

Transgressions + Amplifications

MIXED-MEDIA PHOTOGRAPHY
OF THE 1960S AND 1970S

Collage

One of the techniques used by photographers in this exhibition is collage, combining different materials together on a background to create a new work of art. Materials can be almost anything--photographs, fabric, drawings, leaves, buttons, etc.--and the background can be as simple as a blank sheet of paper or as complicated as a photograph.

With this activity, we encourage you to use the pre-cut, laminated images to create your own collage. Using the white base, layer your chosen images and objects to create your own unique composition. Once you are finished, use your camera or mobile phone to take a picture of your creation.

Alteration

For the second activity, we invite you to choose one (or more!) of the printed images available [list image options] and use the pencils at the station to alter the image. When considering how to alter your chosen image(s), we encourage you to think about the emotions that could have been involved in the scene, how it makes you feel, what memories it brings up for you, or a story you think could be told from the picture.

Combine Them!

Now try combining the two previous activities. Using an image you have altered from the second activity, layer the laminated images from the collage activity on top. Once you have finished layering and positioning, take a photograph of your new collage.

**Please do not alter the laminated images or the white base, and please leave them at the activity station. You are welcome to take your altered, printed images home with you. **

Please tag us at #nmartmuseum when you share your creations on social media

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Photographs are often referred to by a variety of names that may not be familiar to us as the classifications used for paintings, such as “oil” or “watercolor.” Sometimes, this leads us to question what the photograph in front of us is made from, rather than experiencing the work. Throughout this exhibition, when you run into a type of photograph that you are not familiar with, look to one of these sheets for assistance. Below you will find basic definitions of or explanations for many of the processes used to make the photographs in Transgressions + Amplifications: Mixed-Media Photography of the 1960s and 1970s.

Van Dyke

The Van Dyke process was first written about in 1842 by Sir John Herschel and later patented in Germany in 1895 by Arndt and Troost. The process uses both silver and iron salts to create a light-sensitive solution that is coated onto paper or other materials to be used for printing under ultraviolet light. Although Van Dyke is known for producing a slightly warm-brown image, prints from this process can be toned to produce warmer, cooler, or more neutral variations.

Gelatin Silver

The dominant method of printing photographs during the twentieth century, gelatin silver prints, are often what comes to mind when we think of black and white photographs. Light-sensitive silver salts are suspended in a gelatin emulsion, which is coated onto paper. This paper is briefly exposed to light, producing an invisible, latent image revealed by a chemical developer. Gelatin silver paper could be mass-produced without sacrificing quality and was easy to purchase during the twentieth century.

Albumen Print

Pre-dating the gelatin silver print, albumen prints share many of the same qualities. First used in 1847, the albumen process became the first commercially viable material for the mass production of photographic prints. Albumen, from egg whites, is combined with salt and coated onto paper. Once dried, this coating is made light-sensitive with the application of silver nitrate. The resulting emulsion sits on top of the fibers of the paper, as opposed to being absorbed into them, resulting in a paper that can produce sharp, rich photographic images.

Cyanotype

First published in 1842 by Sir John Herschel, cyanotypes are one of the earliest photographic processes. Unlike many other early processes that used silver salts, cyanotypes used iron salts to create an ultraviolet light-sensitive solution. As the “cyan” in its name suggests, cyanotypes can be recognized by their blue color. The process has been used in a variety of ways and with materials such as paper, fabric, and even glass. It was this process that was used for creating copies of technical drawings, especially for buildings, that became known simply as blueprints.

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Gum Bichromate

This process was among the first to give photographers a choice of colors to work with. With practice, a photographer can produce full color images with this process. The basic solution coated onto paper or fabric only has three ingredients: gum arabic, made from refined acacia tree sap; a bichromate, such as potassium bichromate; and a pigment, such as watercolor pigment that comes in a tube. When this solution is exposed to light, it hardens and becomes insoluble. These insoluble areas keep the pigment in place while other parts of the image that didn't receive as much light exposure are washed away. If you look closely, you may be able to see a slight relief created by these hardened layers.

Daguerreotype

One of the first photographic processes invented and the first to be revealed to the public, the daguerreotype is sometimes called the "mirror with a memory" for its reflective surface and extreme detail. This direct positive process produces only one copy every time an exposure is made with the camera. A daguerreotype is made by first polishing a piece of silver-plated copper to a mirror finish. The plate is then fumed with iodine to create a light-sensitive compound on its surface. Next, the plate is exposed to light in a camera. Finally, the plate is exposed to mercury fumes, which reveal the latent image.

Tintype

Despite its name, tin was not used in the historic production of tintypes. Thin sheets of blackened iron were originally used as the base for these images and have been largely replaced by blackened aluminum. This is a wet process, meaning that, once a mixture of collodion and other chemicals flow onto the plate, the process must be completed before the plate can dry. Flowing refers to the process of pouring a puddle of collodion onto a plate and then carefully moving, or flowing, the puddle around so that the entire surface of the plate is coated. Once coated, the plate is immersed in a bath of silver nitrate, which reacts with the other chemicals to form a layer of light-sensitive silver salts. The light-sensitive plate is next loaded into a special holder, placed into a camera where an exposure is made, and then taken to a darkroom where it can be developed. The resulting image is formed by light colored silver against a dark background. These plates are commonly protected with a coat of special varnish.

Photogravure

Photogravure is a process where the final image is created with ink, rather than a light-sensitive material. The image begins as a transparent positive, which is exposed onto light-sensitive materials on a copper plate by shining light through the transparency. The plate is then chemically etched. The resulting intaglio plate can then be used to render highly faithful reproductions of the original photograph when run through a press with a piece of dampened paper to produce the final print.

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**As you enter this
exhibition, ask yourself:**

What is a photograph?

How does photography compare
to other visual art media?

What characteristics must an artwork
have to be considered photography?

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**What does it
mean to transgress?**

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**What are the
“rules of photography”?**

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Who (in the general sense) is not represented in this exhibition?

Why is that important?

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**What are the
“rules of photography”?**

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**How do the
techniques and
approaches in this
exhibition impact
accessibility?**

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**What other
movements in
art history could be
considered transgressive?**