

His Britannic Majesty's

Secretary of State

Requests and requires in the

name of His Majesty

all those who it may concern

to allow the bearer to

find their hidden colonial past,

and be better people.

To pass freely

without let or hindrance,

to recieve such assistance and

protection as may be necessary.

Can parents and children engage with colonial legacy together?

Time living abroad with my family made me look back towards “home”. Everywhere we went, traces of the British Empire appeared – road signs, currencies, civil systems, even a demilitarised zone. Both positive and negative effects were evident. When my children asked, “why do the Egyptians have pounds?” and “Where are the missing pieces of the Parthenon, Daddy?”, I began to see colonial legacy not as history but something that shapes our everyday lives.

The catalyst for this enquiry was investigating my identity documents, including my birth certificate and passport. Once taken for granted, these now serve as the focus of my iterative studio practice and research, helping me reconsider my own positions and the documents themselves. This paper narrates the course of my enquiry to date, including material descriptions of studio practice, critical contexts and possible projections.

From the “indisputable’ know-show power of documents’ (Gitelman, 2014) to the notion of having the “right” papers’ (Keshavarz, 2019), my research highlights how intrinsic documents are to identity, movement and equality. For some, these agents of power are routine; for others, they determine existence. Designers can intervene to expose tensions between these extremes.

The effects of colonial legacies on design contexts – through signage systems, education and language – are as varied as their social and economic impacts. But this most powerful of documents, the passport, is the one material colonial echo that still perpetuates inequality on a global scale today.

In *The Design Politics of the Passport*, Mahmoud Keshavarz presents forgery as a subversive act. He argues that a passport’s authenticity is a designed fiction that reveals the political power and inequality embedded within. My practice subverts form to explore colonialism. As I iterate, reflect and contextualise, positions evolve and so do I. My hope is that my practice can invite others in the field to do the same.

I began by hacking letterpress, reversing the first material process of printing documents. Using film and animation, I augmented my birth certificate, layering it with an audio interview with my mother to connect personal and historical contexts.

Next, I deconstructed and reconstructed my expired passport with analogue methods (fig.1). Travelling within the layers of the passport highlighted various positions from these new visual prompts. The Royal coat of arms and the invitation on the from 'His Britannic Majesty' spoke of monarchy. The stamps within (and my carbon footprint) whispered of past colonial legacies and climate. The intricately illustrated guilloché-style pages sang of the white cliffs of Dover and an idealised version of Britain.

Through cutting and pasting, adding Letraset, stamping, reordering, I became intimately familiar with this expired identity document. Adding photographs of my children and texts, I reclaimed it and highlighted a set of newly found positions.

Figure 1. By reconstructing my expired passport, I discovered positions on monarchy, climate and colonialism.



Responding to the most relevant theme of this intervention, colonial legacy. I subverted another recent expired passport, repaired it and hid a written message within it using heat transfers and stamping (see fig.2). The message introduced a period living outside the UK and the realizations I had as an individual and as a father. Therein, I looked at my current, valid passport which was issued post-Brexit. In comparison, it is sparse and formulaic in its design. Gone are the overly patriotic images of the countryside and famous Britons, replaced with repeating geometric pages bound in an almost-black cover. I wonder what change in national consciousness this reflects.

Figure. 2. An expired passport remade to contain a hidden message of British colonialism.



Figure. 3. An account of my time in Cyprus, using subverted illustration, documents and stamping to describe the echo of Empire over a period of 3 years and 5 countries.



“Four centuries of being told that you are ‘superior’ to brown and Black people ‘leave their stain’
Salman Rushdie

[illegible]



The publication unfolding

Context and Positioning

My position as a Designer researching this topic

A key reference was *The Design Politics of the Passport > Materiality, Immobility and Dissent* by Mahmoud Keshavarz. The author states that 'focusing on design, the very graphic reality of a passport is reductive and irresponsible when in practice design is engaged in shaping a complex environment that extends beyond the colour of the passport or the graphics in its pages' (Keshavarz, p. 67).

This prompted me to ask: if the aesthetics of this most powerful of documents are separate from its effect, does it matter what a passport looks like? Is there value in directly addressing its form? What is my position in relation to reimagining a passport? It was time to consider my practice ethically.

Stepping back from considerations of form, Keshavarz's book, together with references discussed later in this piece, brought a realization that it is indeed possible to address a document like this from a position of inherited personal privilege, as the bearer of the "right" papers'.

He writes 'Once we begin to understand design and the position of the designer through articulatory practice, designers encounter choices to be made on the basis of positions they occupy and have taken, rather than problems to be solved, services to be delivered, or improvements to be facilitated. This consequently locates designers' bodies and subjectiveness in relation to the other bodies and subjectivities involved in any act of articulation' (Keshavarz, pp. 138-139)

This marks a key shift in my approach to graphic communication design, from a problem-solving and ultimately capitalist focus to one that is relational. My practice is teaching me to situate myself *with* a subject rather than rushing to design away a perceived problem without first understanding its context.

Keshavarz continues: 'By thinking of designed things as material articulations and designing as an articulatory practice, ethics become about recognizing the politics of the locations and conditions within which one works, and the politics that is generated from working within those conditions. Consequently, the relation of ethics to design is not a matter of "adding" ethics to design or making design ethical; it is about recognizing how design already contains ethical implications and being able to act on that recognition.' (Keshavarz, p. 139)

From my starting point as a British citizen who carried and benefited from their passport with little awareness of its ethical implications, I was now able to view that document anew through this work. I recognised the colonial legacy and privilege it represents and encourage the same engagement in others.

Keshavarz notes: 'It is impossible to ignore the fact that the current passport in our hands is a specific product of national, colonial, and late imperial ideas around mobility. Furthermore, like other specific material practices that have shaped colonial relationships, these designs are not bound to their specific moment and site of invention and use and move to other spaces once proven to be functional and profitable for the privileged. Thus to recognize the paths designed things and designed activities have taken to arrive to the present moment in which we rework, reshape, or rearticulate them is another aspect of recognizing why design demands an ethical engagement.' (Keshavarz, p.141)

By remediating my passport in response to discovered positions, I came to recognise the inherent ethical concerns it carries, intertwining them with my personal perspectives and acting upon them with purpose. Keshavarz concludes:

'Intervention in design politics is about disarticulating practices, performances, and interactions produced by the design politics, while rearticulating them in directions other than those taken so far or those toward which we are heading. But it is also important to remember that there is no formula for understanding design politics, nor are there specific criteria for making it. There are only moments, situations, devices, and things that can lead us to

disarticulate and rearticulate possible ways of moving through, engaging with, and inhabiting the world. Passports are one of them. 'There are many more to engage with.'
(Keshavarz, p. 141)

There is a metaphor of travel here. When a designer, curator or artist reimagines an identity document, they alter its trajectory as I have, and without a rule book. A document sets out from a bureaucratic position that defines that individual's place in the world (both literal and hierarchical) and the designer changes its bearing towards a new voice and a new message. There an equality in the act of remediation and an opposing inequality in not doing a thing.

Yet my practice has also met resistance. Online platforms flagged my expired, redacted passport as a potential threat: YouTube rejected it, Vimeo removed it, and Issuu's automated checks deemed it illegal. Even printers hesitated to reproduce the work. In the UK, offences related to forging a passport can carry a sentence of up to ten years in prison. Technically, passports are the property of the government, not the citizen. So, when I say 'my' passport – is it really mine?

Examples of Similar Practices that Remediate



Fig. 5. *Sorry for Not Attending*, Jana Traboulsi, 2012

Lebanese artist Jana Traboulsi's *Sorry for Not Attending* (2010, fig. 5) is 'an artist book commenting on the incapacity to attend one's own exhibition, it has been conceived as a statement on visa entry regulations using the format of a passport'. By redrawing and reproducing her passport using analogue methods to mine, she translates a dry and functional document into a powerful comment on against global inequality of movement. Her work was part of *Passports and Identity Documents in the Hands of Artists*, an exhibition at The British Library in Summer 2025.

When interviewing curator Daniel Lowe, Head of Arabic texts at The British Library in July 2025, I made a fundamental realisation. Whilst reviewing the seven works in the exhibition, which all repurposed state-issued documents as analogies for state control of movement and identity, I found that my position has changed by doing the same. Instead of feeling separate from the practice, a spectator of references, I had produced one myself that acted upon me. I moved from designer-observer to activist, albeit from a position of privilege in relation to those represented in the exhibition. It made me ask: if I can realise these things myself through the making, could it be a question for others too? I will describe Traboulsi's work in more detail later in this piece.



Fig. 5. *Sorry for Not Attending*, Jana Traboulsi, 2012

Khaled Jarrar's *State of Palestine* (2012, fig. 5) uses passport stamp and postal stamps for the non-existent state of Palestine as an elegant example of subtle activism. He takes a banal passport stamp and repurposes its design, materiality and context to develop a simple campaign of non-violent resistance. By travelling and stamping other people's documents (240 to date), the idea circulates physically and widely, putting the documents' owners at risk of action against them. The same symbol of the Palestine sun bird is circulated using the Deutsche Post AG service, further propagating the idea.

This remediation of a passport and postal stamp shows yet again that hijacking, repurposing, subverting, translating or manipulating documents of **power** can dramatically change their **effect** from something everyday into something charged and political. By using a passport's visual language and subverting it, we have both changed our documents' course. Jarrar has used formal methods of production to make his piece blend into an active environment, stamping people's passports at checkpoints often putting those people at direct risk.

Using similar formal methods such as foiling and paper choice, I have shepherded my publication into a different space where it speaks to children about colonial legacy and **acknowledgement**. It mimics the original document using foiling and faux leather substrate but then **hijacks** the soft paper internals and intricate patterns to make something alternative.



Fig. 6. Amak Mahmoodian, 2016

Shenasnameh (the name of the official Iranian Birth Certificate, valid for life) is Amak Mahmoodian's comment on the **homogenisation** of Iranian women in their passports, translated into a book, an exhibition installation and two films (see fig. 6). This translation into other media could work with my project. The most engaging for me was the publication, which the artist demonstrated in a poignant and performative film. Pages were ripped, forms were filled in, stamps added and then the book sealed into a bag using a red wax seal, cementing the individual's **ownership** of the book and the **issue** it speaks to.

The reimagining into a book using passport characteristics inspire me to **evolve** my enquiry cross-media. Working in Gitelman's position that to document is to frame something, not necessarily using paper, I ask whether identity documents can be translated into **new forms** or spaces. Mahmoodian's project has helped me realise my agency and the work's potential to be projected forward.

A conditional way of working

As I **travelled** through Unit 2, my working method had three parts. The first was existing discourse, where I sought and acquainted myself with relevant references that could **inform** the second part, the making. I actively borrowed from varied references points in order to build on my work, in a repeating cycle of making and reflecting. The third component was an eye on outcome and its **critical relevance**. Less a chance to produce something pretty, but more to create something tangible that makes a point. The following references have helped me with this balance.

'The process is the product.'

Blauvelt, Maurer, Paulus, Puckey and Wouters' *Conditional Design Workbook* (2013) has helped me to **unlearn tendencies** from my 25-year commercial practice. As an Art Director and Designer working in book design, my process was always focused on an effective commercial outcome. This has often been at the expense of experimentation and play. An **intuitive and iterative approach** has been **uncomfortable** but I am **building trust** in design that unfolds, informed by wider contexts.

Conditional Design Workbook gave me permission to let outcomes emerge organically but 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 forward but fluid momentum. Those conditions included deciding early on a format that **amplifies the subversive** message within my document, using the passports existing illustrative and typographic building blocks to say something new. For example, I took the intricate guilloché patterns once used for **security and forgery prevention** and repurposed them into a children's book illustration.

'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.' (Colomina and Wigley, 2019)

Are we human? Notes on an archaeology of design (2019) made me see that each brief 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 iterations have made me realize that design in turn designs me. Interviewing my mother for Positions through iterating unearthed new information, and setting the audio against the first official document to hold my name 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? My practice has improved my awareness and knowledge of colonialism. Design has made this possible.

Reflections on Context and Positioning

'We can't escape territory, therefore, we can escape the law'
Deutinger (2018, p. 10)

We bound by these documents that reflect and perpetuate inequality. The temptation from a white, Northern European position is saviourism that ignores co-design. Instead, I wonder if graphic communication design can make other holders of the "right" papers notice the hidden hierarchy within.

Knight (2025) suggested picking a layer of passport design such as guilloché patterns present in the UK passport, and subverting. At this moment in British politics where immigration is in the national consciousness, and right-wing attitudes rise globally, any practices to encourage deeper understanding of colonial pasts are worthwhile. After our interview in July 2025, I went on to repurpose those patterns.

Stepping away from this specific document, there is a process of permission at work. Paper enables or disables. Stop or go, yes or no, right or wrong. Is there a simple way of showing this duality using an alternative method of graphic communication design to highlight the issues above? This, perhaps, is a question for Unit 3.

'Today, the territoriality of law and its technical instruments seem to belong to an outdated model that has little place in a globalized world ... It seems that we are on our way to becoming global citizens, with the whole world as our territory. We just don't have a road map yet.'
Deutinger (2018, p. 11)

Critical Case Studies

In this section, we'll travel deeper into three references to see where my practice follows or diverts.

Mentioned in the previous section, Jana Traboulsi's *Sorry for Not Attending* (2013) is a passport that critiques the geopolitical barriers faced by Lebanese citizens. Created after the artist was denied a UK visa to attend her own exhibition at the Tate Modern, London, the work incorporates actual visas, stamps, maps, photographs and drawings.

It grants hypothetical visa access to four destinations, including a fictional Asteroid B612, where travel is restricted for her. She transforms it into a form of artistic resistance, critically commenting on individual rights, mobility, identity and power structures. Through this, Traboulsi exposes the document as an exclusive mediator of state control. The premise of this work is resistance, highlighting the 'unjust global situation' of visa entry regulations.

Masquerading as an official Lebanese passport sleeve, accompanying text cards slipped into the plastic cover explain the book's proposition. But it is the analogue methods that really make a statement. These documents are usually machine-printed and embellished with sophisticated security techniques including specific paper stocks, bleeding inks, security chips and ornate guilloché patterns. This document, by contrast, is handmade; the artist reclaims the narrative by making it themselves demonstrating ownership.



Fig. 7. *Sorry for Not Attending*, Jana Traboulsi, 2012

For example, on pages 2-3 (fig. 7), we see a physical description on the recto page including height, eye colour as well as details of who accompanies the bearer. Note the subtle misogyny in the assumption of 'Son', 'His wife' and 'His children'. This is all provided in three languages: English, French and Arabic. This page, that uses low-cost papers used in photocopying in their typical colours, is overlaid by a super-sized stamp containing the word 'annulé' ('cancelled'). The verso page holds a self-portrait disguised with a line and a parenthesis. Below is an image of a woman in a conciliatory pose that looks like she is worshipping the opposite page. Interestingly, the form is blank, perhaps it is the form itself that is being annulled by the stamp placed upon it.

An original, untouched passport has expected methods of production. Traboulsi's passport is entirely made. My latest passport is a mix of formal and informal, it uses a foiled cover to get your attention, and then plays with the internals.

By sending the passport ahead to the exhibition she couldn't attend and then on to exhibitions in Greece, USA, Lebanon and Germany, this travel document has travelled without its bearer to make a statement about their absence. This is an example of the epistemic power of the document, our relationship with them and the power structures it represents. I wonder if situating my publication in an airport lounge, an airside bookseller or on a departures lounge chair would be an appropriate vector for sharing its message. If a traveller picked it up, would they look twice?

By dissecting and collaging my own passport, I found hidden layers of meaning, context and new connections in Graphic Communication Design. Through iterative experimentation with analogue methods similar to Traboulsi's, I formed new positions on monarchy, climate change and colonialism in British identity. The Graphic Communication Design that I once saw as a profession, can be a vehicle of control and conversely, resistance. The very methods of Traboulsi's work permeate with claiming their space, as I wish to claim mine through the documents that define me.

I began to pose the questions: How can something as mundane as a passport stamp have political power? How else can identity documents be subverted and/or circulated to highlight and resist political injustice? What methods are appropriate to propagate this going forward?

I answered those questions by nominating a position to pursue, evaluating my relation to it and iterating on a response. The striking difference between their starting positions is inequality. Traboulsi remediated her passport from a position of restricted movement and protest, I am remediating mine from a position of relative freedom and privilege of movement. I wonder how else they can mirror each other.

In the first chapter of *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents*, Lisa Gitelman introduces the 'know-show' function of documents and how they both convey and constitute knowledge. The author suggests that mass-produced everyday documents, most common in paper form, play a role in bureaucracy and shape social interactions. And that it is the materiality and reproduction of documents that is central to understanding their historical and cultural significance.

The author asks, what is a document? Is it something else not made of paper? She draws attention to the properties of documents as material objects intended as evidence, processed or framed.

The idea of the "know-show" function of documents is reflected in how Gitelman organises her writing. By analysing receipts and the like, she demonstrates an awareness of their knowledge, and she is showing this by describing it. "Know-show" exists in the text itself through describing mundane, relatable examples and how they sit in the world. This is assisted by the historical positioning and reflecting on the definition of a document. Gitelman also pays attention to materiality by highlighting the physical qualities of paper documents like type and layout, which in turn assert their validity. This aligns with the "show" part of the "know-show" function of documents she describes.

This reference allows me to question my assumptions of documents, their form, function and relevance to my identity and positions. Instead of assuming that a personal, official document should appear as a paper artifact, can I reconsider their form? What is the best medium for a specific document? What should that document communicate if it refers to personal identity? Can they transcend their given function towards something different? *'Paper serves as a figure for all that is external to the mind'*. Therefore, do we embody ourselves in documents? Keshavarz thinks so, mentioning the colonial link between corporeal markers and the right to travel and the rise of fingerprinting (p.30), all the way to using biometrics to literally capture and lock a piece of the body inside the document, thereby monopolizing the power of identification and bodies on the move (p.41).

This reference also introduces me to the idea that they can be both a reflection of authority but also challenge it and that they are tied to specific settings. The methods of graphic communication design are the bridge between the authority and their intention. Traboulsi and Jarrar's projects were circulated without them, out of the artists hands they took on added medium as travel documents that move without their bearers even in an exhibition setting. Jarrar's output was particularly prolific in its circulation. This is echoed by Gitelman:

'Since reproduction is one clear way that documents are affirmed as such: one of the things people do with documents is copy them, whether they get published variously in editions (like the Declaration of Independence, for instance), duplicated for reference (like the photocopy of my passport that I carry in my suitcase), sort of or semi published for internal circulation (like a restaurant menu), or proliferated online (mirrored and cached like the many documents in Wikileaks).'

The reproduction of documents adds value to them and their message; circulation affirms the intent of who issues them or who subverts them.

This analysis underscores the significance of materiality and reproduction in the evolution of documentary practices. Analysing my documents' physical presence and the quality of attention needed to digest it, will inform how I take this theme forward. Not only has Gitelman made me reconsider the very definition of a document, but also how that document can circulate when published or placed into a setting. Could there be new forms of knowledge in circulating multiple copies of my publication in public spaces?

'The Exhibitionist' (the working identity of historian, curator, tour guide and author Alice Procter, mentioned at the start of this piece) uses a variety of curatorial practices to highlight hidden colonialism within British cultural institutions. The following examples illustrate how her work challenges the narratives upheld by museums and galleries and any crossover with my practice.

Uncomfortable Art Tours

'Uncomfortable Art Tours' (see fig. 8) were unofficial, guerrilla-style guided tours in major British museums and galleries including the British Museum, National Gallery, Tate Britain and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The tours revealed how these institutions' histories, collections, displays and funding are rooted in colonialism and empire.

Leading small groups through the collections, Procter discussed how artefacts were acquired, who funded the collections, and how displays often sanitize or obscure their colonial contexts. By focussing on specific objects like Benin bronzes and classical portraits, she created entry points for critical discussion on institutional complicity. Participants were encouraged to question authority and neutrality in an effort to see how colonialism could hide behind culture and education.

'To be clear, I see my work as running alongside the institutions' stories, to contextualise and expand on it, not as a substitute or rival. I want museums to be better, and more representative of the public they're supposed to serve. I can share a story that they aren't acknowledging – I hope one day it won't be necessary for outsiders to take all this work on.' (Doing History in Public, 2025)



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Display It Like You Stole It

Display it like you stole it' (fig. 9) was a series of stickers and badges designed to provoke a rethink of museum display. As you can see in the image on page 15, tight crops of museum pieces found in UK institutions were used as backgrounds and slogans set in prominent, contrasting sans serif type sit upon them. The slogan criticizes UK museums' exhibition of looted colonial artefacts, highlighting how showcasing stolen objects without restitution perpetuates colonial power and erases their often-violent acquisition. Worn within museum spaces, they represented subtle acts of activism – material ways for visitors to “speak back” and challenge the one-way hierarchy in which museums speak and visitors listen passively.

Dear Art Gallery/Museum

'Dear Art Gallery/Museum' was an A6 postcard made for visitors for use within museums or galleries. It was a tool for visitors who, instead of just being quiet audience members, could provide feedback to exhibitors in another act of subtle activism. Instead of coming, viewing and leaving, the visitor transformed from consumer to an active participant in the discourse about representation and accountability.

'Who is the authorial voice here, and what is considered worthy of inclusion? It's well past time for museums to be honest about their acquisitions history and how objects arrive in their collections in the first place.'

(The Exhibitionist, 2025.)

Parallels and Tensions in My Practice

The Exhibitionist's practice exposes colonialism from within objects and the spaces they inhabit, via tours, writing, badges, postcards and podcasts. Similarly, my own project – a subverted passport – an object that also embodies hidden colonial legacies. Its royal crest, internal imagery and deep blue colour evoke imperial power, global reach and a legacy of control over borders and mobility. My reinterpretation of it has *exposed* the colonialism within that was obscure to me before.

Proctor's printed material, specifically the 'Display It Like You Stole It' and 'Dear Art Gallery/Museum', subvert an institutional authority using its own language, as my own project does. Yet, this is not done in an adversarial fashion. Her tours, writing, podcasts and printed ephemera don't insult; they encourage acknowledgment.

'The reason that my tours are called “Uncomfortable” is because the idea is that you actually have to sit with that discomfort sometimes . . . It's not about feeling guilty, it's not about saying “I'm so sorry, I feel so guilty about the past.” . . . It's about saying “Well, we've done some bad things. I know that. What is the legacy that affects me and how can I undo that? What difference can I actually make today?’ (Renegade Inc., 2018)

While my project resembles a bureaucratic object materializing Britain's colonial past – through typography and iconography reminiscent of a passport – the internals offer the same calm, soft activism as Proctor's work. My publication views the subject through a warm, familial lens of everyday life rather than an adversarial one.

The mediums that are so obviously different between Proctor's practice and mine shape their meanings. A passport is a functional object that facilitates movement but also signals hierarchy and privilege. Keshavarz (2020) notes that its multiple and varied stamps and even thickness can act as a sort of status symbol. By contrast, a badge is a worn item used to identify the wearer but also to express that wearer's opinion. 'DISPLAY IT LIKE YOU STOLE IT' is delivered instantly and directly, while a line from my publication – "Where are the missing pieces, Daddy?" (referencing a family trip to the Acropolis in Athens) – invites slower, more personal reflection.

On the 'Uncomfortable Art Tours' and in the interview referenced, Proctor's tone of voice is one of understanding. It's human and reflective. In her 2018 podcast, *James Cook: The Voyages at the British Library*, she records and posts her live reactions to a British Library exhibition marking 250 years since Cook's first voyage. She opens the 58-minute explaining this, with the hum of visitors in the background. She describes the first thing you see being a 17th century map of the Pacific from the European/Dutch perspective and its effectiveness at orientating the viewer going into an exhibition. Next, she describes a painting by John Pule, a contemporary Niuean artist whose work sits immediately opposite the colonial map (Cook visited his birthplace). Proctor describes the label of the artwork which includes the British reference to Niue, "savage island", due to violent confrontations. Pule represents moments of encounters from Cook's 2nd voyage, and Proctor reacts with "it's really interesting to see this artists as an response to the Europeans looking at the Pacific, coming from the Pacific, because that's an angle you often don't get to see in these images, and so it's really nice to have a bit of a sense of that as a kind of balancing out of the narrative as we go in". The podcast continues in this vein with a gentle, objective, qualified tone. My publication echoes that same humanity, mixing memory with facts. For example, I describe a day out to visit Agios Sozomenos ((Greek: Άγιος Σωζόμενος Turkish: Arpalık), a deserted village in the Republic of Cyprus close to our home between 2020 and 2023. My kids asked about the bullet holes present in the abandoned buildings; I was curious about the faces removed from frescoes within its cave chapel. Later research told us that under British rule, government policies deepened divisions between the two inhabiting communities, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, eventually leading to fighting, deaths and the abandonment of the bi-communal village. These facts and memories mix gently and observe history. By engaging and discussing, we learned as a family. Is the something valuable in this tone of voice going forward with my enquiry?

The tours and wearing a badge are soft activism, but they themselves are not hidden. By contrast, my publication is in disguise. Its exterior appears ordinary opens to a large format, map-like, illustrated story inspired by the intricate guilloché patterns of passports. This disguise prompts me to ask: could my publication adopt a more overt, badge-like quality – something proudly shareable? Is there an ethical question here, would this be a publication used to share knowledge without bias or preconceptions? Would it be centrist, left, right, "woke" or neutral? There is a distinct difference in distribution between a tour, with badges and postcards, and a publication that can be reproduced and circulated. Would this represent an appropriate way of enabling colonial acknowledgment?

Reflections and Next Steps

Set against a widening international discussion around restitution of artifacts and acknowledgment of colonial and imperialist legacies by museums and galleries, Procter's approach directly and openly challenges the status quo within the UK. They also ask the viewer to understand and acknowledge that the way our histories are shown and taught is flawed and to examine what difference the individual can make today. In the development of my practice and

iterating versions of my passport, from investigating its materiality to unearthing inherent colonial legacy, I've come to understand my own position more deeply. The latest iterations of my project do not attempt to reconcile the subject of colonial legacy for the masses, instead I consistently frame it using a period of time spent living outside of my home country and everyday family life. This connection has made me aware that I automatically assume that colonialism is negative and without benefit. In turn, my children's understanding of our country's past may also be limited or biased. With this in mind, I aim to let the source material dictate the responses, guided by the making.

This prompts me to speculate on target audience. The Uncomfortable Art Tours' primary participants were art-history students, museum professionals and adult visitors. The Exhibitionist podcasts also dialogue with adult listeners. In comparison, my output looks to include children as an audience, *combined* with their parents. As my enquiry has developed and naturally included my kids, is there an appropriate way to engage both audiences? Could it be a children's book? What examples are out there of kids' books that deal with uncomfortable histories?

In the next step of this enquiry, I interviewed my children about their education and time abroad, exploring what their views of our country's past are. I grounded this within current parliamentary debate on decolonising the UK curriculum which was last petitioned in 2020 and debated in 2021 (UK Government and Parliament, 2020 and 2021). I sourced, read and evaluated children's books for ages 8-13 to determine an appropriate tone of voice for my publication. The systems that these books work within are rigid and can be impersonal. Does using a format like a passport offer a different, unexpected point of access to this subject? Because it's not a book, will people be more intrigued, particularly in a travel environment? Can readers interrogate the subject directly by involving themselves with the document, adding to it, captioning, solving puzzles to gain knowledge?

Therein, using a more direct tone of voice akin to the strength of The Exhibitionist's, I produced the latest iteration, which is a bright, unapologetic publication aimed at children.

With her tours in mind, is there something more performative or site-specific I can do with my document? Can I test its efficacy on friends and family, recording their reactions? I wonder if Proctor's practice also a deep personal connection has, given that she was a dual-nationality child as seen in her biography.

Does a personal connection strengthen or complicate our roles as designers engaging with colonial critique? Do our perspectives need to be micro (personal) as well as macro (societal)?

The source was approached for comment with: "I note a personal connection to your practice. Does your background as a child of two places influence your work? If so, does it help or hinder your curatorial role engaging with subjects like colonial legacy? Do our perspectives as viewers and creatives engaging with this subject need to micro (personal) as well as macro (societal)?" The source did not respond.

On the path of my enquiry so far, I have constantly discovered new and evolving positions through making and research. The unearthing of colonialism in my personal identity document brought a new awareness of my national identity, my cultural attitudes, my inherited privilege and my education. More importantly, it has given me cause to investigate those of my children.

The question again, is:

Can adults and children explore colonial legacy together?

But also:

If there is a lack of awareness or acknowledgment in UK education, can I influence that using my skills as a designer in a publication and/or performance?

Synthesis

My enquiry examines my relationship with colonial legacy as a parent and designer, it starts to explore my childrens' positions too. At a moment of political polarisation, with immigration at its epicentre, I use Graphic Communication Design to prompt others to reflect. I am also beginning to explore how colonialism is represented in UK education as a potential space for further development and dialogue.

Subversion and amplification of our documents through design and publishing, can make us reconsider the form, function and effect of these powerful pieces of paper. By digging into them ourselves (Blauvelt, A., Maurer, L. Paulus, E., Puckey, J., Wouters, R., 2013), we as designers are reminded to question and remediate their role in our lives and those of others.

At the intersection of colonialism, family life and identity, my line of enquiry is deeply personal but also societal. Micro and macro. At first, it makes me see personal positions that were hidden to me before and realise the exceptionalism I've been taught.

Through further research and consideration of audience, I am seeing beyond old assumptions. Those include privilege of movement, subliminal national superiority and by contrast, the preconception of colonialism as an entirely negative phenomenon.

Ongoing research and making could raise new questions:

- What does it mean to be British in a time of polarised politics?
- How is colonialism reflected in the everyday lives of my kids and is there a way of creating soft connections alongside their learning? When asked, my daughter states that she does not know what the British Empire was, but she has also engaged with the triangular slave trade as a subject in her History lessons. With that in mind, can the UK school curriculum connect with learning elsewhere on colonialism and its effects?
- Could other parents share similar realisations through this work?
- Can I encourage positions of understanding, responsibility and tolerance through a publication or performative engagement with a specific audience?

Next Steps

I plan to test my publication, taking in a cross section of parents and their children initially, within my socio-economic group in the UK. Accompanying this, I will seek the professional context of a children's publisher who I work with, Chicken House books, also approach schoolteachers in my personal network. This will situate my practice practically and inform future decisions about broader testing with additional groups to ground the first. In initial interviews with parents, I will ask them to open, read and interact with it. I will film their engagement and ask a consistent set of questions before drawing conclusions.

If my research proves that a publication can foster positive discussion of colonial legacy, deeper evaluation how children's publications currently address the topic will be needed, with the aim of finding a tone of voice and visual language that can speak to young and old alike. Using findings from this research, I could create a series of travel-themed books for adults and children, encouraging families to reflect together on colonial privilege, identity and belonging.

Through these shared encounters, I hope graphic communication design can help reframe colonial legacy for families not as a guilty past, but as an ongoing story that we can learn to engage with more openly and positively, together.

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Typographic note

Firstly set in *English111 Vivace BT* and Caslon which are rooted in colonialism and passport design, this text pivots to distinctly anti-colonial or global, open source typefaces to reflect the shift of colonial awareness and knowledge. Open source typeface **Tac One** embodies an anti-colonial design ethos and rejects Eurocentric typographic norms to center on African authorship and aesthetics. **Noto Sans** was designed to support every writing system on earth – resisting the Eurocentric norm of Latin-only design. It empowers languages marginalized under colonialism by giving them typographic parity.