

Positions through essaying transcript

In an earlier project, I had used a scanner to reduce the resolution and quality of printed images. I decided this would be the basis for my 100 iterations, using an advert from an old Liverpool football programme from the 1970s. My enquiry began by exploring how many ways could I deconstruct and degrade an image.

After completing my 100 iterations, I knew I wanted to explore more using the analogue techniques I had tried. I started thinking about analogue image manipulation and the connections between printing, scanning, collage and DIY political ephemera.

Exploring images of protest materials led me to London docklands protest banners and then to think about Docker's history in Liverpool, where I am from. Dock work is part of my family history, as well as being an integral part of Liverpool's identity as a working-class city. My position within my work relates to this and drives my interest in exploring community and history.

In the mid 1990s, 500 Liverpool dockers were sacked for refusing to cross a picket line over increased casual labour, increased workload and reduced working rights. Since then, the industry has become increasingly automated with less and less people working on the docks.

I started iterating using historical imagery of dockers along with news articles about the strike, experimenting with the same techniques from my 100 iterations. My line of enquiry shifted, thinking how I could represent a community being eroded using these techniques.

At the same time, I was reading online texts and academic journals about the dispute, looking for more information and references that I could use.

During this process, I came across a Facebook group called the Docker's Club. The group's description states, "Its 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." The group functions almost as a live archive, with dockers and family members sharing memories and photos.

The Dockers Club had previously been a physical location, a working man's club and community centre which was open from 1956-2013. It was demolished in 2021, the same year the Facebook group was started, moving from physical space to digital.

I was captivated by the Facebook group, reading posts and comments from those who were part of the dispute and working on the docks at the time, in their own words. The group allows for not only a preservation of experiences and memories of work but also maintains the social culture and sense of humour. The group is searchable, and I was able to sift through, looking for imagery and graphic materials that were used during the dispute.

Whilst doing this, I developed an affection for the way people were interacting. The informal language, misspellings and arguments in the comments. This page brought a level of humanity I didn't find when reading about the dispute online or in texts.

I started experimenting, thinking about the tension between formal knowledge, such as academic journals and the informal context of people sharing memories in the Facebook group.

I also started to gather images and political memorabilia that people had posted in the group, including badges, flyers and banners supporting the dockers and solidarity groups, organising it by media and subject matter. My enquiry was now exploring the questions how can we give communities agency through design? How can we preserve history through visual storytelling?

My research and references informed my ideas around how I could approach my subject matter:

Craig Oldham's "In Loving Memory of Work" is a visual record of the miner's strike, told through its graphic language. This reference provided visual inspiration of how to depict an industry and community using its own political ephemera.

Jeremy Deller staged a re-enactment of the Battle of Orgreave, thirty years after it took place, with ex-miners and stunt actors. Deller described the process as "confronting something and not being afraid of looking at it again". This articulates the value in art and design which gives agency to community and addresses inaccuracies in how a story was told at the time.

Jack Halberstam's "The Queer Art of Failure", explores the importance of low brow media and culture as significant in providing accessible ways to understand complex ideas. I felt this was relevant to my use of Facebook as a source of information within my project, considering it is a platform most people do not regard as high value.

In *Adjusted Margin* by Kate Eichhorn, she discusses the importance of the photocopier in social and political movements. This supported my interest in using printing and scanning techniques to create my work and communicate the visual language of grassroots political action.

With these references (and more) in mind, I began using a mixture of photographs, ephemera and comments taken from the Facebook group, using scanning, printing and collage to tell the story of the dockers. Through this process, I have continued to be interested in how this community perseveres, and how I can explore this further visually.

[See this in publication form here:](#)

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