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**CONTEMPORARY**

**ART**

**ACADEMY**

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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Artist: Susan Parker

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Prepared by: Zavier Ellis & Mathew Gibson

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Date: December 2025

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### INTRODUCTION

This development plan outlines the artistic, professional, and personal ambitions of Susan Parker, a Yorkshire Dales-based artist working primarily in painting and drawing. Recently graduated from the MA at Manchester Metropolitan University, Susan is seeking to re-establish momentum, confidence, and professional visibility following the loss of the structured dialogue, critique, and challenge provided by postgraduate study.

The plan aims to support Susan in consolidating her studio practice, strengthening the quality and consistency of her work, rebuilding critical dialogue, and gradually engaging with professional artworld contexts in a way that feels sustainable, affirming, and aligned with her personal circumstances.

### CONTEXT

Since completing her MA, Susan has continued to work in the studio, though her practice has become less consistent due to life commitments. The loss of regular dialogue, critique, and intellectual challenge has affected her sense of momentum. Her practice centres on painting and drawing, with drawing providing a strong foundation and painting remaining central to her ambition to develop a coherent body of work. She is seeking renewed critical support and professional guidance as she transitions into independent practice.

### AMBITION

#### Short-Term

- To paint and draw more consistently
- To prioritise studio time and creative focus
- To attend a one-week residency at Cove Park in January
- To attend a two-week residency in Spain in May
- To rebuild confidence through dialogue and reflection

#### Medium-Term

- To initiate contact with galleries and curators, locally and nationally
  - To work towards exhibiting within a serious and appropriate professional context
  - To clarify how her work should be positioned and discussed
  - To strengthen the coherence and consistency of her body of work
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## Long-Term

- To sustain a serious fine art practice alongside the winding down of her illustration career
- To balance professional ambition with personal responsibilities, including visiting her mother in Sussex
- To maintain a confident, engaged relationship with her practice over time

## SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Acknowledgement that her work is worthwhile and meaningful
- Affirmation that the work communicates her intentions clearly
- Increased confidence in the value and seriousness of her practice
- Her work being seen, discussed, and taken seriously
- Engagement in professional contexts in London, Leeds, and Manchester

## CHALLENGES

- Uncertainty about where and how to apply for opportunities
- Reduced confidence in the professional positioning of her work
- A lack of dialogue, critique, and tutor-level feedback
- Confidence in the studio but less confidence when presenting or discussing work
- Limited confidence navigating the art world and its structures
- Working in isolation following a background in architecture and illustration
- No current mechanisms for structured feedback or professional development

## NEEDS

- A combination of studio development, critical awareness, and professional development
- Initial emphasis on studio practice, confidence-building, and clarification of intentions
- Professional development to follow once the work feels more resolved
- Regular, thoughtful critique and professional dialogue
- Support in articulating and contextualising her practice

## CAPACITY

- No immediate application deadlines
- Flexibility to take a developmental rather than deadline-driven approach
- Upcoming residencies providing natural moments of focus and reflection
- Desire to reconnect with the excitement experienced during the MA
- Interest in revisiting ideas around the new sublime
- No specific budget set aside; both Susan and her partner are retired

## INVESTMENT & STRUCTURE

- Possibly CRITICAL CONTEXT (PG2) course at £295
- One-hour one-to-one mentoring sessions at £95 per session
- Programme tailored to Susan's goals, pace, availability, and financial context
- Preferred session frequency: monthly
- Flexible regarding days of the week

## WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXPERIENCE VALUABLE

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- Renewed confidence in the strength and value of her work
  - Regular, high-quality critical dialogue
  - Support articulating intentions and making decisions in the studio
  - Guidance on professional positioning and next steps
  - A sense of momentum and renewed belief following the MA experience

## **PROPOSED SCHEDULE**

### **MONTH 1-2 – CRITICAL CONTEXT (PG2) (Jan-Feb)**

- 8-week course

### **MONTH 4 – Joanna Whittle (Apr) – Artist / Curator / Vice Chair of Contemporary British Painting**

- Artist crit.
- Mentee to present practice to mentor for critical feedback.

### **MONTH 5 – Joanna Whittle (May) – Artist / Curator / Vice Chair of Contemporary British Painting**

- Follow-up artist crit.
- Discuss open call application methodologies.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

### **MONTH 6 – Kiera Bennett (Jun) – Artist**

- Artist crit.
- Mentee to present practice to mentor for critical feedback.

### **MONTH 7 – Kiera Bennett (Jul) – Artist**

- Follow-up artist crit.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

### **MONTH 8 – Sam Jackson (Aug) – Artist**

- Artist crit.
- Mentee to present practice to mentor for critical feedback.

### **MONTH 9 – Sam Jackson (Sep) – Artist**

- Follow-up artist crit.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

### **MONTH 10 – Rebecca Pelly-Fry (Oct) - 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 context and opportunity.
- Together decide on tasks/research/discussion topics for the follow-up session.

### **MONTH 11 – Rebecca Pelly-Fry (Nov) - Curator**

- Follow-up session to Month 10.
- Together decide on ongoing tasks/research.

### **MONTH 11 – Zavier Ellis & Mathew Gibson (Nov) – Co-founders**

- Review

## **CONCLUSION**

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Susan Parker is a reflective and committed artist navigating the transition from postgraduate study to independent professional practice. While geographically isolated, she has a strong foundation of skills, ideas, and ambition. Through tailored mentoring, sustained studio dialogue, and gradual professional guidance, this programme aims to help Susan build confidence, strengthen the coherence of her work, and engage with the art world in a way that is both meaningful and sustainable.

**Investment Summary:**

- CRITICAL CONTEXT (PG2) - £295
- 1-hour 1-2-1 mentoring sessions - £95 each (fees paid in monthly instalments. Monthly instalments begin two months ahead of the planned start date, or immediately if the programme begins sooner)
- Start Date: January 2026
- Session Frequency: Monthly after PG2 and a break
- Optional supplementary 1-2-1 mentoring sessions - £95 each
- Optional course add-ons - £95-£295

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