Annotated Bibliography
Positions through Contextualising

(New References Starting #7)

1

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.

2

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

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"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.

3

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

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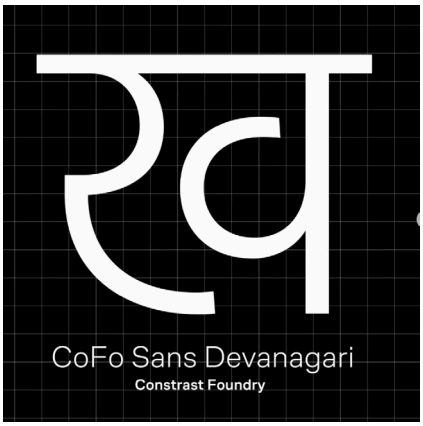

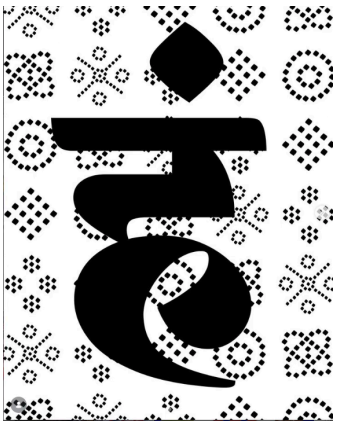

Kimya Gandhi is a typographist who works with Devanagari scripts, whose work was inspired an iterative node in my exploration of value. Her work is rooted in the coexistence of multiple scripts and languages within a single visual field, particularly in how Devanagari and Latin scripts occupy space together without one subordinating the other. I use this as way of exploring a political decision on my postcolonial artefacts, 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 my previous iterations of Jack, and more recently by juxtaposed image artefacts, forces two systems of inscription into contact, and raises questions about the nature of universality of the image.

4

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

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@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.

5

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

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"...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.

6

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

"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.

7

Adriano Celentano Official (2018). *Prisencolinensinainciusol* (Remastered). [online] www.youtube.com. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQDY3HFkh_Y.

Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

"Uis de seim cius nau op de seim
Ol uait men in de colobos dai
Trrr - ciak is e maind beghin de col
Bebi stei ye push yo oh"

Prisencolinensinainciusol is an experimental song written by Adriano Celentano in 1972 entirely in gibberish that mimics the composition style, nuances and phonetic singing style of popular American music of the time, especially that of Elvis. This song was created to explore how music translated despite communication and language barriers. As most European audiences enjoyed the song despite its meaninglessness, it created a cheeky joke on how English sounded to audiences who didn't understand the language. This ties into my enquiry of how value morphs when its stripped of its "authenticity", but still has most of its other familiar qualities. The song remains more 'American' to a non-anglophone Italian audience, than to any American listener who completely understands the cultural context which the song is inspired by, but has no real meaning.

8

Ozo (2026). *Chhota Incense Stick Holder*. [online] ozoworld.in. Available at: https://ozoworld.in/products/chhota-incense-stick-holder?utm_source=copyToPasteBoard&utm_medium=product-links&utm_content=web&fbclid=PAZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQPOTM2NjE5NzQzMzkyNDU5AAGnJjnGYWSkgwLs5S2ggom6c5AhAawbJoCGJNXnr3qiTgEgcAq1fgu7zX7D-uI_aem_twadAorYR66ZYRLcMG_YgQ.

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A more recent parallel is Indian fashion brand Ozo's Chhota Pandit x Funko Pop bootleg. Funko Pop canonises characters through collectibility,

but its roster remains predominantly Western with limited cross-cultural reach. Ozo, which focusses particularly on local subcultures in their practice, takes Chhota Pandit, a comic-relief exorcist character from Bollywood classic *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* (2007) as a deliberately low-brow, no-brain-comedy figure, and translates him into that same collectible format. The move is a reclamation: it forces a mainstream, west-centric object to hold content it would never have chosen. The figurine was popular enough that the creator instantly produced more, and it sold out within a day (Ozo, 2026), suggesting the appetite for this kind of cultural occupation was already there, just unserved. This reference is a great example of bootlegging - and a mixing of high and low brow culture, creating new forms of communities that don't have to conform to either groups exclusively.

9

Pattni, S. (2025). *They stole my identity and replaced it with a myth*. [Oil, synthetic polymer and gold leaf on canvas] Available at: https://sidpattni.com/products/copy-of-flex [Accessed 19 May 2026].

Design Practice / Reading List / Other Readings

Sid Pattni is an Australian artist of Indian descent who unpacks the intricacies of identity, culture, and belonging within a post-colonial framework (Pattni, 2026). A lot of his work explores the complexities of a diasporic identity, navigating multiple versions of self within one frame of reference. He illustrates this by his oil painting, that center portraits of self (in the image above), or other colonial figures in thick frames that reminsce Mughal miniatures paintings, unlocking a colonial gaze of the ones seated in the center of the work. He also often refuses to paint skin - and the piercing effect of the eyes reinforce, no trace of the colonial empire, but a gaze sitting in the center of the void. This juxtaposition inspired a method of 'coexisiting' in my own work. What happens when the ones who command presence - as

the figures in Pattni's works - work in proxy, in absentia? This translates in my enquiry- value, in my own work, is translating between two points and isn't apparent. It's happening virtually, with only its results evident.

10

Robbins, D. (2000) Chapter 2: Socio-genesis of Thinking Instruments, *Bourdieu & Culture*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 25-41.

Design Practice / Reading List / **Other Readings**

Value is not inherent in objects but constructed through the social systems within which they circulate. Drawing on Bourdieu's habitus and cultural capital, what Derek Robbins describes as the socio-genesis of thinking instruments, this project examines how objectivated cultural capital is read differently depending on the viewer's position rather than their given situation. Central to this is Bourdieu's distinction between situations, which are fixed, and positions, which are dynamic and relational. The project presents uncaptioned image pairs as spectrums rather than binaries, deliberately withholding prescribed context so that the participant's habitus operates freely. The reading of cultural capital embedded in each image is not determined by the work itself, but by where the viewer stands in relation to it. This raises a fundamental question: is it possible to read value truthfully without context? And if situation shapes meaning, does every reading produce not a universal value, but a uniquely positioned one?
(Read more in critical analysis)

11

Schwartz, B. (2023). *UNLICENSED: Bootlegging as Creative Practice*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Design Practice / Reading List / **Other Readings**

Schwartz positions creative practice as always responding to existing images, systems, and objects; bootlegging simply makes that dependence visible rather than pretending originality appears from nowhere. He moves fluidly between art theory, piracy, street markets, corporate branding, DIY publishing, and internet culture without treating them as separate worlds, collapsing the distinction between high and low culture in the process.
What makes this particularly productive for my project is Schwartz's focus on the instability of authorship in the circulation of bootlegs. Bootlegging is a direct affront to the cultural capital one seeks in Bourdieu's framework, destabilising the very systems through which value is assigned and legitimised.
(Read more in critical analysis)

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.

Steyerl's *In Defense of the Poor Image* argues that low-resolution, degraded images carry their own political value. As images circulate, they lose fidelity but gain reach; the poor image is a document of its own movement through networks, platforms, and hands. Steyerl frames this degradation as democratisation: the image becomes accessible precisely because it is no longer pristine, and debunks the superiority of the "authentic" image. This connects directly to my project's interest in corrupting a 'pure' and 'valuable' image. The mint-condition Pokemon card operates as a starting point for this logic, which I tried to then was 'destablised' by the changes that occur during its distribution. While I departed from using just Pokemon cards in my enquiry, this concept then evolved in researching bootlegging. Degrading an object of concentrated cultural capital disperses it, and in that dispersal, value is redistributed and renegotiated.

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