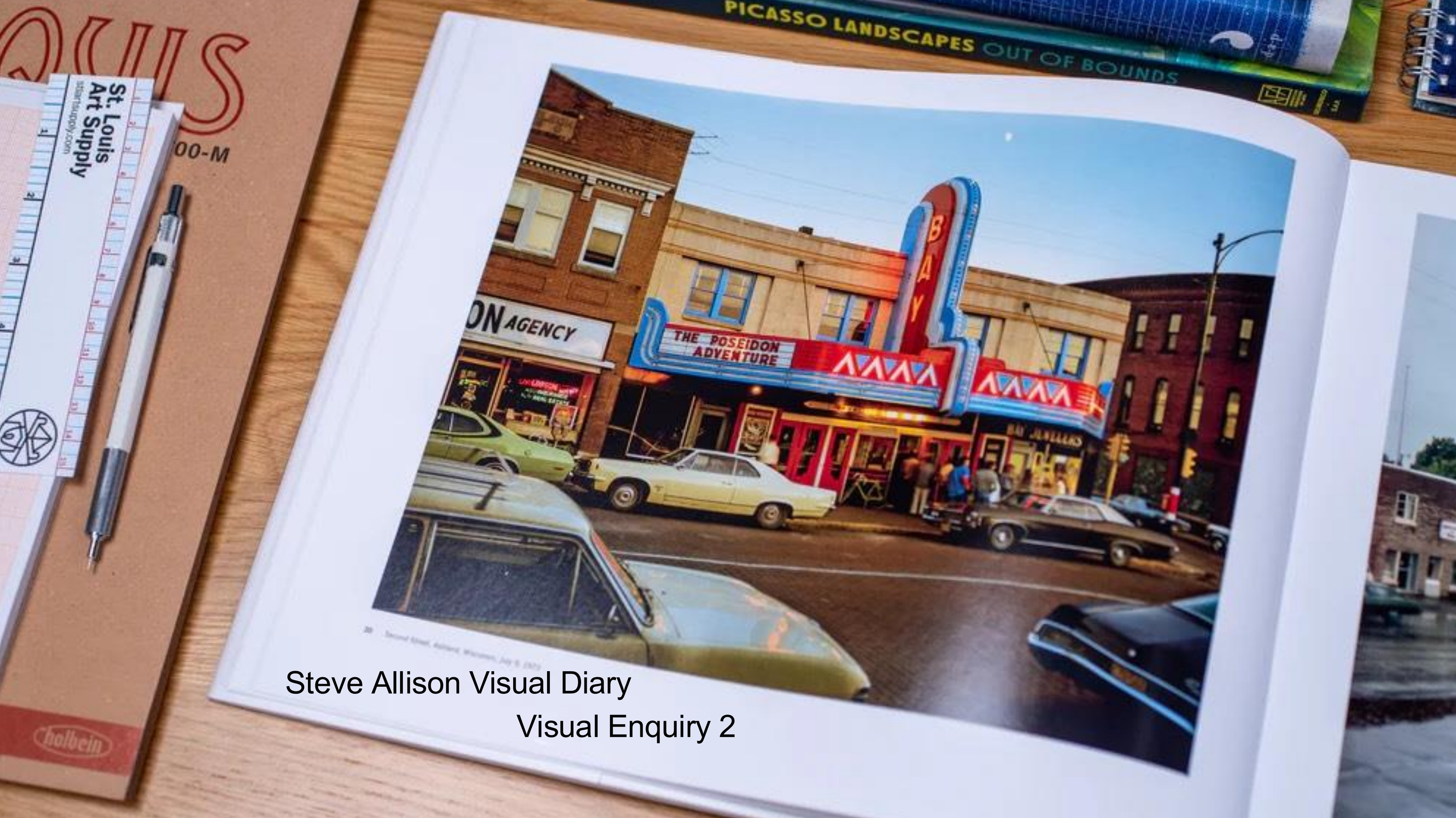
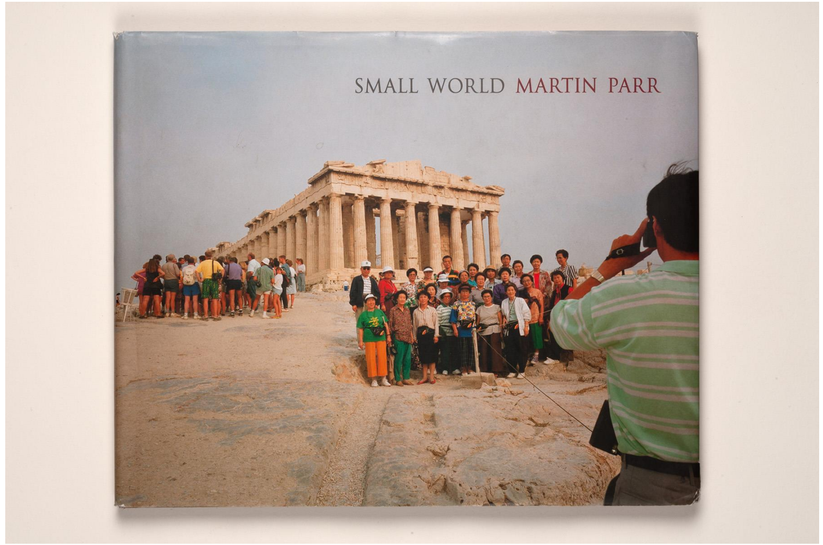


Steve Allison Visual Diary

Visual Enquiry 2





The Book Project

This semester's brief requires the production of a photobook accompanied by a body of work for exhibition. The exhibition component will almost certainly draw from the images included in the book, creating a coherent relationship between the two outcomes. The project involves developing a clear conceptual framework that will underpin the book's theme, followed by the creation or selection of images that articulate this idea.

Subsequent stages will include experimenting with sequencing, layout, paper stocks and binding methods in order to determine the most appropriate material form for the work and to ensure that its underlying concerns are communicated effectively to viewers.

As my long-term ambition is to develop a practice centred on the production of artist books, I am particularly invested in this project. It offers an opportunity not only to refine my technical and conceptual approach, but also to gain a deeper understanding of how the book form can shape meaning, guide interpretation and function as a primary site for photographic practice.

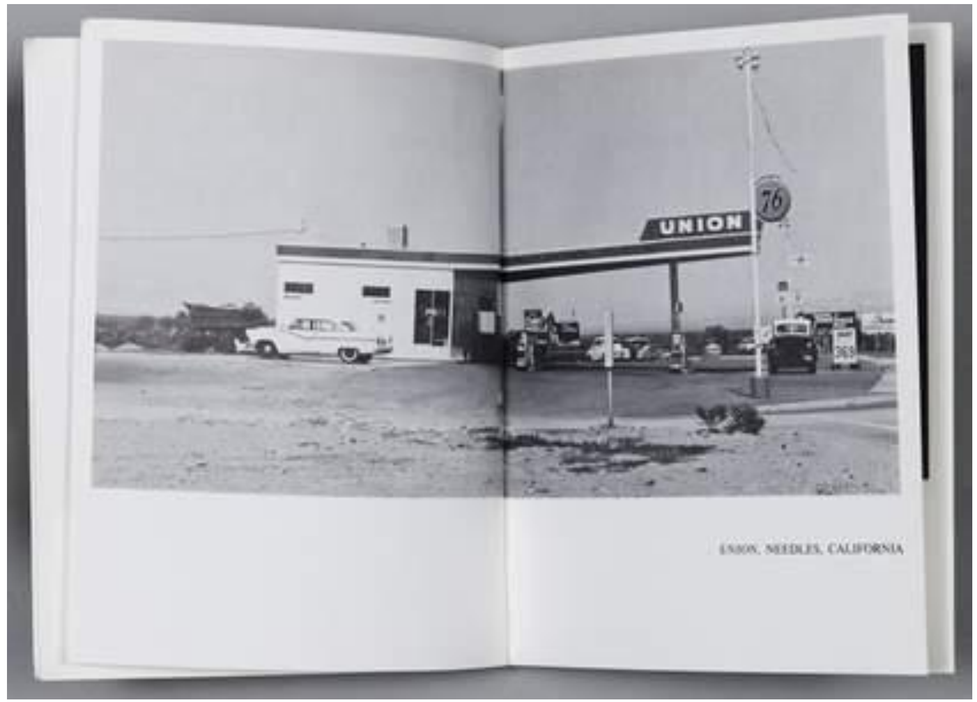


The first session of the Visual Enquiry and Photobook project introduced us to the photobook as both an historical form and a contemporary site of artistic practice. Rather than treating the photobook as a neutral container for images, the session framed it as a medium with its own conventions, politics and material possibilities. We discussed the functions photobooks have served, from documentary record to conceptual artwork, and traced the evolution of image-based books within twentieth and twenty-first century visual culture.

As a group, we examined a range of photobooks, considering not only their imagery but also their sequencing, design strategies and material construction. This process highlighted the extent to which layout, scale, paper stock and binding, operate as meaning, producing elements rather than secondary concerns. We also reflected on how different books address their audiences, noting the spectrum from mass produced publications by major publishers to small edition, hand-made works intended for niche or local readerships. The discussion underscored the paradox that some of the most modestly produced books, initially inexpensive and widely accessible, have become highly collectable and culturally significant.

A key example was Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations (1962)* a work that has been particularly influential in my own practice. Ruscha's book, produced cheaply, originally costing $3 and distributed informally, challenged prevailing assumptions about what a photobook could be (Tate, n.d.). Its deadpan seriality, vernacular subject matter and anti-aesthetic stance positioned it as a foundational text in both conceptual art and the New Topographic sensibility. Ironically, the very qualities that once made it accessible have contributed to its current status as a rare and valuable object. When I visited the Victoria and Albert Museum, I was not permitted to handle their copy, which reinforced the tension between the book's original democratic intent and its subsequent institutionalisation.

This session therefore provided not only an introduction to the photobook as a form, but also a critical framework for understanding how books circulate, accrue meaning and shape photographic practice. It has already begun to inform how I think about my own work and the role the book might play within it.



Book Dummy

As part of the book project, we were asked to produce a book dummy. Since I have not yet finalised the content for my eventual submission, I chose to develop a body of work I had already begun. This took the form of *Twentyeight Red Phone Boxes*, a project consciously informed by the conceptual strategies of Edward Ruscha. Having discovered that there are twenty-eight remaining red phone boxes in the Vale of Glamorgan, I became interested in how these structures are perceived by their respective communities and how they function, or fail to function, in the present day. I photographed each box, inside and out, and began assembling a preliminary sequence.

My initial layout followed the orientation of the original photographs, landscape exterior views placed on the right-hand pages, with smaller interior images positioned on the left. I captioned each spread with the original telephone number, avoiding geographic identifiers, which felt too descriptive and risked anchoring the work in documentary specificity rather than conceptual intent. As several numbers were no longer traceable, I substituted them with coordinates generated through the What3Words application.

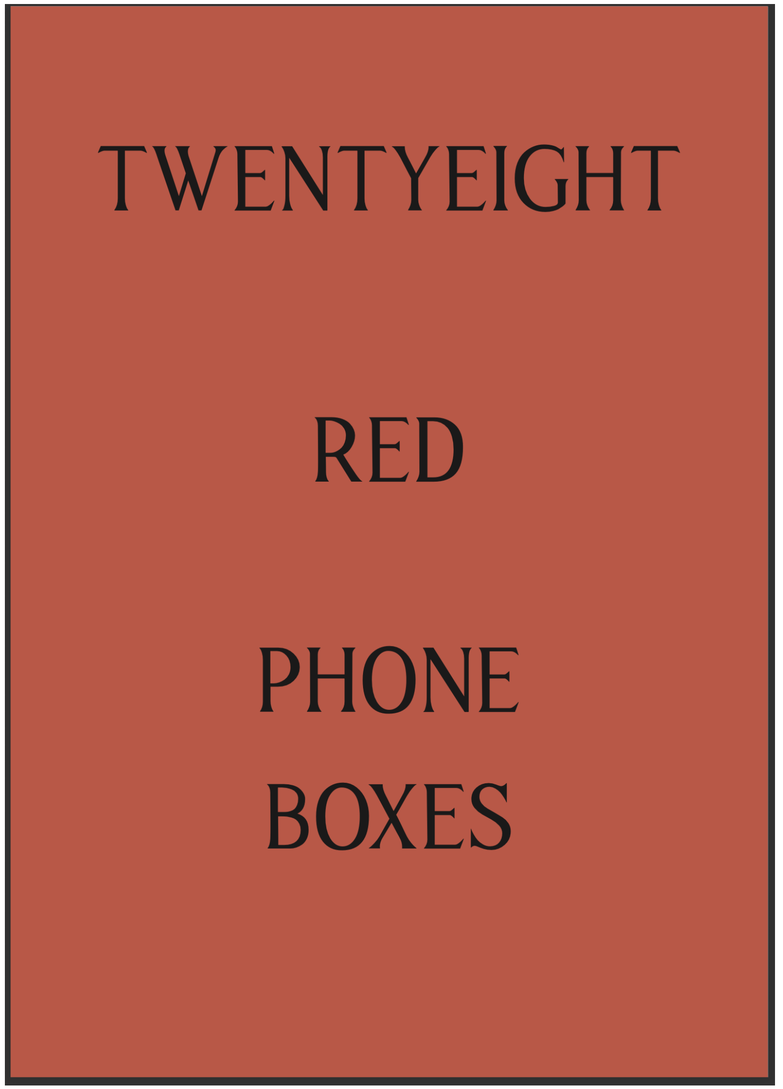


However, I became increasingly uncertain about the inclusion of the interior photographs. Their presence shifted the work toward a factual survey, which conflicted with the more restrained idea driven tone I wanted to achieve. I therefore produced a second layout that omitted the interiors entirely. This allowed the exterior images to sit within the page with a natural border, rather than bleeding to the edge, giving the book a quieter, more deliberate rhythm.

During my research, I learned that Ruscha used a Yashica 6×6 medium-format camera for his early photobooks (Getty Museum, n.d.). In response, I cropped my images to a square format as a subtle homage to his approach. Although my work remains in colour, I wanted to retain the conceptual clarity and structural economy of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Once the square images were placed on the right-hand pages, with captions on the left, the book began to take shape.



The final stage was the cover design. Following Ruscha’s precedent, I opted for a typographic cover without imagery, using a single colour reminiscent of a faded, weathered phone box. I found a font called K6, which someone had created to replicate the word ‘Telephone’ on the original phone boxes. I used this font for the cover and caption text. Lacking the facilities for perfect binding, I used saddle stitching and selected a thread that matched the cover tone. After printing, I trimmed the edges using a guillotine, which gave the dummy a more refined and intentional finish.



Tutorial

Whilst the rest of the class were away in Amsterdam, I had the opportunity to meet with Estefani for a tutorial to discuss my developing ideas for the book project. I began by showing her my book dummy, which she immediately recognised as a deliberate homage to Edward Ruscha. Following this, I presented two possible bodies of work that I am considering for the final submission.

The first project, *Last Orders*, examines the decline of pub culture, once a defining social infrastructure within British life. The work documents pubs that have been abandoned, closed, or repurposed, reflecting broader shifts in community, economy and public space. Through these images, I am exploring how the disappearance of these institutions signals a wider cultural unravelling and how their architectural remains function as markers of social change.







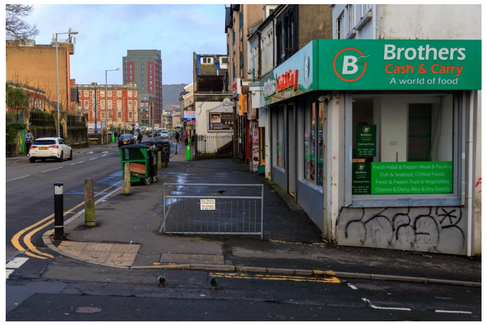
















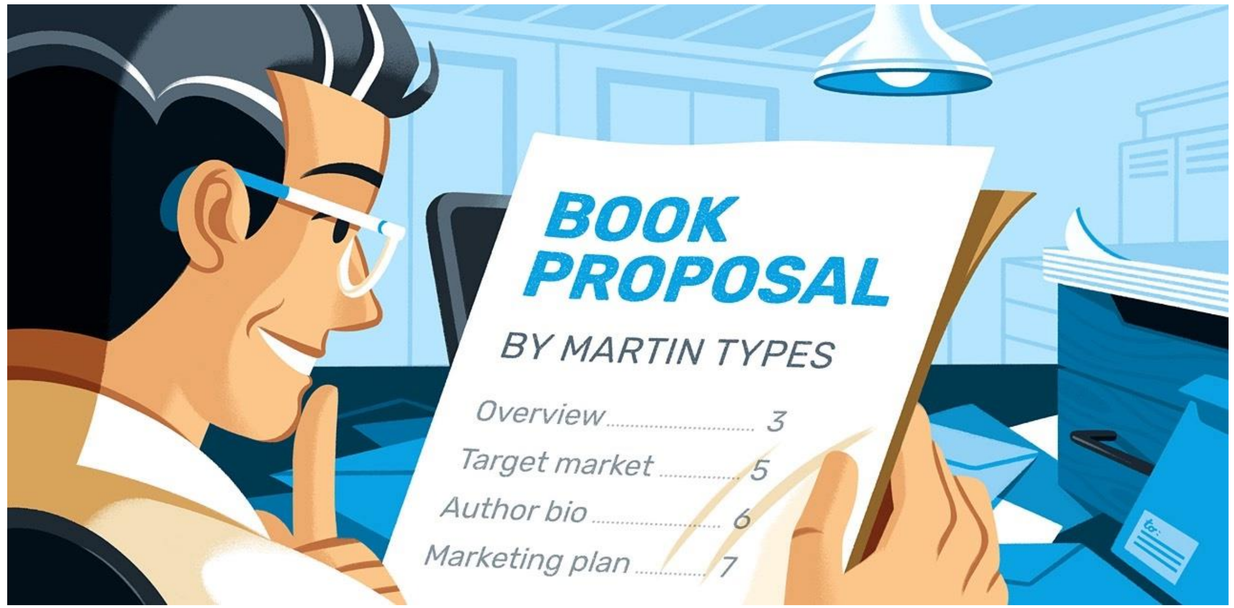


The second set of images, currently untitled, focuses on urban landscapes and the politics of space. This work is strongly influenced by Stephen Shore's attention to the everyday and the vernacular, whilst also drawing from Peter Mitchell's sensitivity to place and quiet humour. The images foreground the layered detail and cultural residue embedded within the urban environment, revealing how ordinary spaces articulate broader social and spatial dynamics.

Both projects offer distinct conceptual trajectories, and the tutorial was valuable in helping me consider how each might translate into a coherent book form.

Book Proposal

The second task is to produce a book proposal that outlines the conceptual influences behind the work I intend to develop. This proposal will articulate the thematic and contextual concerns that the book seeks to address, situating it within relevant artistic lineages and critical frameworks. It will also provide a concise description of the intended outcome, explaining how the book is expected to function both materially and conceptually. In doing so, the proposal will clarify the motivations for the project, the ideas it engages with, and the form through which those ideas will be communicated.



Theme/Context

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 are South Wales is approached here as regions 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, whilst others are left to deteriorate, decisions perhaps often driven more by financial pressures than by the needs or the 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. When 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 carved 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.


PORT
TALBOT
is a colourful town
Domino's
SALES
RENTALS


THE RAILWA
SOUTH WALES




HOMEHUNTERS
BT


CE57 UTM

Influence

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. The date 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.*

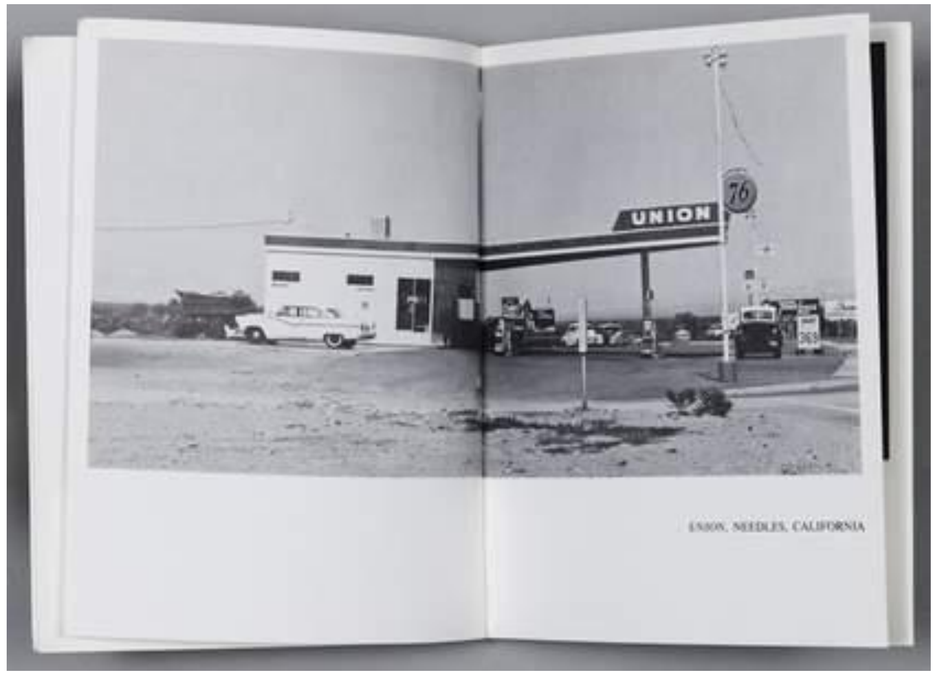
At first glance, the scene may appear mundane or even uninteresting. Yet the photograph reveals a layered narrative about American commercialisation and consumer culture. The absence of people contributes to a sense of quietness, hinting at subdued economic activity and the unhurried rhythms of small-town 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



There are two photobooks which have had a significant influence on my work which 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 construction, 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, whilst 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. They are all printed with exceptional clarity on high-gloss paper. The photographs were made with an 8×10 large-format camera and colour film. 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.





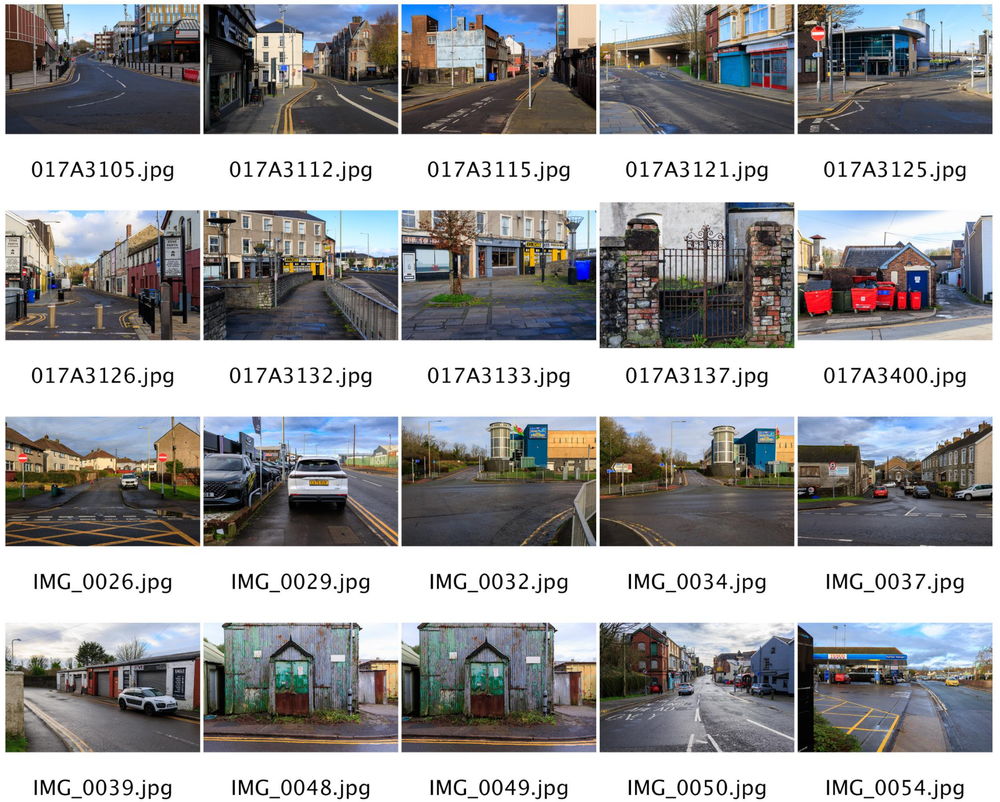
The project Cycle

The process of producing the work for my book was loosely informed by a flâneur-like methodology. I began by selecting locations I felt would offer the kinds of subjects central to the project. Upon arriving, I walked the surrounding streets to develop an initial sense of the area's character. As I moved through these spaces, I photographed in direct response to what I encountered, focusing on details, surfaces and structures that articulated the themes underpinning the work.

My intention was to record as much visual detail as possible. However, unlike artists such as Stephen Shore or Joel Sternfeld, I neither have access to, nor could I justify the cost of, an 8×10 large-format camera. Instead, the images were produced using a combination of medium-format and high-resolution full-frame digital cameras, which offered a practical balance between mobility and image fidelity.

I chose to work in colour because much of the cultural and material significance within these environments is communicated chromatically. The tones of painted surfaces, the weathering of materials and the visual language of signage all contribute to the reading of place. Colour, therefore, became essential not only as an aesthetic choice but as a means of conveying the social and spatial conditions the project seeks to examine.

After the shoot, I reviewed the images and shortlisted those I felt were the strongest.





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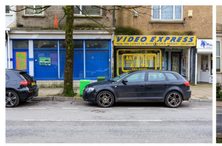

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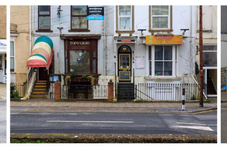

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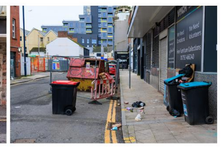

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IMG_0083.jpg


IMG_0088.jpg


IMG_0106.jpg


IMG_0115.jpg

I repeated this process across multiple sites, selecting locations on the basis of their historical trajectories and their capacity to reveal visible traces of change. For the purposes of this project, areas that had remained largely unchanged for several decades offered limited relevance. I was instead drawn to places where the built environment bore evidence of transition, adaptation and decline.

This led me to locations with pronounced industrial histories, Port Talbot, Briton Ferry and former coal-mining communities, where the landscape has shifted from one shaped by heavy industry to one negotiating the realities of a post-industrial economy. These environments still carry the physical and cultural scars of their industrial pasts, yet they also register the economic challenges that followed the loss of those industries.

Such places are rich in visual and cultural meaning. Their surfaces, structures and spatial arrangements reveal layers of social change, making them particularly resonant within the context of the project. The resulting images reflect the post-industrial condition of these communities, capturing both the remnants of former physical labour and the contemporary realities that have emerged in its absence.

Having spent time on several photographic excursions, I have now shortlisted around 350 images that could meaningfully sit within the book. My approach in the field has been closer to that of a flâneur, choosing an area, fixing only a starting point, and then allowing the walk itself to dictate the route. As I move, I respond photographically to whatever the environment offers.

Working this way feels truer to the kind of book I am trying to make. It allows the work to emerge from the place rather than from a predetermined outcome. Beyond selecting where to begin, nothing is staged or strategised. I prefer this openness, it produces photographs that carry the texture of the area and its cultural weight, rather than images shaped by a fixed agenda or a contrived point of view.







My Book Title

Choosing a title for my book has been difficult. It needs to acknowledge my influences, works like *Uncommon Places,* while remaining unmistakably my own. The title should do three things, convey the observational clarity that runs through the photographs, register the social change and infrastructural focus at the core of the project and carry the cool, reflective tone of the everyday urban landscape.

•**Common Ground** Strong, concise, and socially charged. Suggests shared spaces, civic life and the democratic surface of the everyday. Slightly broad, but carries weight and is memorable.

•**Ordinary World** Evokes the everyday clearly, but risks feeling too general or leaning toward the sentimental. Less infrastructural, more humanist.

•**Edges of the Everyday** Quietly poetic, spatial, and observational. Speaks to thresholds, margins, and overlooked zones. Strong alignment with my interest in civic decline and peripheral infrastructures.

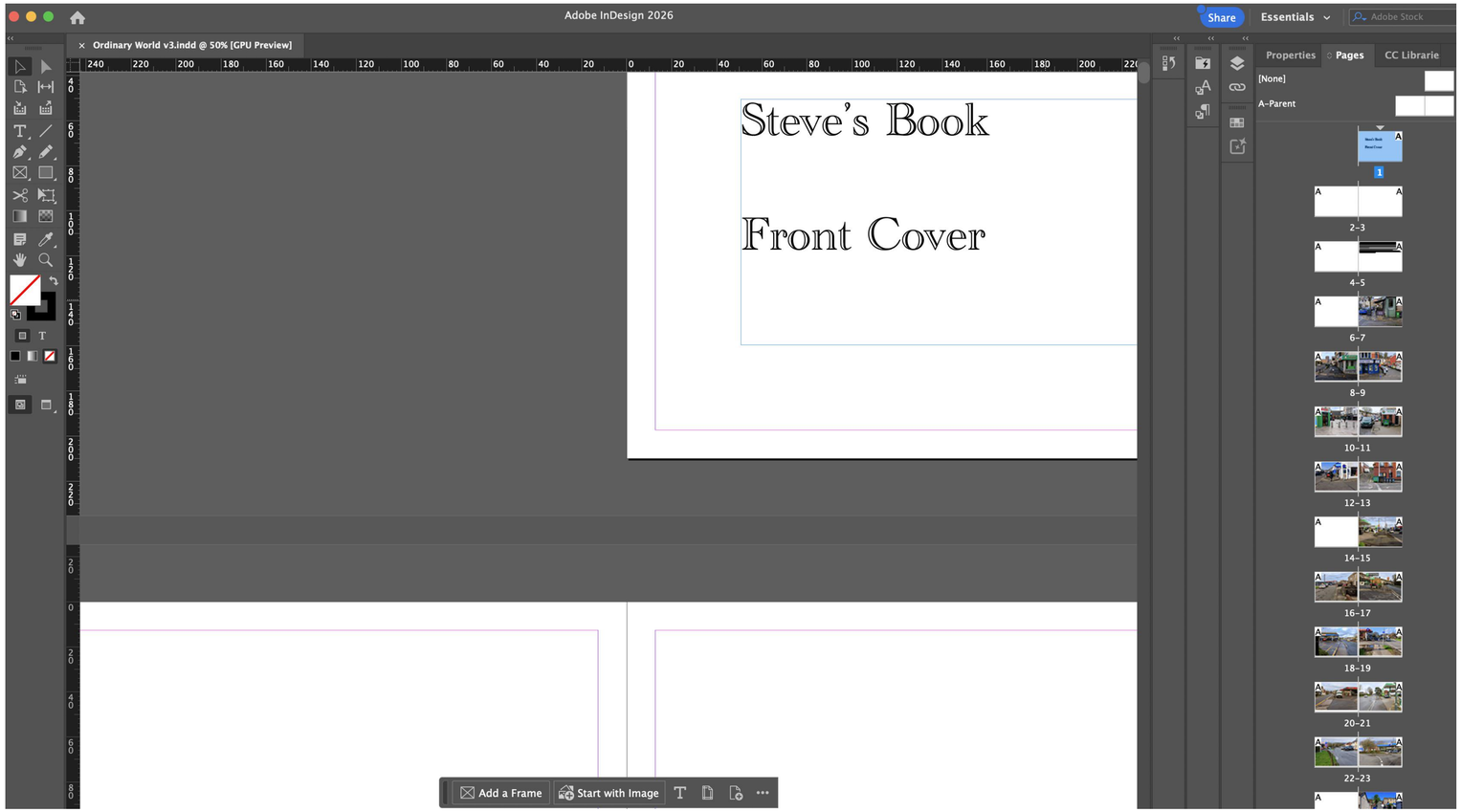
•**Designed for Life** Direct, material and infrastructural. Implies wear, traces and the social life of public space. Carries a documentary sharpness and feels closest to the observational clarity the work describes.

•**Shaped by Life** Conceptually rich, sociological and architectural. Signals a study of systems and civic structures. Slightly more academic in tone, but that may work well given my practice.

I am leaning towards Ordinary World as I feel this is the most balanced.





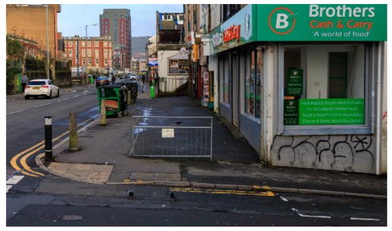


I want the book to feel as immersive as possible, which naturally pushes me toward a larger format. A landscape orientation is essential, it reflects the way the photographs were made and allows each image to sit on the page with the scale and clarity the work depends on. I am choosing a gloss finish for the same reason. It reveals the sharpness and detail that are central to how these photographs operate.

Although an A3 book would offer the expansiveness I imagine, the technical challenges and production costs make it unrealistic at this stage. A4 feels like the right balance, still generous in scale, but far more practical to produce with care and consistency. I have already built an initial layout in InDesign as a starting point.

The final page count is still open. This project benefits from volume and gain weight from the cumulative experience of moving through many images. I expect the sequence to be substantial. At this early stage, I am considering around 120 photographs, though the exact number will be shaped by the edit and by the rhythm that emerges as I begin placing images and letting the book take form.

















Having settled on the basic layout, I began placing images onto the pages. My initial instinct was to group photographs according to the subject within the frame. Although once I started building spreads, it became clear that the work held together more convincingly when I paired images on facing pages according to their aesthetic qualities rather than their literal content. At this stage, that decision was based entirely on feel.

I am aware I need to look more closely at why certain images sit comfortably together whilst others resist pairing. Perhaps there is no strict logic to it, maybe sequencing is, at its core, an intuitive act shaped by the sensibility of the person making the book. Even so, I cannot shake the sense that there is something deeper at play, some underlying visual or emotional rhythm that guides these decisions.

To test this, I began grouping images with similar lighting, tonal qualities, or colour palettes. I assembled twelve photographs into six spreads to get an early sense of whether these choices were working together. This small experiment helped me see how the images begin to speak to one another, and it is giving me a clearer sense of how the larger sequence might eventually take shape. Some of the pairings seem to have a form of symmetry which make them gel together. Other pairings, appear to jar against each other, despite having relatable content. The second pairing on this page is an example of a lack of tone and symmetry despite the content aligning. There are situations where making the pairings uncomfortable might have artistic benefits, it is not the case for this work.

Book Reviews

Stephen Shore - Uncommon Places



Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places* is a substantial, meticulously produced, hardback photobook comprising images made during a series of road trips across the United States. Working in the lineage of Walker Evans and Robert Frank, Shore spent the 1970s travelling across America and photographing the ordinary, unremarkable scenes that constitute everyday life. In contrast to Ansel Adams, whose landscapes present an idealised, almost aspirational vision of America, Shore photographed the country as he encountered it. Adams offered a version of America as he felt it should appear. Shore presented it as he encountered it. *Uncommon Places* has since become one of the most influential photobooks of the twentieth century.

Originally published in 1982 with a tightly edited sequence of 49 images, the book was expanded significantly in the 2004 edition, which added a further 100 photographs. Shore has continued to revisit his archive, reintroducing previously excluded images into the *Complete Works* edition, the version I own. This ongoing process of reconsideration reflects Shore's broader practice of re-evaluating his earlier decisions and acknowledging the evolving meanings of his work.

Shore's commitment to colour was, at the time, both deliberate and provocative. Colour photography in the early 1970s was still widely dismissed within the art world as commercial, vulgar or aesthetically inferior. Critics argued that colour distracted from the formal qualities of black-and-white, such as light, texture, and tonal structure (O'Hagan, 2015). Shore rejected this hierarchy, for him, colour was integral to the descriptive and conceptual function of the work, "The world I was looking at was in colour, and colour seemed integral to the meaning" (Shore, 2007, p.18). His use of colour was therefore not decorative but essential to the project's realism and its engagement with the American vernacular landscape.

The book’s production values reinforce this intention. Printed on high-quality paper, the reproductions preserve the clarity and tonal subtlety of the original 8×10 large-format negatives. The level of detail, both optical and cultural, reveals itself slowly as the viewer turns the pages. What initially appears banal becomes increasingly complex, offering insights into the textures, structures and social conditions of late-twentieth-century America. Each photograph is captioned with its precise location and date, situating the images within a documentary framework that invites the viewer to consider historical and cultural change. The sequence is neither chronological nor geographically ordered, signalling that aesthetic relationships between the images rather than narrative progression, determined the book’s structure. This method enhances the artistic value of the book.

Uncommon Places has been particularly influential in my own practice. Shore’s insistence that everyday scenes are not boring but “rich with meaning” (Shore, 2014) has shaped the way I approach the built environment and the politics of the ordinary. His work demonstrates that the seemingly insignificant can reveal broader cultural truths, a principle that underpins much of my photographic and conceptual research. Each view of the image reveals more due to the exceptional detail in the frame.

The inclusion of motel interiors and portraits of people he encountered along the way introduces a more personal dimension to the project. However, I feel the book would have been stronger without these images. Their presence disrupts the otherwise rigorous focus on the American landscape and its infrastructures, and the work’s conceptual coherence is, in my view, more compelling when it remains anchored in the external world rather than the autobiographical.



Martin Parr - Small World

Small World is one of several photobooks by Martin Parr, published in 2007 by Dewi Lewis. Parr, a prolific and often sharply observant photographer, has long provided humorous yet incisive insights into everyday life. Like Stephen Shore, he was an early adopter of colour photography within the art world, using its heightened palette to expose the contradictions and absurdities of contemporary culture. My reason for selecting this book is its commitment to representing lived reality rather than an idealised or sanitised version of it.

Tourist attractions, whether natural landmarks or constructed spectacles, are typically presented in isolation, framed from privileged viewpoints that exclude the surrounding chaos. In practice, these sites are frequently characterised by restricted vantage points, dense crowds, aggressive souvenir sellers and the commercial infrastructure that supports mass tourism. Local residents often display little reverence for the attractions that visitors travel across the world to see. Parr captures this disjunction with characteristic wit. An image of a man repairing a car in Egypt with a pyramid in the background exemplifies the gap between the mythologised image of a place and its everyday reality.

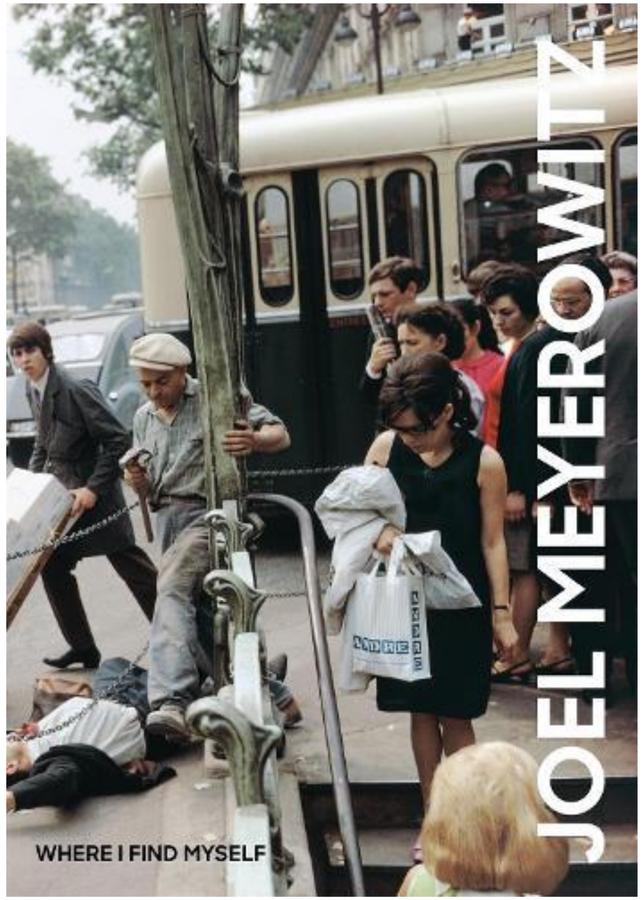




Parr confronts this tension directly through satirical, documentary driven photographs that expose the contradictions of global tourism. As he notes, “Tourism is the biggest industry in the world. I’m interested in the great conundrum, the contradiction between the mythology of these places and the reality” (Parr, 2010). The book brings together images made over several years and across numerous trips, forming a body of work that is both humorous and critical. However, the presentation can at times feel disjointed. A chronological sequence might have strengthened the narrative by allowing the viewer to trace how tourism and its visual culture, has evolved over time.

The book’s design also plays a significant role in shaping the viewer’s experience. Most images are printed with borders, while others appear full bleed. The full-bleed spreads draw the viewer directly into the scene, creating an immersive encounter, whereas the bordered images feel more detached, as though observed from a distance or framed within a conventional photographic space. A small number of photographs span the gutter across two pages; in my view, these images lose some of their impact, as the book’s spine disrupts the continuity of the composition.

Joel Meyorwitz - Where I Find Myself



Where I Find Myself is a substantial retrospective of Joel Meyerowitz's photographic career. The book is a large-format hardback printed on heavyweight quality paper and its physical scale is immediately striking. Containing 354 pages of images and text, it fully justifies its subtitle, *A Lifetime Retrospective*. Meyerowitz's career has indeed been characterised by continual evolution. As he notes, "I began as a 35mm street photographer and later learned to work with the large format camera. In that way I became comfortable with both vocabularies" (Meyerowitz, 2018). The book reflects this trajectory, charting his movement from black-and-white street photography to colour and from spontaneous observation to slower, more contemplative large-format work.

The book is organised into chapters that ostensibly follow a reverse chronological structure, though in practice there is considerable overlap. Each chapter represents a distinct project or thematic concern and is introduced with a short text by Meyerowitz outlining his motivations and reflections. Unusually for a photobook, these textual sections continue throughout, offering extended commentary and contextualisation. Whilst this approach is uncommon, it is effective within the framework of a retrospective, where the artist's voice becomes part of the historical record.

The book’s portrait orientation, however, raises questions about the presentation of Meyerowitz’s large-format images. Several photographs are printed across two pages, and in my view this diminishes their impact. My copy, being new, is tightly bound, making it difficult to fully appreciate the images that span the gutter. Although the binding may loosen over time, a landscape format would have better accommodated the proportions of the work and preserved the integrity of the compositions. I also find the inclusion of Meyerowitz’s recent still-life photographs somewhat jarring. Whilst it is understandable that he wishes to include his latest work, a retrospective is arguably not the most appropriate context for material that diverges so sharply from the projects that define his career.

Overall, I found the book slightly disappointing. I admire Meyerowitz’s work, but I feel this publication does not showcase it to its full potential. The scale and ambition of the retrospective are admirable, yet the design choices and the inclusion of less cohesive material undermine the clarity and impact of the earlier work.



Photobooks as objects

Our session today focused on photobooks as objects, and I found it particularly engaging to consider how their physical form can shape the way viewers read and understand the work. These books often push against conventional expectations, and in doing so they offer a deeper insight into the ideas they hold.

I was especially drawn to *Until Death Do Us Part* by Thomas Sauvin (2015). At first glance it appears to be nothing more than an old packet of cigarettes, its design even predates the familiar anti-smoking warnings. Opening the packet reveals a small book, its cover printed with cigarettes arranged exactly as they would be inside the box. The gold-edged pages echo the foil lining. The object leaves the viewer in no doubt that smoking is central to the work's meaning.





Sauvin, a French artist working in China, constructed the book entirely from found photographs, casual wedding snapshots in which cigarettes appear repeatedly. Because cigarettes play a significant role in Chinese wedding customs, the book becomes a compact, slightly disconcerting study of a cultural ritual. The combination of vernacular imagery and a meticulously crafted object creates a playful but pointed commentary on habit, celebration and social performance (Mallonee, 2025). The title of the book is ironic as cigarettes are known as a serious health risk and a leading cause of early death whilst the wedding ceremony represents a new life together (Gampat, 2024).

We also looked at a range of other examples that demonstrated just how many ways a photobook can be made, concertina structures, fabric-based books and formats that fold, expand, or behave more like sculptural objects. Each one showed how form can act as an extension of content rather than a neutral container. The session was both informative and genuinely inspiring, opening up further possibilities for how a photobook might communicate through its material presence as much as through its images.



Exhibition Title

Our exhibition will be titled *Sonder*. Eeveryone contributed title suggestions. Once the ideas were listed on the whiteboard, we moved through several rounds of voting, eliminating options until we reached a title that everyone agreed on: *Sonder*.

At first, I associated the word with its Afrikaans meaning, “without,” but I was fairly sure the other students were not drawing on that reference. A quick search confirmed a different, more widely recognised definition. *Sonder* is a noun describing the sudden, profound realisation that every passerby is living a life as vivid, complex, and chaotic as one’s own. It captures the idea that each person carries their own ambitions, routines, anxieties, histories, and private narratives, an entire world unfolding alongside ours, often unnoticed. As Radparvar (2018) describes it, we appear in one another’s lives only briefly, sometimes as nothing more than a figure in the background or a lighted window at dusk.

This layered sense of parallel lives and unseen stories feels fitting for a group exhibition, especially one bringing together different disciplines, perspectives, and ways of seeing. The title is descriptive because this is a joint show with the Fine Art faculty and because of the range of work being presented.



Exhibition Role

The exhibition roles were allocated on a voluntary basis, and because this is a joint show with the Fine Art faculty, there were more than enough people to cover every task. In fact, most roles were oversubscribed, which made it easier for those who did not want to take on additional responsibilities to simply step back.

I knew from the outset that design work and social media weren't areas where I could contribute effectively. Instead, I put myself forward for the chairperson role, something I feel confident doing and genuinely enjoy. As it turned out, two others, Libby, and Adam from Fine Art, also volunteered. I decided to step aside and let them take the lead, but I will still act as a joint chair alongside them. Libby will take overall responsibility, and I will support her where needed, whilst Adam will oversee the Fine Art side of things.







Revisiting My Book Title

I have been rethinking the book title and trying to find something simple enough to reflect the mundane nature of the images, yet resonant enough to signal their cultural and political significance. The project traces how the urban landscape shifts over time, reshaped by contemporary needs whilst still carrying the marks of what came before. Capitalism determines which structures are adapted, which are discarded, and which are allowed to decay, often with little regard for history, community or aesthetics.

The more I consider it, the more the city feels like peeling back layers of wallpaper in an old house, each surface revealing a different moment, a different intention, a different set of values. The idea of accumulated layers of time, use, neglect and adaptation sits at the heart of the work. I am leaning toward titles that draw on this metaphor, something around layers and the everyday. *Everyday Layers* is one option, though it feels a little too on-the-nose, so I am exploring variations that keep the clarity but offer more nuance.

Binding Workshop

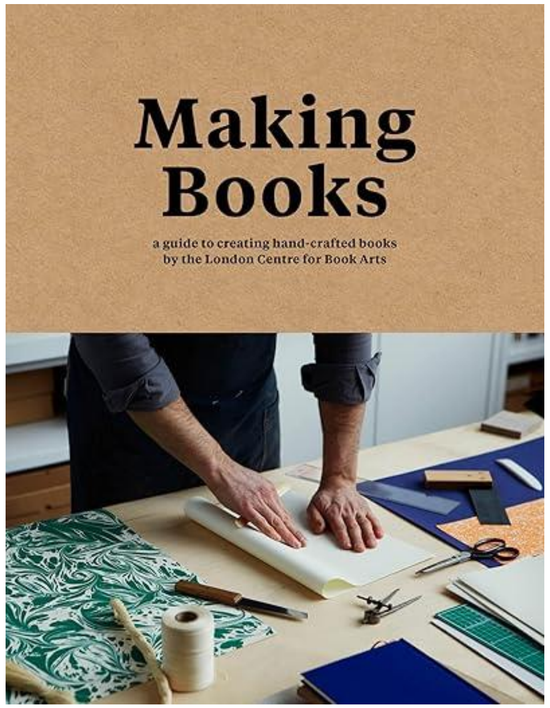
The book-binding workshop was both informative and engaging. We were introduced to a range of binding methods suited to different book formats and creative intentions, along with the tools and techniques required for folding, trimming, and working with various paper types. The session gave me confidence that I can now bind a book myself. Although we only covered a small number of stitching methods, it was clear that the underlying principles can be applied to many other approaches.

To practise, I printed a copy of my *Twentyeight Red Phone Boxes* book and used a simple saddle-stitch binding, which felt appropriate for the subject. I then experimented with trimming the edges using the guillotine. Whilst obvious once demonstrated, I had not previously considered how the centre pages protrude more and how trimming them creates a clean, even edge and a more professional finish.

I enjoyed the process and have since bought *Making Books* by Simon Goode to continue learning. I plan to keep practising different techniques, as I find real satisfaction in making books that house my images.





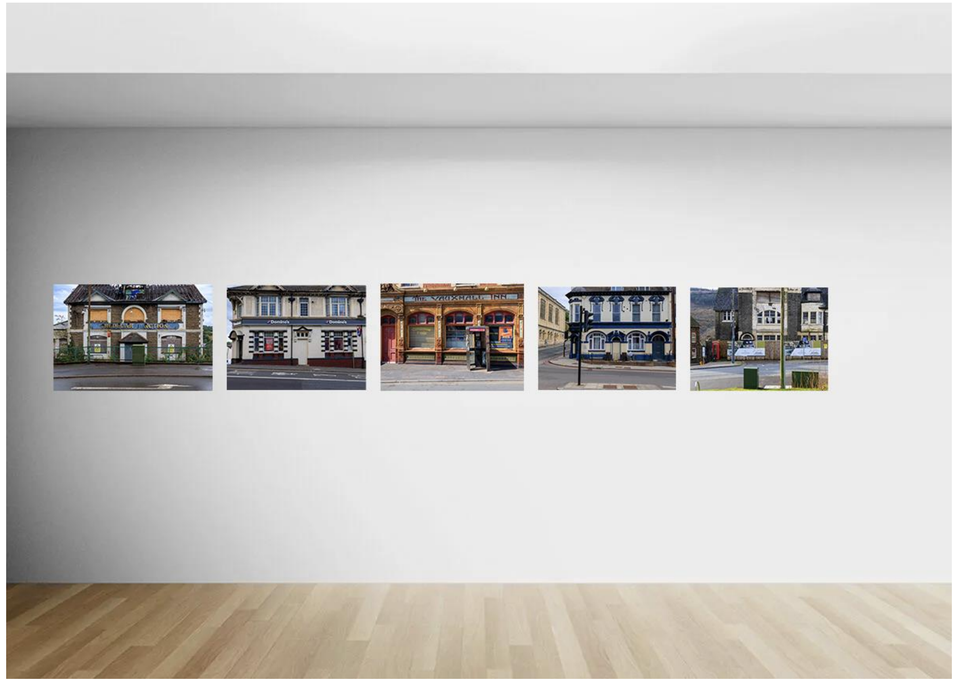


Exhibition Considerations

The exhibition date is approaching, and although I am planning to show still images, there are a few practical uncertainties. I have submitted my exhibition proposal and am waiting to hear whether I will be allocated the space I am hoping for. My main concern is whether there will be enough time to produce the work at the scale and in the format I want.

The images I am developing for the book project rely heavily on scale, they need physical presence to communicate the themes effectively. To avoid presenting a diluted version of the work, I am considering refining the exhibition selection. At this stage, I am leaning toward focusing solely on closed or repurposed pubs. This narrower set still sits firmly within the urban-landscape framework, but it allows the context and ideas to come through clearly with a smaller number of large prints. It also gives the work a stronger conceptual coherence while remaining true to the broader concerns of the project.

I would like to include five large photographic works, each printed at 80 × 60 cm, in landscape orientation, for presentation within the group exhibition. The works will be mounted directly on the wall, with the specific backing or framing method is to be finalised in consultation with the exhibition team to ensure coherence with the wider curatorial approach. I am considering how I can get texture on the images. The images could possibly be printed on vinyl and adhered to the wall as this would allow the underlying wall to provide texture, which I feel suits the work. I am investigating other options, such as thin frames, mounting on textured board and canvas wraps. The scale of the prints is intended to create an immersive encounter, allowing the viewer to engage physically with the textures and structures depicted.



Exhibition Context

I have decided I will definitely use the closed and repurposed pubs as my exhibition focus. The images in the book rely on scale, they work best when they accumulate, when there are many of them in dialogue. Given the limitations of the exhibition space, that approach would not be practical. In parallel to the book, though, I have been developing a project called *Last Orders*, and it sits naturally within the wider body of work. It is effectively a subset of the urban landscape photographs in the book, and one of the exhibition images appears there as well.

Last Orders is a photographic study of the disappearance and transformation of one of Britain's most enduring social institutions. Once central to the life of towns and neighbourhoods, pubs functioned as places of gathering, storytelling, celebration and refuge. Now many stand abandoned or converted into housing, supermarkets or offices, quiet markers of a deeper cultural shift.

Approaching the subject as both elegy and inquiry, I am documenting what has vanished whilst paying close attention to what replaces it. Through these images, *Last Orders* invites viewers to consider the social cost of this disappearance and to reflect on how communities adapt and redefine themselves as their traditional meeting places recede into memory.











Exhibition Presentation

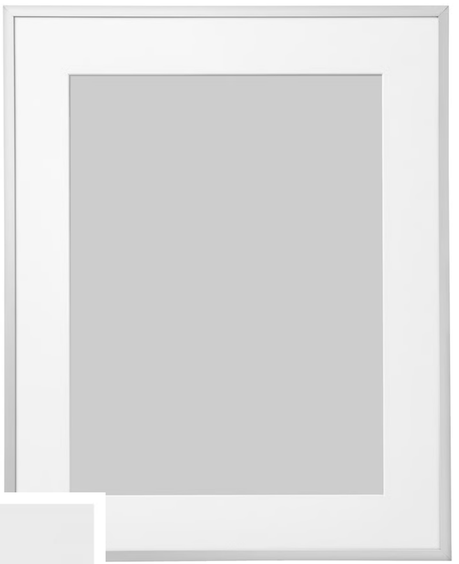
I have now resolved that the works for the exhibition should be presented in frames. Earlier considerations around introducing surface texture were ultimately set aside, as such interventions offered no meaningful enhancement to the conceptual or visual integrity of the images. My intention is for the frames to appear professional yet understated, avoiding any form of decorative embellishment that might distract from the photographs themselves.

This decision was informed in part by the *Coalfaces* series displayed in the *Valleys* exhibition (2024) at the National Museum of Wales. The aesthetic and tonal affinities between that work and my own, made the framing approach particularly resonant. A quiet, functional presentation that supports the image without asserting itself. Whilst custom fabrication was beyond my budget, I was able to identify an Ikea frame whose proportions and material character closely approximated the frames used in *Coalfaces*.

The Ikea design, however, incorporates a perspex glazing and a window mount intended to sit in front of the print, an arrangement that conflicts with my aim for an unmediated viewing experience. I wanted the surface of the photograph to remain exposed, without reflective barriers or additional layers that might introduce visual noise. Achieving this required rethinking the frame's construction.

To retain the necessary depth and rigidity, both the perspex sheet and the mount remain essential components, but their roles are inverted. The perspex will function as a backing substrate rather than a protective front, with the print adhered directly to its surface. The window mount will then sit behind the perspex, providing structural support and ensuring the frame closes securely.

This adapted configuration preserves the simplicity and subtlety I am seeking whilst working within practical constraints. It also aligns materially and conceptually with the broader ethos of the project, clarity, restraint, and a commitment to functional solutions that do not overstate their presence.







Due to spatial limitations within the exhibition venue, I made a necessary compromise regarding print size. Producing the images at **50 × 60 cm** preserves their visual presence whilst significantly reducing the wall space required. After purchasing the frames and obtaining a test print, I began experimenting with the adapted framing method.

The process of adhering the print to the perspex proved technically demanding. The adhesive is extremely tacky, allowing no margin for adjustment. Once the paper makes contact with the perspex, it bonds immediately and cannot be repositioned. Several attempts were required before I achieved a satisfactory placement. Although a minor imperfection remained from an earlier misalignment, the overall result closely matched my intended presentation.

Despite the challenges, the framed test piece confirmed the validity of the approach. The image sits cleanly within the frame, unmediated by glazing, and the material configuration maintains the subtle, professional aesthetic I had aimed for. The success of this trial has given me confidence in the method, though the process clearly benefits from multiple hands and a careful, coordinated technique. I will therefore ask Daf to assist with the final framing to ensure precision and consistency across all exhibited works.

Exhibition Installation

Having established that the adapted framing method was both effective and aligned with the aesthetic I intended to achieve, I proceeded to have the final prints produced and began the framing process. With Daf's assistance, I framed all five works in preparation for installation. Once the frames were complete, I waited for the allocation of exhibition space.

After being assigned a section of wall, I installed the work. The space provided was sufficient to realise my intention of presenting the five images in a linear arrangement, allowing the sequence to be read as a continuous visual progression. The frames include a slight lip between their outer edge and the backing surface, which required a secure method of fixing. I determined that using two screws per frame would hold them firmly in place and prevent any lateral movement.

Using a spirit level and light pencil guides, I positioned and hung each frame to ensure consistency across the sequence. Once my installation was complete, I was able to assist others with their own exhibition setups.







Exhibition Opening

The exhibition opening was highly successful. All work had been installed well in advance, and the bar and reception area were organised efficiently. The event attracted a substantial number of visitors, and the feedback was consistently positive. As a group, I feel we worked effectively and communication was well managed. Communication was through a dedicated WhatsApp group and there was a strong sense of cooperation with members offering assistance to one another whenever needed.

Overall, the exhibition functioned smoothly, and the atmosphere suggested that visitors genuinely enjoyed the experience. I received several encouraging comments about the work I presented, which was reassuring. Whilst external validation is not the primary motivation for my practice, positive responses do help affirm the clarity of the work and the strength of the artistic decisions underpinning it.



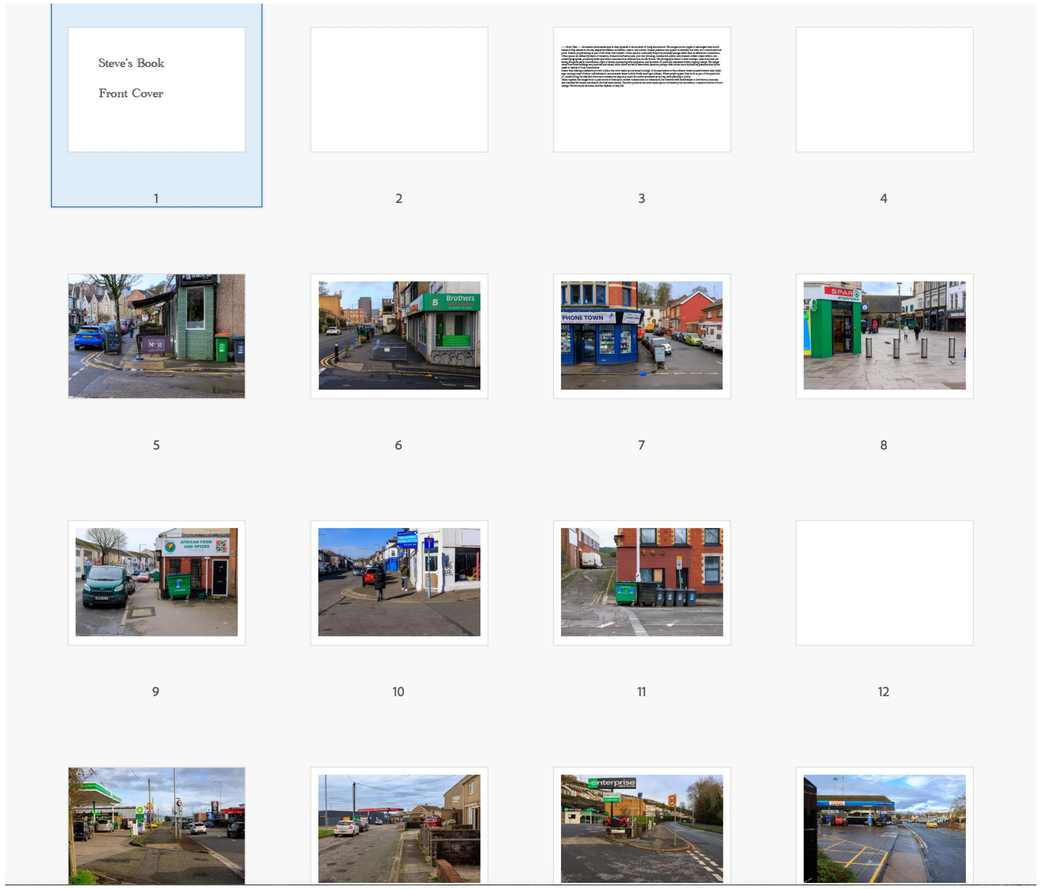
Book Dummy

Having experimented with laying out images as spreads, I decided it was time to tackle the task of creating a book dummy to see how the work was functioning. I have been prolific in shooting for this project, so there is no shortage of material; the real challenge will be deciding what to leave out. I laid out several pages to begin shaping the dummy and started experimenting again with grouping images loosely by content and recurring themes.

For each sequence, I chose to open with a full-bleed image. It felt like an effective way to pull the viewer in before shifting to slightly smaller images with a white surround. At the end of each sequence, I left a blank page as a kind of chapter marker. I am still testing these ideas, so I am not certain this will be the final methodology, but I am drawn to the clarity the blank pages provide and the immersive quality of the full-bleed openings.

What I am less certain about is whether grouping similar types of images risks giving the book a predictable, overly formal rhythm. A more varied or intuitive layout might create a stronger sense of movement and keep the viewer more engaged. I am still feeling my way through that balance.

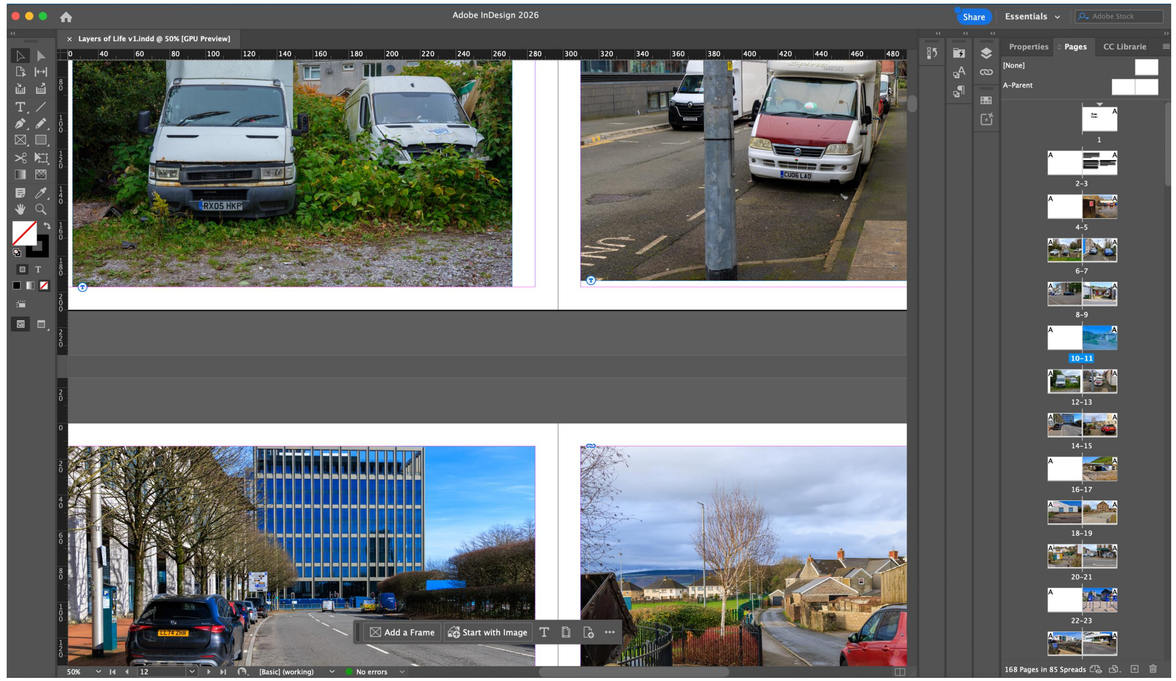
I also know I want the cover image to run across both the front and back cover, though I still need to work out the technical side of achieving that. For now, the book remains untitled.

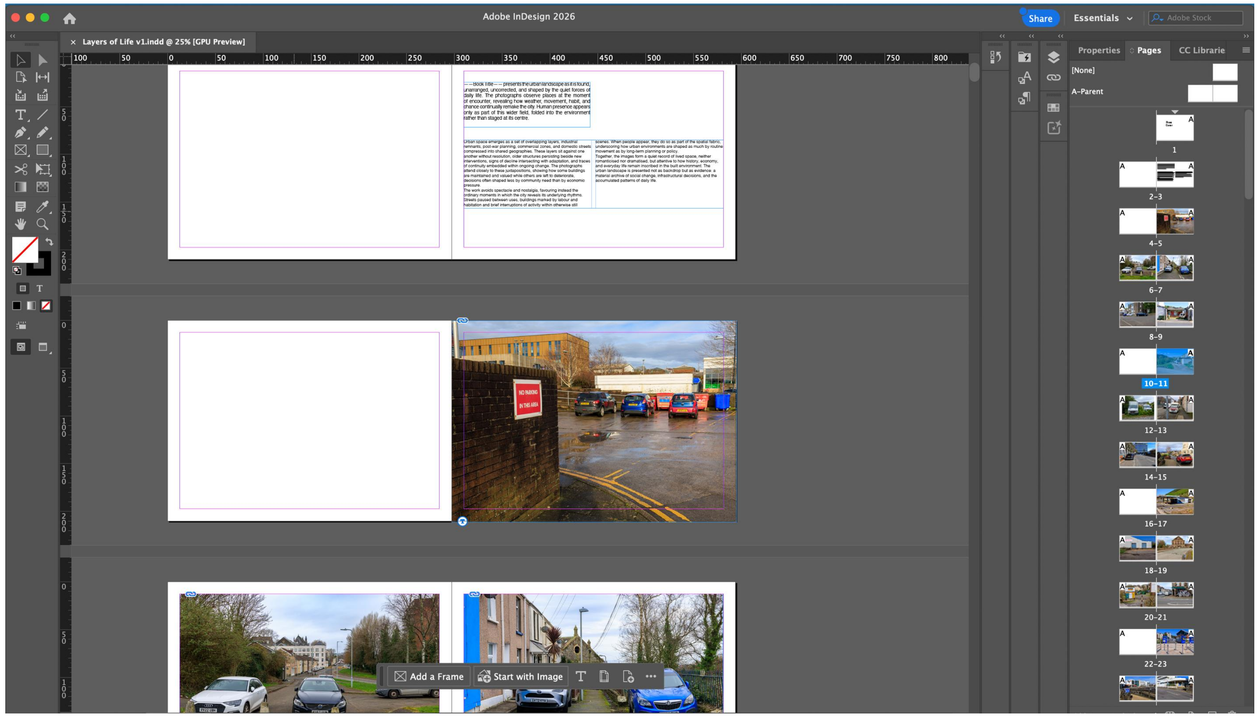


My Book

After sharing my original book dummy, the feedback was positive, though it was clear the project needed greater scale to be fully effective. That aligned with my own thinking. I already knew the book required more images, I just hadn not settled on the exact number. There were also comments about the text layout, particularly the need for a stronger opening paragraph, something that would give the viewer an immediate sense of direction before they returned to read more deeply.

Despite the encouraging response, I became less certain about the image selection. Working from a shortlist of 350 photographs, I realised I had been choosing images to satisfy a theme rather than simply choosing the strongest work. That felt like the wrong way around. I decided to start again, keeping the structure but shifting the emphasis. I settled, instinctively, on 148 images. I cannot fully explain the precision of that number, but it felt right.

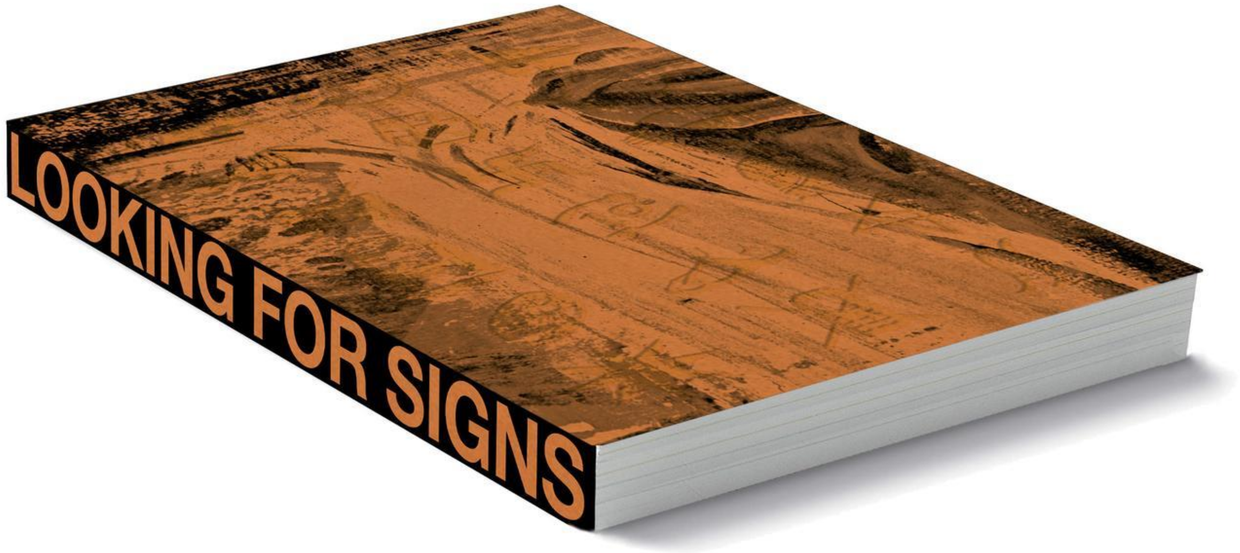




From there, I made a careful selection of the 148 strongest photographs. Only once the images were chosen did I return to the layout. I kept a similar rhythm but allowed the groupings to loosen. Each section now holds five images, with the thematic link sometimes only lightly present. This avoids predictability and keeps the viewer attentive to the shifts in tone and subject.

I reworked the text as well, opening with a more assertive first paragraph and placing the remaining text below in a two-column layout. Once the pages were printed, trimmed, and bound, the new dummy was ready for my tutorial with Peter Finnemore.

Tutorial with Peter Finnemore



We had a tutorial with Peter Finnemore, which was an incredible opportunity. Peter has published several books, including Looking for Signs, which I was fortunate enough to buy a copy of. As soon as he opened the book, he asked whether I was familiar with Ed Ruscha's work. I took that as a very positive remark as Ruscha has been a significant influence on my practice, so the connection felt both intentional and encouraging.

Peter was broadly positive about the book, but he offered two suggestions worth considering. First, he felt the sequence might gain a stronger dynamic if the images weren't all the same size. Second, he suggested experimenting with desaturation in some of the photographs to see whether that shift in tone might open up new readings. Both points were thoughtful, and I will look at comparable books to see how those strategies function in context and whether they serve this project.

At the end of the session he said, "Own it, it's your book. We can make suggestions but it is your work" (Finnemore, 2026). It was a generous reminder that the decisions ultimately sit with me.

Final Stages

The final stage in designing the body of the book involved resolving the layout. This required producing a full-scale dummy, printed as large as the available facilities allowed. Once the dummy was assembled, I was able to lay the book out on a table and examine the pairings and sequencing in detail, ensuring that the structure of the book remained true to the integrity and intentions of the project. This stage was also crucial for assessing how effectively the work would communicate with viewers.

I shared the dummy with as many people as possible and invited objective feedback, using these responses to refine the flow and rhythm of the sequence. Once I was satisfied that the layout was coherent and aligned with the conceptual aims of the project, I prepared the file for submission to the printing service.

At this point, however, the cover had not yet been finalised. I learned that, when working in InDesign, the cover must be created as a separate file. This is because the cover extends beyond the dimensions of the internal pages and must account for the spine width, which varies depending on the total page count and paper stock. The cover design therefore required additional planning before the book could be fully completed.



Book Cover

Throughout the development of the book, the cover has largely sat in the background. I had thought about it, but only in passing. It felt like the right moment to give it proper attention and began experimenting with possibilities. I knew I wanted to work with a single image that would run across both the front and back cover, and I had a sense that the overall tone should lean towards green.

As I scanned through images from the various shoots that make up the project, one photograph immediately stood out. It was taken incidentally while working on the book and does not appear in the sequence itself. The image shows one of the buildings featured in the book sitting in the background, with open ground in the foreground. On that land are two signs, one of them reads “Common Land”.

The photograph feels right for the cover, visually coherent with the rest of the work, but not overly literal. And the sign, almost by accident, may have given me the title of the book.



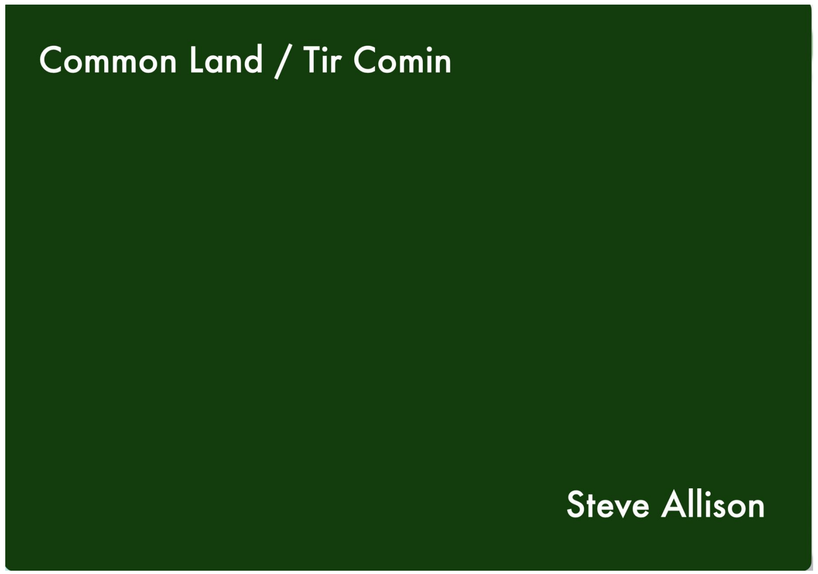
After talking the cover through with Ryan, it became clear that although the concept sits comfortably within the genre, it does not yet feel contemporary. His suggestion was to keep the cover simple, especially given the density and complexity of the material inside. A quieter cover allows the viewer to approach the book without being told what to expect and creates a space for anticipation rather than explanation.

Considering those comments, I began developing a series of variations to see which direction felt most aligned with the work. I experimented with green and blue backgrounds and tried a number of text layouts. I also sampled a section of tarmac for a more site-specific grey, but once scaled up it shifted towards brown and lost the neutrality I was aiming for. I tested a version using the sign that inspired the title, isolating it against a single colour, and another with a small image placed near the centre of the cover. All of the drafts use a single, uninterrupted colour on the back.

After experimenting with several options, I settled on a dark green cover with the title in white at the top and my name at the bottom. The dark green reflects the landscape and creates a tension with the built environment contained in the book.











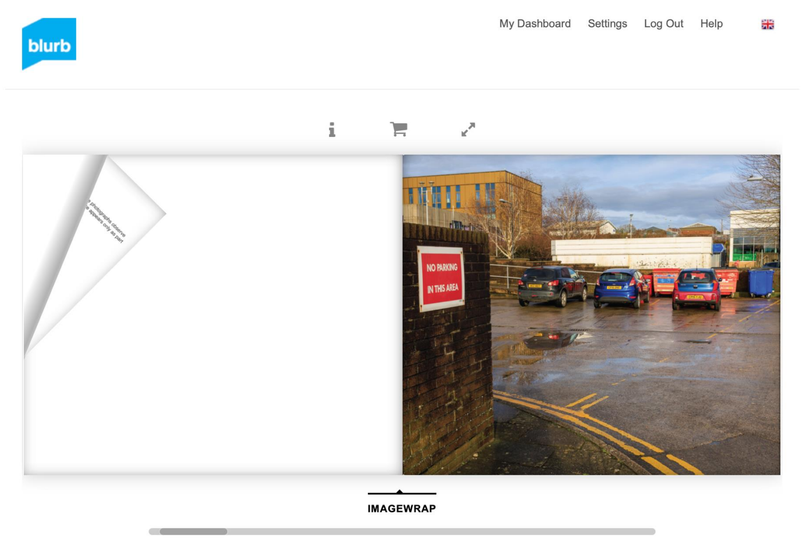
Book Production

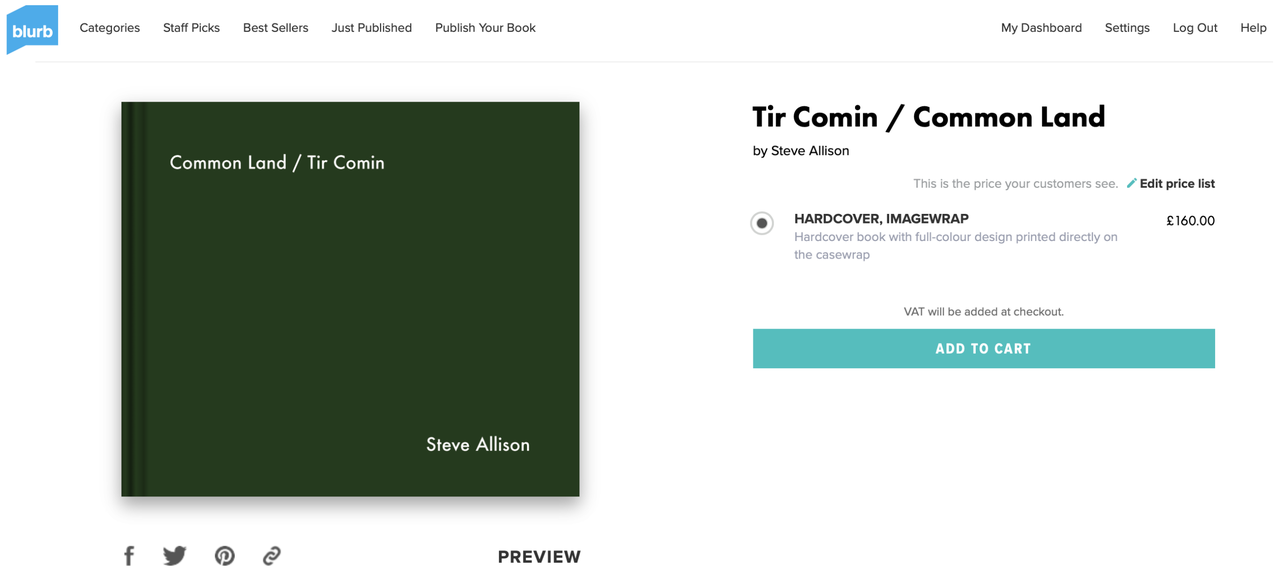
Once the design of the book was finalised, I moved into the production stage. I decided that the book should be professionally printed, as there was no creative rationale for a handmade approach and the work benefits from a polished, precise finish. Selecting an appropriate printing service proved more challenging than anticipated. Many commercial providers cater primarily to casual users and require the use of proprietary software, which significantly limits creative control. Only a small number accept InDesign files or high-quality PDFs.

After comparing paper stocks, cover options, and overall cost, I selected Blurb, as it offers full creative freedom through its InDesign plugin. Using the plugin required rebuilding the book according to Blurb's technical specifications. Although this was a time-consuming process, I retained the existing text and image sequence to ensure continuity with the earlier layout. I produced an additional dummy to confirm consistency before submitting the final version for printing.

My initial intention was to use a linen cover with embossed text. However, once the design was complete, I discovered that Blurb only offers linen covers in grey, which did not align with the aesthetic I had envisioned. I therefore opted for the image-wrap cover, but instead of using a photograph, I created a solid-colour image in the tone I wanted. I placed the title and my name in white text on the front and added both to the spine, leaving the back cover free of text to maintain a clean, understated appearance.

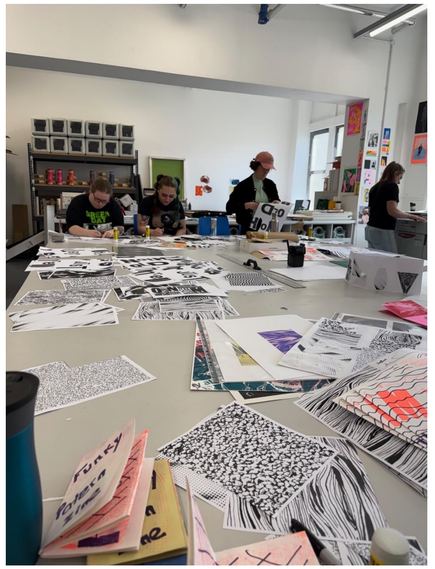
With the cover design resolved, I submitted the interior and cover files to Blurb for printing.





Riso Printing Workshop





The final session of the term was dedicated to a riso-printing workshop. Riso printing was introduced to us as a hybrid process, combining elements of screen printing and photocopying. We examined several examples of riso prints, which clearly demonstrated the aesthetic possibilities and distinctive visual qualities achievable through this method.

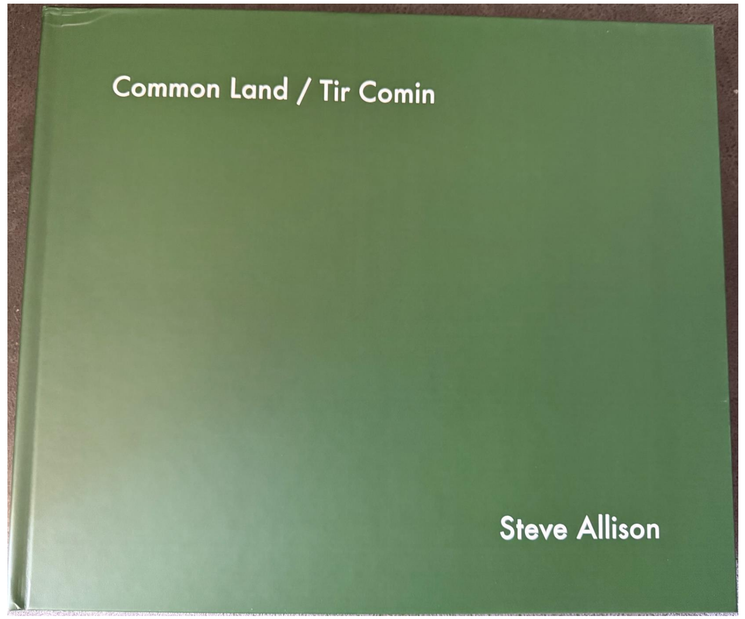
Following the introduction, we were tasked with producing our own riso prints. The exercise was both informative and enjoyable. There was something mildly amusing about watching a room of adults cutting shapes and gluing them to paper with the same concentration and enthusiasm seen in early childhood classrooms. Despite the light-hearted atmosphere, the workshop was highly instructive and expanded my understanding of alternative print processes.

Engaging with riso printing has opened up new possibilities to consider for future projects. It is valuable to develop a broad range of techniques, as each additional process becomes another tool within the creative toolkit, something to draw upon when a project calls for a particular material or visual approach.





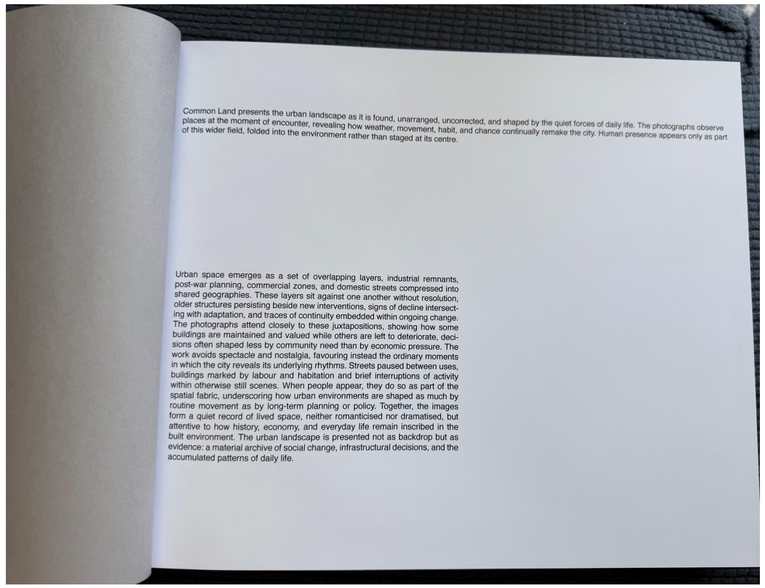
Reflection



Once the book had been printed and delivered, I was able to reflect on the final outcome. Overall, I am very pleased with the book and with the experience of handling it as a finished object. The production quality aligns closely with my intentions, and the sequence functions as I had envisioned.

On reflection, I feel the introductory text sits too close to the spine, which slightly compromises readability. This is a minor issue, but one I will keep in mind for future projects, particularly when working with tight margins or perfect-bound formats.

Despite this small adjustment I would make in hindsight, I believe the book communicates effectively with the viewer. The material decisions, sequencing, and overall design support the conceptual aims of the project, and the final outcome feels coherent and resolved.The body of work produced for this book was informed by the visual and conceptual strategies of artists such as Stephen Shore and Robert Adams. Like these practitioners, the project examines human intervention within the landscape and the politics of space. The photographs trace the continual reconfiguration of buildings and urban environments, revealing how shifts in use reflect broader patterns of social and economic change.



Whilst Robert Adams often addresses human impact on the natural environment with a clear political inflection, this work adopts a more observational stance. It does not present a direct political argument instead, it offers an objective framework through which viewers may draw their own conclusions. In this respect, the project aligns more closely with Stephen Shore’s *Uncommon Places*, where the ordinary landscape is presented without overt commentary, allowing meaning to emerge through attentive looking.

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