
CONTEMPORARY

ART

ACADEMY

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Artist: Esra Gokcen

Prepared by: Zavier Ellis & Mathew Gibson

Date: November 2025

INTRODUCTION

This development plan outlines the artistic context, ambitions, challenges, and professional development needs of Esra Gokcen. It has been prepared following an in-depth discussion about her current practice, recent collaborative projects, long-term goals, and the specific support she requires to advance her work. The aim is to create a framework that strengthens Esra's studio practice, contextual understanding, and professional positioning while building confidence and structure around navigating the contemporary art world.

CONTEXT

Esra Gokcen is a mixed-media artist whose practice combines acrylic, collage, and oil painting to create layered works influenced by music, nature, and intuitive mark-making. Her recent touring collaboration with her musician husband has strengthened her interest in interdisciplinary projects, and she is now exploring a new series that connects visual art, music, and poetry.

With a background in graphic design and an interest in printmaking, Esra is seeking greater structure, contextual grounding, and a deeper contextual understanding. She has worked in paid exhibitions but feels limited by a lack of networking confidence and the absence of a shared studio environment. Now based in Surrey and soon relocating to Hertfordshire, she wants to build momentum, develop her mixed-media practice further, and open new professional opportunities, including eventual MA study and gallery representation.

AMBITION

Short-Term

- Develop new techniques without feeling confined or "boxed in."
- Build structure around practice, research, and professional development.
- Strengthen confidence in talking about her work and approaching new networks.
- Capitalise on the momentum of the recent collaboration and develop the visual-music series further.

Medium-Term

- Secure gallery representation.
 - Develop a more strategic, effective approach to marketing, social media, and exhibition
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applications.

- Increase visibility and success in open calls.
- Build a stronger understanding of contemporary art discourse.
- Expand collaborations within the music world, especially given recent album cover projects.

Long-Term

- Establish her work firmly within the art world and exhibit alongside artists she admires.
- Build a reputation that leads curators, galleries, and collaborators to approach her proactively.
- Achieve financial sustainability through sales.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Increased confidence in networking, speaking about her practice, and approaching galleries.
- A strategic, structured path toward representation and exhibition opportunities.
- A growing audience and more consistent recognition of her work.
- Successful open call submissions and invitations to participate in exhibitions
- A clear integration of her interdisciplinary interests—art, music, nature, poetry—into a cohesive artistic voice.
- Financial stability through sales and reduced reliance on self-funding.

CHALLENGES

- **Networking & Visibility:** Esra struggles with confidence in unfamiliar social situations and finds navigating the art world intimidating.
- **Isolation:** No longer working in a communal studio, she lacks peer interaction, technical exchange, and critique.
- **Time Limitations:** Family commitments reduce available studio hours and energy.
- **Professional Frustration:** Marketing, admin, and application logistics feel overwhelming and unsatisfying.
- **Strategic Uncertainty:** Difficulty identifying the right opportunities, open calls, and ways to capitalise on recent collaborations.
- **Academic Confidence:** Concern about English language demands if pursuing an MA.

NEEDS

- A combination of studio practice development, critical/historical awareness, and professional practice.
- Particular focus on professional development, including gallery approach strategy, portfolio refinement, open call preparation, and narrative clarity.
- Mentoring that builds confidence in describing her practice, networking, and entering new art contexts.
- Structured grounding in relevant art histories and contemporary discourse.
- Consistent crits and feedback sessions to replace the lost dynamic of a communal studio.
- Guidance on leveraging her music collaborations, especially album covers and the touring project.
- Support in developing techniques without compromising her spontaneity or individuality.

CAPACITY

- No fixed budget set aside but is willing to invest as needed when opportunities arise.
 - Prefers a fortnightly mentoring rhythm, allowing time for development and continuity.
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- Would like to start mid-January onward.
 - No immediate deadlines, but interested in aligning professional momentum with possible exhibitions emerging from her music-related series.

INVESTMENT & STRUCTURE

- Mentoring sessions are £95 per hour, with the structure tailored to her goals, budget, and availability.
- Fortnightly sessions recommended to balance depth, flexibility, and forward movement
- Optional additional sessions can be scheduled to support open call applications, portfolio preparation, or professional opportunities

WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXPERIENCE VALUABLE

- Feeling confident and competent in discussing her work with curators, galleries, and new audiences.
- Successful open call applications and increased visibility.
- A clear sense of direction, opportunity, and strategy.
- Development of a body of work that feels authentic, ambitious, and not constrained by external expectations
- Stronger contextual knowledge that enriches her practice and places it within a broader artistic lineage.
- Professional achievements that reduce the need for self-funding.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

MONTH 1 – Emily Steer (Dec) – Art Journalist (19th Dec 2pm)

- Portfolio and artist statement review.
- Mentee to present work and outline needs.
- Mentor to analyse and advise on portfolio & artist statement.
- Together decide on tasks/research for the follow-up session.

MONTH 1 – Emily Steer (Dec) – Art Journalist (6th Jan 2pm)

- Portfolio and artist statement review.
- Follow-up session to Week 1.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks.

MONTH 2 – Rebecca Pelly-Fry (Jan) - Curator

- Mentee to present prior experience, current interests and aspirations, highlighting areas needing support, development, or specific attention.
- Mentor presents summary of experience.
- Explore exhibition opportunity.
- Together decide on tasks/research/discussion topics for the follow-up session.

MONTH 2 – Kiera Bennett (Jan) - Artist

- Artist crit

MONTH 3 – Rebecca Pelly-Fry (Feb)- Curator

- Follow-up session to Week 1.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

MONTH 3 – Richard Dyer (Feb) - Critic

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- Analyse critical context of mentee's practice.
 - Mentor to advise on research & furtherment of contextual awareness.
 - Together decide on tasks/research/discussion topics for the follow-up session.

MONTH 4 – Andrew Etherington (Mar) - Curator

- Mentee to present prior experience, current interests and aspirations, highlighting areas needing support, development, or specific attention.
- Mentor presents summary of experience.
- Explore exhibition opportunity.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

MONTH 4 – Joanna Whittle (Mar) - Artist

- Artist crit

MONTH 5– Dean Melbourne (Apr) – Advisor

- Networking session.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

MONTH 5 – Richard Dyer (Apr) - Critic

- Follow-up session to Week 7.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

MONTH 6 – Zavier Ellis & Mathew Gibson (May) – Co-founders

- Review

CONCLUSION

Esra is at a significant moment in her artistic development, ready to transition toward a structured, ambitious, and well-supported trajectory. She has a distinctive mixed-media practice with interdisciplinary potential, and her recent collaborations signal expanding professional possibilities. With targeted mentoring—balancing studio development, contextual growth, and professional strategy—Esra can move confidently toward medium- and long-term goals such as gallery representation, exhibition opportunities, and greater visibility within contemporary art contexts.

This Development Plan provides a framework to build momentum, deepen artistic clarity, and strengthen her position within the art world, while cultivating the confidence and strategic insight needed for sustained success.

Investment Summary:

- 1-hour 1-2-1 mentoring sessions - £95 each (full payment in advance or monthly for the duration of the programme)
- Start Date: December
- Session Frequency: Fortnightly
- Optional supplementary 1-2-1 mentoring sessions - £95 each
- Optional course add-ons - £95-£295