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Remember That Feeling: An Investigation on the  
Importance of Analogue Photographic Processes in  
Personal and Creative Expression

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**May 2026**

Fine Art

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## **Table of Contents:**

<b>List of Figures</b>	2
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	4
<b>Abstract</b>	5
<b>Introduction</b>	6
<b>Chapter 1: Curatorial Thesis</b>	8
1.1: The Engagement of Process	8
1.2: The Feeling of Analogue	9
1.3: The Fine Art of Photography	10
<b>Chapter 2: Curatorial Choices</b>	12
2.1: Artists and Artworks	12
2.2: Exhibition Model and Layout	24
<b>Chapter 3: Curatorial Aims</b>	28
3.1: Venue	28
3.2: Intended Audience	29
<b>Chapter 4: Other Curatorial Influences</b>	31
4.1: Points of Wider Discussion	31
4.2: Historical Influences	32
<b>Conclusion</b>	35
<b>References</b>	36

## List of Figures

**Figure 1** MacCulloch, K. (2025) *Exhibition model layout*

**Figures 2, 3** Kang, L.L. (2025) *Molt (Toronto-Chicago-Woodridge-New York-Los Angeles)* [Tanned and unfixed film (continually sensitive), cast aluminum kelp knots, spherical magnets, steel, aircraft cable, and hardware]. Available at: <https://lotuskang.com/molt-52-walker/> (Accessed: 12 October 2025).

**Figure 4** Kang, L.L. (2019) *Terrene* [Tanned and unfixed films, photographs, magnets, dibond]. Available at: <https://lotuskang.com/terrene> (Accessed: 7 December 2025).

**Figures 5, 6** Barba, R. (2025) *They Are Taking All My Letters* [70 mm film, aluminum, LED, Plexiglas, motors]. Available at: <https://www.esterschipper.com/artists/118-rosa-barba/works/34211/> (Accessed: 12 November 2025).

**Figures 7, 8** Barba, R. (2022) *Composition in Field* [35 mm film, stainless steel, aluminum, motor, Plexiglas, LED lights]. Available at: <https://www.esterschipper.com/artists/118-rosa-barba/works/28101/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figures 9, 10** Barba, R. (2012) *Spacelength Thought* [16 mm film, projector, typewriter, programming]. Available at: <https://www.esterschipper.com/artists/118-rosa-barba/works/25200/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figure 11** Zuqiang, P. (2025) *Afternoon Hearsay* (excerpt) [18:50, three-channel video installation, 5.1 surround sound, in cinemascope super 8, 16mm and 35mm transferred into digital ], Vimeo. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/1123897373?fl=pl&fe=vl> (Accessed: 28 October 2025).

**Figures 12, 13** Zuqiang, P. (2024) *Deja vu* [loop, mixed media installation, 16mm film, sound, clay, iron oxide]. Available at: <https://www.pengzuqiang.com/dejavu> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figure 14** Liebmann, K. (2020) *Dust in the Wind 2* [cyanotype toned, cotton rag paper]. Available at: <https://katjaliebmann.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Dust-in-the-Wind.pdf> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figure 15** Liebmann, K. (2021) *Erase 1* [cyanotype toned, cotton rag paper]. Available at: <https://katjaliebmann.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Dust-in-the-Wind.pdf> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figure 16** Rennó, R. (2006) *Milan, Agfa Isolette* [Photograph, colour on paper, Agfa Isolette camera and wooden frames]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/renno-milan-agfa-isolette-from-the-project-the-last-photo-t13706> (Accessed: 23 November 2025).

**Figure 17** Rennó, R. (2006) *Zeis Ikon Super Ikonta 533/10* [Colour photograph, Zeis Ikon Super Ikonta 533/10, wooden frames]. Available at: <https://art.blombo.com/zeis-ikon-super-ikonta-533-10-serie-a-ultima-foto> (Accessed: 23 November 2025).

**Figure 18** Rennó, R. (2006) *Pedro Vasquez, Fed 2* [Photograph, black and white, on paper, Fed 2 type camera and wooden frames]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/renno-pedro-vasquez-fed-2-from-the-project-the-last-photo-t13705> (Accessed: 23 November 2025).

**Figure 19** Tillmans, W. (2004) *Freischwimmer 56* [Chromogenic print]. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/wolfgang-tillmans-freischwimmer-56> (Accessed: 30 November 2025).

**Figure 20** Tillmans, W. (2012) *Freischwimmer 199* [Chromogenic print], The Museum of Modern Art. MoMA. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/164471> (Accessed: 30 November 2025).

**Figure 21** Tillmans, W. (2004) *Freischwimmer 54* [Chromogenic print]. Available at: <https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/freischwimmer-54> (Accessed: 30 November 2025).

**Figures 22, 23, 24, 25** Tillmans, W. (1998) *Parkett Edition, 1992-98 (for Parkett no. 53)* [Chromogenic print]. Available at: <https://www.parkettart.com/editions/p/tillmans-wolfgang> (Accessed: 15 October 2025).

**Figures 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32** MacCulloch, K. (2025) *Views of model exhibition*

**Figure 33** Bayard, H. (1840) *Self-portrait as Drowned Man* [direct positive print]. Available at: <https://www.arthistoryproject.com/artists/hippolyte-bayard/self-portrait-as-drowned-man/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

**Figure 34** Buckham, A. (1920) *Cloud Turrets* [Gelatin silver print]. Available at: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/95082> (Accessed: 16 December 2025).

**Figure 35** Hager, A. (1947) *Untitled (Portrait A.H.)* [Gelatin silver print]. Available at: <https://harvardartmuseums.org/calendar/in-person-exhibition-tour-white-shadows-anneliese-hager-and-the-camera-less-photograph-6> (Accessed: 16 December 2025).

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## **Abstract**

This exhibition dissertation investigates the effect of the inherent tactility of analogue photographic processes on the user. Specifically, this thesis explores this user primarily as the artist but acknowledges the user as a member of the general public. This thesis aims to understand why the specific processes of analogue photography have such a profound influence on the user experience, and therefore, the product of the artwork. Upon examining these artworks closely, it is evident that a lingering sense of the artist remains within them. This sense is readily apparent to viewers, prompting the investigation of why and how this happens. Curating a range of analogue photographic process-based artworks, this thesis explores concepts deeply and emotionally relatable to the viewer. The resulting proposed exhibition is a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding the validity that analogue photographic processes hold within contemporary art spaces.

## Introduction

As users of analogue photography, many wonder upon the sensation of closeness to their work. That closeness felt is a product of hands being connected to each step of the process: loading film, capturing images, developing film, printing it and watching an image appear. The act of an image appearing before one's eyes is not an act of magic, yet one of science. The analogue process and personal actions of an individual taken to create a photograph inform the emotional context portrayed to the viewer within that image. This enables the audience to experience a singular piece of time and history and to connect to it on a personal level or study it on an academic basis. To gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, this thesis consults literature on the subject, in both scientific and philosophical writings. Not as a belief system, but as a tool to further understand this seemingly magical act of process.

“It makes sense for us to use the physical to explicate the abstract.” (Dewey, 2018, p. 74)

Formed through an investigation into personal connection and process, this thesis proposes an exhibition titled *Remember That Feeling*. This exhibition aims to go beyond displaying “the image” as the ultimate product of analogue processes and, in fact, explores the blending of technology and art through tactile experiences. This tangible amalgamation of technology is often questioned within gallery spaces. It would be a strange act to discuss this as a concept yet not its often-questioned validity. Therefore, the discourse of photography's changing materiality within contemporary art spaces will be considered. A particular topic within this discussion is the emergence of digital practices and the fear that they will eclipse analogue, not just with gallery spaces, but also within domestic use.

Focusing on the tactile usages of analogue photographic processes and materialities, this thesis explores the boundaries of image, sculpture and ephemerality. The artworks analysed in this thesis emphasise the included artists' connections to process through tactility and experimentation. Analysing the use of analogue materials by artists in a creative manner to convey aspects of life such as queer identity, memory, politics and place. Not only does this thesis analyse this, but also the exploration of artworks using light as a catalyst of discovery, questioning the experimental interactions present between machine and person, often in the space of the darkroom.

This exhibition will take place in New York City's Whitney Museum of American Art. In terms of gallery space, this venue was chosen due to its large size and adaptability, which is necessary for a variety of works in this exhibition, including large-scale sculptures, video-based pieces, and a blend

of traditionally and non-traditionally mounted photographs. The notoriety of New York City, particularly as a hub for diverse artistic innovation, is a main motivator in choosing this gallery.

“To be interested in art as an aesthetic phenomenon is to focus on the creative activity of the artist, the nature of the works produced and the spectator’s experience of them.” (Friday, 2017, p.21)

Considering the above quote as a guidepost of sorts, the intention of this exhibition is to intrigue viewers with the artworks on display, offering a new way of seeing, thinking, and feeling photography. This exhibition caters to those with existing opinions on the use of analogue photography and seeks to challenge that through artworks exploring new outlooks on dialogue between human, machine and light in the pursuit of personal expression. The aim is to engage a broad range of individuals in conversation about the concept of photographic processes beyond the image, and crucially, as a means for artists to express concepts of memory, identity and time in a visually interesting manner to their audience.

## Chapter 1: Curatorial Thesis

### 1.1: The Engagement of Process

When engaging in the acts of analogue photography, using a camera, developing film, and printing images under red light, there is a sense of closeness that is a wonder to the photographer. It becomes apparent to question why this is, and what discussions surround this enigmatic feeling.

The book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Flusser, 2000) depicts an imminent turning point in culture, as the wider society shifts from text-based to image-based information sharing. In exploring this theory, Flusser does so by detailing the significance of physical components crucial to image-based information sharing. In the chapter titled *The Apparatus* (Flusser, 2000, pp. 21–32), the apparatus in this case is the camera, Flusser describes two cultural objects: tools and goods. The tool in question is the camera, and the goods are photographs. A tool, that is to say, a camera, is designed to be an extension of the user, as much as fingers or feet, with express purpose of getting a job done. With the tool's aim to produce goods, both hold cultural significance due to their adaptability. To achieve control of this adaptability, the tool extends its function to that of the human being, the role of which Flusser labels the photographer "the functionary" (Flusser, 2000, p. 24). The intention of the photographer is to "create, process and store symbols" (Flusser, 2000, p. 25) Not only to do so, but to do so in such a manner that is not repetitive, so as not to demean an image or concept. By constantly evolving how they interact with a camera, they, in extension, evolve how they interact with the subject, directly correlating to the change of their work, and therefore the connection between self and apparatus. This connection evolving, therefore, brings into question the integrity of "tool" and "goods", in fact going beyond just that as "photographers are inside their apparatus and bound up in it" (Flusser, 2000, p. 27). Becoming one with the apparatus in its functions and movements enables experimentation by photographers, engaging flesh and machine in an ecosystem that allows for expression and change beyond the simple yet powerful product of a photograph.

This symbiotic relationship between photographer and camera, or more generally, between artist and art, is well explained through Flusser's philosophy. However, it stands to reason that there must be concrete evidence as to why the physical process connects one to their mode of creation. *Hack the Experience: Tools for Artists from Cognitive Science* (Dewey, 2018) explains the exact why of this feeling and, in fact, builds on it by demonstrating how to use cognitive scientific reasoning to one's advantage. In chapter *Embodiment* (Dewey, 2018, pp. 71-80), Dewey details the interwoven connection between mind and body: "We understand what experiences mean for us by using a blend of our sensorimotor skills (or the way we use our senses and our bodies to engage the world)

and perceptual attention.” (Dewey, 2018, p. 72) The body is used to think and experience the world, with action becoming a tool to relay information to the mind, seeking an understanding of what is around us. The use of our senses becomes a tool to process information, in turn allowing us to articulate concepts and create new personal experiences. Directly, this can be correlated with the action of the apparatus and the functionary, clarifying the importance of this symbiotic relationship to an individual’s process or practice.

## 1.2: The Feeling of Analogue

The appeal of analogue photography lies in its tactility. There is a sense of purity in the analogue, a feeling that comes with knowing the photograph, the physical manifestation of one’s memories, has undergone noticeable handling through a process that can be followed to achieve it. Inherently, the appeal of analogue photography lies in its limitations; scratches, colour warps, grain and general flaws, creating what could be described as an honest image. Explained in Walter Benjamin’s essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1973) is a similar concept of this honesty, “The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable.” (Benjamin, 1973, p. 217). This uniqueness is labelled throughout the essay as “aura”. Authenticity is at the heart of this definitive word, “aura,” where the individual who created the piece affects it through the time, place, and circumstances of their life within a specific period, contributing to the details within the piece. It is undeniable that “aura” is felt within art, allowing the maker's experiences to shape the context of a piece, with a uniqueness in context readable to an audience.

Benjamin, describing the “aura” of a work of art as the unique presence intrinsic to the piece, states, “The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.” (Benjamin, 1973, p. 215) Holding great emphasis on the importance of the “aura” to the historical context of the piece, he believes that the uniqueness of a piece is singular to itself. Benjamin determines that the authenticity embedded in the work is challenged by the mechanical reproduction of the work. By damaging specific details that signal the original context, mechanical reproduction causes a reduction in the “aura”. An exception is made, however, when Benjamin specifically considers the photographic image: “Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway” (Benjamin, 1973, p. 214). Regarding an understanding that the sharing of visual information is a crucial aspect of the power of the image, it is not unreasonable to believe that “aura” and production can work in tandem. However, it is a fine line of honouring both

authenticity and innovation in the search for one to bring the authenticity of analogue to new heights and new audiences.

In digital, many are returning to analogue methodologies due to the wider range of points in the process. With more techniques to use, one can get a better understanding of their work, enhancing their experience with the blend of old and new. Kristof Vrancken writes on this, seeking to answer the question of how photography may be useful in a day and age where the digital archive grows every moment, at the touch of a finger. While acknowledging that the digital age has taken a step forward in its convenience and quality of use, Vrancken notes that perhaps it is time we “consider what we have lost” (Vrancken, 2020, p. 91). Referring to Jonathan Openshaw, Vrancken notes that a revolution of sorts is underway among younger artists, those who grew up in a world of analogue experiences but have arrived at adulthood at a time when digital technology reigns supreme. These “post digital artisans” (Openshaw, 2015, p. 9) seek to blend technique and technology in a quest for tactility; they wish to feel what they are doing, to get their hands on material and know that what they create is truly authentic, searching for “the magical moment when craftsmanship and non-reproducibility develop something unique”(Vrancken, 2020, p. 91). By combining analogue cameras, experimentation with light and chemicals, with digital scanning, video, and recording techniques, Vrancken finds a new way forward to deepen the experience of the artistic process, thereby enriching the content of the artwork and allowing a standout piece in a world of digital over-saturation.

### **1.3: The Fine Art of Photography**

Exploring where photography ends with simple images for the press and begins to be explored as a malleable process, beyond simply being an image, it is undeniable that photography is a tactile activity. Reviewing the transformation of the photograph from this simple image into something that recognises its materiality as an art form, we have an intersection of tactility and image-making that shares something beyond the usual. In fact, each part of the process from camera to developing can be intersected and manipulated to change the process, and therefore the meaning, of the product.

*Photography's New Materiality* (Plummer, Riches, and Woolridge, 2011) explores the materiality of photography, both in its historical context and in contemporary art, noting that materiality was never in question in photographic practices. Historically, photography has been defined by its technical boundaries, with scientific exploration at the forefront of discovering the ultimate way

to capture a moment in time. With this categorisation of technology, it is logical that during the twentieth century, we saw a turn towards digital practices, prompting a fear of losing photography's "material presence as it has become reconfigured" (Plummer, Riches, and Woolridge, 2011). This fear, however, has proven to be a catalyst in rediscovering material-based methodologies. The article notes a significant exploration of techniques such as cyanotype and daguerreotype, with a return to experimentation with light and emulsions in work presented in exhibitions. The move towards new materialities is described "to both look back to analogue processes and go beyond those limitations" (Plummer, Riches and Woolridge, 2011).

*Photographic Materialities in Contemporary Art*, (Vuorinen, 2024) explores the changing interest towards photography in contemporary art. While Vuorinen brings the rapid movement towards digital practices into discussion, there is no questioning that the tactility of photography is a form within contemporary art. The image and the material of photography are not separate entities; rather, they are two objects coexisting as options for manipulation. Vuorinen delves into the beginning of photography being recognised in galleries. Citing the exhibition *Photography into Sculpture* curated by Peter C. Bunnell (1970), it is described as a "turning point" between the photographic image and the material of the photographic, allowing a prolific gallery such as MoMA to be at the forefront of discussing the capability of photography as a contemporary art form beyond the two-dimensional confines of an image (Vuorinen, 2024).

## Chapter 2: Curatorial Choices

### 2.1: Artists and Artworks

In a city iconically known for its contributions to the arts, this exhibition will be displayed on the 7th floor of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. This exhibition will feature artworks from six artists who experiment with the use of film, sculpture, and photography, with a crucial emphasis on analogue photographic materials. Exploring the boundaries of photographic materialities, these artists showcase an impactful contemplation of the human experience across concepts of the passage of time, the evolution of language and the importance of memory. The artworks are well distributed across the gallery space, including a separate dimmer space for light and projection-based works.

Below is a mock model of the exhibition layout. It is numbered in the order intended for the audience to follow; however, it is open to free movement if the viewers wish.



Figure 1

## Lotus L. Kang: Works 1 and 2

Molt (Toronto-Chicago-Woodridge-New York-Los Angeles-), 2022-2025.

Tanned and unfixed film (continually sensitive), cast aluminium kelp knots, spherical magnets, steel, aircraft cable, and hardware.

304.8 x 132.1 x 205.7 cm



Figure 2



Figure 3

The first work seen when entering the gallery space is Lotus L. Kang's *Molt (Toronto-Chicago-Woodridge-New York-Los Angeles-)* (2022-2025). The visceral colours and fluid draping of this work immediately confront viewers with a wonder of “what and how?” that will introduce them to the materialities explored in this exhibition.

Consisting of “industrial-sized” lengths of unfixed photographic film suspended alongside metal fixings, Kang’s work explores continuous change and uncertainty in both the material and concept of her work (MoMA, 2022). These lengths of film are continuously exposed to light, developing gradually as the piece moves from place to place. Kang refers to *Molt* (2025) as “skins” that “tan” (The Museum of Modern Art, 2025). With a nod to human skin itself, Kang illuminates the work as one that consistently adapts and renews itself. This concept of physical change in relation to human anatomy is further explained by her use of terms such as “bruise”, “bile” and “blood” to describe the colours caused by natural light in the photographic film, further relating to a sense of change and unknowing the artist feels within not just life but their creative process (The Museum of Modern Art, 2025).

Terrene, 2019

Tanned and unfixed films, photographs, magnets, dibond

Dimensions unknown



Figure 4

Placed behind *Molt* (Kang, 2025), *Terrene* (2019) is a work by Lotus L. Kang with no discoverable biography, notations or discussions from the artist. With a sense of visual relation, the placement of this work facing the entrance introduces the viewers to a combination of image and experimentation, inviting them to gaze past the previous work.

It is deeply fascinating to see an earlier iteration of Kang's iconic "tanned" film in a juxtaposed composition with that of *Molt* (Kang, 2025). As opposed to Kang's other works, consisting of unbroken lengths of film, *Terrene's* (Kang, 2019) use of "tanned" film is cut up into smaller rectangular shapes, using the same magnetic fastenings, however, with the inclusion of photographs. The subjects in these images vary, many holding details of rust-covered buildings and industrial settings, while the leaves of a plant, the outline of shoes and flowing ink-like illustrations feature in others. Knowing that Kang's use of material blending with human nature is an essential characteristic in her work, it is assumed that these images are linked to the artist's inspirations. Describing the development of her practice, Kang states, "the work transmutes through adding or subtracting from what came before." (Ting, 2023, p. 106). Applying this to what we visually know of Kang's two works featured in this exhibition, it is understandable to assume that *Terrene* (Kang, 2019) has become her own source of inspiration in her practice.

### Rosa Barba: Works 3, 4 and 5

They Are Taking All My Letters, 2025

70mm film, aluminium, LED, Plexiglass, motors

187 x 262 x 15 cm

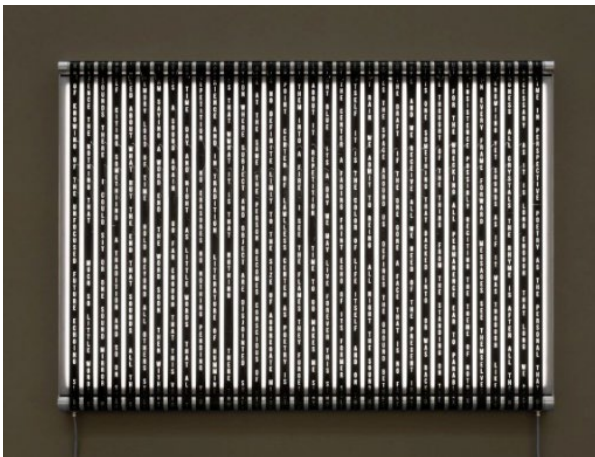


Figure 5

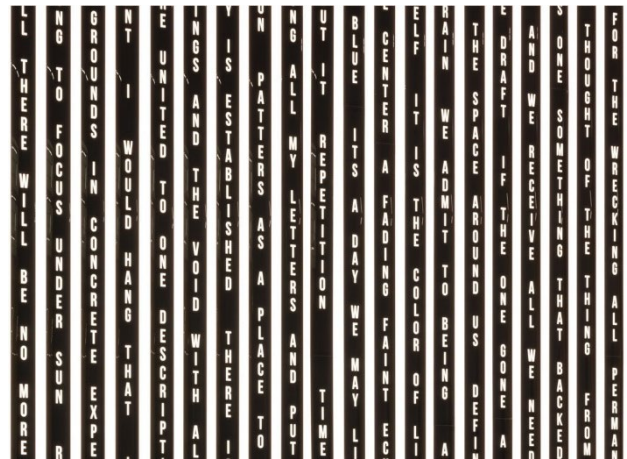


Figure 6

Three works by Rosa Barba are displayed in a separate room painted grey, with dim lighting intended to highlight the light-inclusive nature of the work. Having Barba's works alongside each other allows the textual elements to create a narrative of the intersection of technology and human communication through the application of film, motors, and kinetic sculpture (Price, 2025). Utilising photographic film not as a tool for a photographic image but as a tool for alternative communication in tandem with motors and light, Barba asks the rhetorical question, "What happens... when the image is taken out of the projection and the 'information' becomes the light itself?" (Kay, 2025).

*They Are Taking All My Letters* (Barba, 2025) consists of 34 lengths of 70mm celluloid film, a favourite of Barba's, that are in constant motion. Printed on the film are excerpts of "Susan Howe, Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, as well as on the artist's own writings." (Esther Schipper, 2025). The letters are rotating at such a speed that the viewer cannot achieve more than glimpses of the combined text. This work lies at the intersection of textual and visual communication, appearing to be fleeting in nature, yet allowing each to proceed at their own pace, expressing what they need to and no more.

Composition in Field, 2022

35 mm film, stainless steel, aluminum, motor, Plexiglas, LED lights

91 x 120 x 9 cm

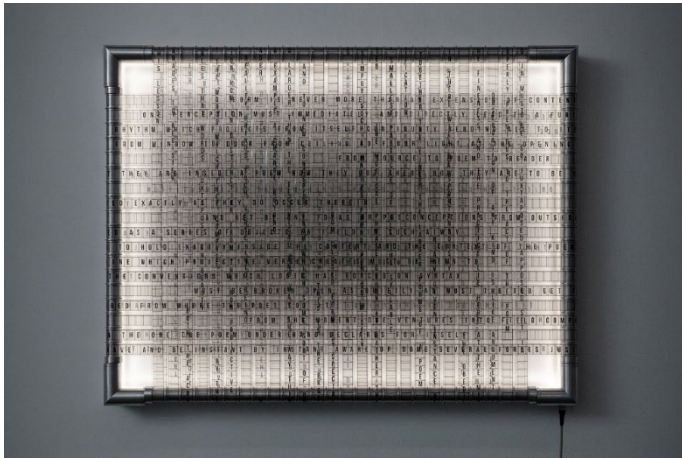


Figure 7

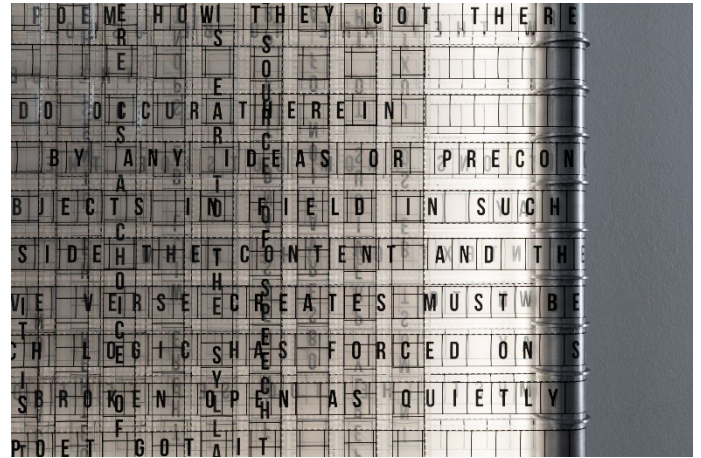


Figure 8

*Composition in Field* (Barba, 2022) mechanically loops woven lengths of transparent film lit from behind in a rhythmic display of text. (Kim, 2025). The text central to this work is Charles Olson's *Project Verse*, wherein Olson proposes that poetry is a form of energy transferred from the poet to the reader (Stefon, 1998). Correlating to Olson, Barba takes this poem and transposes the energy, shifting it in a play of light and information, essentially creating a “poetry machine” (Barba, 2025).

Spacelength Thought, 2012

16 mm film, projector, typewriter, programming

Dimensions variable

Projection distance: 2-2.5 m approx.



Figure 9

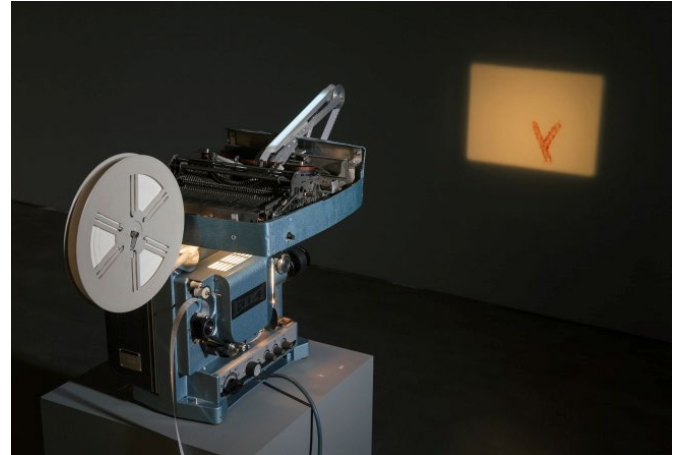


Figure 10

*Spacelength Thought* (Barba, 2012) finds a typewriter printing and projecting letter by letter onto celluloid film that slowly gathers and bundles onto the floor (Esther Schipper, 2025). In an endeavour to explore the evolution of language, Barba wrote her own monologue examining the “nonlinearity of reading and slowing down of language” (Barba, 2025). This work illuminates the methodical engagement with language throughout her work, playing with dialogue between objects to examine the conventionality and usefulness of film (Price, 2025).

## Peng Zuqiang: Works 6 and 11

Afternoon Hearsay, 2025

18:50, three-channel video installation, 5.1 surround sound, in cinemascope super 8, 16mm and 35mm transferred into digital

approx. projection size, 200 x 500 cm

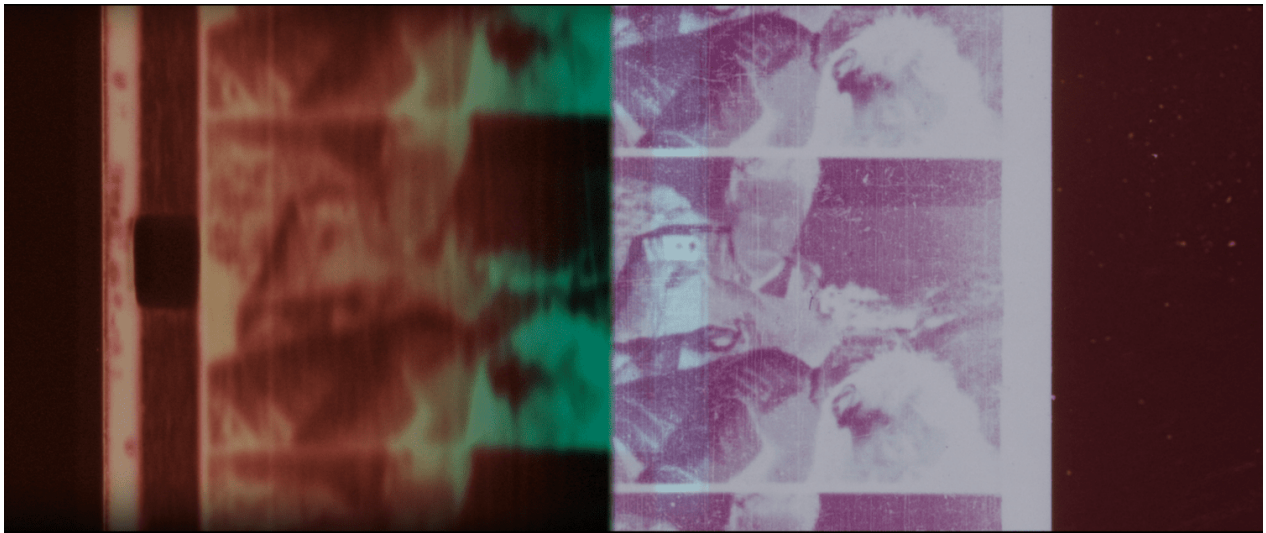


Figure 11

Displayed opposite Barba's works, in the dim section of the exhibition, this film is the lone feature on its wall, intended to be given the space it needs for the viewer to grasp the detail in this large-scale projection.

Exploring ephemerality and fleeting moments in experiences within his heritage and culture, Zuqiang's work asks, "*what is a film without a camera?*" (The Common Guild, 2025), manipulating, weaving and repurposing memory through the tactility of photographic film and moving image. His film *Afternoon Hearsay* (Zuqiang, 2025) explores a split-screen visual narrative in conjunction with text, portraying a story of heritage and life in a historically political setting with a key connection to photographic film. This film strives to reveal Zuqiang's reflections on "the violence, tragedy and suppression of truthful image circulation" (The Common Guild, 2025), represented through experimentation with 8.75mm film. This film stock is central to the storytelling within this work, having been created and circulated in 1960s – 1980s China, for the express purpose of projecting propaganda and educational content to rural communities.

Déjà vu, 2023-24

Loop, mixed media installation, 16mm film, sound, clay, iron oxide

Dimensions unknown



Figure 12

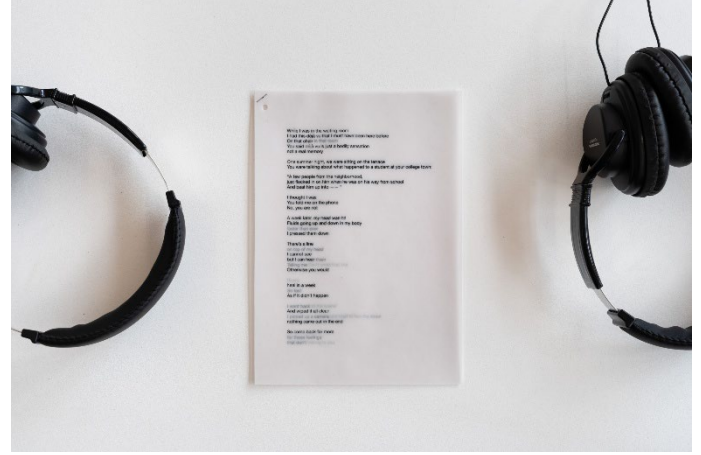


Figure 13

This work stands at the tip of the gallery space, on the opposite side from Zuqiang's other work. This work is intended to be last, with a bench and headphones; this work is placed so that the viewer may take time to contemplate the work and the exhibition, gazing through the windows facing the metropolitan cityscape of NYC.

Responding to government protests in China in 2022, *Déjà vu* (Zuqiang, 2024) unites camera-less image-making, spoken word and sculpture in questioning the persistence of violence (Emalin, 2025). Directly exposing 30 meters of wire, which is used by emergency and rescue services, onto 30 meters of film, Zuqiang created a photogram which projects directly onto a window, allowing for it to be seen both inside and out (Emalin, 2025). On semi-translucent paper, the narration of the accompanying sound is printed irregularly, leaving readers attempting to discern the words, yet perfectly coinciding with the disconnect of protest chants and the narrator's broken memories (Zuqiang, 2025). Drawing from his own "embodied experience" (Zuqiang, 2025), this work profoundly captures the fleeting memories of panic and violence in an ephemeral and empathetic collaboration of sight and sound (Jacques, 2025).

### Katja Liebmann: Work 7

Dust in the Wind 2, 1996-2020, cyanotype toned, cotton rag paper, 131 x 138 cm

Erase 1, 2010-2021, cyanotype toned, cotton rag paper, 130 x 180 cm



Figure 14



Figure 15

On the opposite side of the wall to *Afternoon Hearsay* (Zuqiang, 2025), viewers are treated to the soft blurs of Liebmann's work, gently re-welcoming viewers to the main gallery space.

Katja Liebmann is an artist deeply involved in the concept of the personal archive, employing photographic processes such as cyanotype, pinhole cameras, and kallitypes. (HackelBury Fine Art, 2019). By using these early methods, “reflecting on tools of the past to emphasise the fleeting nature of the present” (HackelBury Fine Art, 2019), Liebmann connects apparatus and memory on a dream-like journey, using time as a mode of transport to do so.

*Dust in the Wind* is a series of cyanotype prints in which Liebmann revisits old negatives and recreates them into a new body of work, crafting “etchings of time” through London and New York over 25 years (HackelBury Fine Art, 2022). *Dust in the Wind 2* (Liebmann, 2020) and *Erase 1* (Liebmann, 2021) are both produced as toned cyanotype triptychs on fibre-based paper, creating deep, muted navy hues that stretch across three prints in soft, painterly motions. Liebmann's use of “low-tech” mediums impresses a physical effect of memory on her prints, showing wear and tear as if they were well-loved and often looked at, adorned with blurs, scratches, and general imperfections (Liebmann, 2019). Experiencing movement as a studio of sorts, Liebmann harnesses photography to directly confront her exploration of cityscapes and landscapes, stating, “I used photography as a medium to absorb the impressions of the cities” (Artdoc, 2022).

## Rosangela Rénno: Work 8

Milan, Agfa Isolette, 2006, Photograph, colour on paper, Agfa Isolette camera and wooden frames, Dimensions variable

Pedro Vasquez, Fed 2, 2006, Photograph, black and white, on paper, Fed 2 type camera and wooden frames, Dimensions variable

Zeis Ikon Super Ikonta 533/10, Photograph, colour on paper, Zeis Ikon Super Ikonta 533/10 camera and wooden frames, Dimensions variable



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

To the immediate right of the entrance, three instalments from *The Last Photograph* series are displayed. Slightly separate from the other works, the lack of distraction invites the viewers to contemplate the only outright inclusion of the camera in this exhibition.

Rosangela Rénno is an artist whose work dives into the concepts of collections and archives. While she defines herself not as a photographer but as an observer and collector (Iturralde, 2025), her attention to objects and storytelling makes her a significant contributor to this exhibition. Particularly, Rénno seeks to utilise found images, cameras, and photographic objects to expose social injustice while showcasing the stories of those affected by such injustices, poetically shedding light on voices commonly silenced (Iturralde, 2025).

*The Last Photograph* began with an invitation from Rénno to 42 photographers, in which she welcomed them to select a camera each from her flea-market-acquired collection. Asking them to photograph Brazil's most famous attraction, Christ the Redeemer on the Corcovado Hill, Rénno chose one photograph from each roll, displaying image and camera as diptychs (Scharrer, 2006). This engagement between Rénno and participants resulted in an enquiry of photography as a means to look beyond the search for a final image, regarding copyright and authorship as items to be relinquished, instead inviting viewers to look into the resulting images to discern the life of the person who took it.

## Wolfgang Tillmans: Works 9 and 10

Freischwimmer 56, 2004, Chromogenic print 240 x 180 cm

Freischwimmer 199, 2012, Chromogenic print 224.2 x 181 cm

Freischwimmer 54, 2004, Chromogenic print 237 x 181 cm



Figure 19



Figure 20

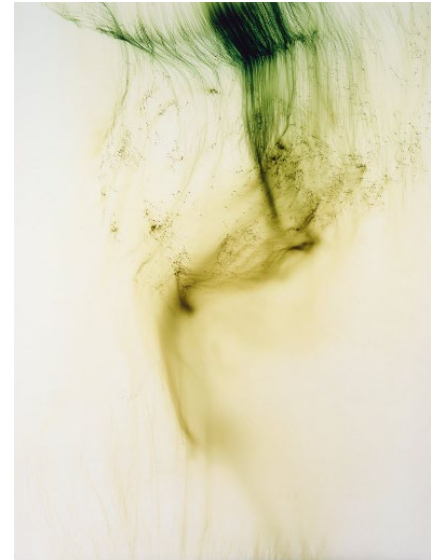


Figure 21

Placing the two series of works by this artist against each other creates an almost hallway of exclusively Wolfgang Tillmans. The space given to these works invites viewers to step back and take their time to appreciate the varieties of these works.

Wolfgang Tillmans is widely regarded as a pioneer within the medium of photography, having played across technique, subject and curation in his work (Zwirner, 2025). Tillmans' work deeply considers social awareness and hierarchies while staying delicate and light-hearted, skilfully integrating intimacy and material through a perceptive balance of the richness of life and significance of medium.

*Freischwimmer* is a series of works spanning multiple decades, holding a wide range of variations that the artist continually explores. Translating to '*Free Swimmer*,' these works are characterised by a sense of liberation in their flowing lines of subject matter. Tillmans created this by reducing the process to its simplest form: light, paper, chemicals, chance and the darkroom (Phillips, 2018). Working alongside material in a collaboration of mindfulness and light, Tillmans remarks, 'what connects all my work is finding the right balance between intention and chance, doing as much as I can and knowing when to let go' (Eicher, 2008).

Parkett Edition, 1992-98 (for Parkett 53), 1998

Chromogenic prints

40.5 x 30.5 cm



Figure 22



Figure 23

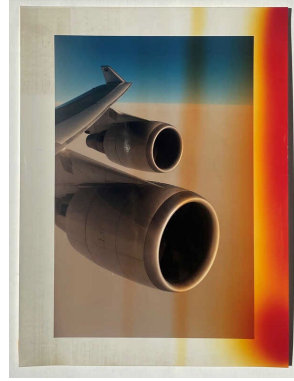


Figure 24



Figure 25

Erratically splayed across the gallery wall, reminiscent of many of Tillmans' past exhibitions, *Parkett Edition, 1992-98 (for Parkett 53)*, (1998) is a series of sixty photographic prints by Wolfgang Tillmans that consists solely of a collection of mistakes made within chemical interactions during the printing process (Dercon *et al.*, 2017). The prints used were discards from images that, at the time, were becoming well known as part of 'Tillmans' brand. Allowing "all kinds of analogue glitches" to be present within his work, Tillmans blended his original concepts of unapologetic people with that of physical experimentation with analogue process. By repurposing and reworking prints that are imperfect versions of "perfect" works, Tillmans found a way to breathe new life into them, simply through material manipulation (Dercon *et al.*, 2017). The obvious touch of Tillmans in these works truly shows his closeness to his work, connecting to this exhibition in an inherent way by a narrative of direct connection to the artist and work.

## 2.2: Exhibition Model and Layout

As shown at the beginning of this chapter, a model was made of the Whitney 7th-floor gallery space to accurately curate a layout of this exhibition. The model was created with 1 meter in the space equating to 1.5 cm in the model. It is important to note that in the case of mock displaying *Parkett Edition, 1992-98 (for Parkett 53)*, (Tillmans, 1998), the images are not accurate depictions of the prints. Additionally, due to there being 60 prints, all of which are not available to view, a selection was chosen to display within this thesis.



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

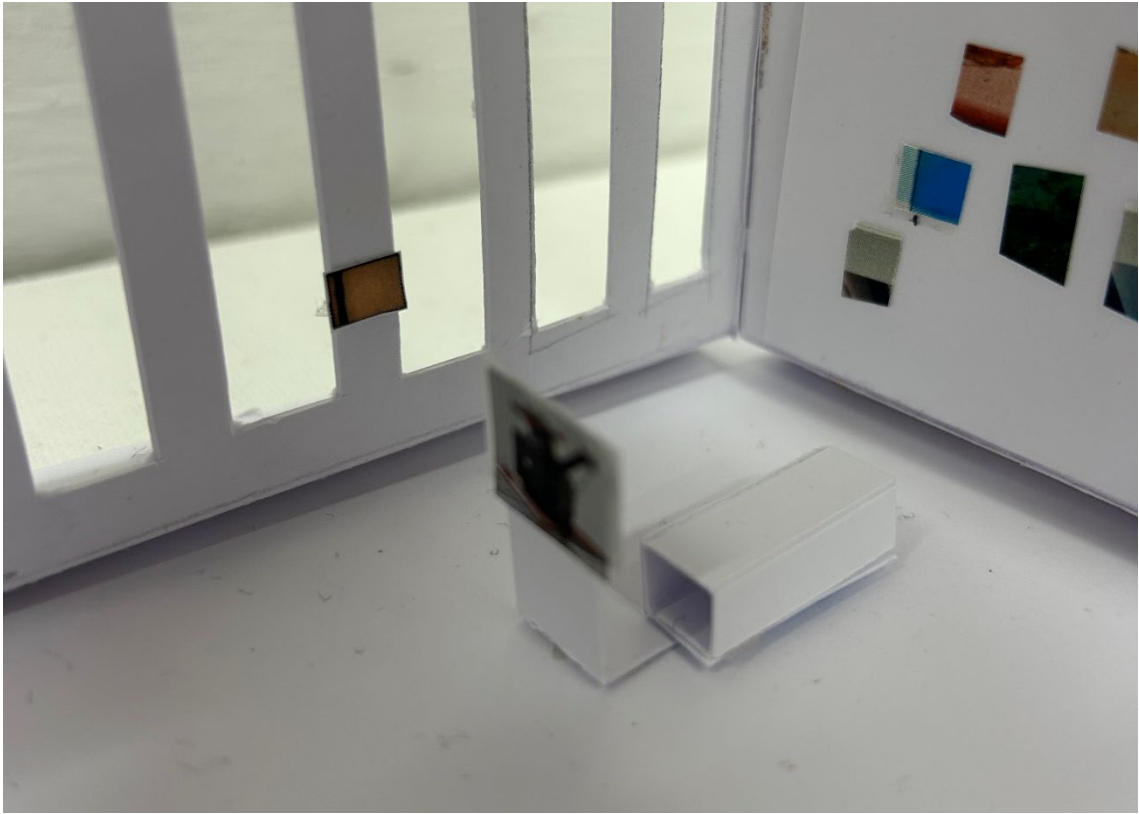


Figure 29



Figure 30

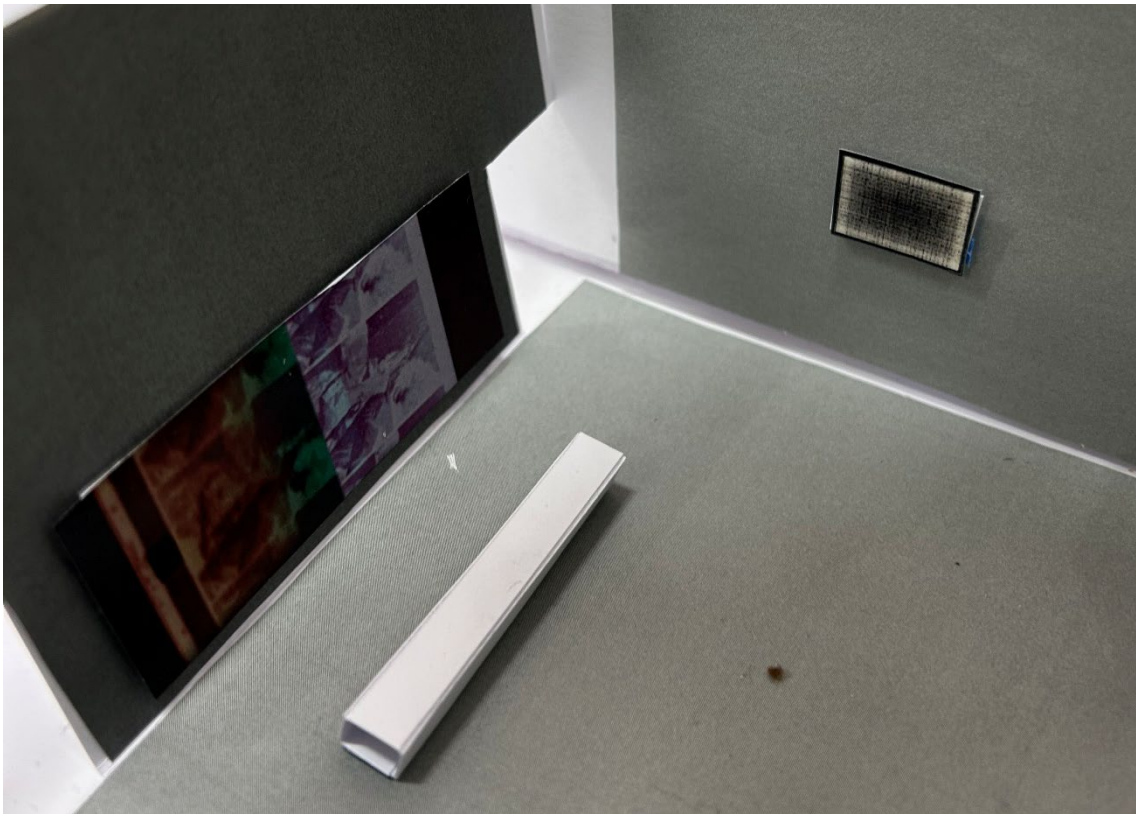


Figure 31



Figure 32

## Chapter 3: Curatorial Aims

### 3.1: Venue

The Whitney Museum of American Art was chosen to host this exhibition largely due to its gallery size, outreach and resources. The reason an untraditional space was not chosen was originally due to this consideration of outreach; however, upon further thought, it would likely not be suitable due to the delicacy of certain artworks in this exhibition. The installation teams available to prepare the required space for this exhibition, while carefully securing the artworks, are invaluable, with “an excellent team... prepared for any sort of eventualities” (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2025). Employing the availability of installation teams, the gallery space within the Whitney can be transformed to suit the needs of this exhibition. Creating a suitable environment for works that require specific conditions, such as projections and light-based sculptures, to stand out in a darker, dimmer space. Being able to create a dimmer space, both separate yet alongside the traditional stark white of the space, provides excellent contrast to emphasise the range of light, colour, and compositions present in the chosen artworks.

The importance of New York City to photography history and general culture was a significant draw to the Whitney's choice. Standing proudly overlooking the Hudson River in the Meatpacking district of Manhattan: “This is not a building that stands in isolation; it is a building that embraces the city and welcomes people in” (Piano, 2025). The bustling life and distinct nature of NYC speak directly to the richness of photography and life within this exhibition, “perhaps because of its incomparable energy and unrivalled diversity” (Christie's, 2021). Furthermore, the city's reputation as a centre point for both photography and contemporary art history is impossible to ignore. The magnitude of streets and dense population of the city are grounds for endless inspiration and collaboration, making it “much harder to stay in your own world and your own mind” (Weiner, 2020).

It has not gone unnoticed that the artists featured in this exhibition are predominantly not of American heritage, specifically that of the United States of America. This presents a possible issue or conflict of interest with showing at the Whitney. However, the artists included in this exhibition have previous connections to America, whether they have been based in the US previously, or have created and exhibited work in the US exploring contexts related to American identities or are citizens of continental North and South American countries. Showing a willingness to accept non-American artists, the Whitney has previously sought to expand its catalogue of artists in several exhibitions, including the renowned Whitney Biennial: “The show's organisers aimed for a wide definition of American art: the roster includes artists based in the US, irrespective of original

nationality, and American-born artists living abroad” (Stapley-Brown, 2017). This is evidence of an important turning point in the Whitney’s definition of American art, embracing the diversity of NYC, and the USA, honouring the “integration of unique, distinct cultures” (Civic Issues, 2019). Acknowledging the concern about the validity of the American-ness of this exhibition, the multitude of factors contributing to the choice of this gallery, combined with the above evidence, ultimately demonstrate that the Whitney is an appropriate venue for this exhibition.

Among the key considerations for an appropriate space and location, accessibility and public reach were essential factors. It is essential to note that, although this thesis does not directly address the issue of disadvantaged individuals or lack of access to contemporary arts spaces, it is no less imperative to this curator that every viewer has an equal opportunity to engage with this exhibition. The selection of a space that can cater to a range of needs while being publicly known and well-funded, such as the Whitney, was at the forefront of this decision. Providing several accessibility programs, including audio descriptions, sign language tours, sensory-friendly events and adequate wheelchair access, the Whitney is welcoming to all eager to experience the extensive range of contemporary art on offer (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2025). Additionally, the museum offers a range of free opportunities and discounted tickets. With a range of art-making events, music and more available for the enjoyment of visitors, the Whitney opens its doors to all visitors every Friday night and every second Sunday at no charge (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2024).

### **3.2: Intended Audience**

The aim is to present a diverse range of intersecting concepts to a varied audience, so that they may be introduced to a way of thinking and experiencing photography beyond their existing knowledge. This exhibition is intended to serve multiple audiences with varying knowledge and interest in photography. Across these audiences, there is a universal intention: to engage viewers in questioning the depth of photographic processes, ultimately wondering where material, person and culture coincide.

Primarily, this exhibition seeks to engage those well-versed in photographic process and philosophy, such as scholars, students and practising professionals who are based within the fields of contemporary art and photography. Secondly, viewers who have a keen interest in contemporary art, who may not be directly involved in the realm of the arts, and wish to witness the pushing of boundaries within photographic materiality. With this exhibition discussing the

connection between photography and the artist, it is essential that the main audience, those who are previously involved within the arts, can engage with the artworks in a manner that caters to their creativity. In the book *Wired to Create* (2016), writers Scott Barry Kaufman and Carolyn Gregoire discuss in immense detail the neuroscience and psychology behind “the mysteries of the creative mind” (Kaufman and Gregoire, 2016). In the chapter *Openness to Experience*, the writers refer to Kaufman’s doctoral dissertation, in which three key forms of cognitive engagement to openness can be observed. “Intellectual engagement” is the compulsion for truth and problem-solving, which can be obeyed by the inclusion of technological advancements in photography and art. “Affective engagement” is associated with the use of intuition, compassion, and empathy to achieve answers, consulting with the viewer’s ability to read into the artworks and comprehend the emotional meanings embedded within them. Lastly, “aesthetic engagement” is the drive towards imagination and art to decipher visual pleasure, perhaps the most surface-level and yet most important type of engagement needed in this exhibition, so that viewers can simply enjoy what is in front of them. (Kaufman and Gregoire, 2016, p. 83) The book clarifies these factors as varying in each person, with most people being higher in one type of engagement than the others. The demonstration of these in relation to the proposed exhibition is important in evaluating the potential success of the exhibition and engaging creative minds.

Outside of these main audiences, those with little to no knowledge of contemporary art and photographic contexts are welcome to explore what is on offer. While the general public is largely familiar with analogue photography and has probably used it, the digital archive is an ever-growing, easy-to-feed beast, as explored through Vrancken (2020) in chapter 1. Conversely, *Technologies of memory: Practices of remembering in analogue and digital photography* (Keightley and Pickering, 2014) analyses analogue photography as a valid tool for remembering in personal use. To do so, the authors examine a focus group of individuals on their feelings surrounding four key points: photo-taking, photo-viewing, photo-storing and photo-sharing. The findings show that there is a profound combination of digital and analogue practices. This blend is a conscious decision by many of the interviewees, as they navigate day-to-day life with digital devices literally in hand; there is the convenience of taking and sharing images with friends and acquaintances. While digital means are no less effective, the materiality of analogue prevails in the storing of family memories. The ability to hold and feel a photograph connects the individual by allowing them to possess their own tangible memory and, therefore, is categorised as a valuable object. The limited capacity of film, which contributes to the photographs becoming “singular in existence” (Keightley and Pickering, 2014), raises an issue of photographic materiality and is precisely the feeling this exhibition aims to evoke in viewers.

## Chapter 4: Other Curatorial Influences

### 4.1: Points of Wider Discussion

#### **Phyllis Christopher and Ajamu X In-conversation: Darkroom/Studio Intimacies**

This in-conversation was held as part of an exhibition and series of events hosted by the Cooper Gallery in Dundee, focused on inviting the public to respond to radical ideas of resistance, survival, celebration and action, with the catalyst being intersectional feminist and queer ideologies. Phyllis Christopher and Ajamu X discussed “Darkroom Intimacies”, detailing the power of process in the engagement of the photographic object as a means to connect to queer identities, both with themselves and their subjects. Particularly, the sights, smells, and textures in analogue photography become erotic in a manner as the materiality of the subject and process enhance a feeling of intimacy, becoming fluid and unapologetic. X describes working in the darkroom as “a magical world that only some are privy to” (Christopher and X, 2025). This fantastical world is indeed a unique experience for each photographer. The recognition of that feeling by other photographers became a major driving point for the theory behind this exhibition. Christopher discussed that in her current work, she has taken to embracing all accidents and mistakes within the darkroom, refusing to avoid the physical effects the material and chemicals themselves leave behind (Christopher and X, 2025).

#### **Christina Seely: Slow Perceptions | Embodied Relations**

Discussing perspectives and collaborations between the non-human world and humans in artistic practices, Louise Mackenzie and Christina Seely host an in-conversation, *Slow Perceptions | Embodied Relations*. Describing herself not as a photographer, but rather as a visual or photographic artist, Christina Seely immerses herself in the creative use of photographic processes to document our “increasingly tenuous relationship to the non-living world” (Seely, 2025). Immersing herself deeply in “the accelerating realities of climate collapse” (Seely, 2017), Seely’s work often finds her in places on Earth rapidly affected by climate change. During the creation of the photographic series *Terra Systema*, Seely engaged directly with her camera, capturing long exposures of the rainforest canopy in Panama. She sought to capture the “breathing” of the trees, feeling the landscape viscerally through harnessing her camera (Seely, 2025). Despite her consistent use of photography, Seely does not see the camera as a mere tool, but rather as an embodiment of herself, a non-human collaborator along with her on the mission to express the complex relationship between Earth and humans.

## The Sustainable Darkroom

A growing aspect of photography's materiality in recent history is that of sustainability. Questioning the harm caused to the environment by silver particles and other chemical compounds used in darkroom chemistry, institutions such as The Sustainable Darkroom have emerged with a mission to repurpose what can be reused and make from home what cannot. Set on transforming the material relationship we have with analogue photographic processes into one that reduces environmental toxicity, The Sustainable Darkroom is dedicated to research and education through community engagement (The Sustainable Darkroom, 2025). Focusing on the alternative processes inherent in analogue photography, The Sustainable Darkroom is creating a new way forward in the approach of photographic materialities, one that shows care for the planet.

### 4.2: Historical Influences

#### Hippolyte Bayard



Figure 33

While not easily recognisable as a spearhead of photography's invention alongside Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre, Hippolyte Bayard is no less of a contributor to the rich history of photography. At a time of many scientific conventions and breakthroughs, Bayard was eager to show his works, some of the first successful experiments of direct-positive photography (Beaton and Buckland, 1989, pp. 36–37). Discouraged in doing so by a friend and sponsor of Louis Daguerre, who went on to be awarded a pension of 6,000 francs and an abundance of praise, Bayard was diminished in recognition for his breakthroughs. Rightfully enraged, he responded with the creation of *Self-portrait as Drowned Man* (Bayard, 1840). Posing himself as a corpse, darkened, decay-like face and hands included, Bayard took his own photograph (O'Hearn, 2018).

Humorous yet morbid, he sought to show the neglect he keenly felt by staging his own drowning. Despite his anger, Bayard is credited with producing the first known instance of photographic propaganda (Beaton and Buckland, 1989, pp. 36–37), becoming an admirable figure of tenacity.

### **Alfred Buckham**



**Figure 34**

Carrying the well-earned moniker of “Daredevil Photographer”, Alfred Buckham was a pilot in the Royal Navy during the First World War, later becoming a captain in the Royal Naval Air Service (Pearson, 2018). Armed with a heavy plate camera, Buckham had a penchant for hanging from the side of his planes in pursuit of capturing stunning scenes of cities, landscapes and the clouds themselves, all from his vantage point in the sky. After nine plane crashes and a tracheotomy, Buckham was discharged from the air service. In recovery, he turned to creating “photo-montages” (National Galleries of Scotland, 2025), which could be described as one of the first instances of photo-editing. Carefully selecting from his collection of over two thousand negatives, Buckham would combine multiple images of clouds, landscapes and planes to create the perfect picturesque scene. His selective exposures of negatives were meticulous, ensuring that the edges between each image were nearly undetectable, as he adjusted light strength and exposure times at each point of manipulation (National Galleries, 2025). Creating photographs that give no indication of being edited, Buckham had the ability to leave viewers to believe it was a perfect instance of the moment of photographing. Buckham’s dedication to his craft cements him as an icon of seizing the moment, awe-inspiring in his immaculate results.

## Annelise Hager



Figure 35

Using the technique of photograms, Annelise Hager's practice in the darkroom was experimental and powered with her knowledge and fascination of natural sciences. Combining her own poetry with her artworks, Hager substantially presented a new way of thinking in the movements of camera-less photography and surrealist art (Harvard, 2025). Using multiple layers and exposures with techniques and objects to natural science and women's work, Hager's work portrays a fluidity and movement that is inherently soft, and almost feminine in style. Assigning her practice the appropriate title "White Shadows". Despite her accomplishments towards an innovative blending of darkroom process and care, Hager remains largely unknown. Unfortunately, a large portion of her work was lost, a cause of bombings present in 1940s Germany, and overshadowed by the 1950s rise of international male painters (Harvard, 2025).

## Conclusion

The theory explored in this thesis reinforces the validity of analogue photography, both in a gallery context and within general usage. The findings of this thesis establish that users, in both artistic and domestic contexts, connect more deeply with the output of emotion and memory in artworks due to a lingering sense of manipulation stemming from the inherent materiality of analogue processes.

The examination of philosophical and scientific theories in this thesis has proven successful in investigating the undeniable phenomenon of physical closeness and connection between analogue photographic processes and the artist. This undeniable act of physical closeness is embedded in the artwork, making it an emotionally charged piece that invites viewers to discuss and question the wonder of photographic materiality. This thesis and the resulting exhibition serve as evidence that the processes and materialities of analogue photography are capable of being pushed beyond what we know, as many artists attempt to digest the world around them, creating new dialogues between the object, the viewer, the gallery, and the creator.

Analysing the validity of the Whitney Museum of American Art has been crucial in understanding the significance of geographical location and accessibility in creating an exhibition for the chosen demographic. Exploring the resources available to the Whitney has solidified its selection, verified by the acknowledgement of New York City's diverse influence. Investigating not only where the viewer will visit, but also why they would want to, this thesis has come to understand that the public holds a lingering fondness for analogue photography in a digital age.

Providing insight into the initial fear of the increase of digital practices, it is clear to see that new photographic technologies do not endanger the old. In fact, they create a longing for authenticity that often results in the dismissal of digital ways. However, it is clear to see that both analogue and digital have their uses, and the blending of the two together allows for an emphasis on unconventional photographic materialities, in a new age beyond technological need.

The curatorial decisions significantly influenced the effectiveness of this exhibition in portraying the explored theory through a series of artworks. Sticking to the concepts of changing materialities and the impact of "aura" (Benjamin, 1973), the chosen artworks effectively convey the significance of the analogue photographic process in the creative expression of an individual. Conclusively, the curatorial decisions in this thesis have successfully created an exhibition that will undoubtedly connect with the viewer in an emotionally provocative manner, prompting their own interest in the expanded use of analogue photography.

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