

**Positions through iterating**  
**Mark Ecob, MAGCD 1**  
**Written response 020525**

## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 1

Blauvelt, A., Maurer, L. Paulus, E., Puckey, J., Wouters, R. (2013) Conditional Design Workbook. Amsterdam: Valiz

*‘The process is the product.’*

As an Art Director and Designer of twenty-five years experience in book design, my process has always focussed on an effective commercial outcome. This has often been at the expense of experimentation and play. An intuitively iterative approach has been uncomfortable for me but I am unlearning gradually and building trust in design that unfolds.

Conditional Design Workbook gave me permission to let outcomes emerge organically within a framework. Like the fictional neighbourhood of Banguit, where conditions of construction were set to allow for growth and interpretation, I set up a framework and conditions at each stage of this brief to encourage a forward but fluid momentum.

## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 2

Colomina, B. and Wigley, M. (2019). Are we human? Notes on an archaeology of design. Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers.

*‘Design is what you are standing on. It is what holds you up. And every layer of design rests on another and another and another. To think about design demands an archaeological approach. You have to dig. Dig into the ground, underground, beneath the seabed, and deep into the Earth. Dig into the things sitting on the ground - buildings, cities, treetops, and antennae. Dig over the ground - into the air, clouds, and outer space. Dig even into the invisible layers – data storage, formulas, protocols, circuits, spectra, chemical reactions, chemical reactions, gene sequences, and social media posts. Digging, documenting, dissecting, discussing – digging, that is, into ourselves. ‘*

Each project so far has been archaeological. Whether it was Methods of investigating, where I dissected and classified graffiti tags at my local skate park, or Methods of translating where I uncovered and illustrated shared memories behind photography of and interviews with my father, I have been digging to find something.

By combining these methods of exploration with an intensely personal enquiry, I am excavating myself. Design is not just a profession or a creative activity, it has a link to my being.

My latest iterations made me realize that design in turn designs me. Interviewing my mother unearthed new information and setting the audio against the first official document to hold my name along with childhood ephemera, had a profound effect. I find personal insight through interacting with a document. If a piece of paper can invoke such meaning, can graphic communication design have a therapeutic function?

## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 3

Traboulsi, J. (2010) Sorry for not Attending. Available at: <https://janatraboulsi.site/Sorry-for-not-Attending> (Accessed: April 2025).



Official documents are functional but powerful hierarchical devices that mediate movement. Paper that represents a person and their right to be.

The embellished passport created by Lebanese artist Jana Traboulsi reinvents, enriches and educates as part of a broader comment on movement. It relates to my project in that it gives me permission to question documents as a representation of the self. By manipulating hers using simple techniques of graphic communication design, she has turned a dry and functional document into powerful comment on political movement.

Can identity documents be enriched to show more than our biographic information, and actually become more personal?

## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 4

Buckle, H (2013) Birth certificates by IWANT for Icon magazine. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/04/19/birth-certificates-by-iwant-for-iconeye-magazine/> (Accessed: April 2025).



By redesigning the UK birth certificate in 2013, east London studio IWANT directly addressed the authority of an official document, whilst making it a more authentic representation of the individual.

Their rework with complimentary on and offline components include unexpected content such as a birthstone or lunar cycle. The layout, seasonal colour palette and styling give it a fresh feel whilst respecting the old with appropriate production value in the physical iteration.

This work situates my practice in questioning official documents and I can conclude that making a digitally augmented iteration of an official document is appropriate.

Is there a way of adding a printed element to my current digital iteration that shows the same emotional depth and historic context? Does representing emotion have a place on this kind of document?



## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 5

TRANSCESTRY: 10 YEARS OF THE MUSEUM OF TRANSOLOGY (2025) [Exhibition]. Lethaby Gallery, London. 11 March - 11 May 2025. Available at: <https://www.museumoftransology.com> (Accessed: April 2025).



This exhibition is full of items that have been augmented with personal contexts. The exhibition design itself leads with a postal label motif, one of which comes with all majority of items in the archive.

Various government documents feature in the collection, including a Deed of Change, Council letters, Medical correspondence, all given added importance and context. The more official the document, the greater the effect of the labels. By embellishing them with stickers like the Deed of Change, or simply displaying them as a group in this exhibition, the curators and owners of the documents add power and emphasis to them. Sterile, impersonal pieces of printed matter become narrative. These examples show the innate value in foregrounding personal identifying documents by putting them in personal contexts using methods of graphic communication design.

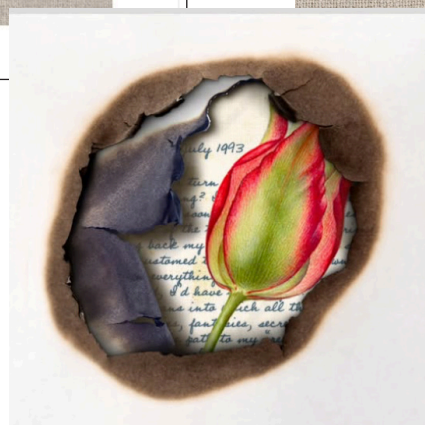
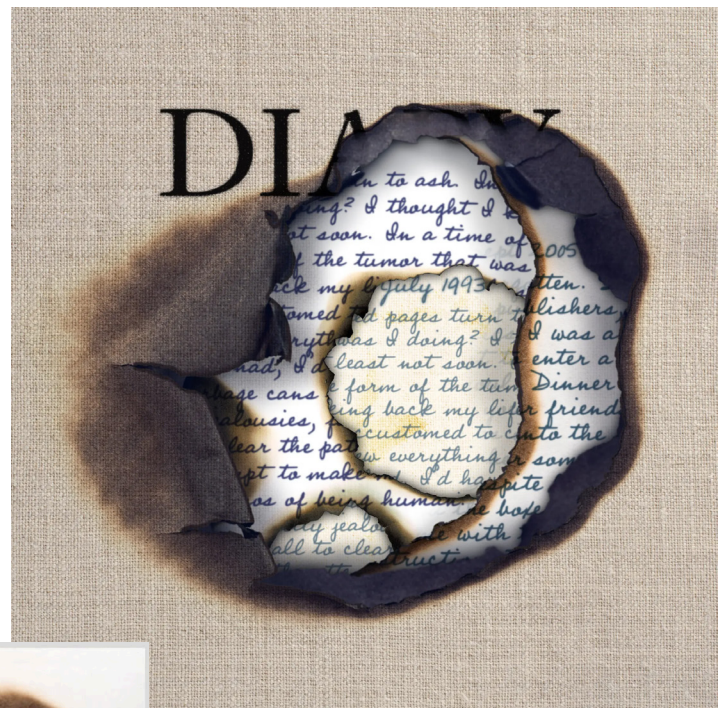
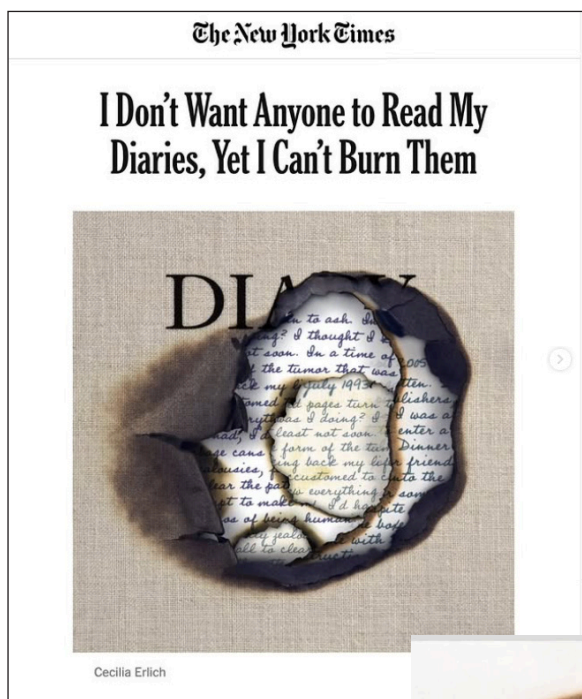
## Annotated bibliography

### Reference 6

Erlich, C. (2025) Instagram. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/cecierlich/> (Accessed: MAY 2025).

The work of typographer and designer Ceci Erlich is both static and moving. She reveals messages and hides them using both simple playful animations and textured photography. The example plays with themes of digging into the past, and represent the never-burned diaries of someone who was diagnosed with severe illness. The layers offer insight into a deeper message, and Ceci's other work shows that the medium need not restrict moving from static imagery into something interactive.

The performative quality of my Methods of iterating and Positions through iterating output is a starting point for this and I look forward to reducing the messaging down to its most important parts whilst retaining the innate, personal impact of shared narrative.



## Statement

How are we defined by documents? Can we better define ourselves by manipulating them?

My line of enquiry so far has been archeological. I've been dissecting, translating and digging to find meaning. Most recently, 'Methods of iterating' saw me reverse letterpress to reclaim ink from paper. It made me wonder what was underneath and ask what value does negative space have? In 'Positions through iterating', I am finding what I was looking for behind the reclaimed ink, it's me and how I connect to the world.

I have created a rich, layered film that draws upon my own childhood experience by using a conversation with my mother as a framework to augment my birth certificate. Using software which I am new to, I found personal and therapeutic insight through manipulating the first document of my existence. Behind each embellishment, the birth certificate subtly changes with the audio.

At the end, the new certificate reflects my lived experience as a small child more inclusively. But it also queries the effectiveness of documents as expressions of identity. Is showing our biographical information enough? Instead of a cold government document, is there a way of making it more personal, a vehicle to define ourselves proactively? What connections can I find by exploring the materiality of these documents and where will it lead me?

This enquiry will develop naturally through an intuitive process and trusting it to show me the way rather than focussing on a specific outcome.