

Positions through contextualising written response

Bibliography

*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 predominantly black and white imagery and coloured paper. I mostly used analogue image manipulation, such as cutting, sticking, scanning printing. This encouraged rapid iteration and more creative, playful outcomes that stayed true to the subject matter.

*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 and industry 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

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

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> (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

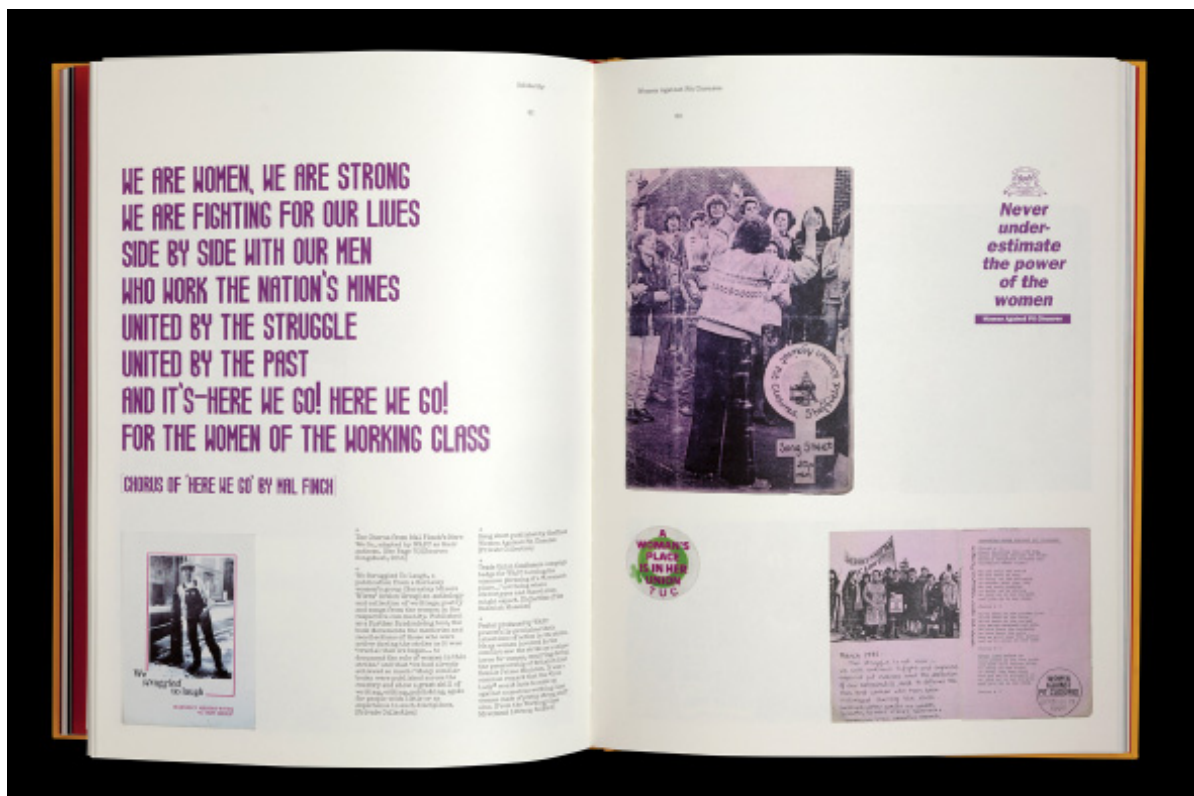


The Guardian's editorial project using handmade collage to depict the 2024 election was a way to both generate imagery quickly and to comment on the political climate of disinformation, contrasting with the digital generative churn of news media whilst referencing the analogue print history of grassroots 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 use of collage, cutting and sticking, working within set conditions, often reusing the same imagery to create different compositions.

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

Oldham, C. (2023) *In Loving Memory of Work*. Rough trade books.



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.

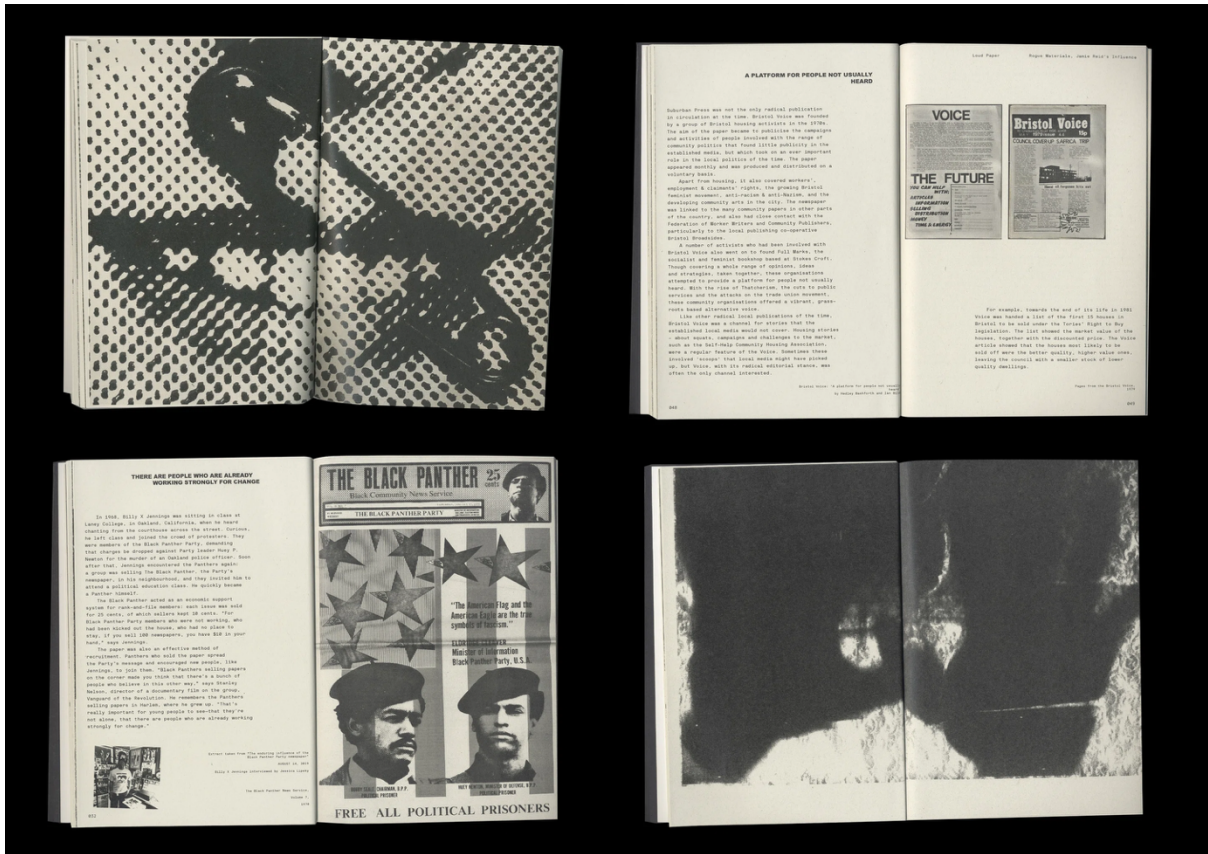
Miner's and their families contributed to the writing, typefaces were inspired by lettering from handmade banners coal from the mines was infused into the printed material of the publication, profits from sales were donated to the Orgreave Justice Campaign. All aspects of the project centre around the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

This reference shaped my approach to visual representation of an industry and community. I have applied a similar vision to my project in collecting ephemera and imagery and organising this in a way to tell the story of the community through their own words.

Printed work of Eloise Aitkin

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-aitken-graphic-design-publication-discover-230426> (Accessed: 11 May 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 believe 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, using coloured paper can communicate an energy and association with DIY culture.

***Introduction: Low Theory – Jack Halberstam**

Halberstam, J. (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

"I do believe that if you watch Dude, Where's My Car? slowly and repeatedly and while perfectly sober, the mysteries of the universe may be revealed to you.

I also believe that Finding Nemo contains a secret plan for world revolution and that Chicken Run charts an outline of feminist utopia for those who can see beyond the feathers and eggs. I believe in low theory in popular places, in the small, the inconsequential, the antimonumental, the micro, the irrelevant; I believe in making a difference by thinking little thoughts and sharing them widely.” (Halbertstam, pp.6)

“Low brow” media such as children’s cartoons, comedy films, is not treated as valuable or critically important part of culture. Halbertstam argues that this is a space for people to engage with media that deals with complex ideas in an accessible way.

I am using Facebook, a platform that is perceived as irrelevant and unfashionable as a source to explore history and community. Halbertstam views low culture as an alternative form of knowledge production and I believe this applies to Facebook being used as an archive.

There is value in spaces we regard as not valuable, but which are used en masse and are widely accessible. In this context, Facebook is enabling a community to continue to exist, despite structural and institutional attempts to destroy it.

The Dockers Club Facebook group

Kenny-Campbell, M, Campbell, J, Parker, P. (2021) *The Dockers Club*. [Facebook] Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/480431253151577/about> (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

“The Dockers Club...aim is to bring together former Liverpool dockers—many of whom lost their jobs during the 1995–1998 strike—and to reconnect them with the social lives and communities disrupted by industrial dispute and containerisation...” (2021)

This reference forms the basis of my project, and functions for those using it as a space open to anyone to observe and to contribute to the shared knowledge of the Liverpool Docks. It collects experiences of people who worked as Dockers and were part of the Dockers Dispute, during which 500 people lost their jobs.

This group preserves the history of an industry that is slowly declining. It exists as a live archive of history direct from those who experienced it first hand, relatives of dockers and those interested to learn more about the history.

The Facebook group has a collection of stories, memories, ephemera, photographs which embody the culture of Liverpool Dockers, which is intrinsic

to the city. I have used these to iterate and create a visual depiction of the group and dockers history.

Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital,"

Sekula, A. (2003) 'READING AN ARCHIVE Photography between labour and capital', in L. Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader*. Routledge, Available at: <https://archive.org/details/photographyreade0000unse/page/n3/mode/2up> (Accessed: 19 May 2026).

*"...some of the photographs in this book were originally reproduced in the annual reports of the Dominion Steel and Coal Company, others were carried in miners' wallets or framed on the mantelpieces of working-class homes. Imagine two different gazes...in an archive, the difference, the **radical antagonism between** these two looks is eclipsed." (Sekula. 2003, pp. 445)*

Sekula discusses how photographic archives strip images of their original context, enabling them to be used to serve any narrative. Archives are not neutral – Sekula explores the question of archiving serving an agenda – is it for the community or for capital?

This reference examines the effect archives of images of working-class people, in this case, photos of coal miners. Sekula posits that the images become a financial token to the Steel and Coal corporations, rather than having the emotional cultural value to their community.

This reference relates to my using a Facebook group as a source of material; pushing me to consider how the context of Facebook allows for agency and ownership for the community. This leads me to consider how the content and images would be viewed within my work and what contexts they might be viewed within.

Cyberfeminism index – Mindy Seu

Seu, M. (2019) *Cyberfeminism Index*. Available at: <https://cyberfeminismindex.com/> (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

"By aggregating nodes and markers, hard research and scattered facts, these containers might surface suppressed voices among the connections they draw... History written by the victors offers glimpses of marginalized figures" (no date, para 7)

The Cyberfeminism Index is an online archive centred around feminism within the digital and online realm. Seu started the website as a google spreadsheet that anyone could contribute to, forming connections around the process of shared archiving. The quote describes how Seu views this drawing together of information from broad sources and how it might shed light on marginalised communities who might be lost within mainstream discourse.

Online archiving in a collective manner means there is no institutionalised structure – it is a decentralised process. Whilst Seu edited the index for the publication and website form, it came about through collective method.

I believe this reference is relevant as my project is also dealing with an online community built from collective contributions that seek to preserve and connect.

Seu, M. (no date) *On Gathering*. Available at: <https://issue1.shiftspace.pub/on-gathering-mindy-seu> (Accessed: 20 May 2026).

Jeremy Deller - The Battle of Orgreave (2001)

Jones, J. (2013) *The Battle of Orgreave (2001)*. Available at: https://youtu.be/3ncrWxnxLjg?si=b_OdjXEArnNQmPg4 (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

“This isn’t about healing wounds... it’s definitely about confronting something and not being afraid of looking at it again.”(The Battle of Orgreave, 2001, 10:14)

Deller restaged the events of the 1984 Battle of Orgreave with ex-miners who were present at the time of the Miner’s strike, along with historical reenactors and stunt actors. Deller wanted to draw the attention of the public back to the event to address inaccuracies with reportage from the time.

The method of depicting history through reenactment serves as inspiration to unconventionally engage with history, in a way that can enable a community to have agency over their own story. This is something I am interested in with my project, the potential for creative work to tell a new version of events in a way that it hasn’t been previously.

***Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century by Kate Eichhorn**

Eichhorn, K 2016, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*, MIT Press, Cambridge. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. (Accessed 11 May 2026).

"Beyond being appropriated by artists and anarchists, these machines also played an essential role in the late twentieth-century social movements..."
(2016, pp. viii)

Eichhorn explores the ubiquitousness of the photocopier as a tool for dissemination of printed material, but also as a vehicle for ideas and social movements.

The aesthetic of photocopied materials is synonymous with political action and social movements. As a cheap, easily accessible piece of equipment, virtually anyone can use, the photocopier has played an important part in grassroots political action of all kinds.

This is pertinent to my project as I have been using photocopying techniques to iterate and create my work. Scanning and printing is the tool that I have used to unify the ideas and materials in my project. As a tool and an aesthetic, it both references the political action associated with photocopying, as well as creating a look and feel that fits with the subject matter of labour disputes and protest.

Extended critical analyses:

In Loving Memory of Work – A Visual Record of the UK Miner’s Strike 1981-85 edited by Craig Oldham

Oldham, C. (2023) *In Loving Memory of Work*. Rough trade books.

“In Loving Memory of Work – A Visual Record of the UK Miner’s Strike 1981-85” by Craig Oldham is a book which tells the story of the UK Miner’s Strike through a collection of ephemera, photographs, writing and graphic material. The book is organised to take the reader through the events of the strike, introducing solidarity movements and the different visuals they were represented by. The design of the book takes the form of the media within – the typefaces are developed from artefacts from the strike such as banners and t-shirts. The colours and paper textures represent the quality of aged political pamphlets and flyers. Oldham seeks to encapsulate the essence of the strike within the form as well as the content.

A central aspect of this publication is the idea of collective effort leading to success for a community, for example, within the book credits online (2023), the Howard Zinn quote; “the countless small actions of unknown people” which lie at the roots of “those great moments”. During the strike, the miners were demonised, with the National Coal Board and the government being favoured in the media. Oldham uses his position as a designer to bring agency to the miner’s story, telling the story from their perspective through the media created during.

Every featured work is credited, with those whose names may have been lost to time now being highlighted. In profiling the graphic artist, Paul Morton, Oldham describes “Miners, their wives, children and communities discovered a creativity they never knew they possessed” (2023, pp. 67). The strike led to a creative fusion between Paul and the community, which generated graphic material that garnered support and funding for the cause (2023, pp. 68). Oldham uses the book format to anthologise and commemorate the graphic representation of the strike, and places it as a tool as important as picketing and protesting as a historical tool of protest. This is clear even within the chapter names, with the section related to posters, banners and badges being referred to as “The Tools of Protest” (2023, contents page).

This reference deepens my understanding of the field of graphic design, showing its importance as a tool for political action on behalf of marginalised communities, but also as a method to preserve history. In using design to highlight a historical movement in a time of political upheaval, this can in turn

inform an approach to using to design within current political struggles. In current times where the role of the designer feels precarious, when not serving the needs of capital (2025), this book shows there is value and purpose in the designer working to serve a community and disrupt, challenge and confront the political climate we find ourselves in.

In *Loving Memory of Work* has informed the way I have approached the Liverpool Docker's dispute within my work, gathering ephemera and identifying the visual language of the community and its history. Whilst they are different movements, there is a consistency in the aesthetic of DIY political media – lo-fi photocopied imagery, imperfect typography, bold messaging, which I have incorporated into my methods of creating during this project.

Oldham, C. (2023) *Features original contributors and the work of the following artists, designers, musicians, comedians, writers, film-makers, and those involved in the strike.* Available at: <https://www.inlovingmemoryofwork.com/the-contributors> (Accessed: 13 May 2026).

Oldham, C. (2023) *In Loving Memory of Work – A Visual Record of the UK Miner's Strike 1981-85.* Rough Trade Books.

Alderson, R. (2025) *Graphic Design among most at risk jobs from AI-* report. Available at: <https://www.designweek.co.uk/graphic-design-among-most-at-risk-jobs-from-ai-report/> (Accessed: 13 May 2026).

Jeremy Deller - The Battle of Orgreave (2001)

Jones, J. (2013) *The Battle of Orgreave (2001)*. Available at: https://youtu.be/3ncrWxnxLjg?si=b_OdjXEArnNQmPq4 (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

Deller restaged the events of the 1984 Battle of Orgreave with ex-miners who were present at the time of the Miner's strike, along with historical reenactors and stunt actors. A key idea within this reference is that those tell a story have control over the narrative. When The Battle of Orgreave first occurred, it was depicted within the press that the miners had behaved like a violent mob and that their behaviour warranted the disproportionate police response (The Battle of Orgreave, 2025). Deller took the position of facilitator, creating the conditions for those participating to influence the work and tell their own story, without the smear campaign that existed during the strike. Reenactment Director, Howard Giles states, "it's important people don't forget what happened... reportage was not as accurate as it could've been and we hope we can readdress that balance" (The Battle of Orgreave, 2001, 13:35).

As the project developed, participants became progressively engaged, their memories, experiences and emotions influencing the reenactment. The film documents the planning and staging of the battle as well as recollections of the miners and local people of how the events took place during the strike, including their experiences of negligent police tactics and brutality. Deller's intention is to highlight the injustice and keep it within public memory, stating, "This isn't about healing wounds... it's definitely about confronting something and not being afraid of looking at it again" (The Battle of Orgreave, 2001, 10:14).

This is evident in the presentation of the work through the editing of the film, focusing community of miners to emphasise storytelling from their point of view. Mainstream video reportage from the BBC at the time showed the battle only from behind police lines (2015), obscuring how violent armed police forces were in comparison to the miners. Centring the footage around miner's recollections and experience in the reenactment counters the previous dominant point of view.

In addition to centring the film from the miner's perspective, Deller mixes footage from the reenactment with interviews with union members, local people, politicians such as Tony Benn and photos and clips from news reports at the time, as well as clips speeches from then-prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Mixing these different clips within footage of the reenactment continually places the viewer within the context of the country at this time and

forces the viewer to see the events from different perspectives adding further contrast between the public story and the experience of the miners.

Video format enables Deller to immerse the viewer in more than just the static visuals of the time – allowing us to observe locations, see movement, hear accents, experience atmosphere in a way that an image or a piece of graphic design might not be able to do so easily. Ephemera and graphic material can also provide a tangible experience; however, I believe this film through video, audio and editing is successful in taking the viewer back in time, along with the miners.

Within my project I have been exploring the Liverpool Docker's dispute of 1995-98, using a Docker's community Facebook group as a live archive and resource to design from. The group contains stories from the perspective of those who experienced the dispute first hand, both dockers and family members. Deller's method of depicting history through reenactment serves as inspiration to unconventionally engage with history in a way that can enable a community to have agency over their own story.

The Battle of Orgreave (2025) *BBC News Battle of Orgreave report- 18th June 1984*. 13 August 2025. Available at: <https://youtu.be/bOZcQIda5P4?si=tEQyuOfNZHEAv1YP> (Accessed: 18 May 2026).

Weller, M. (2015) *Letters. The BBC and its coverage of the battle of Orgreave*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/23/the-bbc-and-its-coverage-of-the-battle-of-orgreave> (18 May 2026).