How Critical Reflective Methods inform Studio Practice.

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THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Case Room

"Firstly…that creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs…

Secondly to suggest that creative practice -- the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art -- can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research."

- (Smith & Dean, 2009)

Critical reflective methods require students to situate their practice within the wider context of Communication Design practice. Students are required to consider historical, social, political and theoretical aspects alongside methodology to inform their studio practice.

"One thing illustration has always lacked, compared to graphic design, is a strong critical framework by which to assess it"

- Rick Poyner, The Missing Critical History of Illustration, Print (June, 2010) .

Methodology:

- Literature review of reflective methods
- Interviews with graduates
- Survey of graduates from last 10 years
- Review of GSA student experience surveys
- Qualitative reflections of staff

Research shows the benefits of Critical Reflection:

- As closely linked to higher-order thinking skills.
- Playing an important role in facilitating student transitions.
- Facilitating students in making meaning of their learning.
- Helping students to take ownership of their learning.
- Improving academic performance.
- Reducing student stress/anxiety in setting clear goals.

- (QAA/SFC Report, 2023)

Challenges Identified are:

- A disconnect between research and practice.
- Motivating students to engage with reflective activities.
- Reflective tasks can become a chore if not supported.
- Cultural difference in the understanding of reflection.
- Students may lack any prior reflective activity experience.
- Trust levels among peers may impact the quality of feedback.

How we engaged students with Critical Reflection;

- Seminars to introduce reflective models.
- Peer reviews and discussions.
- Student led presentations of projects.
- Critical reflective journals throughout study.
- Introducing students to research tools in the library.
- Encouraging students to engage in academic discourse.
- Requiring students to document and reflect on their learning.
- Setting reflective writing tasks to develop reflection.

How was critical reflection evidenced in studio practice;

- Deeper understanding of own learning.
- Greater awareness of appropriate processes for ideas.
- Reflection through making and more iterative approach.
- Improved rigour in interrogation of research.
- Improved ability to analyse own and others work.
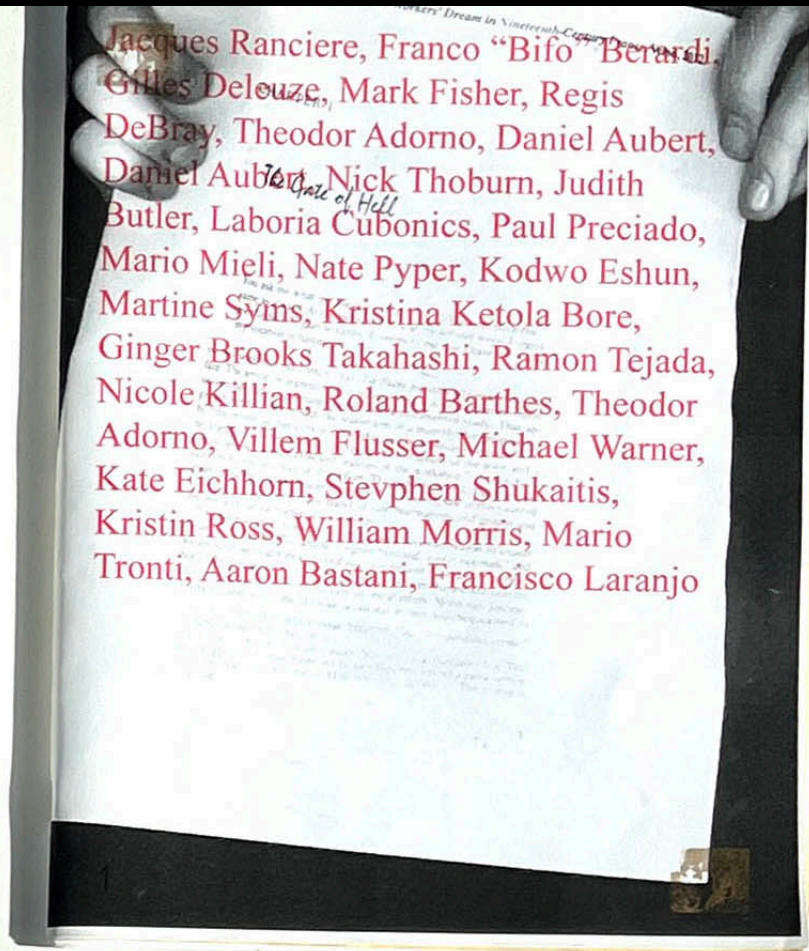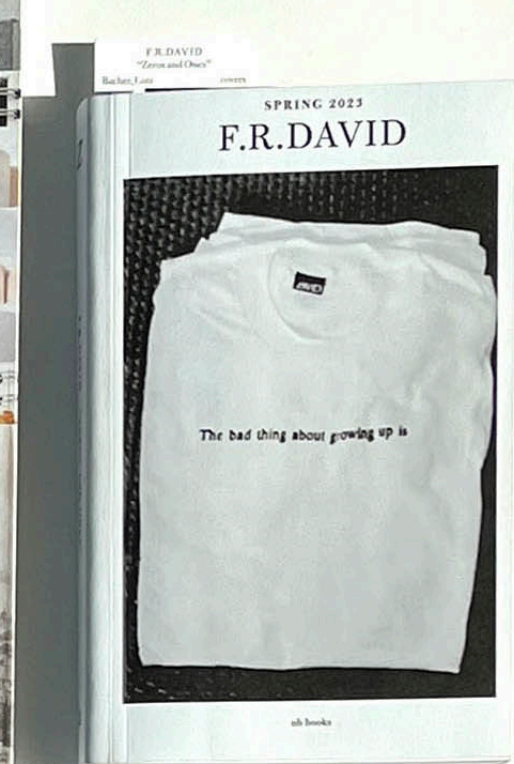- Documenting of own learning and process.

Research Seminars

Drawing as research
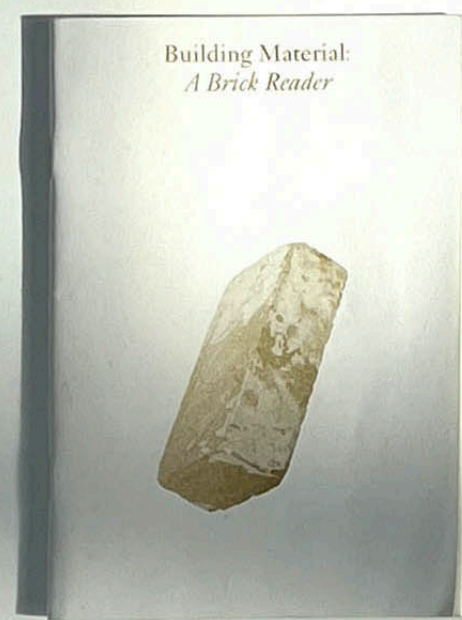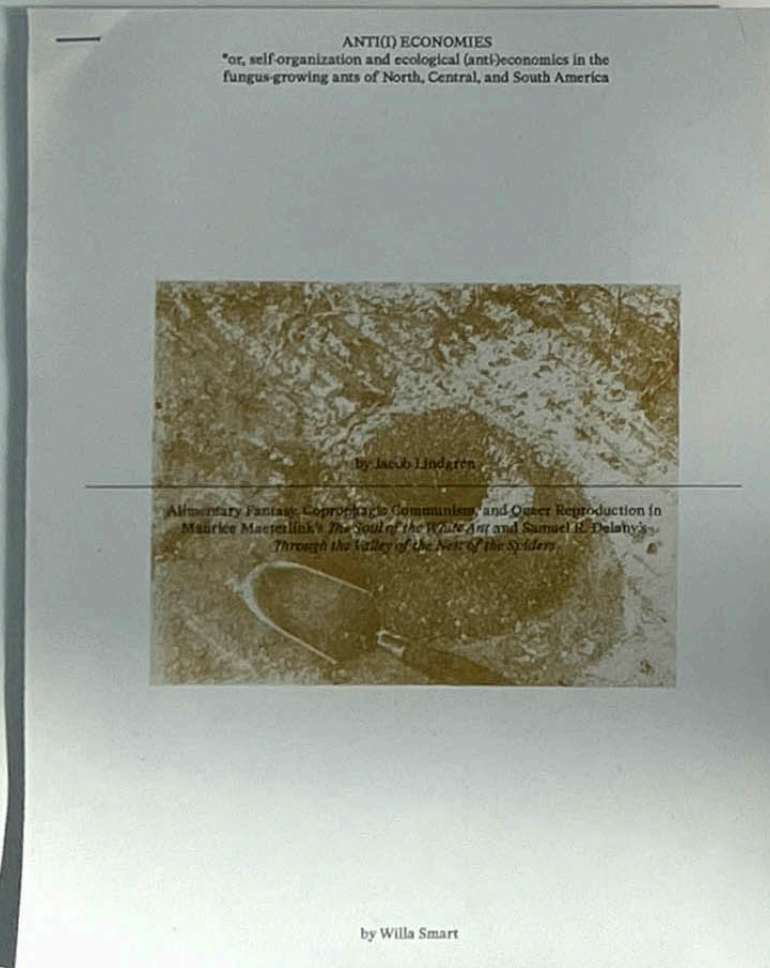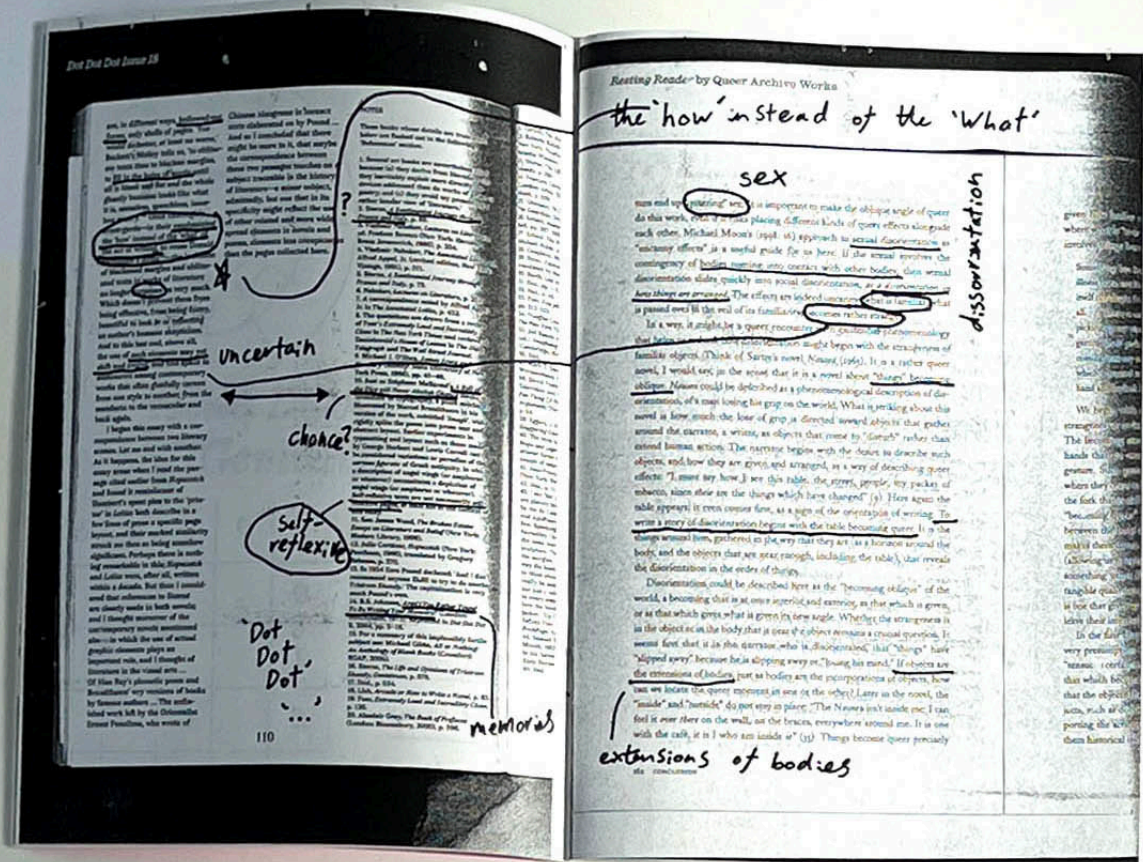
Reader Workshop / Publications provided by GoodPress

Padlet research (deliberately blurred for privacy)

Publication Club (PubClub)

Students are introduced to reflective frameworks such as Gibbs, Kolb and Rolfe et al;

1. WHAT? (Descriptive level of reflection)
2. SO WHAT? (Theory and knowledge building)
3. NOW WHAT? (Action orientated reflection)
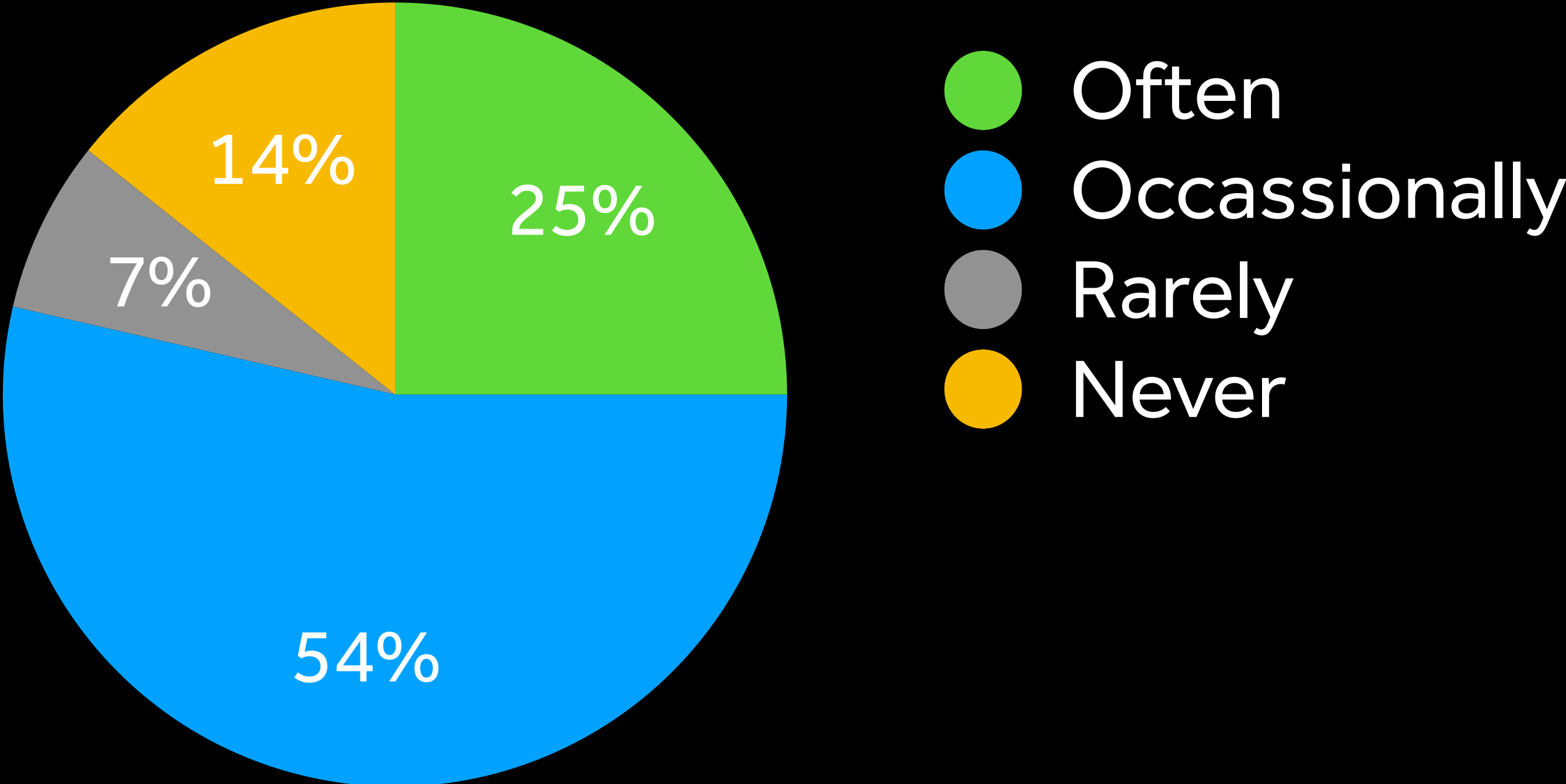
- Rolfe et al Reflective Model

Did your prior study require you to participate in critical reflection?

Yes   No

36%

64%
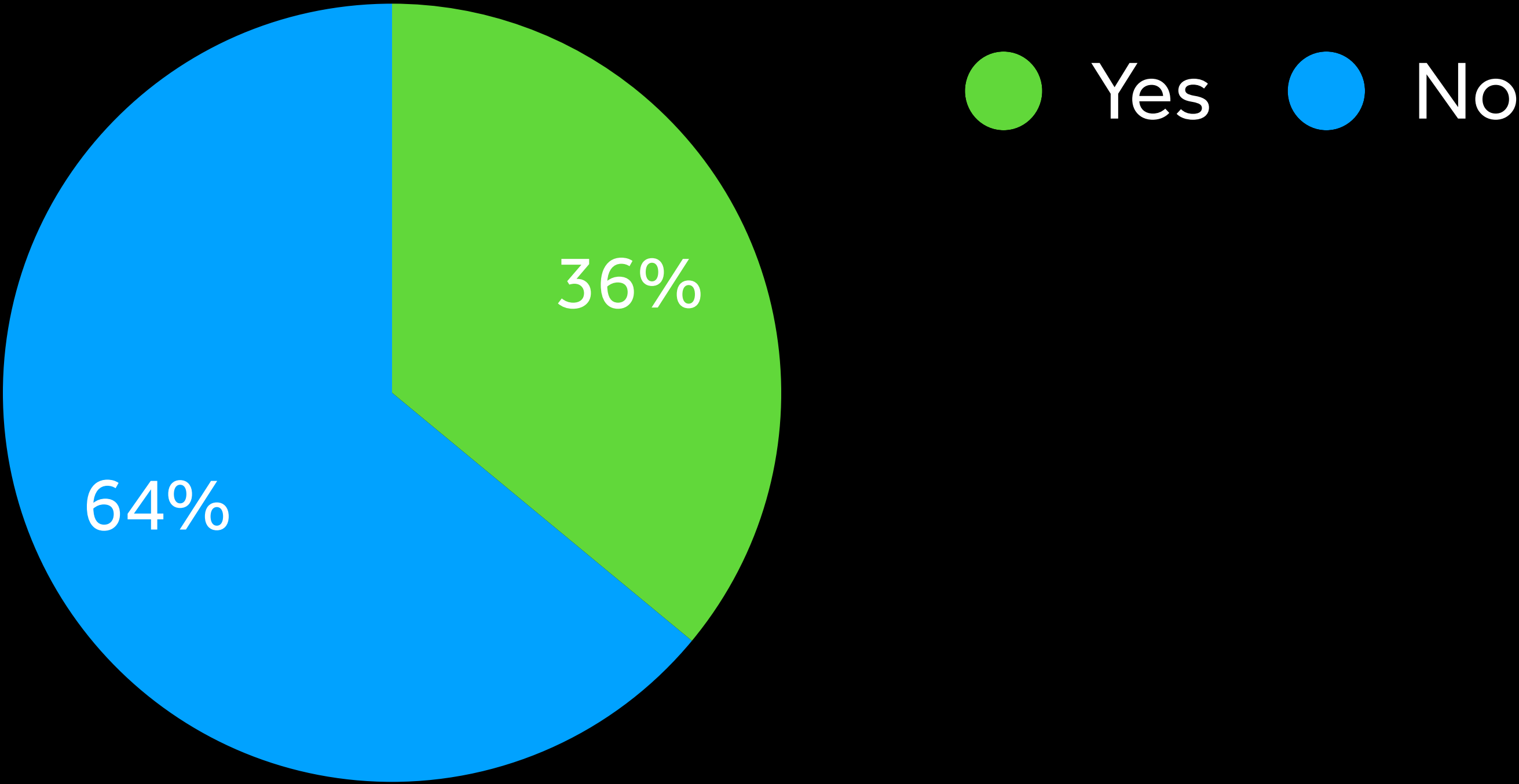
# How often did you make entries to your critical reflective journal?

- 🟢 Daily
- 🔵 Weekly
- ⚪ Monthly
- 🟡 Only when required
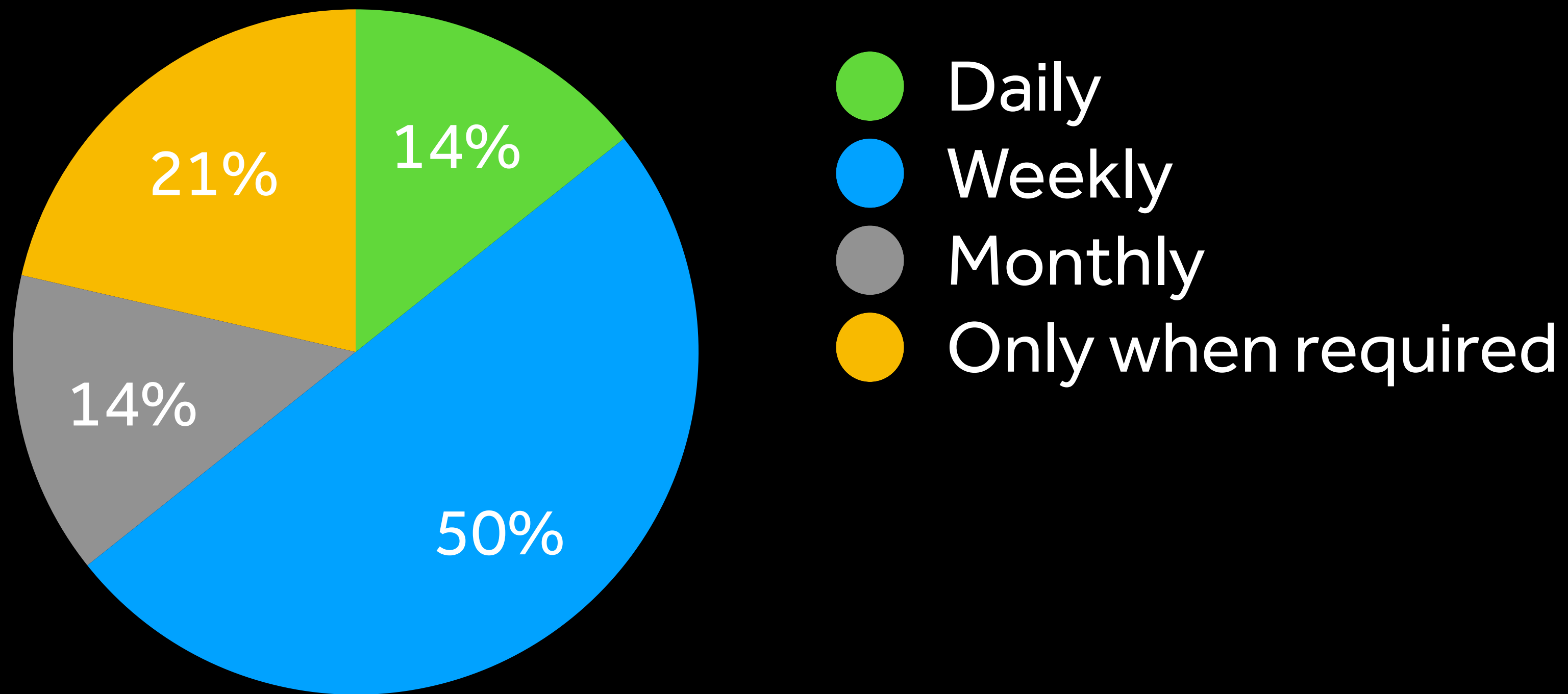
Did you ever revisit your journal to reflect on earlier entries?

- 🟢 Often
- 🔵 Occassionally
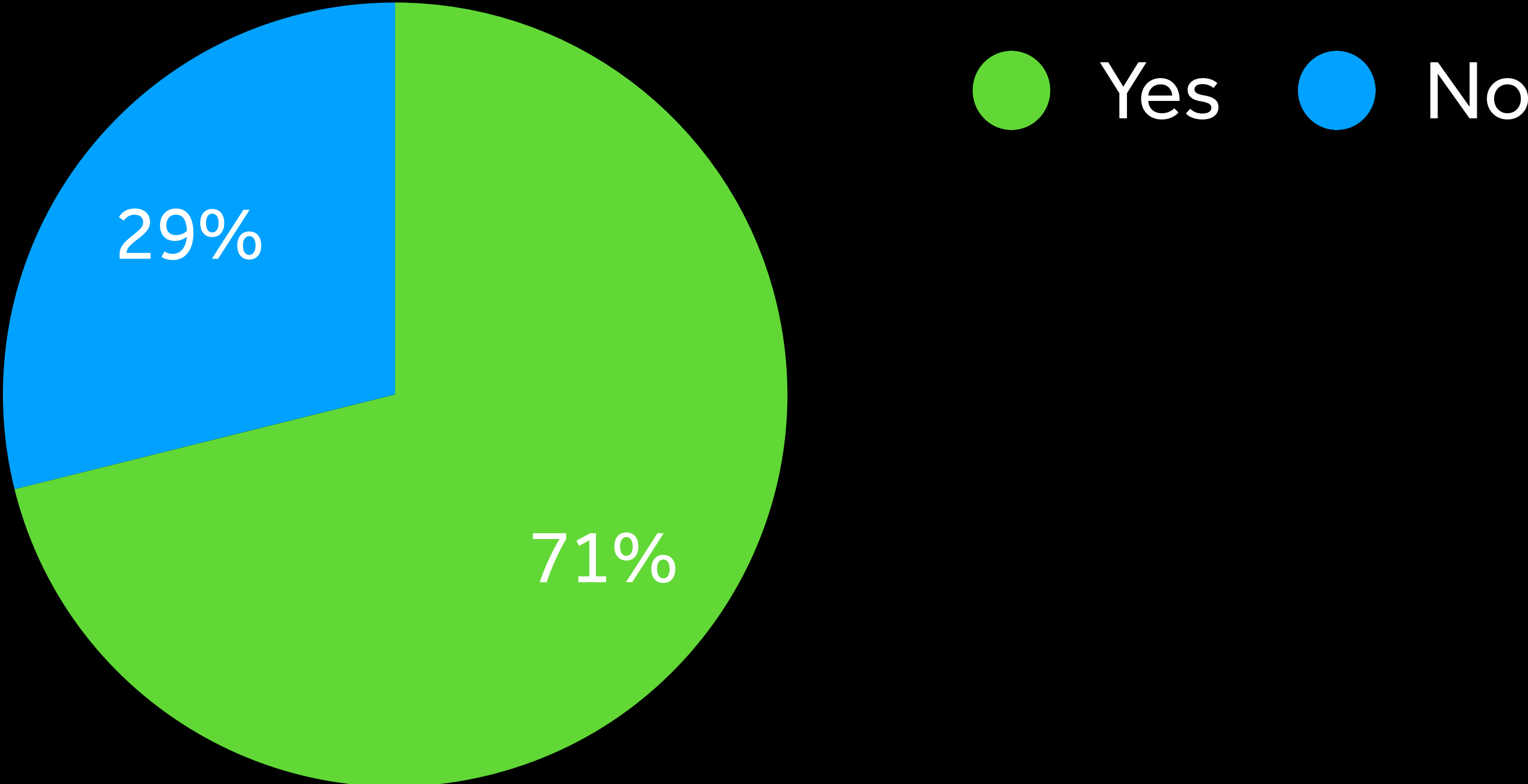- ⬜ Rarely
- 🟡 Never

25%

14%

7%

54%

Did critical reflection help you to take ownership of your own learning?
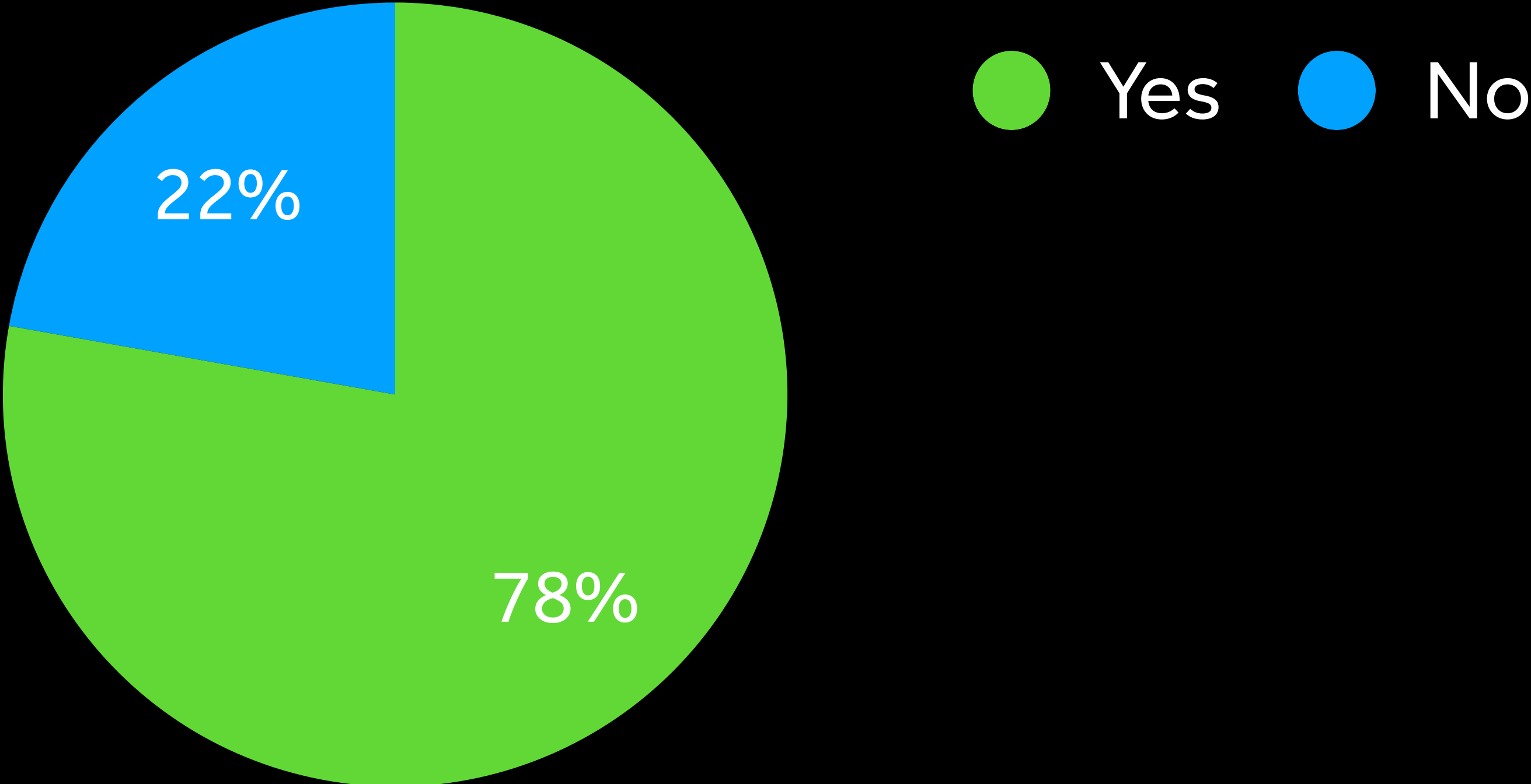

Yes ● No
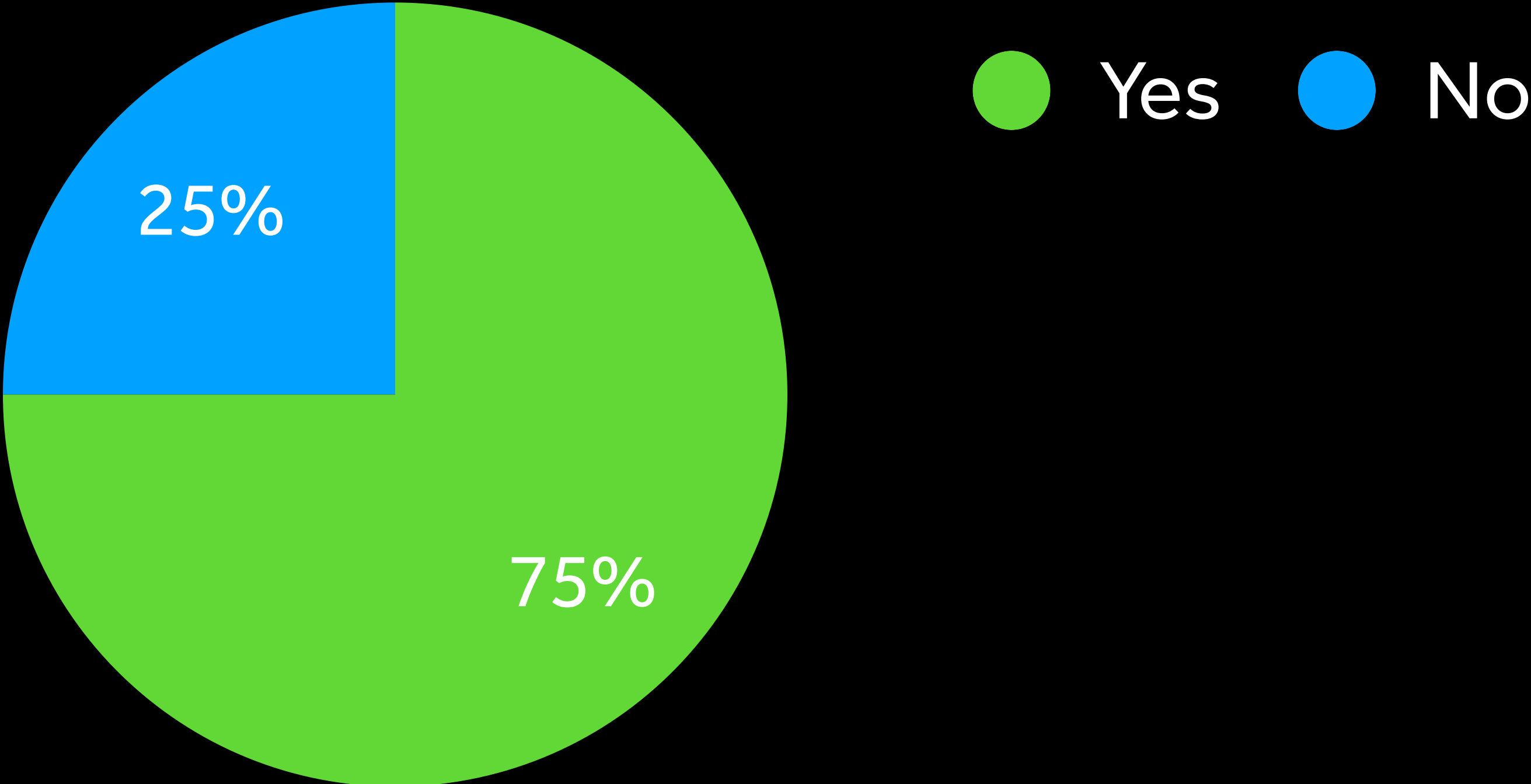
Did critical reflection help you to organise your time effectively and be more realistic in setting goals?

Yes   No

25%

75%
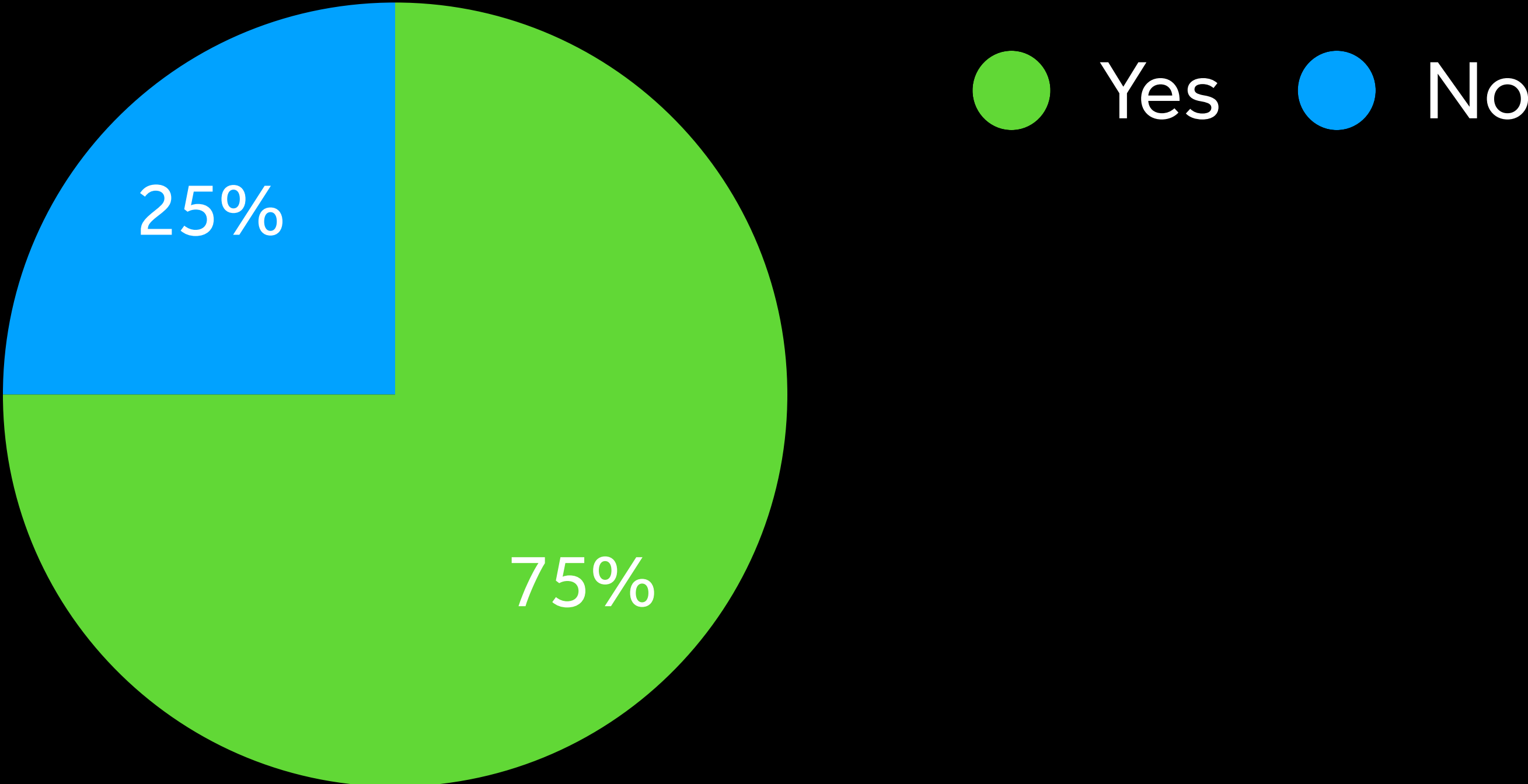
Did your critical reflective journal help you to develop a more authorial practice?

● Yes   ● No

29%

71%

Did the ability to critically reflect on your practice assist your transition to work or further study?

● Yes ● No

22%

78%

"I think learning processes of reflection is really important towards developing an effective and enjoyable professional design practice. Informal/formal group discussion with peers and tutors was the most valuable reflective practice to me at the GSA, and it's the most common and effective reflective practice that I've experienced in the working world."

- Graduate

"The course helped me establish a consistent workflow and a habit of reflective thinking, which is particularly useful when I'm handling multiple tasks. In my daily life, I've made it a practice to document my thoughts and observations through simple notes and photographs".
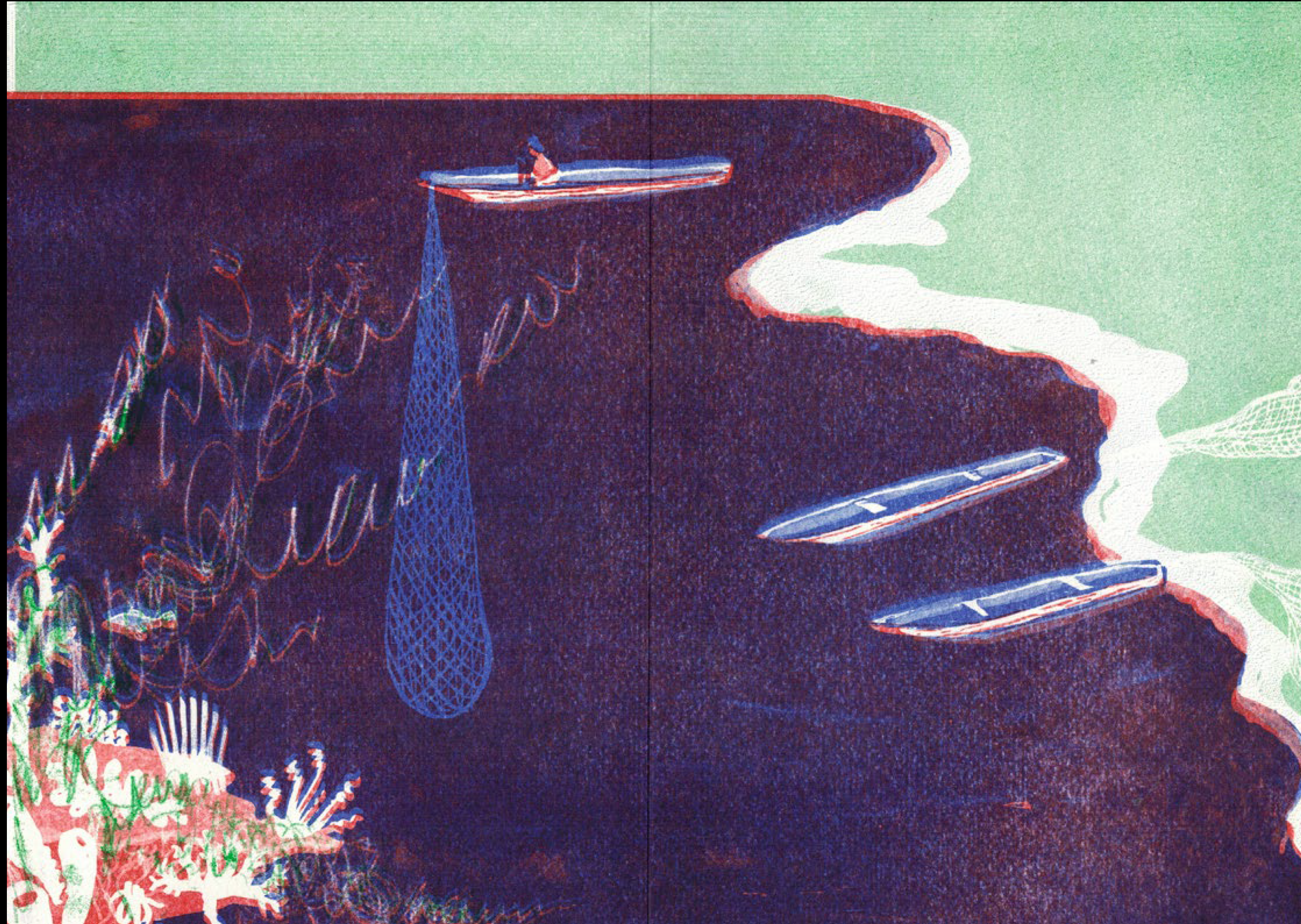
- Graduate
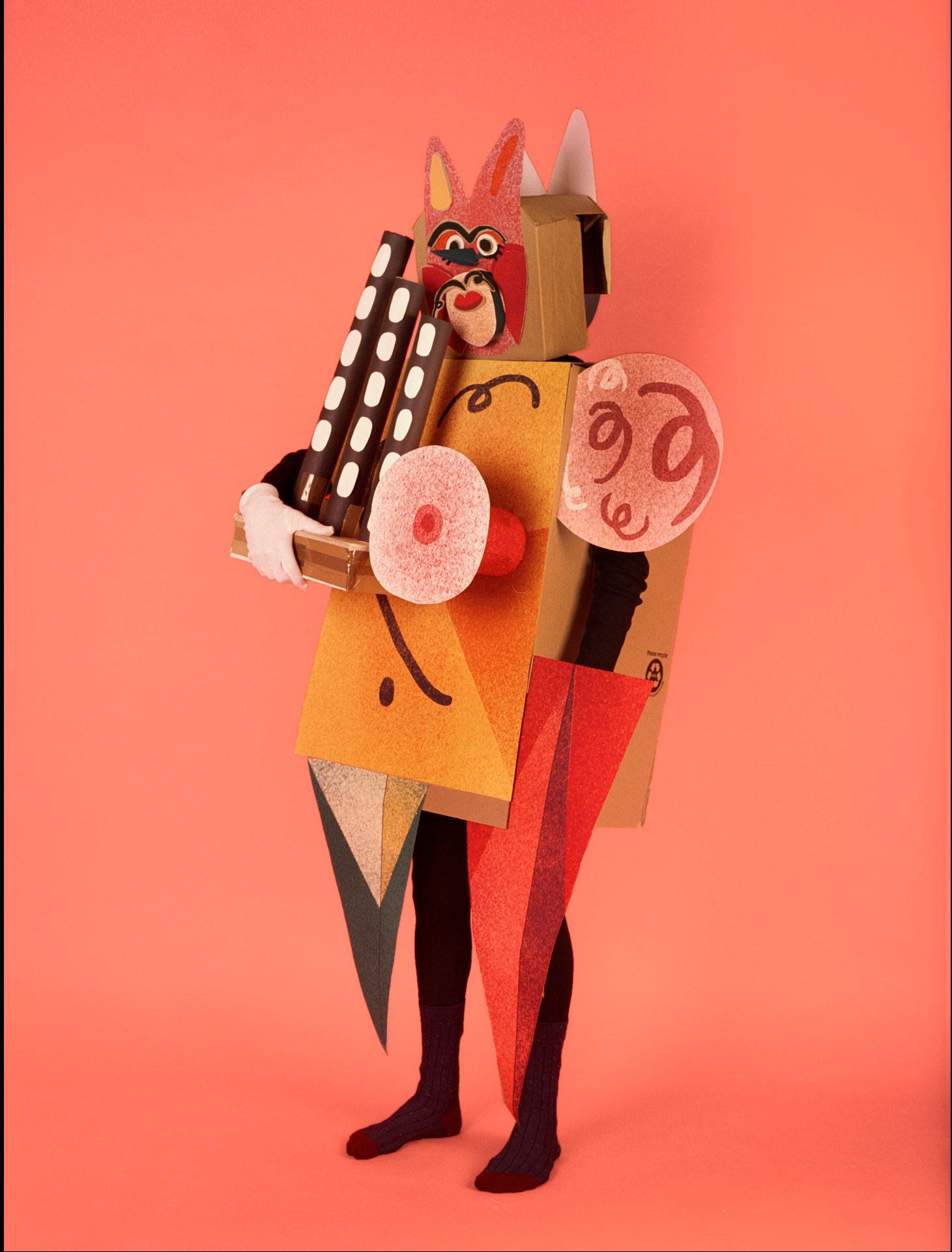
Eunjoo Lee, MDes Communication Design

Ane Lopez, MDes Communication Design

Laura Mayer MDes Illustration, Enviroment v GDP

In summary critical reflective methods develop:

• Students who can translate their learning to further study.
• Reflective practitioners able to adapt to change.
• Social commentators and critics.
• Curators, facilitators, and collaborative practitioners.
• Graduates with an authorial practice.

Thank You!

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