

Unit 27: Experimental Imagery in Photography

NQF Level 3: BTEC National

Guided learning hours: 60

Unit abstract

Artists and designers use technology, both new and traditional, to push the boundaries of image making, by exploring new ways to use materials, techniques and subjects. Diverse photographic media have often been brought together with this aim. This approach is considered a valuable and creative means of communicating intentions.

This unit extends learners' creative and technical skills through the development of research skills and investigative approaches to manipulating materials, processes, procedures and subjects. This could be considered supplementary to the accepted range of conventional techniques. The development and understanding of photographic processes, and how photographic imagery can be manipulated and challenged, is central to this investigation.

Although the unit does contain a degree of technical consideration and focus, these are not the sole concerns. Learners will be encouraged to develop an individual and creative response to applying techniques which may be combined to originate new methods of working. Learners may also attempt to combine different techniques to produce innovative examples of new methods of enhancing photographic imagery.

The key areas of research, evaluation, practical experimentation, selection and production are all covered in this unit. There will be opportunities for learners to challenge and test techniques, refine their ideas and select appropriate processes with which to make finished work. As learners' understanding grows they may find the sophistication of their ideas improves, particularly as they learn to recognise the potential for producing engaging imagery. Learners will consider and challenge the context in which imagery exists, for instance projections onto surfaces and installations.

Knowledge and understanding gained in this unit can be applied across a range of disciplines such as graphic design, 3D design and fine art. A key factor in the unit is for learners to achieve a workable balance between technical considerations and creative intentions.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to explore and test a range of techniques, materials, processes and media
- 2 Be able to create images through selecting appropriate techniques, materials and processes to meet their intentions
- 3 Understand the contexts in which imagery exists
- 4 Be able to evaluate and refine developmental work to produce outcomes.

Unit content

1 Be able to explore and test a range of techniques, materials, processes and media

Explore: investigate, look into, consider; examine, research information about selected techniques; use relevant textbooks, magazine articles and internet resources; practical experiments, trials and tests

Range: to extend between the specified limits of the processes- span, scope, extent, limits, bounds, confines, parameters

Techniques: eg silver-based, such as liquid emulsion, printing out, hand-colouring, toning and tinting, posterisation, sabattier, infra-red, baseboard print distortion, combination and sandwich printing, emulsion lift, emulsion stripping and image transfer; traditional processing techniques pursued through digital software; non-silver, eg gum bichromate, salt, gum oil, bromoil, cyanotype, collotype, platinotype, photocopying, photograms

Other techniques: eg pinhole, long or short exposure effects and multiple exposure; lighting techniques, strobe, mixed and projection lighting; digital, scanning and computer manipulation in programmes such as Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro, raw conversion

2 Be able to create images through selecting appropriate techniques, materials and processes to meet their intentions

Create images: eg explore and select appropriate techniques or processes; evaluate, refine, adapt and modify results to meet creative intentions; keep records of thinking and conclusions

3 Understand the contexts in which imagery exists

Context: the circumstances that form the setting for an event or idea in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed – situation, background, scene, setting frame of reference, contextual relationships

4 Be able to evaluate and refine developmental work to produce outcomes

Evaluate: analyse examples using appropriate technical language; consider technical qualities, aesthetic qualities and fitness for purpose

Grading grid

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all of the learning outcomes for the unit. The criteria for a pass grade describes the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 explore and test a range of techniques, materials, processes and media	M1 approach a range of techniques, materials, processes and media in a challenging and coherent manner in order to create individual images	D1 work independently, with understanding and skill in challenging and reviewing techniques and processes to create innovative and exciting outcomes.
P2 create images through selecting appropriate techniques, materials and processes to meet their intentions	M2 effectively evaluate and refine developmental work to achieve purposeful outcomes that have considered the context in which imagery can exist.	
P3 describe the contexts in which imagery exists		
P4 evaluate and refine developmental work to produce outcomes.		

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Tutors delivering this unit will need to consider how best to provide an appropriate choice from the large range of techniques and processes available. Learners will need to be equipped with basic information concerning the range of techniques and processes that they will work with.

Some techniques can be extremely time-consuming and care should be taken to ensure that in-depth research, image production and final presentation of results do not compromise simultaneous work in other units.

Learning outcome 1 can be delivered through a sequence of studio-based tasks that introduce specific aspects and techniques that challenge and extend how imagery can be made. Much of the scope of the unit will depend on the range of materials, techniques and processes available at the centre. However, learners may gain more insights by applying their efforts across a narrower range of techniques, and by comparing and sharing results in group critiques.

It should be stressed that learners can either develop variations of existing techniques or, to evolve new techniques of their own. Tutors will need to provide learners with access to sufficient research facilities and resources. Learners should support their practical explorations with examples of similar techniques used in the work of others. Learners will need to observe all relevant health and safety guidelines when accessing photographic studios and darkrooms.

Learning outcome 2 builds on the experiences in learning outcome 1. Learners should use the results of their explorations to select appropriate techniques for the production of experimental images. These techniques should be appropriate to the proposed content or desired effect of the images. As learners refine their ideas they should clearly record their evaluations in an appropriate format. This may be in the form of a technical workbook or personal journal. Learners should record both creative and technical information regarding their choice of working practices. Learners should avoid focusing on purely technical considerations at the expense of creativity.

Learning outcome 3 develops understanding of the context in which imagery can be found and used. Records of the potential situations in which ideas and imagery could be presented should be evidenced and evaluated in an appropriate format such as sketchbooks.

Learning outcome 4 has strong links with learning outcome 3 as the evaluation and presentation of the final outcome will be dependent on it being sited appropriately, eg combinations of materials, projection of imagery onto other imagery or surfaces, the presentation of imagery in a controlled setting, reduced lighting, mounted. Learners should identify technical issues and qualities that they have addressed through their practical work. Aesthetic qualities and fitness for purpose of their developmental work should be evaluated in learners' presentations.

Assessment

Evidence will be generated through the final images, which use the chosen technique or process, and the evaluation of their relevance and presentation. Evidence will also be generated through practical activities, discussion, participation in preliminary research and its subsequent presentation. The unit provides the opportunity for learners to extend their creative and technical skills by researching and experimenting with materials, processes and procedures, supplementary to conventional photographic techniques. The ability to break away from orthodox thinking is a valuable asset that enables learners to produce original images.

To achieve a **pass** grade, learners must achieve the four pass criteria listed on the grading grid.

For P1, learners will explore a basic range of techniques and processes. There will be a basic level of skill shown in the work, and decisions prompting creative developments may have been tutor-driven. Evaluations will be evident but limited in scope.

For P2, learners will be able to select a technique based on their explorations with the tutor's assistance. Learners will show a limited understanding of the potential of processes and techniques to produce experimental imagery. Considerations may be purely technical rather than a balance of technical and creative.

For P3, learners will have some knowledge of the potential contexts in which their work can be presented and seen. This is likely to have been tutor driven.

For P4 there will be evidence of evaluation throughout the learning process. There will be some indication of purpose, but the exact choice of techniques may be tutor led. Techniques used may enhance imagery in a limited manner. Final outcomes will be presented appropriately. (There is a very close link with P3.)

To achieve a **merit** grade, the learner must achieve all of the pass grade criteria plus the two merit grade criteria.

For M1, learners will show some confidence in exploring a range of techniques and processes. The work produced will show skill and understanding of the potential for development. There will be evidence of personal intention in learners' evaluations. Learners will show knowledge and understanding in selecting techniques and will have identified a personal response that can be supported with an appropriate range of skills.

For M2, learners will show independence in applying a range of presentation techniques to contextualise imagery. There will be evidence of a balance between creative considerations and skilful application of appropriate technical guidelines. Evaluation will be evidenced through the creative process in an appropriate format, usually sketchbooks.

To achieve a **distinction** grade, the learner must achieve all of the pass and merit grade criteria plus the one distinction grade criterion.

For D1, learners will show an in-depth understanding when exploring techniques and processes. Practical work will show a high level of technical skill. Ideas and evaluations will demonstrate skill in proposing creative applications and the conclusions reached will be clearly expressed. The effects in enhancing imagery will be consistently applied. Creative intentions will have been realised.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit links with all core and specialist units, in that it is possible to draw on the experience gained in these units to support the research and image production carried out for this unit. The techniques developed in this unit may also feed into other option units.

Essential resources

Learners require access to an appropriate range of studio facilities, processing equipment and specialist chemicals. For some processes, specialist equipment may not be available and a degree of improvisation can often provide a suitable alternative solution. Many non-silver processes, for instance, require an ultraviolet exposing source, and daylight provides an adequate alternative to a UV light box.

Indicative reading for learners

Books

- Airey T – *Creative Photo Printmaking* (Amphoto, 1997)
- Carr K T – *Polaroid Transfers: A Complete Visual Guide to Creating Image and Emulsion Transfers* (Amphoto, 1997)
- Ephraums E – *Creative Elements: Darkroom Techniques for Landscape Photography* (Amphoto, 1995)
- Failing P – *Abstract Color Photographs: Arthur Grossman* (University of Washington Press, 1997)
- Frost L – *The A-Z of Creative Techniques* (David and Charles, 1998)
- Hedgecoe J – *The Photographers Handbook* (Ebury Press, 1992)
- Hirsch R – *Exploring Colour Photography: A Complete Guide* (Laurence King, 2004)
- Ingledeew J – *Photography – In the Portfolio Series* (Laurence King, 2005)
- Langford M – *The Darkroom Handbook* (Ebury Press, 1984)
- Martin J and Colbeck A – *Handtinting Photographs: Materials, Techniques and Special Effects* (North Light Books, 1989)
- Renner E – *Pinhole Photography* (Focal Press, 1995)
- Scopick D – *The Gum Bichromate Book: Non-silver Methods for Photographic Printmaking* (Focal Press, 1991)

Other reading

There are examples of photography-related work using experimental thinking in fine art periodicals. Learners will need to review current stock for specific articles.

Art Monthly – Wendler J

Artforum – Korner A, Landesman K and Guarino C

British Journal of Photography – Incisive Media

Emulsion Lifts and Creative Techniques – booklets from Polaroid UK

Portfolio – Portfolio Photography Workshop (Edinburgh Ltd)

Key skills

Achievement of key skills is not a requirement of this qualification but it is encouraged. Suggestions of opportunities for the generation of Level 3 key skill evidence are given here. Tutors should check that learners have produced all the evidence required by part B of the key skills specifications when assessing this evidence. Learners may need to develop additional evidence elsewhere to fully meet the requirements of the key skills specifications.

Communication Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewing explorations in group scenarios making timed presentations researching examples from practitioners, or considering technical data. 	<p>C3.1a Take part in a group discussion.</p> <p>C3.1b Make a formal presentation of at least eight minutes using an image or other support material.</p> <p>C3.2 Read and synthesise information from at least two documents about the same subject.</p> <p>Each document must be a minimum of 1000 words long.</p>
Information and communication technology Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> researching techniques and processes on the internet reviewing and refining searches producing supporting materials for use in presentations. 	<p>ICT3.1 Search for information, using different sources, and multiple search criteria in at least one case.</p> <p>ICT3.2 Enter and develop the information and derive new information.</p> <p>ICT3.3 Present combined information such as text with image, text with number, image with number.</p>

Improving own learning and performance Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing progress at tutorials • agreeing actions and working practices, and planning production of images • evaluating their work at key stages in the unit. 	<p>LP3.1 Set targets using information from appropriate people and plan how these will be met.</p> <p>LP3.2 Take responsibility for your learning, using your plan to help meet targets and improve your performance.</p> <p>LP3.3 Review progress and establish evidence of your achievements.</p>