

# Annotated Bibliography

## Positions through Iterating

**Anderson, B. (1983). *Census, Map, Museum*. In: *Imagined Communities*. London; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, pp.163–186.**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

“For the colonial state did not merely aspire to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility; the condition of this ‘visibility’ was that everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number.” (Anderson, p.184, 1983)

My enquiry began with assessing the nature of objects to understand their implicit narratives, moving with the assumption that objects are not neutral. Benedict Anderson’s chapter on *Census, Map and Museum* helped to get started on this line of thought. My object of enquiry, a system of playing cards, is a colonial inheritance that is now ubiquitous around the world. The cards have become an artefact of a colonial era, and are often seen in remakings and reinterpretations, still identifiable through its original order and elements. This artefact has a certain visibility and classification that seemingly redeems it of its historic impact and histories, neutralising its presence in today’s world. The cards fall into this category of analysis. For instance, indices were added into the corners of the cards as a way to standardise them in the 19th century, as their production increased when capitalism gained dominance. The cards have complete clarity and visibility in their order, creating a panoptic effect that allows total surveyability. This makes it interesting to see how the serial number can distort to upend its intrinsic order.

**Azoulay, A.A. (2019). *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. London: Verso, pp.1–180.**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

“Archival accessibility, like other procedures for handling documents, is a process of learning to accept the imperial claim to neutrality. Citizens may be familiar with some factual details regarding looted material that they

consult in the archive, but they are socialized, through the archive, to relate to this knowledge as secondary in their archival journey, based on their privileged access to documents, objects, and files classified in specialized places as “national treasures” or “patrimony.” Rarely are they called upon to account for that wrong.” (Azoulay, p.171, 2019)

Azoulay was an invaluable reference for my enquiry. Her passionate unlearning of imperialism, through modifying our visualities around pre-existing structures, helped to strongly situate my project. In Chapter 01, she argues that imperial violence operates by treating peoples and worlds as raw material and ultimately as imperial resources (Azoulay, p.8, 2019). In my iterations, this analogy became a turning point in seeing the Jack as a resource and raw material, opening new explorations of how the Jack could visually transform into raw material, moving across ores, metals, fabric and textiles. In Chapter 03, she discusses the imperialistic archival process, where taxonomy is reclassified into the structure of imperial power and the original taxonomy destroyed in the process. Reading the card system through this lens, the Jack transforms into a postcolonial subject, restructured within an imperialist hierarchy with its original condition erased. This line of thought opened up further iterative potential, by refusing the classificatory framework imposed on the image of the card.

**@kimyagandhi (2025). Instagram, 24/04. Available at: [https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4Dkk0It3O/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4Dkk0It3O/?img_index=1) (Accessed: 24/04/26).**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings



Kimya Gandhi is a typographer who works with Devanagari scripts, whose work was inspired an iterative node in my exploration of the Jack. Her work is rooted in the coexistence of multiple scripts and languages within a single visual field, particularly in how Devanagari and Latin scripts occupy space together without one subordinating the other. I use this as way of exploring a political decision on my postcolonial artefact , as refusing the

hierarchy that historically positioned Latin script as the universal and Devanagari as the regional or vernacular. Introducing Devanagari in the framework of the Jack forces two systems of inscription into contact, and raises questions about the nature of universality of the image. The script also asserts a presence that card had systematically excluded, and refuses the system's terms by occupying more space on its surface.

**@kleinian (2026). Instagram, 24/04. Available at: [https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4Dkk0It3O/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4Dkk0It3O/?img_index=1) (Accessed: 24/04/26).**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings



@Kleinian labels their self a 'modern archeologist', creating speculative pieces about what archeology would feel like years on by imposing humanity's digital footprints onto geological material. This exploration of medium helped me find new iterative devices for the Jack, especially helping to project Azoulay's discussion of resource and raw material on my topic of enquiry. The exploration started out as a 2D image, a flatlay and a symbol - when brought into 3D space, the card exposes its depth, weight and material it previously did not accommodate. Rendering the Jack into 3D illustration, across ores, metals, fabrics and textiles enacts transformation, with the medium becoming the means through which the Jack's buried histories are brought to the surface. The material carries the argument of holding time, much as the geological layers of Kleinian's rocks.

**Pater, R. (2021). *Caps Lock: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape It*. Amsterdam: Valiz.**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

“...imagining a currency that reflects economic transactions as well as the social relations it represents, would have to coincide with an economic system that prioritizes social and human values over economic growth.”  
(Pater, p. 56, 2021)

The quote above is a paraphrase of Marx's work by Pater, as he discusses bank notes and their design as one of the formative roles of the design industry as we know it. He argues that designers have historically functioned as scribes of power, producing the visual language that legitimises and reproduces dominant systems without questioning the ideological frameworks they serve and also in establishing a 'currency' that serves to transact. This is critically useful for understanding the playing card system as a designed object, one in which the indices, hierarchy and court cards are design decisions that naturalised a particular order, making it appear self-evident and universal. The Jack ultimately was assigned a position and a legibility that serves the system's internal logic, and as an 'currency' that can be transacted in card games for something of higher value. What becomes generative for my enquiry is working against this 'scribal' function. In allowing the Jack to transform across materials, forms and meanings, the iterations perform a sort of counter-scribing, using visual language to destabilise the hierarchy. And using Pater's framing, as design produces the Jack's conditions of subordination, then it also holds the potential to undo them.

**Sealand. (2009). In: Metahaven: unincorporate identity. Baden: Lars Müller ; Springer Distributor, pp.6–49.**

### Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

“Heraldic elements found on national coats of arms are visual representations of myth- for example, dragons are realities in national crests even if we know they don't exist. In the new definition of national identity, Sealand-style, information takes on the role of the dragon.”  
(Sealand, p. 48, 2009)

Metahaven's observation that heraldic elements function as visual representations of myth, and that information takes on the role of the dragon in constructing national identity is used as critical lens for understanding what the Jack actually is within the deck's hierarchy. The Jack is not a real figure: it is a mythologised one, whose rank and legibility are sustained entirely through visual convention rather than any inherent authority. Metahaven's project does not simply critique this condition but speculatively redesigns it, producing an alternative visual identity that may operate outside institutional recognition. This is where the connection to my enquiry sharpens: the iterations of the Jack are similarly speculative,

not proposing a correction to the system but imagining what the Jack might look like when the myth that contains it is rejected. Each iteration becomes a site where the Jack is made unstable with its scaffolding visible.

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