

What Does It Mean to Experiment with Photography Today?

Experimental photography is not a particular technique or aesthetic, but a way of questioning the image and the conditions under which it is produced. To experiment is to question the medium, test its limits and ask what a photograph might become when we stop treating it as a finished result. We live surrounded by images that are produced, shared and discarded at increasing speed, while countless others remain stored on digital devices, never published, printed or shown.

Experimental Photography

Proposes a Different Rhythm.

It restores time for observation, uncertainty within the process and engagement with materials. It works with light, but also with the body, memory, territory, technology, chance and the relationships formed around an image.

Experimentation begins when photography does more than represent the world and starts intervening in how we perceive, understand and relate to it. Every image contains a way of seeing, shaped by the device used, the photographer's decisions and the context in which it is viewed.

Changing the camera, intervening in a negative, altering an emulsion or transforming the support modifies the image **while questioning the conventions through which we recognise something as photography**. A burnt, stitched, erased or deteriorated image, or one printed on a leaf, **cannot easily present itself as a transparent window onto reality**. Its surface reveals how it was made, which materials were involved and which accidents contributed to its appearance.

This material dimension is particularly significant when so much of our visual experience takes place on screens. **Recovering materiality means encountering the weight of paper again, the fragility of an emulsion, the duration of an exposure and the changes produced by water, heat, chemistry or sunlight**. Yet the value of a process does not lie only in the skill required to perform it. It also lies in its ability to unsettle certainty, identify a problem and create unexpected connections. Experimenting also means considering **the material, social and ecological consequences of each process**: which resources it uses, what waste it produces, which narratives it reproduces and who has access to the knowledge it generates.

The history of artistic experimentation is marked by attempts to break down boundaries between disciplines and bring art closer to everyday experience.

Collage, photomontage, found objects, chance, archival intervention and combinations of photography, film, performance and installation expanded the possibilities of the image. Many contemporary practices continue this impulse. There is, however, a risk: when the experimental is recognised only through a particular appearance, it can become a catalogue of visual effects, such as stains, chemical errors, manipulated negatives or unusual surfaces. Experimentation then ceases to function as a question and becomes a formula. **Producing a different-looking image is not enough. We must also ask why a technique was chosen, what it transforms, what it challenges and which relationships it makes possible.**

Within this context, **artists occupy many positions: author, researcher, mediator, teacher, learner and transmitter of knowledge.** A technique developed over many years may be transformed by the experiences and materials of other participants. This exchange requires listening and responsibility. Experimentation becomes meaningful when knowledge moves in several directions, when teachers are also prepared to learn and when a territory participates in the process without becoming merely a visual resource.

During the festival, **photography becomes a shared language between people who may not speak the same language or have the same age, education or experience.** An unexpected image can begin a conversation, a shared formula can open a new project and an exhibition can turn individual research into a public experience. A workshop can transform a technique by bringing it into contact with different perspectives. A residency allows individual processes to coexist and evolve, while a portfolio review can redirect a line of research. Although photographic history is often wrongly organised around major authors, works and inventions, **photographic processes have always depended on collective knowledge transmitted through darkrooms, schools, publications, associations, workshops and communities. Experimental photography makes this collaborative dimension visible.** Experimenting together means building a space where knowledge remains open, historical processes converse with digital tools, chemistry coexists with artificial intelligence and private archives encounter public space. Experimental photography is not defined by a single aesthetic or a closed set of procedures.

More than a category,
it is an attitude:
a willingness to ask questions, change habits and remain open to the unexpected.

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