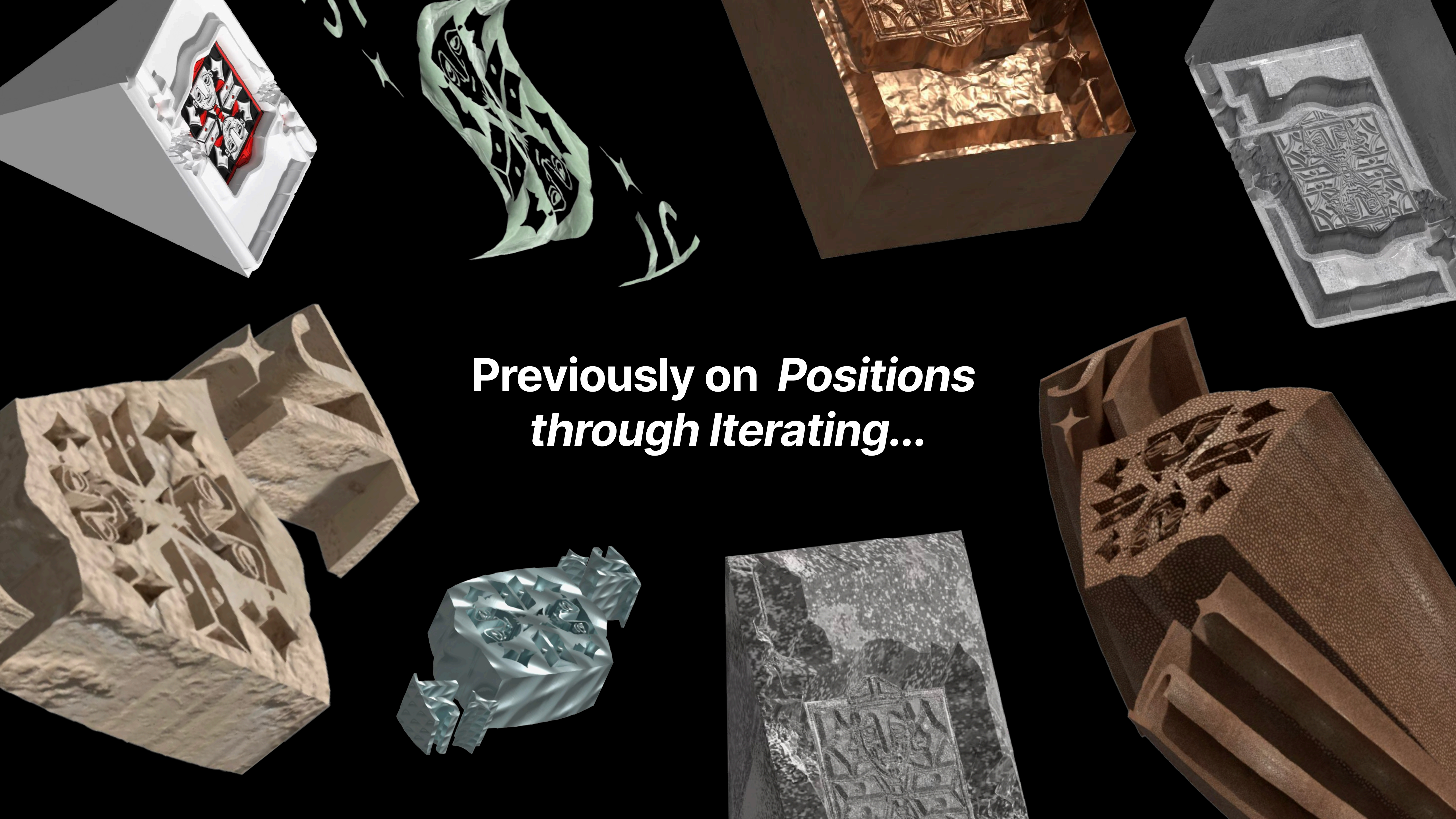


# Positions through Contextualising

Week 01 | Iterations and Draft Bibliography

Uma B.

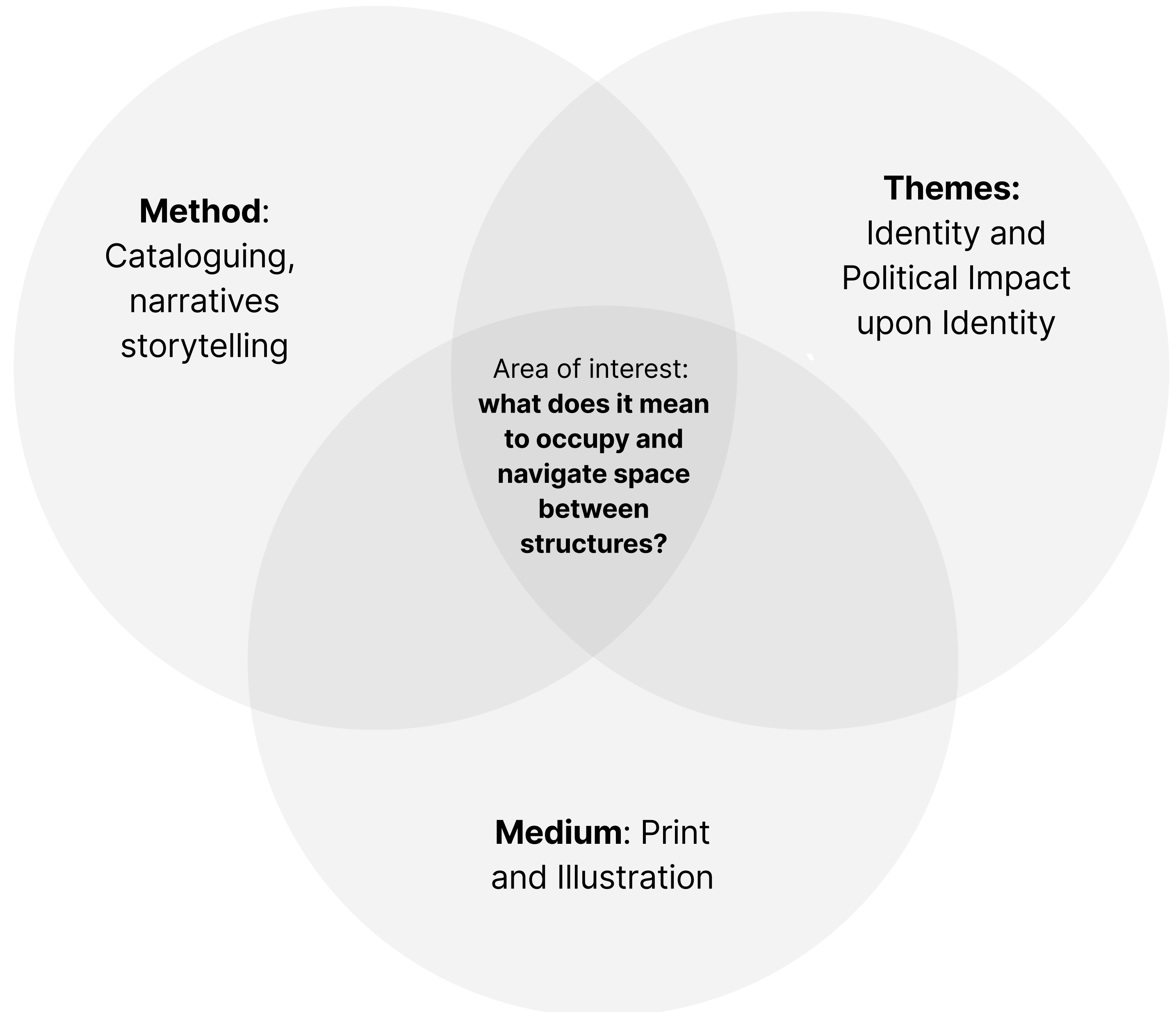


Previously on *Positions*  
through *Iterating...*

## Enquiry Venn 1.0

My first line of enquiry was influenced by my interest in channeling stories through material objects that seemingly hold more information than they let on.

I wanted to explore **these stories that were seated in an immutable structure, and see how they evolved.**

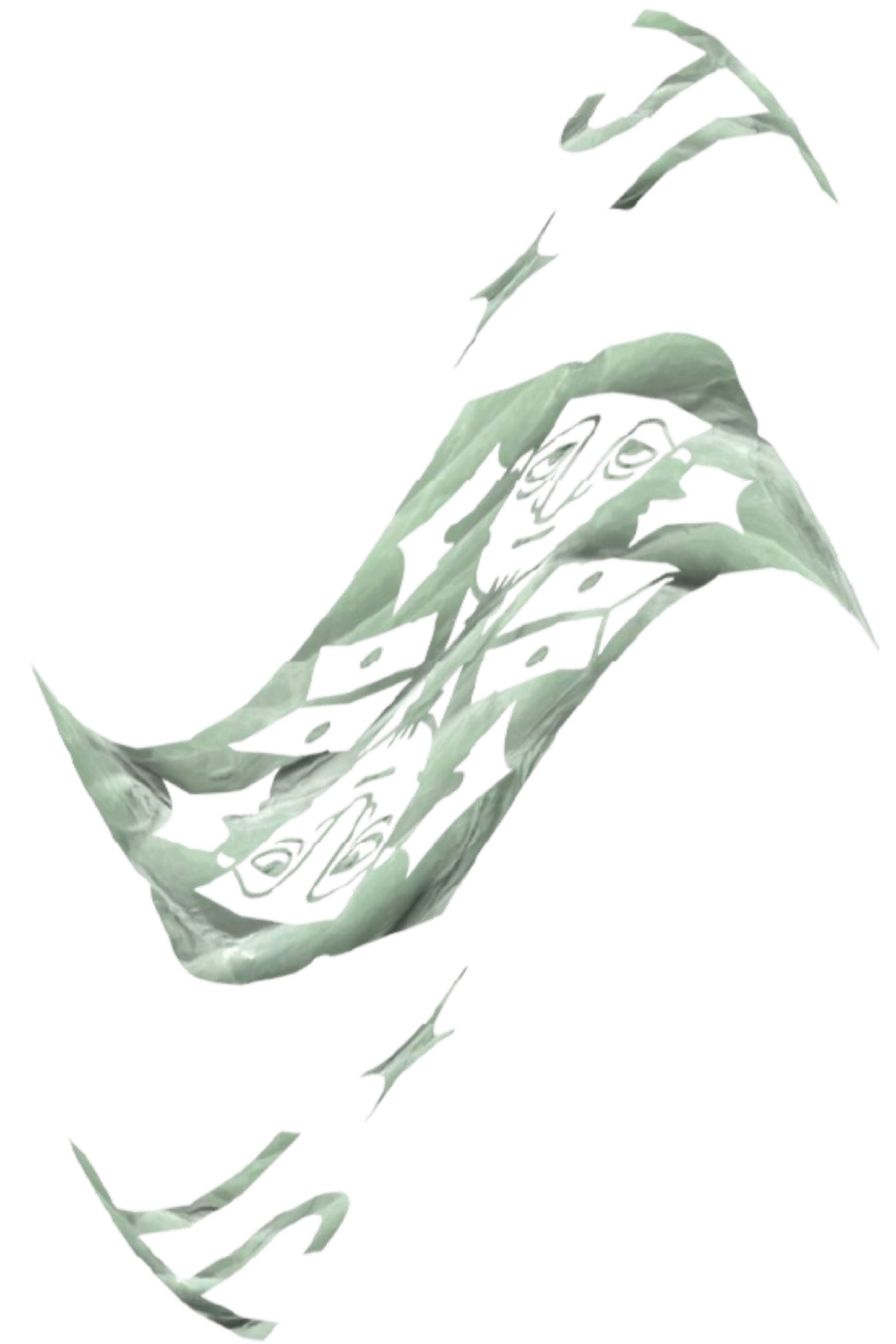






Towards the end of the previous assignment, I had used the structure and hierarchical order of a (political) system such as playing cards, located one point of entry - the Jack card - and iterated with that card as way of exploring identity. I had ended with the questions: **What does identity look like for a figure caught between belonging and subjugation? And more specifically, what happens when the symbols that sustain hierarchies begin to evolve?**

However, upon review, this LOE could still be distilled further for more space for studio experimentation, esp. through a GCD lens.



# Developments for Positions through Contextualising

# Approach

While my previous exploration expanded more strongly on a theme, this time, I wanted to **focus on form and medium**.

I realised, in my '3D illustrations' of the Jack iterations, I still represented on 2D surfaces as a way of cataloguing, **revealing an interest in 'value' which is manifested in 2D objects**.

So I moved on from 'materiality' and 3d explorations to a **focus on 2D collections** - pieces that 'flatten' an idea, for better or for worse.

# Approach

I continued with the category of 'playing cards': as all kinds of cards have characters or attributes attached to them that make them transactional.

Through Graphic Comm Design, certain symbols are assigned currency and transactional value. **How does form/medium make or break this sense of value?**

My iterations for this assignment took off from this point of entry.

# Reference

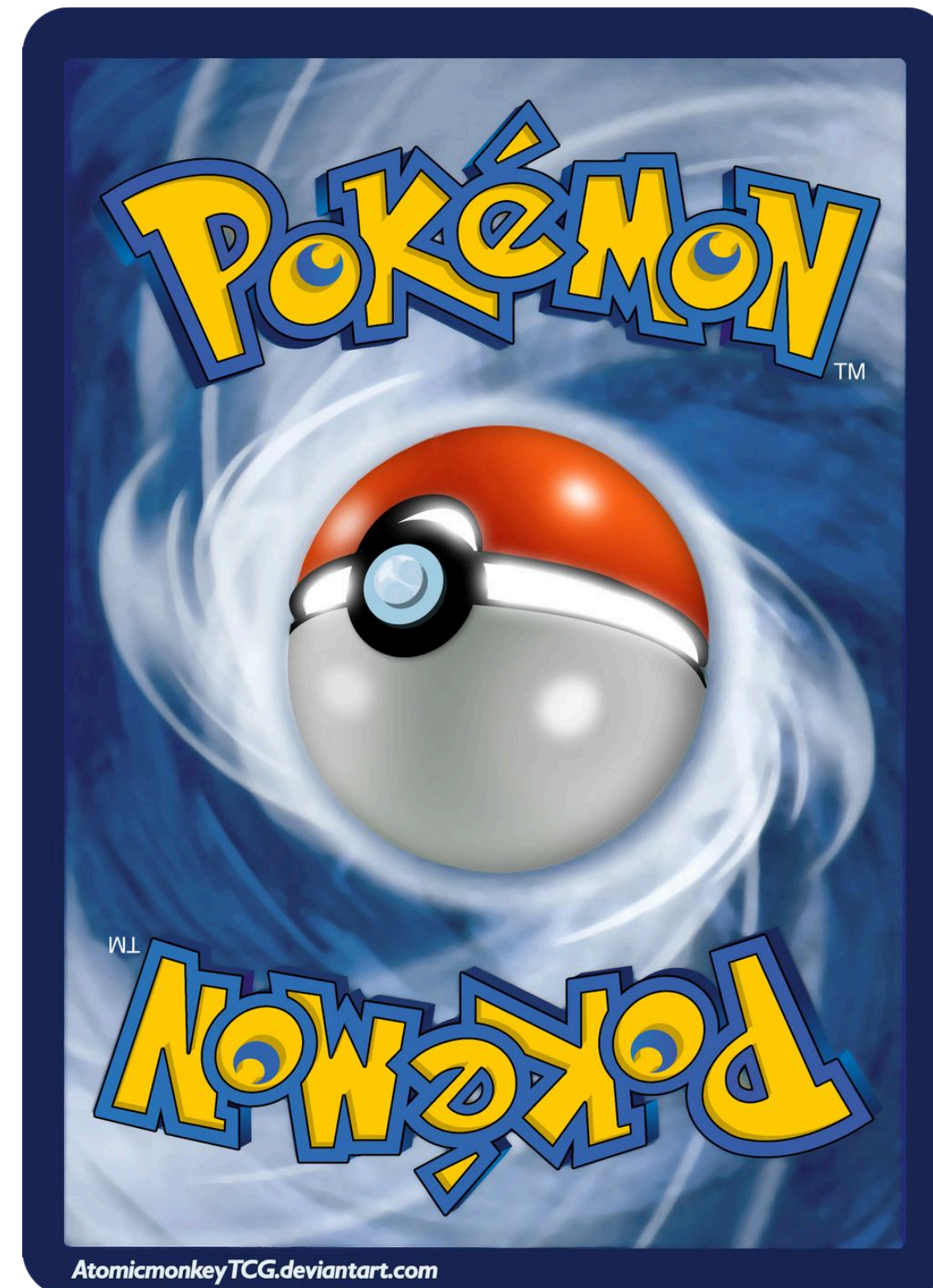
I wanted to carry on with my investigations on 2D objects so I made a list of all that belong in this collection.

For this assignment, I chose to go ahead with **trading cards**, next on my list - more specifically, the **Pokemon Cards**.

## Types of flat 2D objects / ~~tasks~~

1. Cards →
  - Postcards
  - Trading cards
  - Notes / Post-its
  - Playing cards
  - Business cards
  - Dance cards / 'cliffies'
  - Pamphlets
  - Brochures
  - Parking cards
  - Credit cards / Travel cards
  - IDs / Passports
  - Price tags
  - Name tag "Hello, I am"
  - Coupons / Vouchers
  - Tickets
  - Receipts
  - Stickers
  - Lottery / Scratch card
  - Gift cards
  - Stamps
  - Tarot cards
  - Bingo cards
  - Currency
2. Books
3. Screens
4. Paper
5. Textile

# Reference



Growing up, Pokemon Cards were a big big deal to have! And very few of my friends and family had originals, as most of the ones we had were some knockoffs.

Pokemon cards are meant to be traded and played with, but most had a select few and very few to swap them with, so they ended up as collectible first.

# **Mapping Context (In Circulation/Distribution)**

Pokémon

This article is more than 4 months old

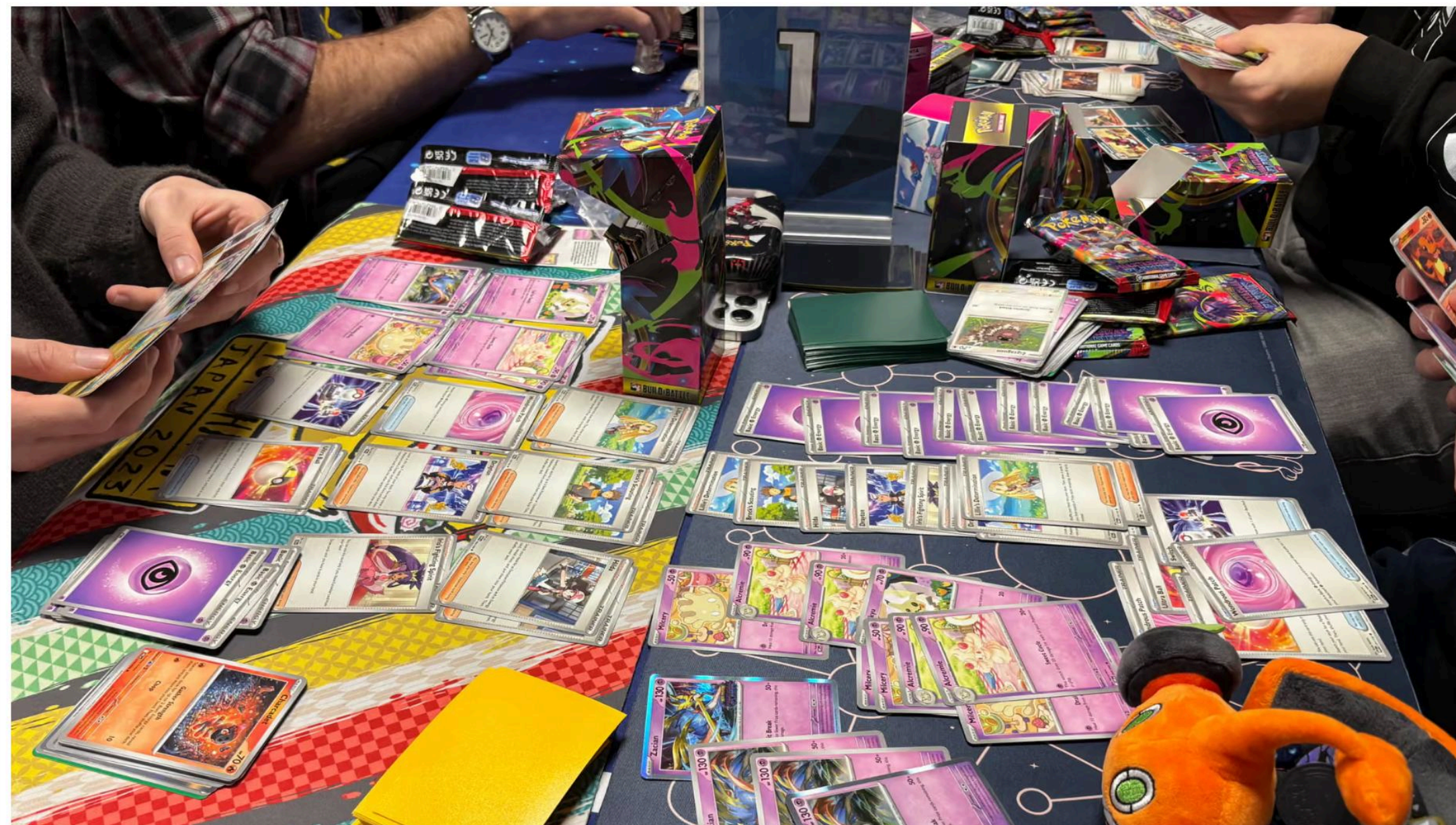
## 'Kids can't buy them anywhere': how Pokémon cards became a stock market for millennials

Daniella Lucas

Mon 8 Dec 2025 10.00 GMT

Share 47

Prefer the Guardian on Google

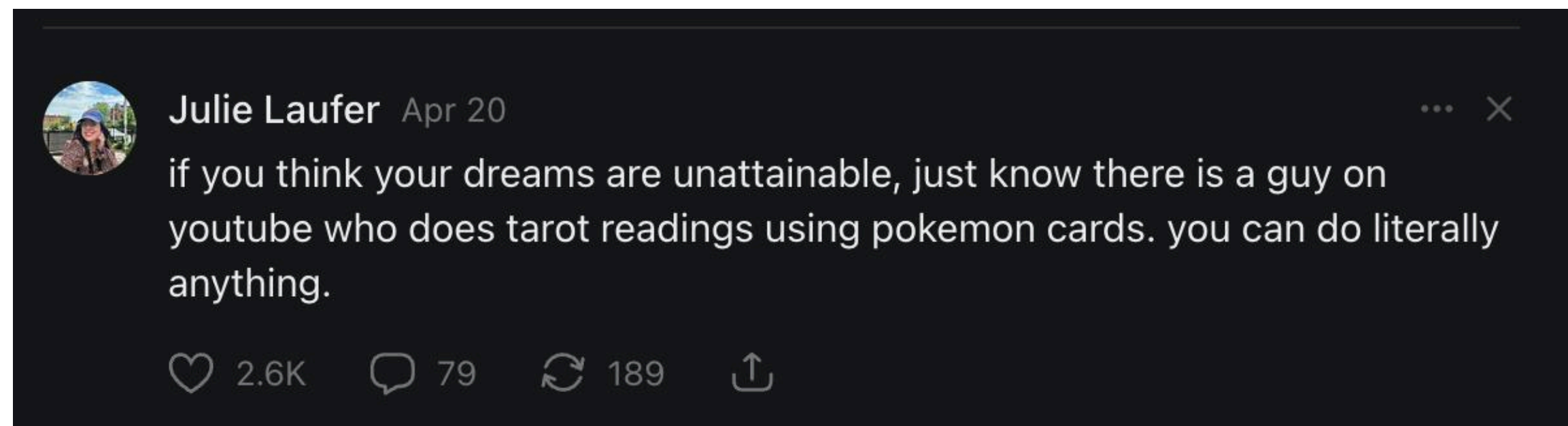


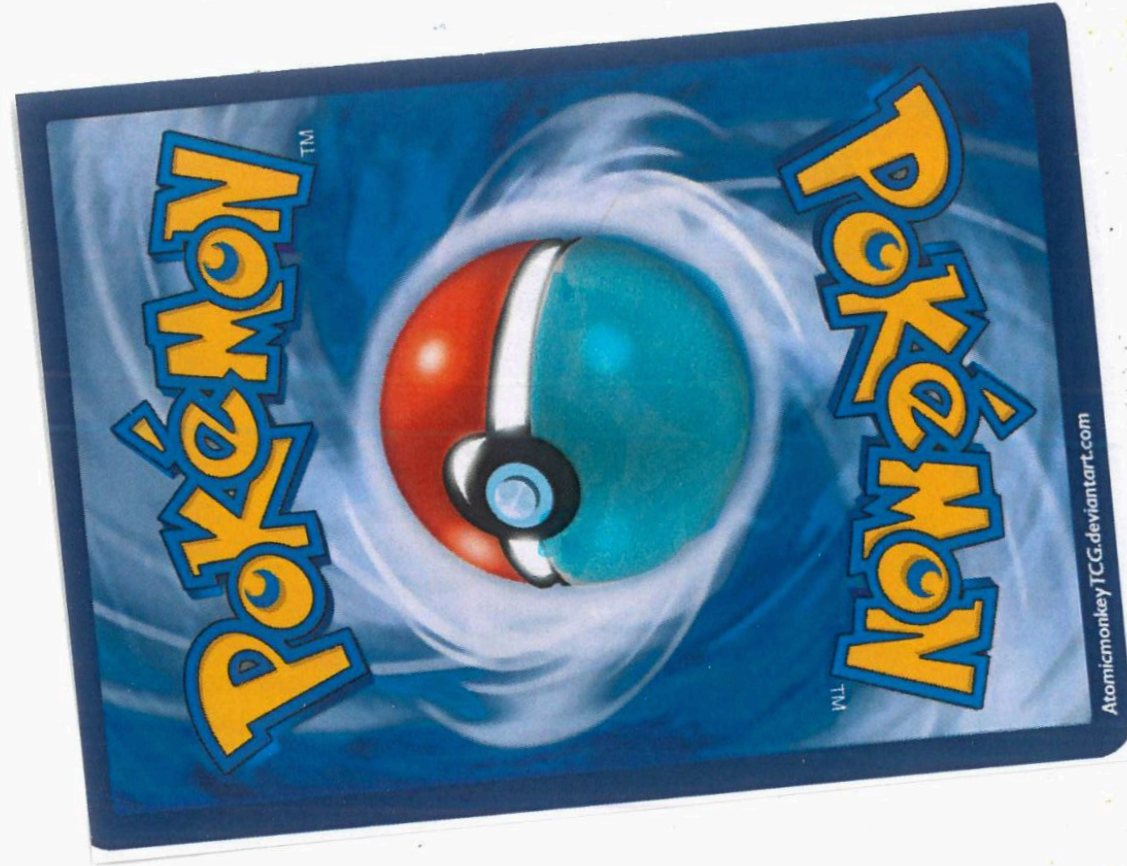
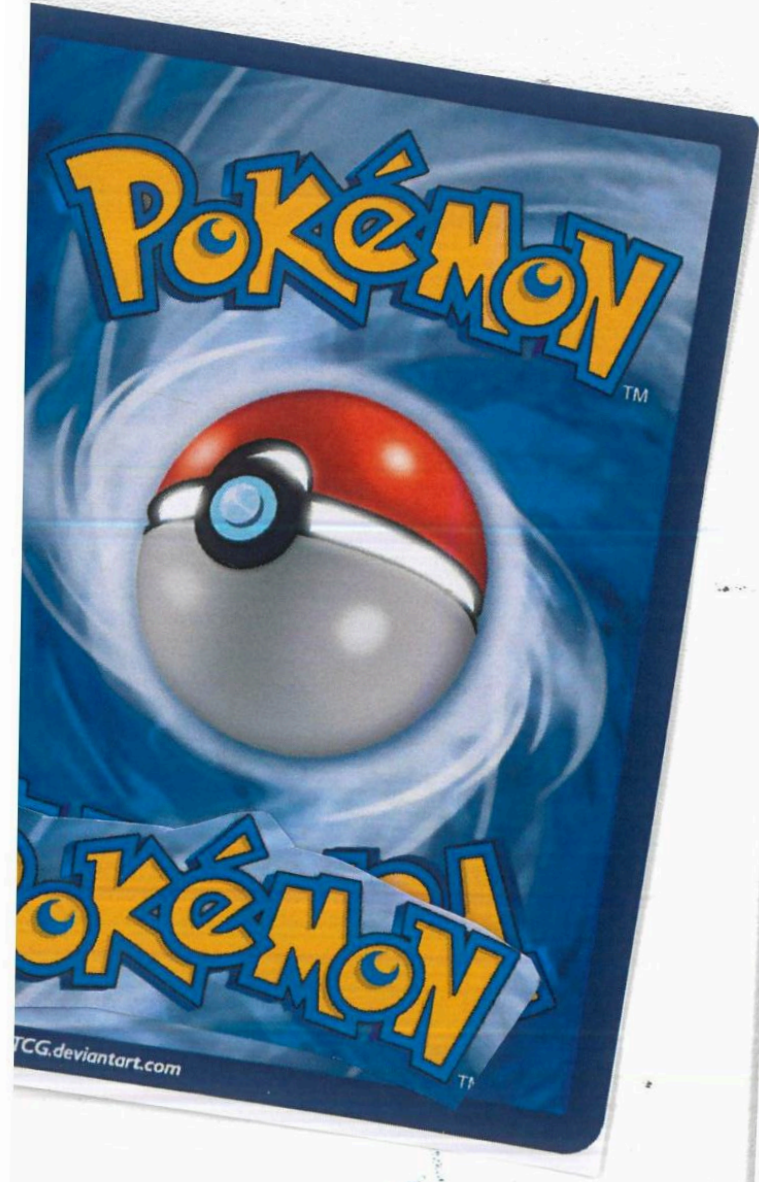
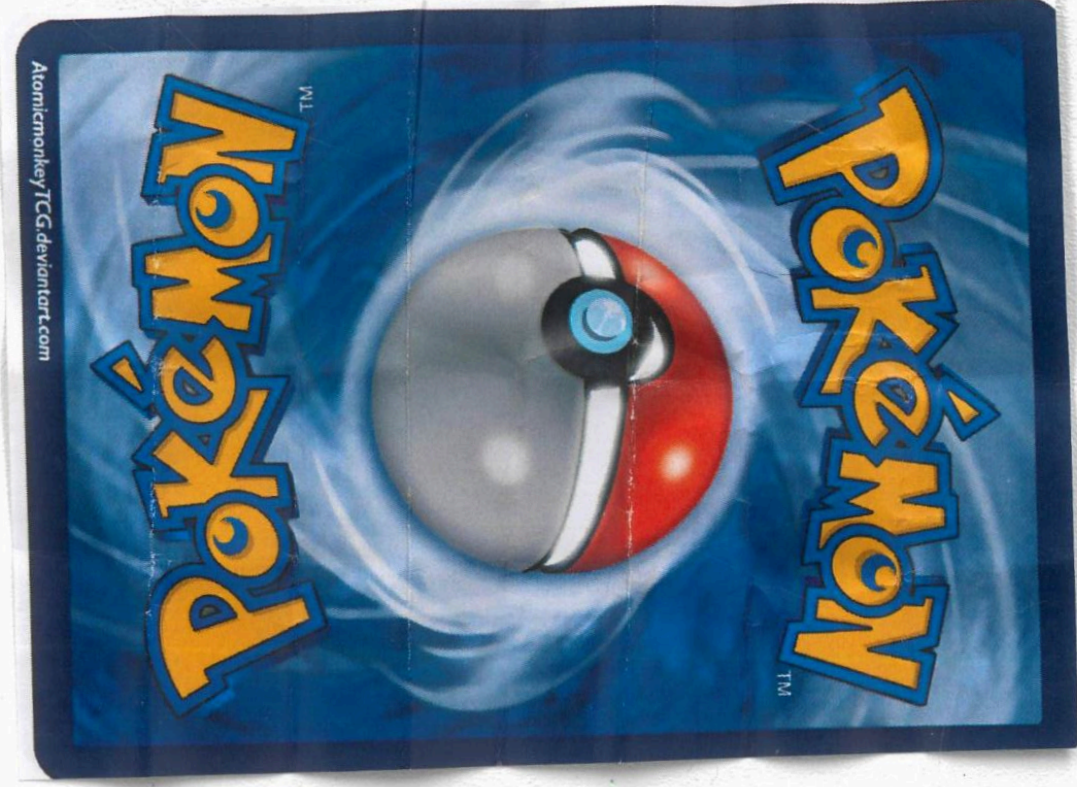
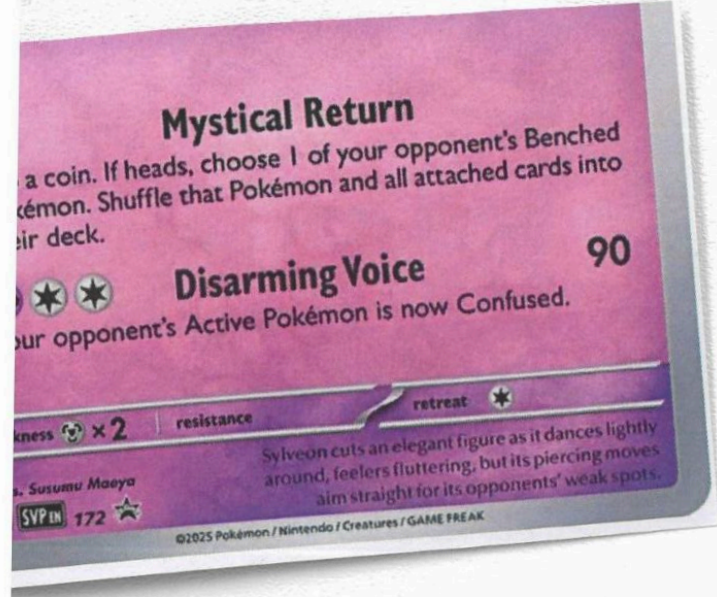
It is extremely difficult to buy a set of Pokémon cards at any of these shops now; they sell out instantly, and the vendors are hesitant to say when exactly they will be restocked.

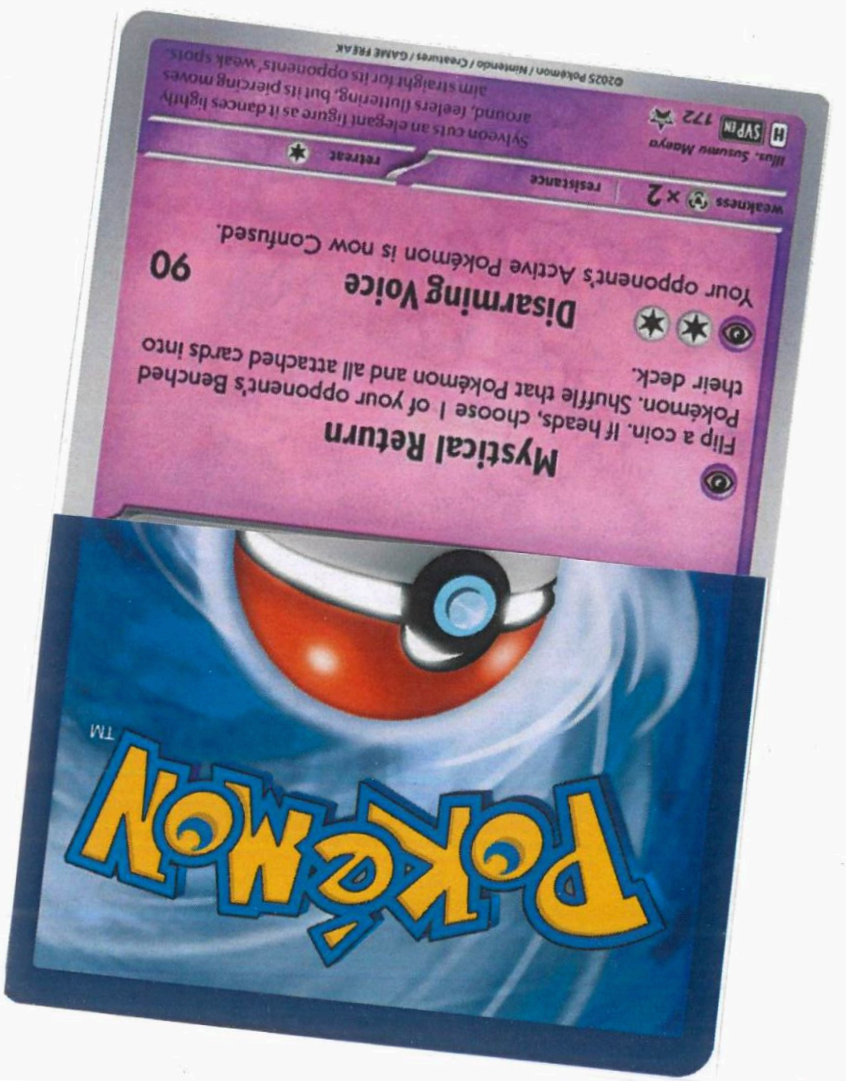
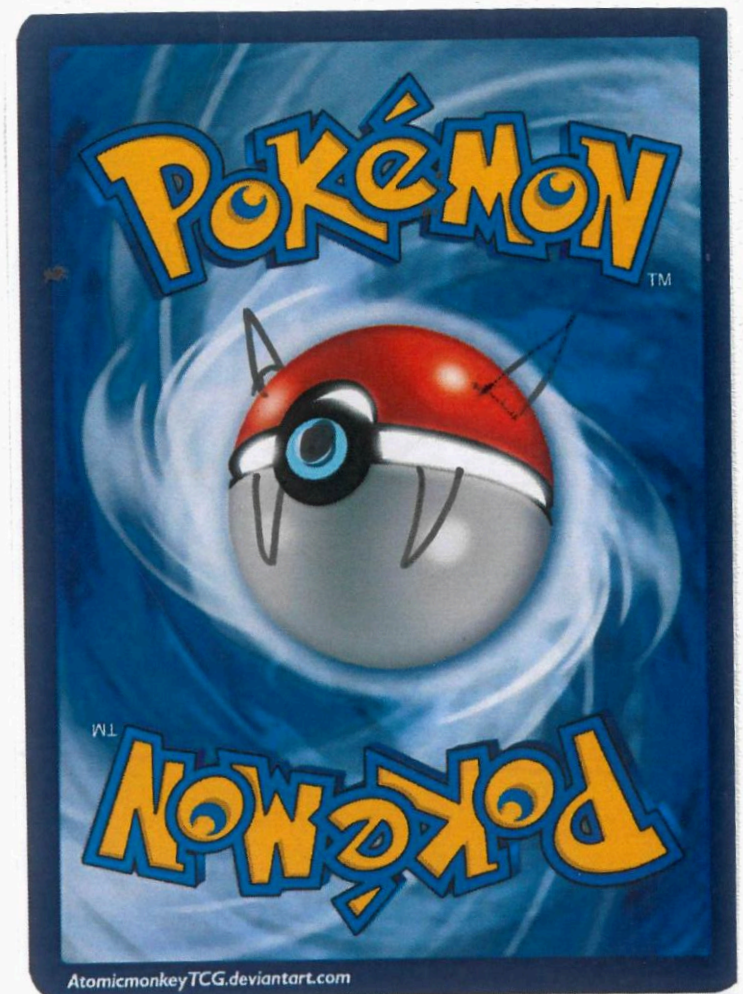
The collectible aspect is growing strongly, that these pieces are acquiring a whole new value.

**Pokemon Cards are directly related to demand and supply of rare cards.**

**What if the form affected its distribution?**









Charizard is the rarest, most coveted Pokémon card - what changes when it is beaten up, torn, vandalized?

# **(Some) Draft Bibliography**

**“...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)**

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

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 card is ultimately 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.

**“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)**

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

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

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# In Defense of the Poor Image

Steyerl, H. (2009) "*In Defense of the Poor Image*," e-flux [Preprint], (10).

Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image>.

Hito Steyerl talks about how as an image degenerates, it becomes more democratised and accessible as the image is more widely circulated.

A lot of my iterations in this week hinged on the idea of 'corrupting' a pure image, like the form of a mint condition Pokemon card.

# Paraphernalia

Connor, S. (2013). *Paraphernalia : the curious lives of magical things*. London: Profile.

This reading talks about the how a card is an 'activated piece of paper'. A paper carries information, a card "announces" it. The card carries a certain authority when its a card.

# Next Steps

- More iterations to explore the enquiry, and references alongside to develop it.
- Right now my iterations are mostly 'depreciating' the image/card in this exploration. There needs to be more intention to where this goes now.

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