

Line of Enquiry

Positions through Iterating

As I began this assignment, I was guided by an interest in narratives that are hidden within the constraints of a predetermined system. To explore this, I turned to a deck of playing cards, identifiable for its known order and monarchical hierarchy, using the character of 'Jack of Diamonds' as a way to activate my enquiry. The Jack sits in a particular kind of tension: recognisably part of the ruling order, yet subordinate in the larger scheme. Working through successive iterations, I sought new connotations latent within the Jack, asking what happens to its identity when its form and meaning is translated and transformed.

This enquiry was sharpened by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's *Unlearning Imperialism*, in which she argues that imperial violence operates by treating peoples and worlds as its raw material, and ultimately imperial resources (Azoulay, p.8, 2019). Read alongside the system I was exploring, this reframed the deck of cards as the monarchy existing in an imperialist light- and the Jack, the resource and raw material, when disrupted, became a 'postcolonial' subject.

As Jack, the lowest Court Card, earned new forms and meanings through iterations, it developed questions about the identity of a low-agency player in a system. **What does identity look like for a figure caught between belonging and subjugation? And more specifically, what happens when the symbols that sustain hierarchies begin to evolve?**

References:

Azoulay, A.A. (2019). *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. London: Verso, pp.1-57.