**Investigating photobook formats**

**Learning Outcomes**

* To be able to analyse how innovative publication formats interact with photographic content
* To understand how the use of published format might be used to explore your creative practice

**Introduction**

* These items are all photobooks taken from our enclosure collection at LCC. They are all formally published, and while sharing some aspects of design with book arts, they remain commercially distributed items (albeit in many cases in small print runs).
* They have been chosen because they all use some aspects of non-traditional or innovative bookmaking (these are to be explored by you).
* What I want is for you take some time to look, explore, investigate the material, thinking precisely explicitly about what happens when you interweave the act of looking (at a photograph) with that of reading and counterpointing the same information through these published forms.

**Theoretical scaffolding**

As a little bit of scaffolding for this task I wanted to share comes from two of the artists Albaran and Cabrera who made the book *The World’s First Photobook Was Blue* (2021), who say:

“Photography is not the thing. It is the thing that gets us to the thing.”

Which I love, for its early twentieth century phenomenological flavour – Husserlian in tone, with this idea of bracketed experience being the cypher back towards its subject.

How dos the photo as thing and the book as thing lead its readers and viewers to the rich content, meaning, experience and memories of its subjects?

**The task**

* In pairs select one of the books from the selection provided – go with your instincts and pick something that grabs your attention.
* Take 6 minutes to explore/investigate your book:

1. Identify any features related to the photographic form, book format and design or layout that you feel are important to the book.
2. Record your response to the book, was this aesthetic, did the context and debates engage you, or did you experience something else?

* Feedback to the group

1. Present two aspects of the book you thought were important (design feature or content).
2. Share any aspects of the work that have inspired you or made you rethink the possibilities of your own practice in a published form.

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| Book | Notes |
| [Ponte City : Mikhael Subotzky - Patrick Waterhouse / edited by Ivan Vladislavic ; [book] designed by Ramon Pez ; the Walther Collection.](https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=279315) | A year-long documentary project looking at the iconic Johannesburg apartment building synonymous with life in Apartheid South Africa, presented as a cardboard box containing a series of discrete pamphlets comprising of essays, photographs and other collected evidence.  `Housed in a plain, stapled cardboard box, Ponte City is really eighteen books: a large photobook with a minimalist blue-and-black cloth cover, and, nesting beneath it in a rectangular cavity, seventeen saddle-stitched booklets. These form a kind of visual-textual puzzle: the cover of each is a section of one of the photographs in the bigger book, and each reflects on or interprets Ponte differently. If you follow the editorial signposts, you’ll flip through the photobook, and as you get to the pages with the “missing pieces,” reach for the right booklet and read downward into the subterranean layers beneath Ponte, or upward through its hollow core. |
| [Stijn van der Linden : an essay on the concave city corner / photography & -analysis, Stijn van der Linden ; text, Stijn van der Linden & Katrien Vanherck.](https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1477015) | Winner of the Photobook Week Aarhus Dummy Award 2018.0Stijn van der Linden’s photobook is an exploration of how spaces become spaces and how photography can influence this process. It is an artistic experiment that examines concave city corners and tries to systemize corners using certain codes and diagrams related to their physical appearances. Do corners create their own places by connecting certain colours, materials and objects? or is it all a matter of people’s perception? 'an essay on the concave city corner' is a poetic and faux-scientific look on hidden and vague locations in the city. Codes relate to data analysis of the various visual components of the photos. |
| [Museum Bhavan by Dayanita Singh](https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=927721&query_desc=kw%2Cwrdl%3A%20Dayanita%20Singh) | An experimental book, situated between the museum and publishing. Readers are encouraged to arrange the concertina photobooks housed within the handmade box to create their own exhibitions.  Consisting of nine individual “museums” in book form, Museum Bhavan is a miniature version of Singh’s traveling exhibition of the same name whose prints are placed in folding expanding wooden structures (her “photo-architecture”), which she likes to interchange at will. |
| <https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1162515&query_desc=kw%2Cwrdl%3A%20no%20more%2C%20no%20less> | In 2015, French artist Thomas Sauvin acquired an album produced in the early 1980s by an unknown Shanghai University photography student. The album comprises original negatives, silver prints, manuscript comments from an anonymous professor, and shows the student’s diligence in mastering the rules applying to the conventional portrait. This volume was given a second life through the expert hands of Kensuke Koike, a Japanese artist based in Venice whose practice combines collage and found photography.  The series, “**No More, No Less**”, born from the encounter between Koike and Sauvin, includes new silver prints made from the album’s original negatives. These prints were then submitted to Koike’s sharp imagination, who, with a simple blade and adhesive tape, deconstructs and reinvents the images. However, these purely manual interventions all respect one single formal rule: nothing is removed, nothing is added, “No More, No Less”. In such a context that blends freedom and constraint, Koike and Sauvin meticulously explore the possibilities of an image only made up of itself. |
| <https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1540150&query_desc=kw%2Cwrdl%3A%20the%20world%27s%20first%20photobook> | Albarrán Cabrera's newest monograph "The World's First Photobook was Blue" is not a book about what Albarrán Cabrera do, but why they do it. A book without a beginning or and end, without a specific cover (that is why this book has three), and where the text talks about why they photograph and not the images per se. The title is a nod to Anna Atkins, the binding a nod to Brassaï and the entire book is a homage to this deceptively simple but really complex medium which is photography. |
| <https://libsearch.arts.ac.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1457346&query_desc=kw%2Cwrdl%3A%20american%20origami> | Abstract: American Origami is the result of six years of photographic research by Andres Gonzalez. The project closely examines the epidemic of mass shootings in American schools, interweaving first-person interviews, forensic documents, press materials, and original photographs. The book takes its reader through a visual journey of shared grief and atonement to illuminate moments of beauty and pose moral questions embedded in acts of collective healing. Bound in a unique way, the varied elements repeat and fold into each other, creating a parallel world of past and present, and showing the silenced landscape together with the personal artefacts created by those left behind. |

Albarrán, A., Cabrera, A. and Rexer, L. (2021) *The world's first photobook was blue.*Munich, Germany, Antwerp, Belgium, Paris, France: Ira Stehmann Fine Art, IBASHO, the(M) éditions.

Dayanita Singh, Sen, A. and Steidl, G. (2016) *Museum Bhavan.*Gottingen: Steidl.

Gonzalez, A. (2019) *American origami.*Amsterdam]: Fw:Books.

Koike, K. and Sauvin, T. (2018) *No more no less*, Jesi, Italy]: Skinnerboox.

Linden, S.,van der and Vanherck, K. (2019) *Stijn van der Linden: an essay on the concave city corner.*Aarhus, Denmark]: Photobook Week Aarhus.

Pez, R. and Vladislavić, I. (2014) *Ponte City: Mikhael Subotzky - Patrick Waterhouse.*Göttingen, Germany: Steidl.

**Albarrán, A., Cabrera, A. and Rexer, L. (2021) *The world's first photobook was blue.*Munich, Germany, Antwerp, Belgium, Paris, France: Ira Stehmann Fine Art, IBASHO, the(M) éditions.**

Albarrán Cabrera's newest monograph "The World's First Photobook was Blue" is not a book about what Albarrán Cabrera do, but why they do it. A book without a beginning or and end, without a specific cover (that is why this book has three), and where the text talks about why they photograph and not the images per se. The title is a nod to Anna Atkins, the binding a nod to Brassaï and the entire book is a homage to this deceptively simple but really complex medium which is photography.