

MA NARRATIVE ENVIRONMENTS



MA Narrative Environments

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London
College	Central Saint Martins
School	S School
Programme	CSM Spatial Practices (L033)
Course AOS Code	CSMMANARX01
FHEQ Level	Level 7 Masters
Course Credits	180
Mode	Extended Full Time
Method	Face to Face
Duration of Course	2 years
Teaching Weeks	60 weeks
Valid From	2025/26
Collaboration	N/A
UAL Subject Classification	Architecture and Spatial and Interior Design
PSRB	N/A
Work placement offered	Yes
Course Entry Requirements	<p>The standard entry requirements for this course are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An honours degree in a relevant field: architecture, exhibitions, graphics, interiors, performance, retail, spatial, theatre, 3D, multimedia or interaction design, experience design, speculative design, design strategy, social or service design, gaming

	<p>environments, science communications, museum studies or curatorship, writing, literature, and design management</p> <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An equivalent EU/international qualification <p>And normally at least one year of relevant professional experience.</p> <p>APEL – Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning</p> <p>Exceptionally applicants who do not meet these course entry requirements may still be considered. The course team will consider each application that demonstrates additional strengths and alternative evidence. This might, for example, be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related academic or work experience • The quality of the personal statement • A strong academic or other professional reference <p>Or a combination of these factors.</p> <p>Each application will be considered on its own merit but we cannot guarantee an offer in each case.</p> <p>English language requirements</p> <p>IELTS level 6.5 or above, with at least 5.5 in reading, writing, listening and speaking (please check our main English language requirements webpage).</p>
Selection Criteria	<p>MA Narrative Environments select applicants according to potential and current ability in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and knowledge in your own discipline and preferably some examples of post college work in your particular field(s) of interest • Work demonstrating engagement with narrative in a spatial context, whether that is a real, mediated, or virtual space • A reflective and critical approach • Evidence and experience of teamwork

- Self-motivation, ambition and a commitment to the course.

What we are looking for

MA Narrative Environments actively seek students who want to investigate the future of narrative environments and grow their expertise within the creative, cultural and commercial sectors. We are especially interested in students interested in engaging with philosophy, technology, and society. We seek resourceful, talented and ambitious individuals who work well in multidisciplinary teams. The college's strong international profile is reflected in the broad cultural mix of our students and our international studio collaborations and exchanges.

Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

Year 1

Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Certificate (Exit Only)	60

Year 2

Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Diploma (Exit Only)	120
Master of Arts	180

Scheduled Learning Split by Level	Credits
Level 7	20%
Total Scheduled Learning Split	20%

Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

Aim/ Outcome	Description
Aim	The course researches and develops narrative environments as platforms for speculation, information, narration, communication, research, and planning.
Aim	The course advances research and innovation in the philosophical, technological, social and cultural influences and impacts of narrative environment design, drawing upon past, present, and future perspectives. The course advances a planetary perspective, with considerations of climate, social equity, racial justice and class core to project development.
Aim	The course advances practical methods in the design of narrative environments using digital and physical strategies and techniques through projects developed in collaboration with industry, academic and government partners.
Outcome	A futures-driven, present-sensitive, historically-informed, and socially-conscious understanding of narrative environments as systems and platforms.
Outcome	A strong grasp of the philosophical, social, and technological implications for narrative environments as a discipline and practice, with the capacity to apply climate and social justice principles across scales – from the local to the planetary.
Outcome	A skill set that draws upon general design knowledge related to narrative environment production, with fluency to communicate with diverse audiences across verbal, textual, visual, aural, and/or other media, and specialisation in at least one domain or medium of creative practice.
Outcome	An advanced design portfolio that serves as a professional launchpad for further creative development, speculation and realisation.
Outcome	A clear positioning of a practice of narrative environments in relation to other design areas, professional fields, and creative disciplines, that articulates social intent and values.

Distinctive Features	
1	A futures-driven approach presents narrative environments as arenas for speculation, projection, planning, and reflection across digital, physical, and hybrid domains.
2	A research-driven curriculum that integrates philosophical enquiry about narratives and environments from social and planetary perspectives with practical design techniques and strategies.
3	An adaptive and inclusive approach to the conceptualisation, creation and curation of narrative environments that incorporates cross-genre formats across technologies, typologies, and aesthetic styles.
4	An innovative mix of speculative, spatial, and strategic systems design enables the realisation of complex environments and narratives that respond to and generate diverse contexts.
5	A focus on collaborative practice provides professional opportunities to work with industry, academic, and cultural partners on live projects.
6	Professional development and practical production workshops throughout the course ensure students are ready for the next professional step upon graduation.

Course Detail

Based within CSM's Spatial Practices Programme, MA Narrative Environments is a two-year course focused on the research and development of environments in which narratives unfold. Narrative environments are platforms, scenarios, and interfaces for communicating information, researching and testing possibilities, hosting events and experiences, and/or generating diverse forms of intelligences. Narratives include not only stories, but rhetoric, discourse, and programs related to human and non-human communication, including non-human languages, biosemiotics, artificial intelligences/machine learning and large language models. Environments include interior and exterior, physical and digital spaces and temporalities, and synthetic-natural ecological systems across scales – from the intimate to the urban and the planetary. The course researches and develops immersive and interactive systems and hybrid environments that propose, model, simulate, plan, construct, and/or perform alternative infrastructures, ideologies and worlds. The course advances a planetary perspective, with considerations of climate, social equity, racial justice and class core to project development.

MA Narrative Environments explores the interplay between situational and speculative knowledge about narratives and environments as they are, have been, and what they might become. The course starts by charting and understanding contemporary and historical narrative environments, critically demythologising, deconstructing, decolonising, and decommodifying dominant narratives about humans, society, machines and agency. Systems observation and mapping is then developed through counterfactuals and speculative histories, grounding future propositions for infrastructures, ideologies, and worlds. Key research questions include: How are narrative environments transmitted and distributed across space and time? How do technologies shape narrative environments and how do narrative environments shape technologies? How do narrative environments change in the shift from screen-based narratives to spatial narratives embedded throughout cities, landscapes, virtual interfaces, and model worlds? How do the tools and understandings of narrative environments reshape architecture, infrastructure, science, technology, and planning? How do narrative environments mobilise and complexify facts and fictions, models and simulations, needs and desires?

What to Expect

- **The course is particularly focused on narrative environments as shaping and shaped by technology and media.** Through critical and speculative design projects, students and tutors research the integration of digital and analogue contexts through experiential and experimental interfaces, spatial computing, alternative infrastructures, and environments and discourses that frame and re-frame the possible worlds of humans and nonhumans alike.

- **The course teaches and deploys design methods from across disciplines relevant to narrative environments**, including storyboarding and story matrices, user experience and user interaction, narrative devices, worlding and worldbuilding, improv/performance, media, and gaming. The course uses multiple time-based media at various scope and scale, including text, sound, video, projection and AR/VR.
- **The course takes a highly philosophical and highly practical approach to narrative environment design.** The course's seminars draw readings and references from disciplines as diverse as design, science and technology studies, spatial analysis, human-computer interaction, film, theatre, and performance, anthropology, and philosophy. The course also teaches practical skills in design production related to budgets, project management, IP, collaboration, negotiation, and proposal composition. The course offers introductions to a variety of techniques for developing narrative environments. Students work independently to determine and develop practical media tools relevant to their individual practice, advancing them through project-driven tutorials and workshops with CSM's media lab.
- **The course cohort is collaborative, interdisciplinary and international.** Students come from global backgrounds and diverse disciplines, and the course actively embraces and leverages the range of languages, experiences, and domains brought to each project. Students collaborate across the cohort to complement, develop, and enhance their skillsets and interests across design domains. This focus on collaboration mirrors the highly collaborative dynamics of design in applied contexts.

Industry Experience and Opportunities

In the first year of the course, students work on live projects with partners from across industry, academia, and government sectors. These briefs include the creation of new interfaces, experiences, interactions, platforms and scenarios. At the end of the first year, students undertake an industry study that connects them with an organisation or organisations across their field of interest and begin to chart their own research interests. In the second year, students lead the research and development of a narrative environment, facilitating collaborations and partnerships throughout the process.

MA Narrative Environments alumni go on to work in many diverse fields, bringing skills in both narrative and environment development to architecture and urban/international development, foresight and futures, design strategy, UX/UI, set and production design, tech, and experience/spatial design for culture, brands, and events/festivals. The course hosts lectures and workshops with speculative designers and thinkers on narrative and environments from across the world to complement the range of perspectives delivered through project briefs with industry, academic, and government partners.

Course Units

Unit 1: Foundations

This unit develops foundations for the design of narrative environments through a series of rapid intensive projects that introduce philosophical, social, and technological propositions, narrative devices, and environmental research and development. These projects introduce design strategies and techniques that shape narrative environments and explore tools and frameworks for understanding constructions of space and time. Methods include systems mapping and analysis, speculative scenarios, strategic design and narrative communication.

Unit 2: The Collaborative Unit

This unit is focused on cross-college collaborations and collaborative practice. MA Narrative Environments students collaborate with students from another CSM course on a project brief with partners and/or critics from industry, government, or academia. The design briefs in this unit typically explore the social impact of emerging technologies, scientific research, or alternative architectures. Key insights include interdisciplinary communication and collaboration, ethical practice, and feedback.

Unit 3: Major Project Research

This unit focuses on narrative environment research, helping students explore foundational ideas and practices that will help them develop their own Major Project.

Part 1: Fieldwork (Summer Term YR1)

- Students work on a site-specific design brief focusing on using media tools and ways of integrating local and planetary knowledges to shape creative fictions.

Part 2: Industry Study (Summer Term YR1)

- Students develop their professional network through industry research, placements, interviews with partners or surveys of the field, or participation in special projects or events.

Part 3: Design Research (Autumn Term YR2)

- Students engage a specific site, scenario, or environment that provides foundational research for their Major Project. Working individually or collectively, students develop a Research Study that traces their topic, charting theoretical influences and identifying possible interventions. The

study can be delivered in various written modalities – from anthropological to fictional, with visual or auditory supports welcome and includes design prototypes that test early experiments with a variety of design directions.

Unit 4: Major Project Development & Presentation

This unit focuses on the design, realisation and communication of a major design project. Students focus on designing, prototyping, producing and presenting a major project that engages the environments identified in their Design Research, often in-situ. Students then present representations of that project through media assets in the final Showcase.

Important note concerning academic progression through your course:

If you are required to retake a unit you will need to cease further study on the course until you have passed the unit concerned. Once you have successfully passed this unit, you will be able to proceed onto the next unit. Retaking a unit might require you to take time out of study, which could affect other things such as student loans or the visa status for international students.

CSM Academic Support is delivered by a team of academics and practitioners working alongside your course to help you progress and achieve your maximum potential as a student. Academic Support can help you to develop your skills in different areas, including critical thinking, research and writing, time management, presentations and working independently and collaboratively. These may be offered as part of your timetabled classes or as bookable tutorials and workshops.

Mode of Study

The course is delivered in extended full-time mode over two years. Students will be expected to commit 30 hours per week to study, which includes teaching time and independent study.

Credit and award requirements

The course is credit-rated at 180 credits.

On successfully completing the course, you will gain a Master of Arts (MA degree).

Under the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, an MA is Level 7. All units must be passed in order to achieve the MA but the classification of the award is derived from the mark for the final unit only.

If you are unable to continue on the course, a Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) will normally be offered following the successful completion of 60 credits, or a Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) following the successful completion of 120 credits.

Learning and Teaching Methods

The learning and teaching methods devised for this course include:

- Briefings
- Lectures
- Seminars
- Group Tutorials
- Individual Tutorials
- Workshops
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Self-reflection

Assessment Methods

- Presentations
- Proposals
- Projects
- Peer Feedback

Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:

- The Learning and Teaching Policies of the University of the Arts London
- CSM College Policies and Initiatives
- The QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- Consultation with relevant academic and industry practitioners
- UAL Framework for Embedding the Principles for Climate, Racial and Social Justice

Course Diagram

MA Narrative Environments – PLEASE NOTE DUE TO VACATION DATES, SPECIFIC DELIVERY WEEKS MAY CHANGE.

S=summative assessment

LEVEL 7 – Year 1																															
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
Unit 1: Foundations (40 credits)												S	Unit 2: The Collaborative Unit (20 credits)						S	Unit 3: Major Project Research (60 credits)											
LEVEL 7 – Year 2																															
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
Unit 3 Continued									S	Unit 4: Major Project Development & Presentation (60 credits)																			S		

The University will use all reasonable endeavours to provide the Course and the services described in this Output. There may be occasions whereby the University needs to add, remove or alter content in relation to your Course as may be appropriate for example the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, or in response to student feedback, or to comply with applicable law or due to circumstances beyond its control. The University aim to inform you of any changes as soon as is reasonably practicable