

Theme/Context

Provide a brief summary of the theme or subject you want your work to focus on. You might include details about the impact you hope to achieve, how the book format will help you connect with your audience, and what will make your work stand out. (300 – 500 words)

The aim of my photobook is to document urban landscapes as they appeared at the moment of being encountered. The images are not staged or rearranged; they record scenes as they existed on the day, shaped by weather, movement, chance, and routine. Human presence may appear incidentally, but never as a constructed focal point. Instead, people emerge as part of the wider environment, reinforcing the idea that urban space is continually shaped by everyday passage rather than by deliberate orchestration.

Urban spaces in South Wales is approached here as a region defined by layers of transition. Industrial infrastructures, post-war planning, commercial centres, and domestic streets coexist within compressed geographies, producing landscapes where remnants from different eras sit side by side. The photographs attend to these overlaps, older structures persisting alongside newer interventions, signs of decline intersecting with adaptation, and moments of continuity embedded within ongoing change. The images reveal how some buildings are preserved and valued, while others are left to deteriorate, decisions perhaps often driven more by financial pressures than by the needs or desires of local communities.

Rather than offering a definitive portrait of place, the work resists spectacle and nostalgia. It focuses instead on the ordinary: streets paused between uses, buildings carrying traces of labour and habitation, and moments where activity briefly interrupts stillness. Where people appear, they do so as part of the spatial fabric, underscoring the idea that urban environments are shaped as much by routine movement as by long-term planning or policy.

Taken together, the images form a quiet record of areas of South Wales as lived space, neither romanticised nor dramatised, but observed with attentiveness to how history, economy, and everyday life remain inscribed in the built environment. The work positions the urban landscape not as backdrop but as evidence, a material archive of social change, infrastructural decisions, and the rhythms of daily life. The images in the book will be in colour and contain high levels of detail, presented on high quality gloss paper. The book will be large enabling the viewer to immerse themselves in the various scenes.



Influence

Highlight the work of a photographer who currently inspires your work. Analyse an image of theirs and explain your interest in their work. Consider style, theme, context, practical technique. (300 – 500 words)

One of my influences for this project and in my practice in general, is Stephen Shore. My practice explores social change. I am strongly influenced by the new topographic style of photography and how the man altered landscape changes over time.

This image captures an ordinary street scene that aligns closely with the documentary discourse of the New Topographics movement. Rather than presenting a picturesque or idealised landscape, the photograph foregrounds the man-altered environment and the traces of human activity embedded within it. It functions not only as a landscape photograph but also as a form of social commentary, offering a glimpse into the road culture of early 1970s America. The scene reflects a moment of shifting economic patterns in small-town life, revealing how suburban and infrastructural spaces, often overlooked or dismissed as visually unremarkable, are in fact rich with aesthetic and cultural significance.

The title, consisting solely of the location and date, appears matter-of-fact but provides important contextual cues. Naming the town situates the image within a specific geography and situates it in a specific time. This allows the viewer to analyse the cultural changes over time. The large, fuel-inefficient car, for example, reflects a period when petrol consumption was not yet a cultural or economic concern, and mobility was associated with freedom rather than constraint.



Stephen Shore, *Mineral Wells, Texas, June 1972.*

At first glance, the scene may appear mundane or even uninteresting. Yet the photograph reveals a layered narrative about American commercialisation and consumer culture. The absence of people contributes to a sense of quietness, hinting at subdued economic activity and the unhurried rhythms of small-town life. The empty road and lack of traffic evoke a time when driving was relatively unrestricted and unburdened by congestion. The framing and use of colour challenge traditional expectations of landscape photography, drawing the viewer into the scene rather than positioning them as a distant observer. The image's stillness and ordinariness become its strength, inviting reflection on the cultural values, economic conditions, and infrastructural realities of the period.

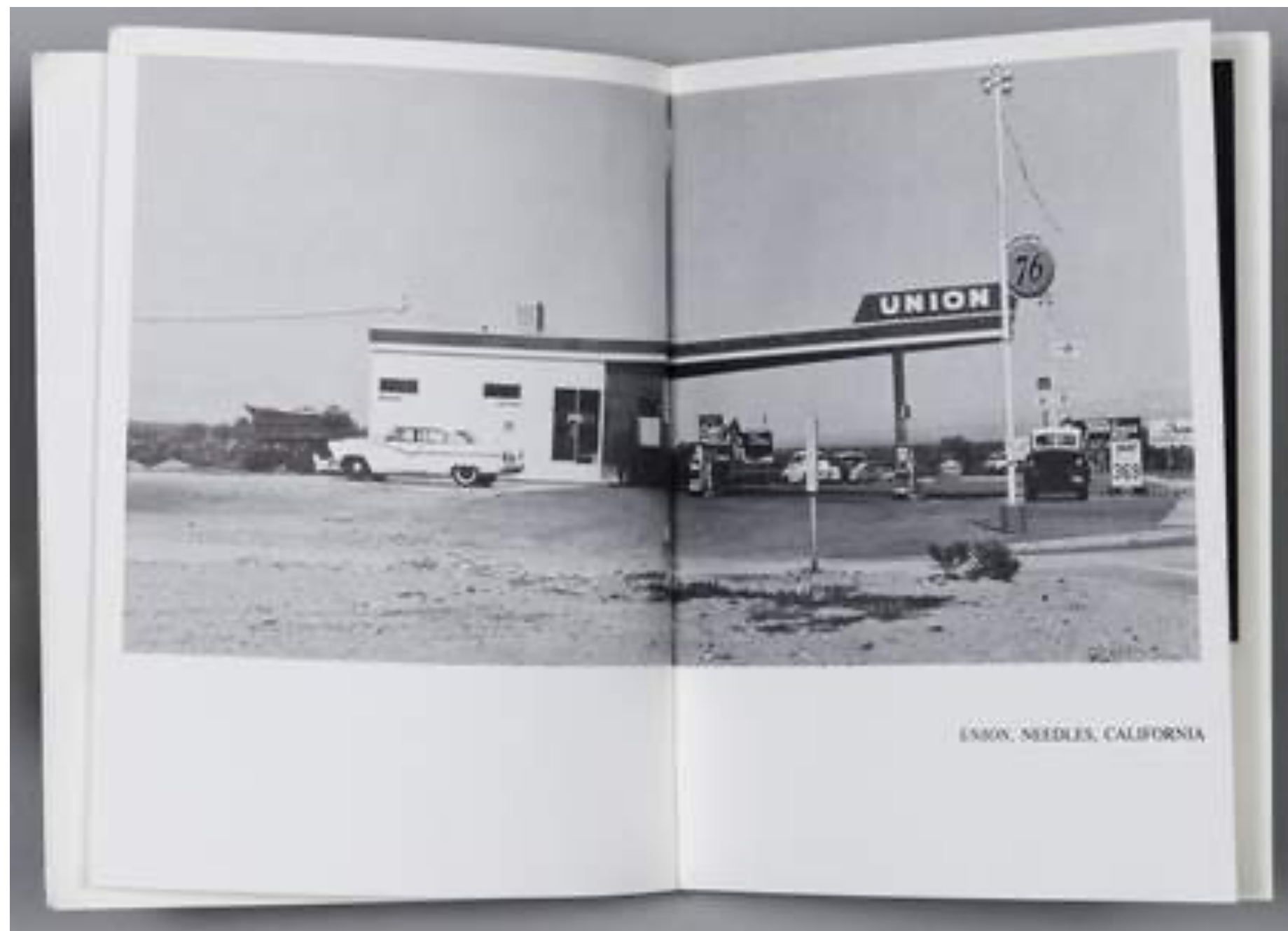
Ultimately, the photograph exemplifies how everyday suburban spaces can carry significant meaning. It demonstrates that the seemingly banal, petrol stations, roadside architecture and parked cars, can reveal broader truths about American life, mobility, and the socio-economic landscape of the 1970s.



Stephen Shore, *Mineral Wells, Texas, June 1972*.

Book Form

Referencing the session PowerPoint on Moodle (or another relevant source), discuss at least one book that has influenced you. Explore its visual and aesthetic qualities, social or historical context, impact, or practical methods relevant to your theme. You may also evaluate its overall effectiveness. (300 – 500 words)



There are two photobooks which have had a significant influence on my work and address themes closely aligned with the project I aim to produce. The first is *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by Edward Ruscha, a seminal publication that helped bring the ordinary, man-made landscape into the realm of contemporary art. By selecting petrol stations as his subject, Ruscha directs attention toward structures that are typically overlooked. The book elevates these utilitarian sites, prompting viewers to reconsider notions of value, beauty, and artistic legitimacy. Although Philip Leider (2023) remarked in *Artforum* that the photographs were not professional and that “most of them are not even good,” the images are, in my view, rich with cultural meaning. They speak of travel, consumerism, and a specific moment in American life. The book’s modest production, black-and-white reproductions printed cheaply and originally sold for three dollars, reinforces its conceptual stance, art need not rely on spectacle or technical virtuosity to be significant.

The second book, while exploring similar thematic territory, could not be more different in form and intention. Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places* is a high-quality, large-format publication containing varying numbers of images depending on the edition, all printed with exceptional clarity on high-gloss paper. The photographs were made with an 8×10 large-format camera and colour film, and the book is designed to showcase the depth, detail, and tonal subtlety of the originals. Shore approaches each scene with meticulous compositional precision, producing images that are both visually sumptuous and grounded in the everyday. His insistence that ordinary scenes are not boring but “rich with meaning” (Shore, 2014) underpins the project's conceptual foundation.

Shore's approach is arguably more honest than that of many landscape photographers who present the world as if emptied of human presence, “as though mankind has been wiped out by the plague” (Harris, n.d.). In contrast, Shore acknowledges the human imprint on the landscape. Each image is captioned with its exact location and date, giving the book a documentary discourse that enables viewers to consider not only spatial but also cultural change over time. The work blurs the line between documentary and art, every time the book is viewed, each photograph reveals further layers of detail and meaning.

Together, Ruscha and Shore demonstrate two distinct but complementary strategies for engaging with the everyday landscape. Ruscha's conceptual austerity and Shore's formal richness both affirm that the ordinary built environment is worthy of sustained attention, an idea that sits at the core of my own practice.



References

Harris, G. (no date) *Book review: Stephen Shore: Uncommon places - the complete works, Learning with Experts*. Available at: <https://www.learningwithexperts.com/blogs/articles/book-review-stephen-shore-uncommon-places-the-complete-works> (Accessed: 10 February 2026).

Leider, P. (2023) *Edward Ruscha's twenty-six gasoline stations, Artforum*. Available at: <https://www.artforum.com/columns/edward-ruschas-twenty-six-gasoline-stations-215580/> (Accessed: 10 February 2026).

Shore, S. (2014) *Uncommon places: The complete works*. Thames & Hudson.