

Positions through iterating written response

Statement

My project began with the idea of degrading an image through 100 iterations, inspired by a process of printing and collaging with low resolution imagery I had been doing in a previous project. During the first week of this process, I focused solely on the process of image quality reduction. Going into the second week, I decided I was interested in exploring these techniques with imagery I found online of the Liverpool Dockers and the strike which took place from 1995-98. Some questions that crossed my mind were:

How does the process of analogue image manipulation create new meaning?

What can image degradation communicate about a historical event?

When do stories of communities no longer exist?

How does collage enable me to depict these people in a new way?

What does lo-fi print aesthetic contribute to images of dockers working and striking?

Could image degradation be a way to represent history and community becoming obsolete?

I continued to iterate, creating different compositions from the same set of images, including an article about the strike. I collaged them together, utilising the scanner to warp text and photo, exploring how I could evoke the idea of people missing or being reduced out of the picture either through low resolution or cutting and removing.

References

Conditional Design Workbook

Blauvelt, A., Maura, L., Paulus, E., Puckey J. and Wouters, R. (2013) *Conditional Design Workbook*. Valiz.

"Constraints sharpen the perspective on the process and stimulate play within the limitations."(Blauvelt et al. 2013, ii)

The Conditional Design Workbook focuses on a collaborative creative process, aided by restraints and rules. Blauvelt et al. emphasise the importance of process over product, finding the value in the steps taken to produce over prioritising the end piece. They acknowledge their output will be influenced by

the outside world, working with the conditions and rules they set in place and their collaborative process.

This reference provided a way to approach my iterations during this project, focusing on how I could narrow down and limit the variables involved in my process of image creation. I selected a number of constraints such as using black and white imagery, only using analogue image manipulation, such as ripping, scrunching. This encouraged rapid iteration and more creative, playful outcomes.

Hito Steyerl – Poor images

Steyerl, H. (2012) *The wretched of the screen*. Sternberg Press.

“The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance” (2012, pp. 32).

Steyerl describes the poor image as a processed, lower quality visual that is circulated en masse, reduced in quality by the way it is saved and shared. Screenshots, compressing, cropping and posting on social media reduce resolution, making a file smaller and faster to share.

I think Steyerl’s perspective on the success of low quality digital images in their proliferation; being circulated and accessed by large numbers of people, could be applied to thinking around traditional lo-fi methods of publishing via photocopying, making zines, posters and communications materials for physical circulation when there are limited resources.

I was interested in how image quality reduction could be used to explore telling the story of a community which is fading in to obsolescence. How could my experimentation with photos of the dockers strike potentially show this?

The Liverpool Dockers and Reclaim the Streets, Creating Spaces of Solidarity (related to project through its subject matter)

Weber, E. (2023) ' *The Liverpool Dockers and Reclaim the Streets, Creating Spaces of Solidarity*, VOL 27, NO 1, 54-65. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2023.2258916>

"I propose that excavating historical collaborations between the environmentalist and labour movements offers ways forward for thinking about solidarity." (2023, pp. 54)

Weber discusses the historical events of the Liverpool Docker's strike, how not receiving recognition by their union led to unconventional striking methods and a decentralised effort, with dockers forming solidarity with diverse groups such as Reclaim the Streets, an environmental performance art group. Weber argues that the Docker's being locked out and inhabiting the space outside their workplace led them to connect with Reclaim the Streets who base their protest within public space.

Weber's analysis inspires me to think more broadly about how to depict this story. How can I show the sequence of events in a decentralised way, thinking about it from different perspectives? How can I move from a dominant, singular point of view or version of events in the way that I execute my work?

The Guardian's editorial for the 2024 political election cycle (related to project through its method)

Brewer, J. (2024) Behind the scenes with The Guardian creative team making all its election artwork by hand. Available at:

<https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/the-guardian-election-editorial-graphic-design-illustration-spotlight-140624> (28 April 2026).

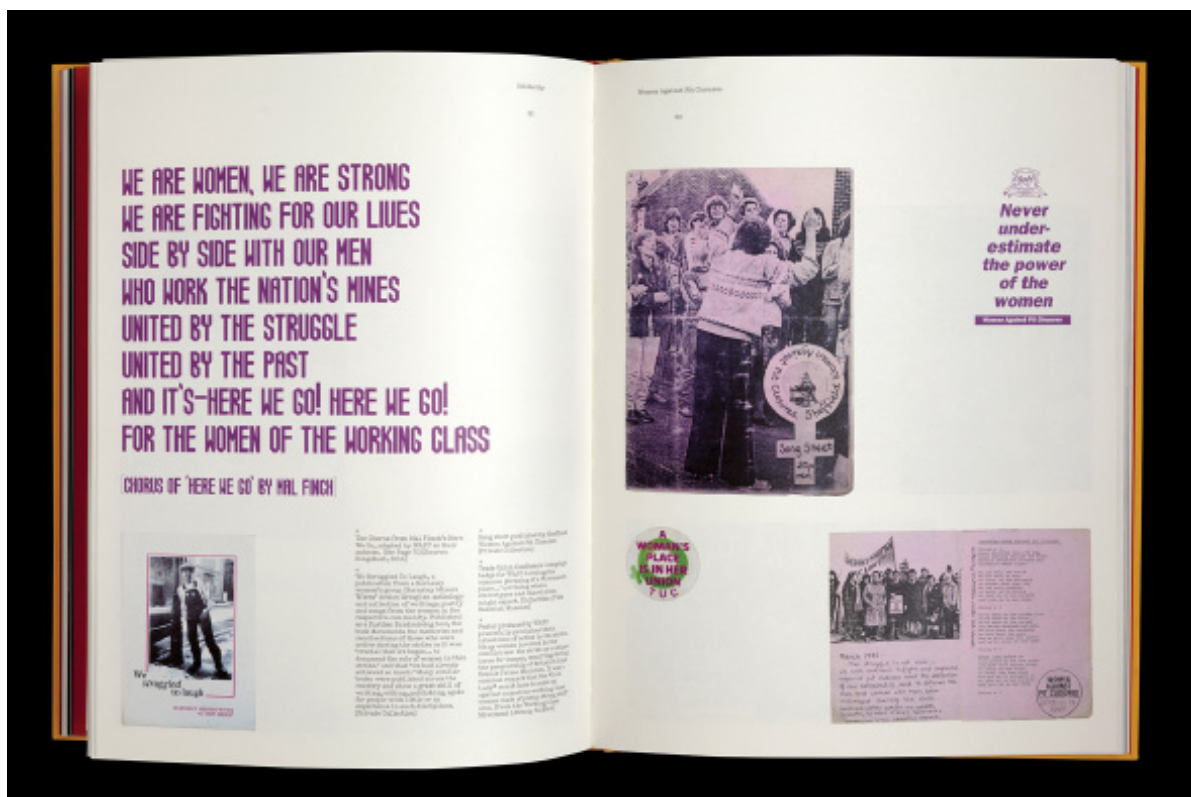


The Guardian's editorial project using handmade collage to depict the 2024 election was a way to both generate imagery quickly and to comment on the political climate of disinformation, contrasting with the digital generative churn of news media whilst referencing the analogue print history of grassroots graphic design. This allowed them to both communicate what was happening within the election cycle as well as critique the conditions these events are happening in through the medium they were using.

Their process is described; "the direct nature of cutting and arranging paper...setting ourselves very strict parameters and limitations". I feel this connects with my iteration process over the two weeks of the project, working within set conditions, often reusing the same imagery to create different compositions to communicate different meaning, whilst remaining in the same visual world.

In Loving Memory of Work – A Visual Record of the UK Miner's Strike 1981-85 edited by Craig Oldham (critical position)

Oldham, C. (no date) *In Loving Memory of Work*. Available at: <https://www.inlovingmemoryofwork.com/> (Accessed: 28 April 2026).



Oldham's project creating a visual record of the miner's strike embodies a critical position of the designer as a storyteller, providing an approach where each aspect seeks to tell the story through its content, design and materiality.

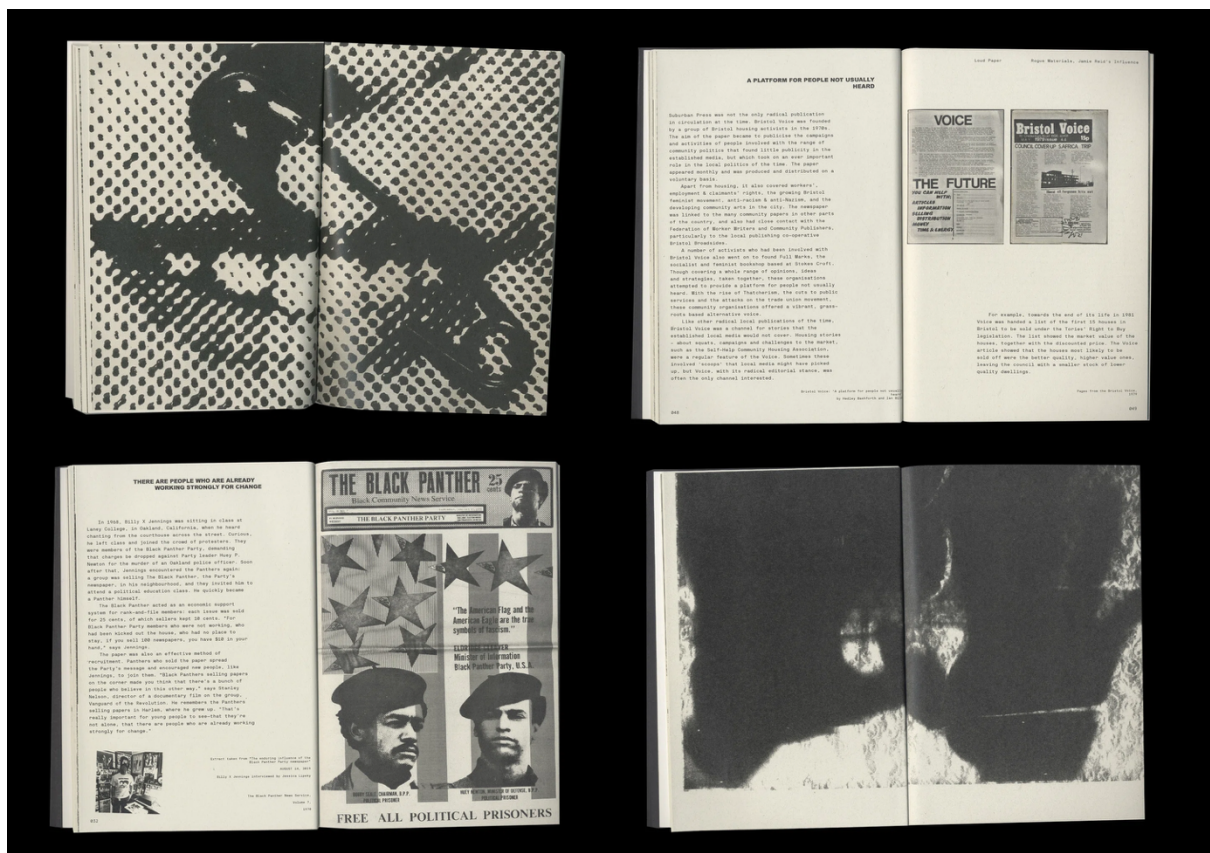
Miner's and their families contributed to the writing, typefaces were inspired by lettering from handmade banners coal from the mines was infused into the printed material of the publication, profits from sales were donated to the Orgreave Justice Campaign. All aspects of the project centre around the community the work is about having agency over their story.

One could argue that this work was still designed by an individual, filtered through their perspective and therefore can never truly be a representation of a group. However, I believe the designer can prioritise the community through their design choices and involve them in telling their story.

Printed work of Eloise Aitkin (related through method)

Tree, E. (2026) *The magic of self-publishing and lo-fi production comes alive in Eloise Aitkin's printed matter.* Available at:

<https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/eloise-aitkin-graphic-design-publication-discover-230426> (Accessed: 28 April 2026).



Eloise Aitkin's work focuses on using lo-fi methods to create imagery and publications. The use of found paper and low-quality printing methods

emulates grassroots publishing culture of the 1970s. Aitkin describes “I’m passionate about the social implications this era had on graphic design and how the commercial printer made it accessible to create physical work quickly and economically”. Low resolution printed material lends itself to political subject matter due to its low cost and immediacy of use for the individual.

I feel this contributes to my understanding scanning and printing as a tool within my project. It both relates to the fast creation of materials, which for me was part of my iteration process, but also references it’s use as a tool for political action. I’m interested in how the print quality, for example using half tone, scanning and printing can communicate an energy and association with DIY culture.