

Written response: positions through contextualising

PART 1

A continually growing bibliography of references. By the time you finish this project, you should have gathered at least 12 references: roughly 3–4 from the reading list, and the rest a balanced mixture of texts and projects (or practices) that you've found through your own research. These 12 references can include the 6 you've previously found, by a short statement (100–200 words) explaining how the reference enhances or challenges your understanding of your specific area of interest. (Remember: Don't summarize the reference; instead, put it in context of your emerging practice.)

References drawn from the course reading list

Benedict Anderson (2006). 'Census, map, museum' *Imagined communities*. London: Verso pp.163-185

- *A short quote, image or detail*

"While this kind of archaeology, maturing in the age of mechanical reproduction, was profoundly political, it was political at such a deep level that almost everyone, including the personnel of the colonial state was unconscious of the fact and it became a normal and every day. It was infinite quotidian reproducibility or its realia that revealed the real power of the state."

- *Short statement*

A stamp is an interesting medium because it holds a long history of design. Historically, it has been used as a form of nationalism. A medium portraying the strengths of a country in relation to other nations. In colonial times, the stamp was used to display colonial power. Anderson (2006) has helped me contextualise the meaning of a stamp as a form of nationalism and how it is strongly linked with the colonial history of a country. It would be valuable to explore the political and historical aspects of the stamp. To examine how such a small object can convey so much about a country's wealth, and how this representation may shift depending on the subject matter or symbolic meaning of the stamp.

Ludovico, A. (2012). *Post-digital print : the mutation of publishing since 1894*.

- *A short quote, image or detail*

"Traditional print publishing, on the other hand, is increasingly presenting its products as valuable objects and collector's items, by exploiting the physical and tactile qualities of paper. It thus acts as a counterpart to the digital world, while looking for ways to cope with a gradually shrinking customer base, particularly in its traditional sectors such as newspaper production and distribution (where costs are becoming unsustainable) or paper encyclopaedias (which have already become vintage status symbols rather than practical information tools). Several products will thus need to be re-invented to still make sense in print."

- *Short statement*

Ludovico (2012) raises an interesting question: how can print media survive in the age of digital media? The stamp serves as a particularly relevant example in this context. As a popular collector's item worldwide, it holds value not only in print history but also in cultural and political history, making it an object that carries meaning beyond its functional purpose. Central to this is its materiality, the physicality of print and the tactility of paper contribute to the narrative of the stamp in a way that digital media cannot easily replicate. These tangible qualities become design elements in themselves, building a world and story around the object. It is this tension between the physical and the digital that makes the stamp a compelling subject of investigation. Following Ludovico's (2012) argument, this raises the question: is there a way to combine print and digital elements to renew and reimagine the story of an object such as a stamp?

Gitelman L (2014), 'Paper knowledge': towards a media history of documents', Durham, Duke University Press. p9

- A short quote, image or detail

use of print cultures, plural, as an analytic set loose from the very printing, print publication, regulation, distribution, and circulation.³⁸ We might likewise be wary of recent claims that "the Age of Print is passing" because "print is no longer the default medium,"³⁹ a notion promoted in 2009 by none other than the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), which "no longer recognizes a default medium" in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.⁴⁰ (Current MLA style directs researchers to label works cited as "Print" or "Web," as appropriate.) Not only do statements like these tend to reify (to default to?) print as one thing instead of many, but they also impute a generalized cultural logic for print and—by extension—other media, at the same time that they fall back on the old Romantic trick by which Western modernity forever periodizes itself as modern.⁴¹ Better instead to resist any but local and contrastive logics for media; better to look for meanings that arise, shift, and persist according to the uses that media—emergent, dominant, and residual—familiarily have.⁴² Better, indeed, to admit that no medium has a single, particular logic, while every genre does and is. The

- Short statement

People like to think print is dead and everything is going to be digital. People nowadays see stamps as something from the past and a printed item that is no longer useful in modern day technology. But on the other hand, there is this fascinating aspect to them that people still love. Just because print isn't the default medium anymore doesn't mean it loses all its value. Maybe it gained even more value just because it's no longer the default medium. Whether people romanticise it or want to push back against technology, the appeal is real. Gitelman (2014) has helped me with my position towards using an older medium for my design practices. How can I use this old, printed medium for storytelling in a contemporary world?

References drawn from outside the course reading list

David (1995). European Stamp Design.

- A short quote, image or detail

"Similarly, stuck onto the envelope or parcel and franked by distant mail office, the stamp offers the charm of mysterious and exotic message, a fragment of another time and place sent to join us in our banal world"

- Short statement

For me, a stamp is a way of connecting people and places, an aspect highlighted by David (1995). There is a mysterious quality to the stamp that genuinely intrigues me. The way it uses images and text as decorative elements on an envelope is a compelling use of the medium. The ability to build a narrative within such a small space, combined with the intimacy of receiving a handwritten message, makes the stamp a uniquely special object. Perhaps it could even be understood as a form of escapism, given the intimate connection it creates between people and places.

Tree, E. (2025). Jacob Hutchinson merges structured layouts with the soft imperfections of old stamps and vinyl stickers. [online] Itsnicethat.com. Available at:

<https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/jacob-hutchinson-graphic-design-discover-040925>.

- A short quote, image or detail



- *Short statement*

This Sheffield-based designer works across both physical and digital media. It is interesting to observe how they use digital media to explore the feeling of physicality, suggesting that the *tactility* of print need not be lost in a digital context. This *project* raises the question of nostalgia. As a medium that belongs to an older form of communication. In an age dominated by digital communication, this nostalgia may be what gives the stamp its emotional weight and cultural significance *today*. *this is* quality that I wish to *explore* how the feeling of a printed object can be transformed or translated into a digital medium. This leads to a central question: how might we capture the feeling of the stamp without relying on the physical object itself?

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. [online] Ways-of-seeing.com. Available at: <https://www.ways-of-seeing.com/ch1>.

- *A short quote, image or detail*



This is the last picture that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself.

It is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence.

In this essay each image reproduced has become part of an argument which has little or nothing to do with the painting's original independent meaning. The words have quoted the paintings to confirm their own verbal authority. (The essays without words in this book may make that distinction clearer.)

- *Short statement*

How can text and image work together in the telling of a story, and what role does text play in shaping the interpretation of an image? These questions are central to my exploration. In my iterations, I experimented with text and how the meaning of an image could shift depending on the words accompanying it. The way text influences an image is an interesting area to explore in the context of storytelling and worldbuilding. This interplay can create a tension between the two elements, influencing how a viewer reads and understands them together. As Berger (1972) suggests, altering a single element within a painting or image can fundamentally change its initial meaning. This is particularly relevant when applied to stamps, where text and image have worked together to construct a specific national or political narrative. By reframing this relationship, it could become possible to shift the viewer's perception and open the object up to new interpretations.

Brueghel, P (1559). *Nederlandse spreekwoorden*.

- *A short quote, image or detail*

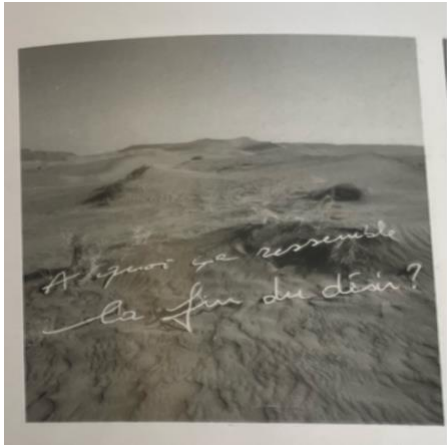


- *Short statement*

Brueghel (1559) relates to my enquiry into worldbuilding. It demonstrates how a single painting can construct an entire world on its own. Building an image in which every detail is part of a larger story, yet each detail, if extracted, could stand alone and give a new story. In my iterations, I used this painting to explore how details from a larger image could function independently, creating a different world when combined with details from other paintings. Brueghel (1559) was part of the Flemish Primitives, a group of artists who used symbolism to create deeper layers of meaning when portraying everyday scenes and portraits. This approach to storytelling is particularly relevant to my research, as I aim to create meaning within my stamps and explore how these meanings shift in relation to other stamps carrying different narratives.

Hapkemeyer, A. and Weiermair, P. (1996). *Photo Text Text Photo*. Edition stemmle.

- *A short quote, image or detail*



- *Short statement*

Building on Berger (1972), Hapkemeyer & Weiermair (1996) further explore the relationship between text and image, and how this dynamic can shift meaning, both within the artwork itself and for the observer. Where Berger (1972) lays the foundation, Hapkemeyer & Weiermair (1996) show how contemporary practice applies this principle, using text and image together to create and communicate meaning. What I found particularly useful for my own practice was their observation that when image and language are aligned within a single work, the meaning or perspective becomes difficult to miss (Hapkemeyer & Weiermair, 1996, p. 7). This was a shift in thinking for me. Previously, I had been using language to alter or challenge the meaning of my work. This insight encouraged me to instead align text and image, allowing both to reinforce and strengthen the same narrative, a more intentional approach to storytelling.

Johnson, S. C. (1944). British postage stamps. Standley Currie

- *A short quote, image or detail*



- *Short statement*

As the first adhesive postage stamp was designed in the UK, I wanted to research the heritage of British stamp design and understand how early stamps used storytelling as part of their visual language. Johnson's (1944) survey of British stamp design documents a wide

range of designs from the origins of the medium, proving particularly helpful in addressing my enquiry question around where the value of the stamp lies. What Johnson (1944) made clear is that the history of the stamp is what makes it culturally rich. It also revealed how the storytelling within stamp design has evolved significantly, shifting from purely colonial propaganda to becoming a design practice in its own right (Johnson, 1944, p10). This trajectory was directly relevant to my own practice. Rather than reproducing the historical functions of the stamp, I wanted to find my own storytelling approach, one that focuses on the design itself and uses the medium intentionally to communicate meaning

Someoneyouknow (2018). PANTOGRAPHY. [online] PANTOGRAPHY. Available at: <https://pantography.com/> [Accessed 25 May 2026].

- *A short quote, image or detail*



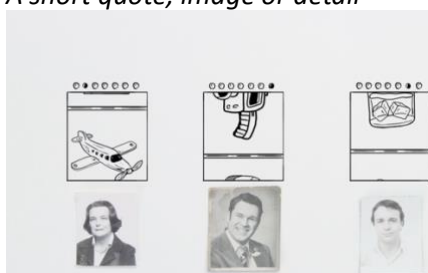
- *Short statement*

Pantography (2018) is a particularly relevant project to my practice, as it demonstrates how the visual language of historical stamps can be reappropriated within contemporary design. The project uses existing stamps from different countries as source material to create new ones, showing that the medium still has creative potential today. What made this source useful was how it articulated the cultural significance of stamp design. As Pantography (2018) notes, stamps represent one of the earliest forms of mass media in graphic design and have long functioned as a canvas for cultural storytelling. This directly supports my enquiry into the stamp as a medium for storytelling, reinforcing the idea that the stamp is not a functional object, but carries meaning with a design history that can be drawn on and reimaged in contemporary practice.

Tyrell, C. (dir.) (2018) My Dead Dad's Porno Tapes. Milkman Productions.

<https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2018/10/04/dead-dads-porno-tapes/>.

- *A short quote, image or detail*

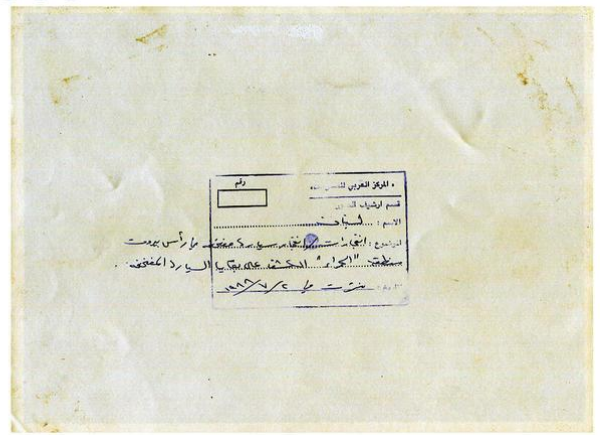


- *Short statement*

Tyrell's (2018) documentary *My Dead Dad's Porno Tapes* proved particularly enriching for my enquiry through its approach to storytelling and personal narrative. The film follows Tyrell as he investigates his family history through the physical belongings left behind by his late father. This informed my own practice. Inspired by Tyrell's (2018) method of using personal objects as a starting point for research and reflection, I turned to my own family's collection of stamps and letters as a way of learning about my grandfather, someone I never known. In the same way that Tyrell uses his father's belongings to reconstruct a relationship and a history, I found that the stamp and letter collection offered a connection to my grandfather's life and story. This process of personal archival research became central to how I approach storytelling within my stamp design practice.

Wilson-Goldie, K. (2004) 'Walid Raad and the Atlas Group', Bidoun [online]. Available at: <https://www.bidoun.org/articles/walid-raad-and-the-atlas-group> (Accessed: [date]).

- *A short quote, image or detail*



- *Short statement*

Raad's Atlas Group project offers a framework for understanding how history, memory, and personal narrative intersect within artistic practice. By presenting a mix of media, Raad shows structural links between history, memory, and fantasy (Wilson-Goldie, 2004). Raad questions the nature of historical truth itself, arguing that what people come to believe about past events is shaped more by memory and psychology than by what occurred (Wilson-Goldie, 2004). This resonates with my own enquiry, where I draw on my family's archive of stamps and letters as a medium through which to reconstruct and communicate a personal history that was never directly accessible to me.

PART 2

Extended critical analyses of two of the references that you've found: one *text* and one *project* (or practice). Each analysis should be at least 500 words long (1,000 words total). One of them should probably be the reference that you've chosen to respond to in your studio project, but it's not required.

In each critical analysis, start by briefly introducing the key idea(s) or position(s) presented in the reference. Then: Describe how that key idea or position is evident in or supported by the formal qualities of the work (if it's a text, this could mean its rhetoric, typography, or layout; if it's a project or practice, this could be its medium, material, mode of production, or circulation). Discuss how the reference reinforces or challenges your existing understanding of the field of graphic or communication design. You might also draw it into dialogue with another of your references.

Most importantly, discuss how it might shape the way you develop *your* project. (As always, be as specific as possible.)

1) Scott, D (1995). European Stamp Design.

Scott (1995) focuses on stamp design from five different European countries. Taking us through the history of each country's stamps and reflecting on how their communicating national identity as well as their cultural significance and showing the design developments of their period. By adopting a semiotic approach to analyse stamps as sign and symbols. This approach helped me have a better understanding of their meaning and what they can communicate. Scott (1995) analyses how stamps have a clear narrative for storytelling, and how that meaning is much deeper than first anticipated.

After seeing that a stamp not only serves as a national identity but a broad design medium. This has helped me to position myself into making stamps and finding new ways I could use them in my design practices where I research how I can use stamps as a medium for storytelling and worldbuilding. Scott (1995) inspired me into seeing more into a stamp than just a postal tool, showing it served as a design tool for centuries. Seeing the different approaches of the design has taught me that boundaries have been broken and renewed from time to time. Giving a designer more freedom and power to use the medium to its full potential. After having a deeper look into different design periods and processes of different designers, I really got carried away by the diversity of approaches designers over those five countries had. Each country had its own way of making new rules into making stamps but also into telling stories through the stamps. This allowed me to give my own meaning into the stamps in my research.

Scott (1995) has talked about how a stamp offers us a charm and mysterious element in our lives. By putting onto an envelope to send to different destinations and people, it creates this sense of human connection with sender and receiver but also between the story on the stamp and its viewer. This layer added a sense of connection between an object, a narrative and a human experience. It's a particular object for storytelling because of its size. In my opinion the hardest aspect of designing it, is to find a way to link the mandatory information of a stamp to the visuals of it for the storytelling. How can you make an image work on such a tiny medium.

For my research a stamp creates a perfect tool to connect myself with my family's history and archive. Using the stamp as a form of nostalgia puts it all together for storytelling.

Through seeing the evolution of stamp design from five different countries, I've learned the versatility of stamps and how this is personal design process of the designer. Even though there are rules and mandatory elements, each design and period have its own characteristics. But keeping an overall clarity and recognition of the medium. In my opinion that's what makes a stamp such a strong medium for design. No matter what the design is, there is this sense of materiality that keep the medium recognisable.

2) Tyrell, C. (dir.) (2018) My Dead Dad's Porno Tapes. Milkman Productions. <https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2018/10/04/dead-dads-porno-tapes/>.

- Theme of discovering more about a person through the personal belongings
- Working with scans giving a mixed media look and feeling → giving it a more of a nostalgia look

- Reflection on how the past shapes us and in learning more about yourself through it
- Memory and keeping it alive
- Using physical objects to reconstruct and narrate a person's life.

Bibliography:

Reading List:

- Benedict Anderson (2006). *'Census, map, museum' Imagined communities*. London: Verso pp.163-185
- Gitelman L (2014), *'Paper knowledge': Towards a media history of documents'*, Durham, Duke University Press. P1-20
- Ludovico, A. (2012). *Post-digital print : The mutation of publishing since 1894*.

Other:

- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. [online] Ways-of-seeing.com. Available at: <https://www.ways-of-seeing.com/ch1>.
- Brueghel, P (1559). *Nederlandse spreekwoorden*.
- ilson-Goldie, K. (2004) 'Walid Raad and the Atlas Group', Bidoun [online]. Available at: <https://www.bidoun.org/articles/walid-raad-and-the-atlas-group>.
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- Tree, E. (2025). Jacob Hutchinson merges structured layouts with the soft imperfections of old stamps and vinyl stickers. [online] Itsnicethat.com. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/jacob-hutchinson-graphic-design-discover-040925>.