - reflect - next steps*

Participants included: a mixed-ability, diverse student group with varied prior drawing experiences. 19 x GMD1 students attended the workshop in total.

Data collection methods included: pre-workshop questionnaire, observation notes, workshop artefacts, student feedback and reflection notes.

*McNiff and Whitehead, 2009
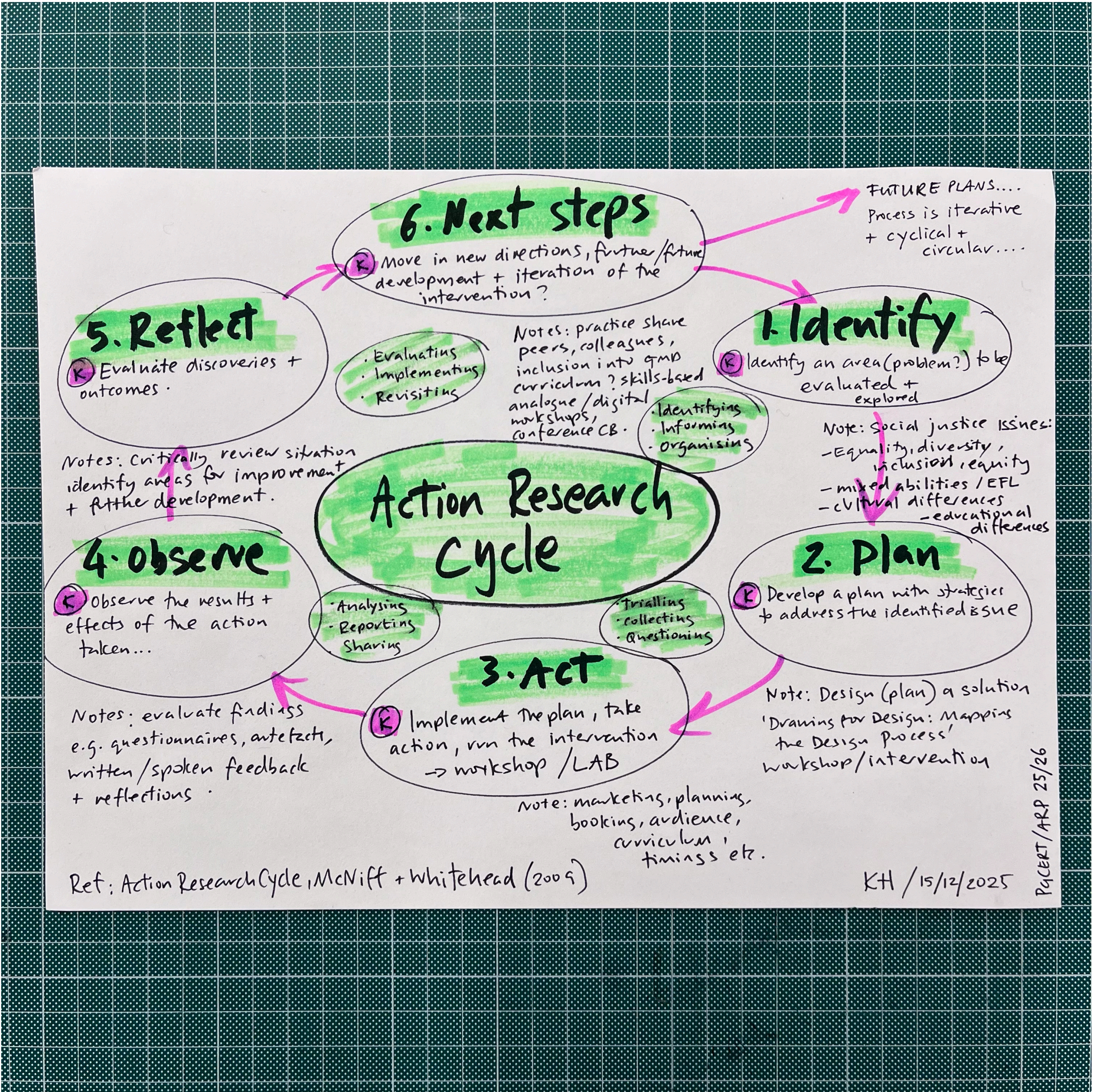
# Workshop: Drawing for Design Description

*Drawing for Design is a hands-on, creative workshop where you will explore how drawing is used as a visual research tool in design thinking.*

*In the workshop you will:*
*Experiment with different materials and mark-making techniques*
*Use drawing to map and understand the design process*
*Discover how drawing supports every part of graphic communication design*

*Suitable for year 1 Graphic Media Design students.*
*All drawing abilities welcome – no experience needed!*

*Date: Wednesday 26th November 2025*
*Time: 2 – 6pm*
*Location: D110*
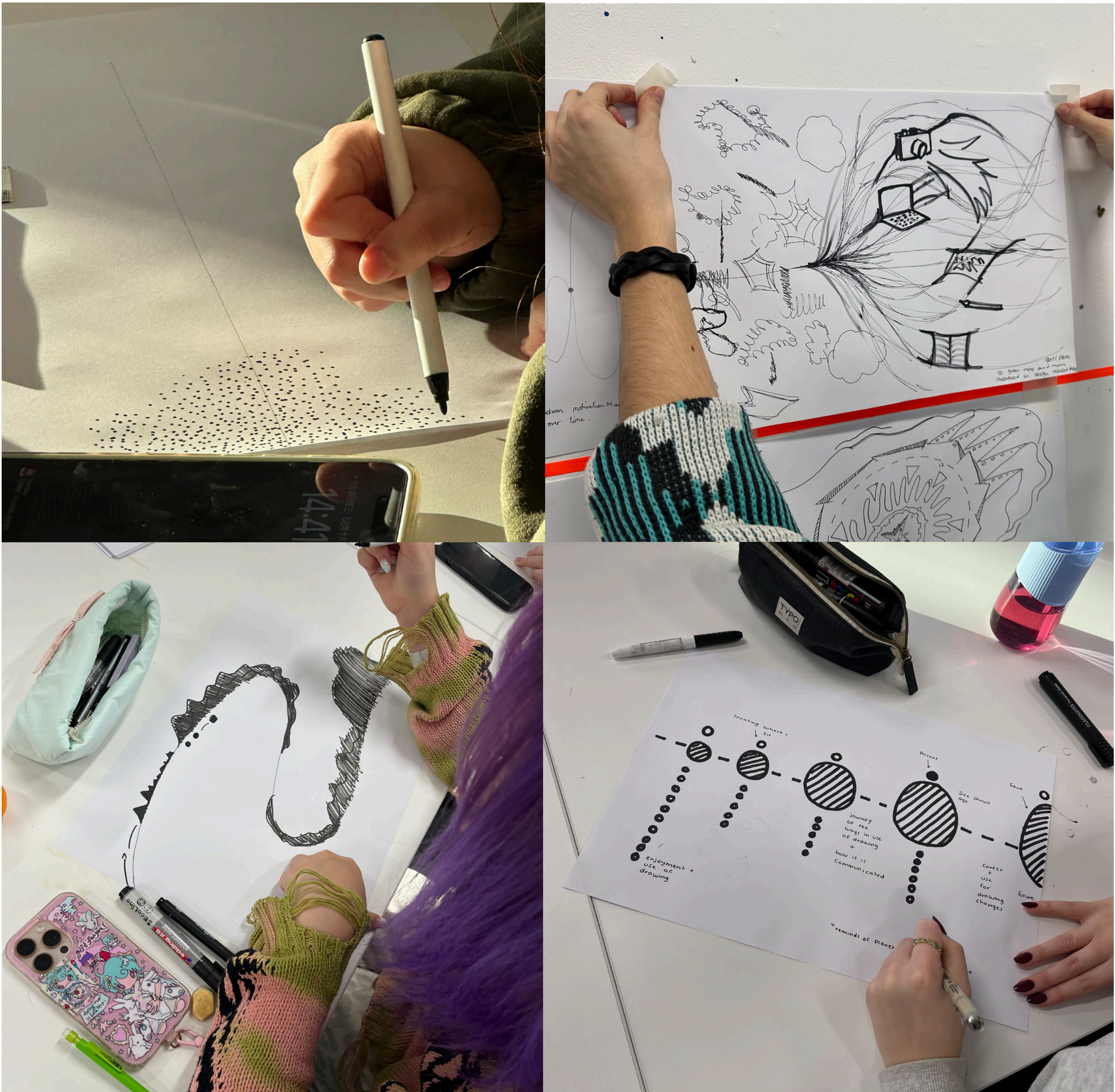
# Workshop: Drawing for Design Introduction

Sharing visual reference examples; drawings, diagrams, charts, mapping systems and mark-making processes.

# Workshop: Drawing for Design Task 1

Working independently, students drew a 'designed' timeline to visually communicate and map their prior experiences of drawing - from childhood to present day.
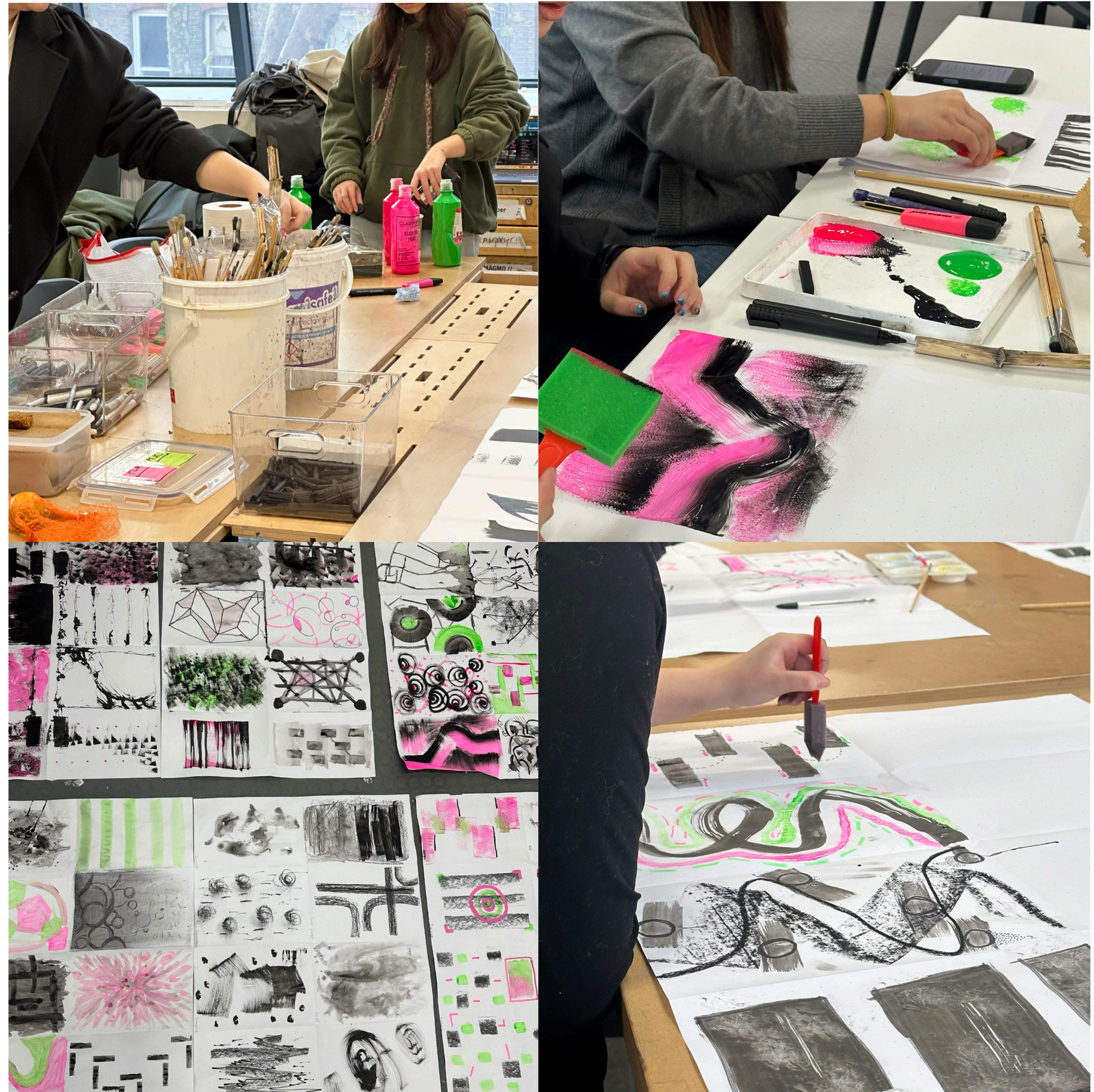
# Workshop: Drawing for Design Task 2

Working independently, students explore combined materials and mark-making processes to visually communicate each stage of the design process:
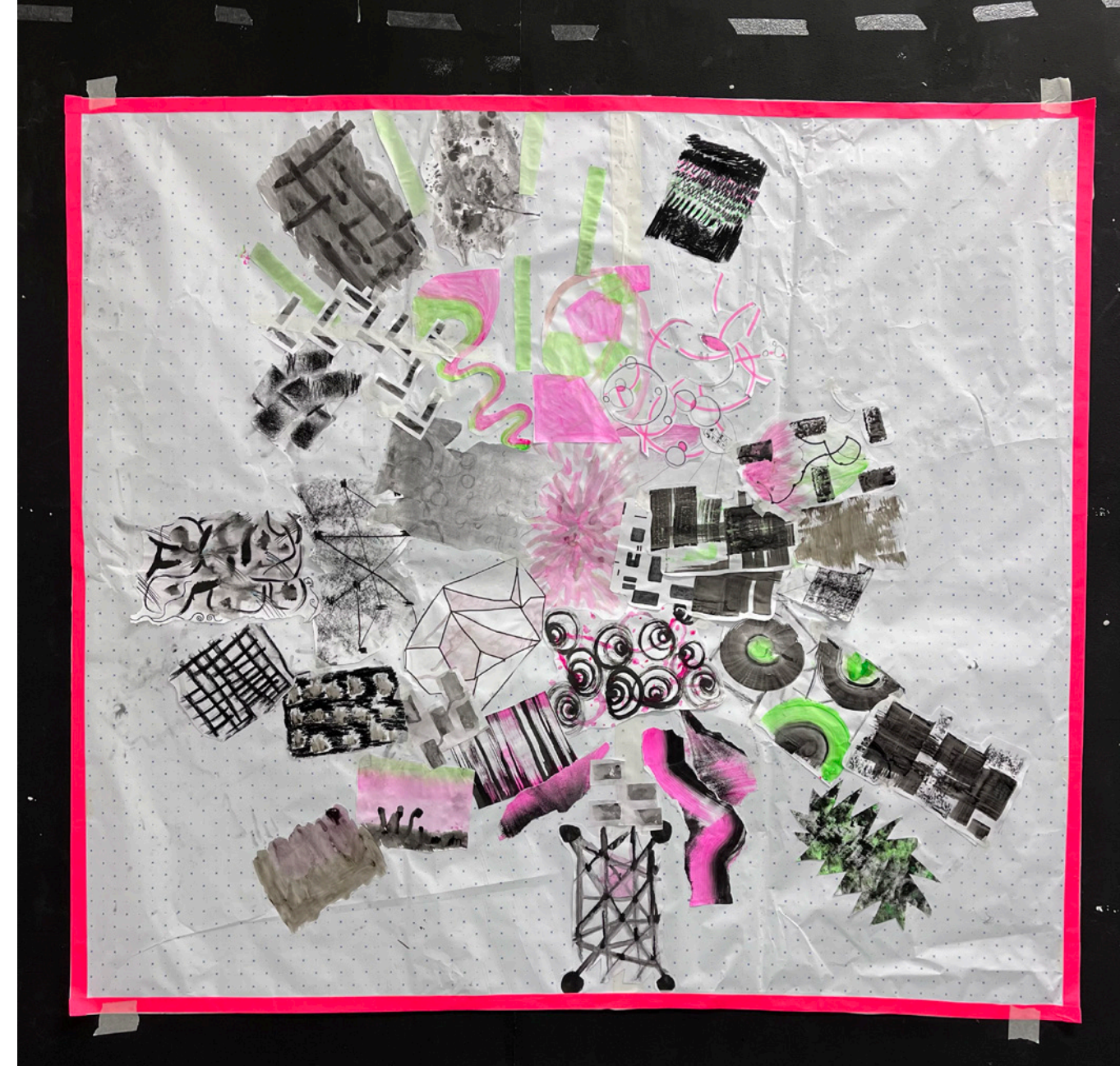
*Brief – research – idea generation – development – prototyping – final design – evaluation*

# Workshop: Drawing for Design Task 3

Working in small allocated groups, students collaborate to create large-format collaged maps, to visually communicate the arc and journey of the design process.
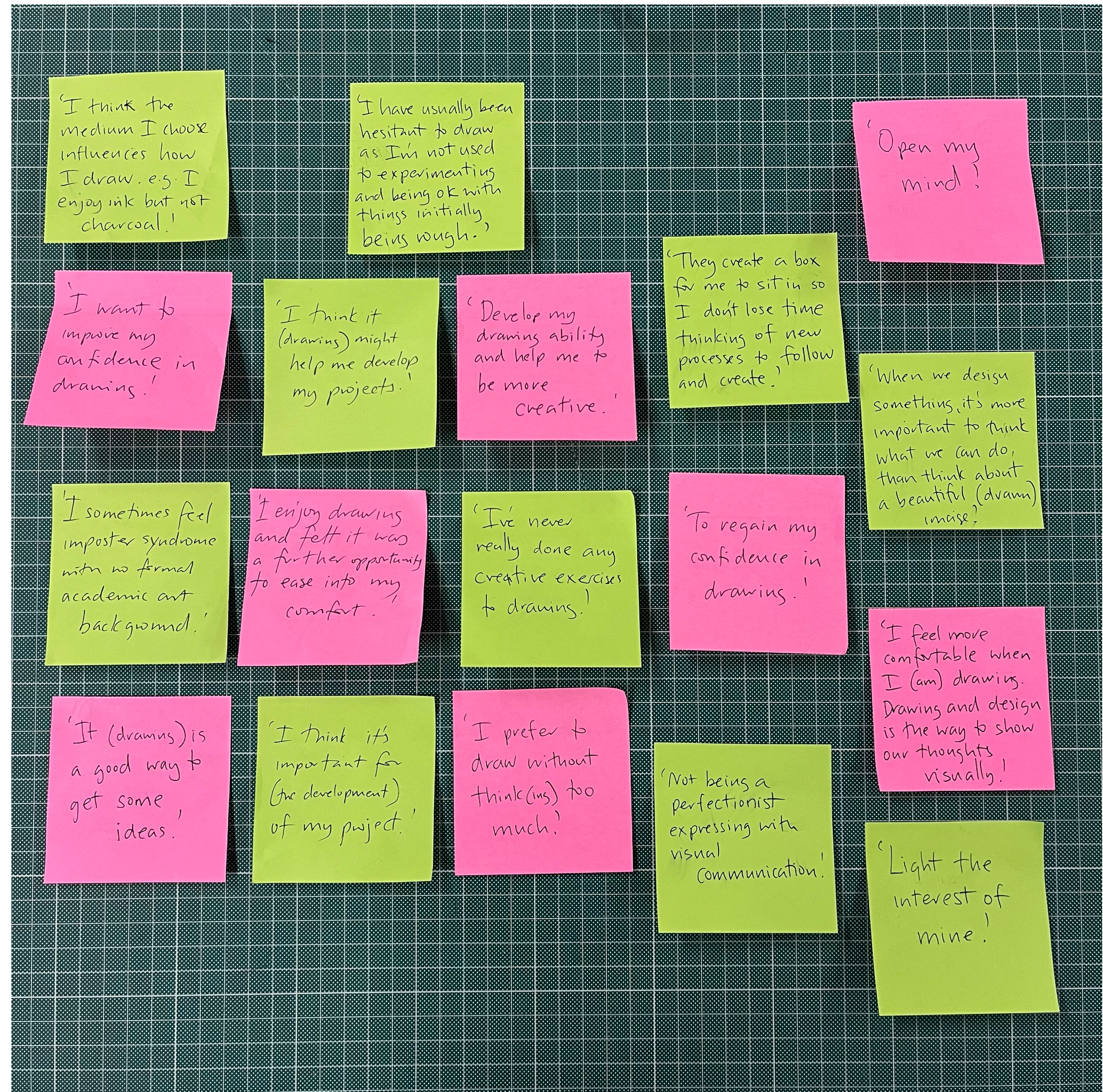
# Findings: Research Question 1

**RQ1**

*In what ways do students engage with drawing, and how do their prior educational experiences influence their attitudes and approaches?*

- Students often saw drawing as something that must be neat, correct and realistic.

- During the warm-up tasks, many students reported feeling freer and better able to use drawing as a thinking tool.

- There was a visible shift where drawings became increasingly energised, faster and more conceptual.



'I think the medium I choose influences how I draw. e.g. I enjoy ink but not charcoal.'

'I have usually been hesitant to draw as I'm not used to experimenting and being ok with things initially being rough.'

'Open my mind!'

'I want to improve my confidence in drawing.'

'I think it (drawing) might help me develop my projects.'

'Develop my drawing ability and help me to be more creative.'

'They create a box for me to sit in so I don't lose time thinking of new processes to follow and create.'

'When we design something it's more important to think what we can do, than think about a beautiful (drawn) image.'

'I sometimes feel imposter syndrome with no formal academic art background.'

'I enjoy drawing and felt it was a further opportunity to ease into my comfort.'

'I've never really done any creative exercises to drawing.'

'To regain my confidence in drawing.'

'It (drawing) is a good way to get some ideas.'

'I think it's important for (the development) of my project.'

'I prefer to draw without think(ing) too much.'

'Not being a perfectionist expressing with visual communication.'

'I feel more comfortable when I (am) drawing. Drawing and design is the way to show our thoughts visually.'

'Light the interest of mine.'

# Findings: Research Question

**RQ2**

*How can collaborative visual mapping of the design process, support diverse students' understanding and engagement with design briefs?*

- **Reduced pressure on aesthetic drawing skills;** increased focus on sequencing, reasoning and communicating visual thinking processes.

- **Barriers were lowered;** drawing tasks were shared not individual, anxiety decreased and overall engagement, energy-levels and perceptible joy increased.

- **The design process was made visible;** students reported increased clarity and confidence about; sequencing tasks, interpreting a brief and how idea development is iterative and non-linear.
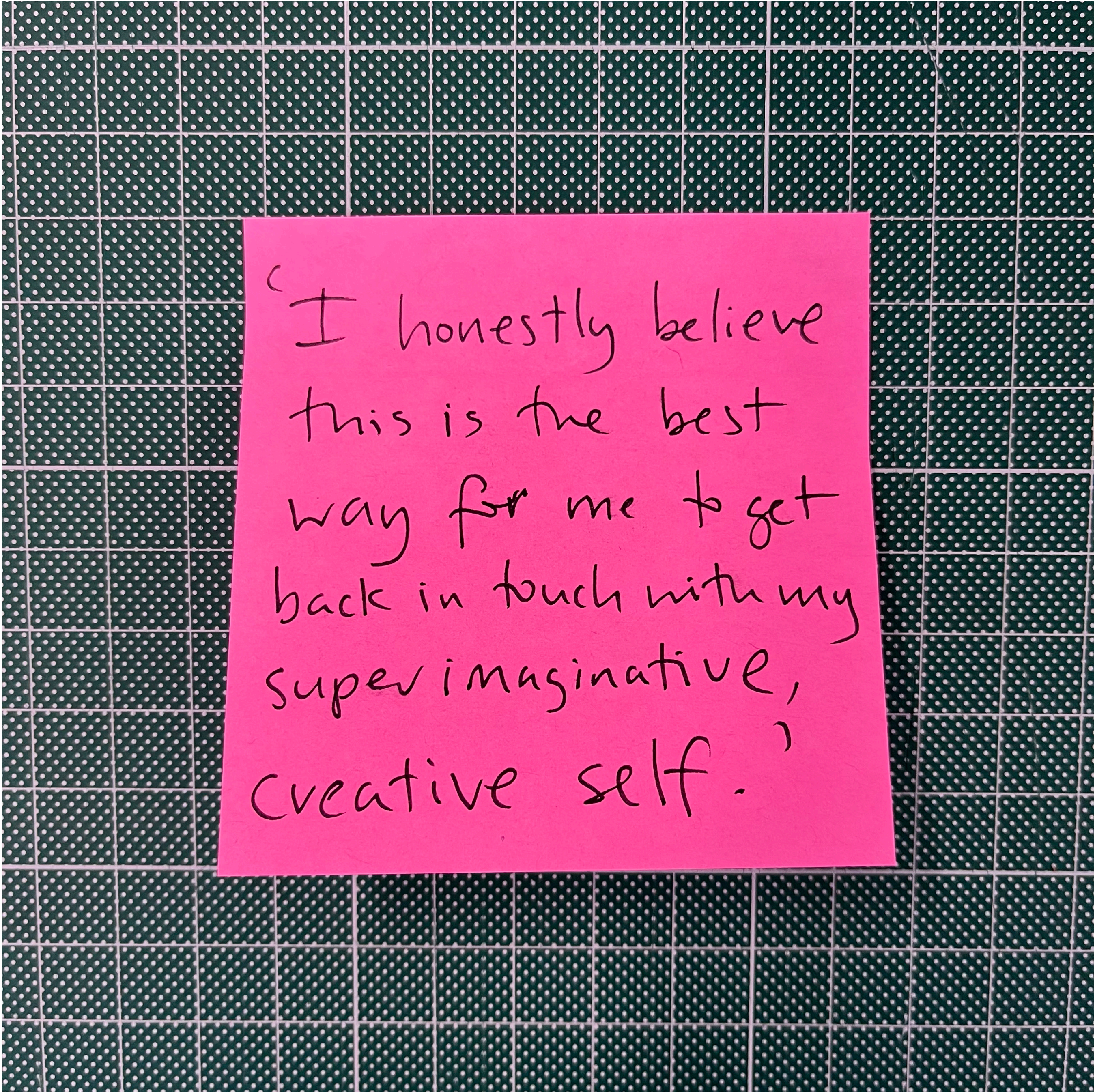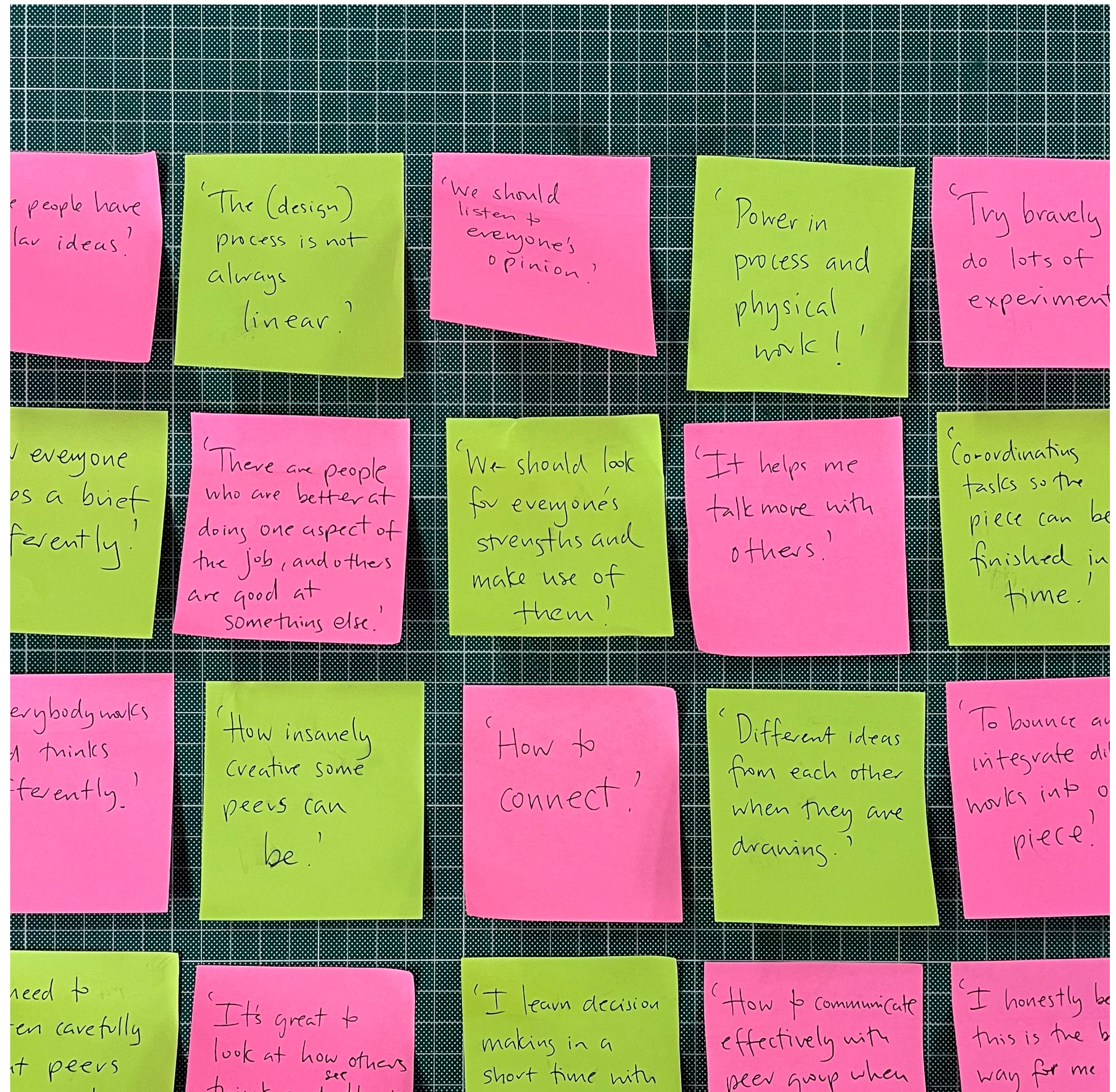
# Conclusions and Next Steps

- Students' relationships with drawing are shaped by their educational histories, and raised confidence in drawing helps supports visual thinking.

- Collaborative mapping helps students understand briefs, engage actively with their design journey and enhances creative outcomes.

- I will explore and develop drawing skills-based workshop models for integration into core GMD1 curriculum, and possible LCC conference 2026.

- I will explore opportunities for drawing community-building workshops for wider diverse audiences e.g. UAL Drawing Club 2026.
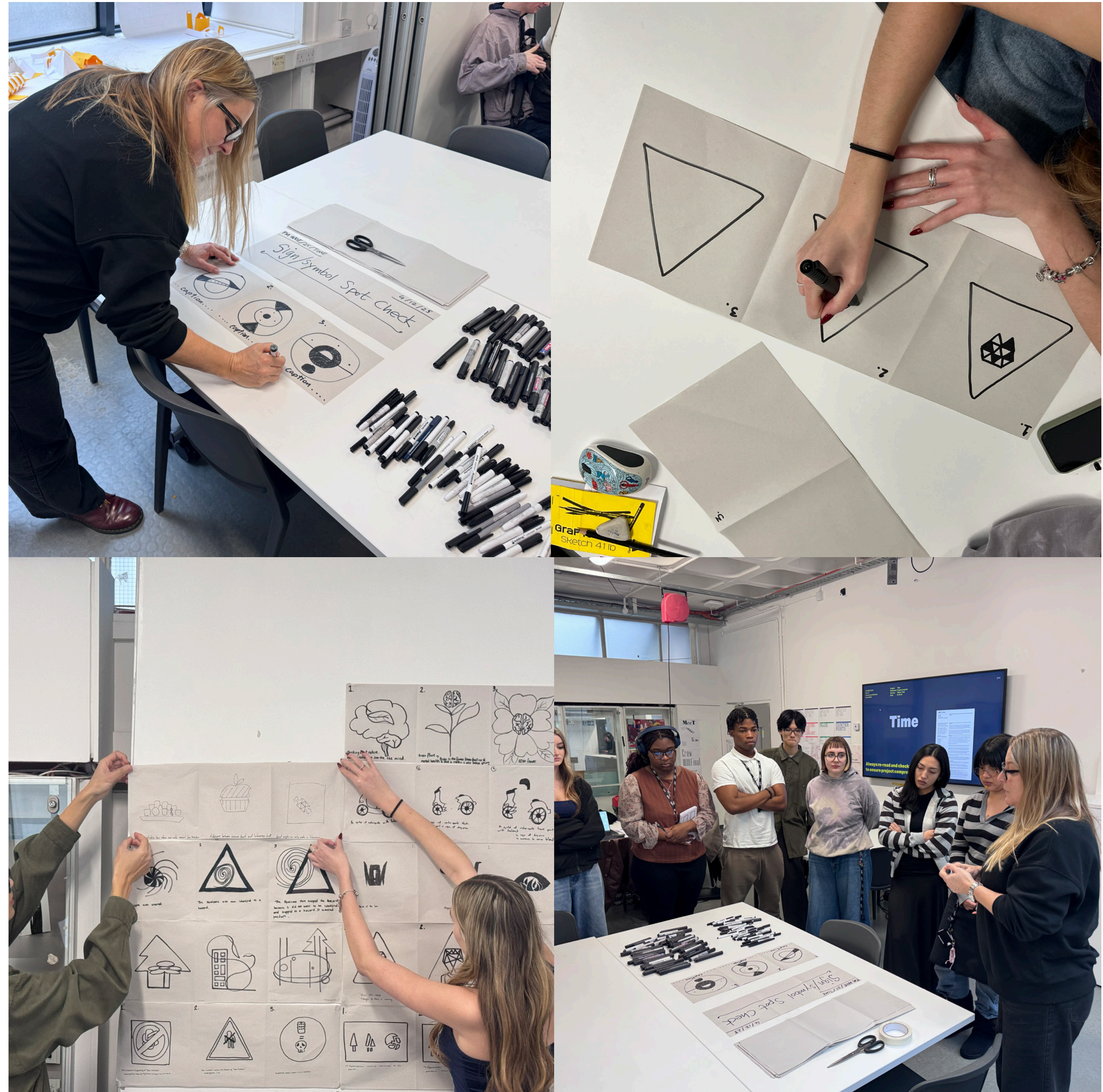
# Thank you

Any questions?



Photography credits: Taylor Hall & Ravin Raori

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