

Experimental Photographs

Photographs that go beyond the “straight photograph” using special materials and or techniques. These photographs are created in the camera or in the darkroom.

----- Darkroom Techniques-----

Paper negative print: a print of reversed values made by contact printing a positive print on another piece of paper under glass just like making your proper proof contact sheet. Contrast filters and burning & dodging can be used. Make your positive print on paper without writing on the back.



Photogram: a camera-less print made by shining enlarger light through transparent, translucent and opaque objects placed on photo paper. Moving objects during parts of the exposure can create overlapping and blended elements.

Multiple Printing: Combining two or more negatives on one print. Two or more enlargers makes this easier. Test prints and drawings help with alignment- burning & dodging might be necessary. Allowance needs to be made for different areas of density in the negatives to make the images blend well.

This technique allows you to change the size of each image in the enlarger to fit together appropriately.



Negative Sandwich: Using several negatives on top of each other in the enlarger carrier. There has to be clear or thin areas on the negatives to let light through both. Because they are together in the enlarger- you can't alter the size relationship between the images - you can shift them offset from each other. Print the combination as if they were one negative.

-----In Camera Techniques-----

Double or multiple exposure-

- 1)exposing the film more than once without advancing the film. Some cameras have this as a built in feature, some need to be tricked to shoot the second time without advancing the film.
- 2) opening the shutter (camera on tripod) in a darkened room and using a spot or flashlight to “paint with light” on your subject.
- 3) Run the film through the camera twice. Mark how your film lines up when you load your camera, shoot first exposures on the roll and then rewind the film but not all the way. Reload the same film in the camera and make 2nd exposures on top of the first.

Filters on the lens: there are many commercial filters that attach to the front of the lens to modify the light entering your camera. Some are colored to filter out different parts of the spectrum. Yellow makes white clouds stand out against a blue sky. Green makes green objects lighter (trees) and red objects darker (on black and white film). There are also filters that distort and add special effects to the image- starburst, diffusion etc. You can use anything in front of your lens for special effect such as saran wrap, nylon mesh, crinkled plastic---

Special Films: Infrared film that is only sensitive to infrared (below red invisible) light- available in rolls.

Orthochromatic film that is not sensitive to red light- can be used with a red safelight. Orthochromatic film may be high contrast “litho” film or continuous tone copy film. This film can be cut into small pieces and placed inside your camera in the darkroom. This film can be developed in dektol (print developer).

Paper negatives: in place of film, you can put pieces of your printing paper in your camera and make single or multiple exposures - experiment to get the right exposure.

There are countless other ways to do experimental photography- these will get your imagination started.
Hand coloring - Bas relief - Cliché verre - Sabbatier effect - Liquid light - Collage - Pinhole camera - Mixed Media

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Solarization (Sabatier effect)

a complete or partial reversal of tones in an exposed and partially developed paper emulsion when given a uniform second exposure and developed to completion.

A negative is exposed on paper that would produce a normal print. The print is partially developed and then exposed to an overall even source of light. It is then developed to completion. Testing is needed to achieve the proper balance of initial exposure, flash exposure and development to achieve the proper effect. Parts of the print will reverse tonality with the extra exposure - getting lighter instead of darker.



Bas relief: a high contrast negative and positive are sandwiched together very slightly out of register to create an image of very shallow relief- with line drawing qualities. A negative with strong linear qualities is contact printed on high contrast orthochromatic (not sensitive to red light) film to create a film positive. This positive is then printed with the negative as a sandwich. The combination is shifted slightly out of register to create the outline effect.

