

Transcendent Forms

By Andrew Paul Hayward

In the grand scheme of the photographic influences on my life and practice over the years it cannot be credited enough the impact that The Tate Moderns 'Shape of Light' (Baker, S. 2003) has made. The showcasing of some of the most influential abstract practitioners of the last 100 years made me question what we mean by abstract photography and what it means to practice it. The result of this recently has been a wider and deeper understanding of this form of photographic practice which is all too often misunderstood or not understood at all. It is my intention this Final Major Project to explore abstract photography and what it means for my photographic practice. I will call this body of work 'Transcendent Forms', although this title could change as the project progresses.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

We must first consider what we mean by 'abstract photography'. In essence "all photographs are, to some extent abstractions" (Chris Francis. Nd.). All photography derives its existence from the presence of light and how that light interacts with the material put before it. What occurs is then interpreted by our perception which is combined with our experience and conditioning of reality. What appears as one thing for one person may appear as an entirely different thing for another.

A key theme through the project which I propose to compile is the production of non-representational photographic images which become as obscure as possible, testing the perceptions of the audience. This will be made possible through the extensive use of cameraless techniques documenting a wide variety of subject matters pushing them to the ends of their representation.

I envisage the work created as part of 'Transcendent Forms' would fit well amongst both contemporary abstract art and photography alike. I feel my intended work would fit well in both mainstream and

independent gallery spaces where it could be seen by a wide range of audiences. It is further my intention to ensure that the work is accessible to others who may not find themselves in a gallery space either by choice or by chance.

As an example of where I intend to draw initial inspiration from, and to try and set into context my own work to, I turn to the photograms of Abelardo Morell. Known to me more for his obscure work than his photograms, Morell is nonetheless an important part of my journey into non-representational abstract photographic practice. In the two examples below, Morell has created his photograms not on paper but on large format photographic negatives. This decision in the process means that Morell's imagery has a much greater dynamic range than printing straight onto traditional darkroom paper. The reproducibility of these images increases as well as the quality Morell is able to display his works in. Although the visual qualities of these images surpasses the abilities of most darkroom papers, it is worth noting that the lack of contact between the objects (subject) and the printed image (surface) reduces their worth in my eyes. This does not diminish that they are superb representations of non-representational photography but that they lose an element of credibility amongst many still debating photography's viability as an art form.



Figure 3.

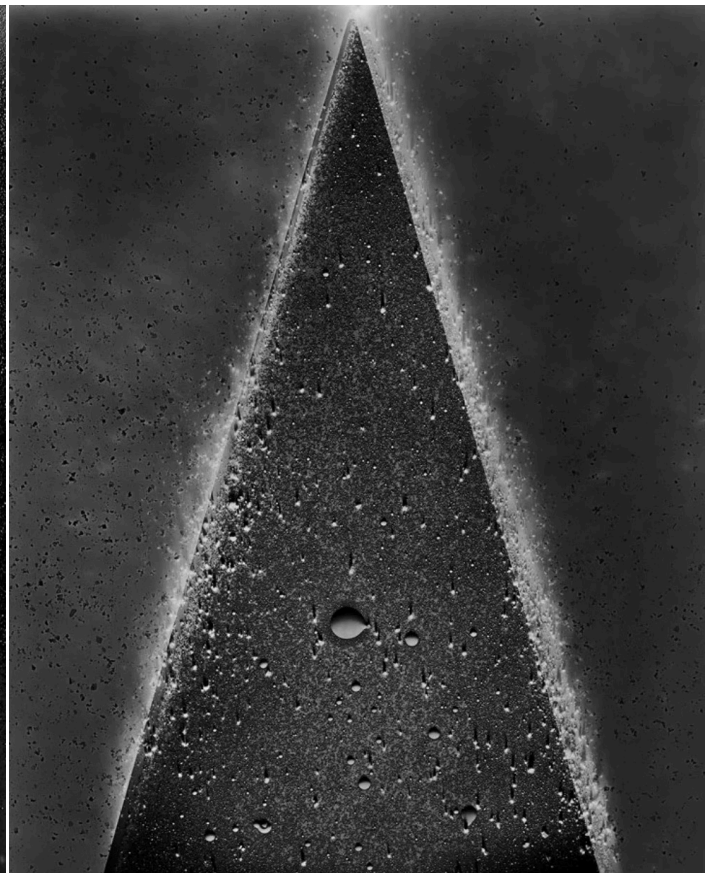


Figure 4.

The work will start from a foundation of non-representational abstract photography and the practice of existing photographers. The initial concept is to produce photographic imagery which becomes as non-representational as possible aiming to, in turn, create a representational code of its own. This will move

towards the creation of independent and unique imagery to form a body of work. This will take the form of a collection of images which work together in series and provoke thought and focus from the viewer making them work harder to interpret the images content. It is my full intention that the final outcome will result in a series of large images intended for exhibition and a book of reproductions documenting a wider selection of work which flows in series. The size and style of the book is not yet clear but I would like to create something unconventional and artisan.

Production Overview: Phase one: Research and Development:

In this first phase it is intended that the work of existing practitioners in the field is investigated and interrogated to try and consider exactly what 'abstract photography' is. This research will take the form of both visual and theoretical research. The visual research is quite self explanatory, while the theoretical focus of my research will centre around more contemporary photographic theory, particularly that which has been conceived since the widespread existence of digital technology in the 21st century.

This research will lead the way to development of my own practice through the use of commonly encountered methods as well as the progression into more complex and experimental techniques. It is my firm intention that much of these experiments will rely little on actual 'cameras' and more on the relationship between light, surfaces and how they interact with the subject matter.

Phase one will run from the start of the Final Major Project (Mid-September 2020) until the end of December 2020. Some experiments to this end have already been carried out and are featured below.

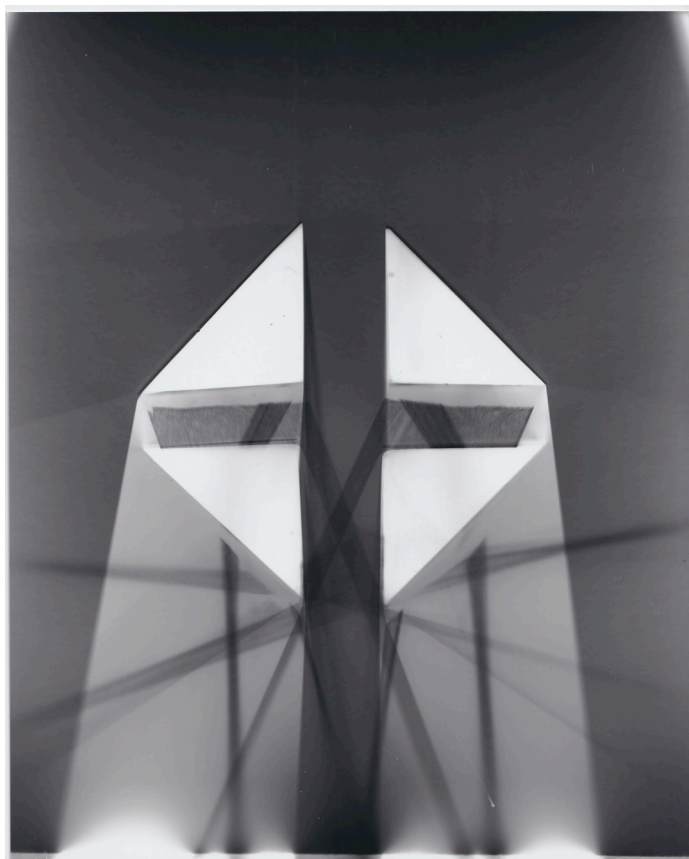


Figure 5.



Figure 6.

Production Overview: Phase two: Production and presentation experimentation:

With the methodology building mostly complete, phase two will seek to revolve around the production of works towards the project. These will vary greatly in terms of their scale and form but it is my firm wish to work with traditional darkroom methods as far as possible and that the large majority of the work is to be made using cameraless processes. As previously stated, the main point of investigation is to explore the relationship between light, surfaces and how they interact with the subject matter.

It is also in this phase that the presentation methods will be explored and experimented with also. It is my personal wish that the end result of 'Transcendent Forms' be exhibited in as many locations as possible and part of the process will be the seeking out of venues for displaying the works.

Phase two will last from the start of January 2020 until the beginning of March 2021.

Production Overview: Phase three: post-production and collation:

With the methodology adequately refined and production techniques honed, phase three will see the production and collation of 'the thing itself' and 'Transcendent Forms' will take its final form.

As previously stated, it is intended that this final form will consist of a series of large images accompanied by a book to display the wider body of work. It is not yet clear how many pieces will form the final series of large images and that this will form part of the process.

It is my intention to produce an artisan book to accompany the project with a high importance placed on its unconventional form to suit seemingly unconventional form of the imagery created. It is my desire for this book to be artisanal to enable a wider selection of the work to be visible to a wider audience while also retaining the limited edition nature of the artworks.

It is hoped that works produced as part of 'Transcendent Forms' will provoke new discussions on what abstract photography is and on the nature of representational form.

Phase three will last from the beginning of March 2021 until the required submission deadline for the Final Major Project of the 30th of April 2021.

MA Photography Risk Assessment form

Please read the Risk Assessment Guidelines before completing this form which contains further resources, available from [The Photography Centre](#).

- Please save a copy of this form to your computer
- You will need to attach a risk assessment form to your Research Project Proposal and your Final Major Project Proposal.

Photographer's Name:	Andrew Hayward	Date(s) of Shoot:	October 2020 onwards
Assistants' Names:			
Tutor / Supervisor:	Wendy McMurdo		
Location:	The darkroom at Midhurst Rother College		
Description of work:	General darkroom practice for the production of images for FMP.		

Persons at Risk Identify all those at risk

Technical Staff:		Academic Staff:		Students:	Y	Admin Staff:		Canteen Staff:	
Contractors:		General Public:		Visitors:		Estates Staff:	Y	Library Staff:	
Cleaning Staff:	Y	Emergency Personnel:							

Other:		Especially at risk:	
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Check list				
Equipment	Darkroom Chemistry	Stands/tripods	Broken glass	Darkened conditions


PRIMARY RISK ASSESSMENT			
Example			
HAZARD	<i>What kind of hazards are there at the site or in your task?</i> <i>i.e. Light stand</i>	RISK OF	<i>What risks do those hazards create?</i> <i>i.e. Light stand falling over</i>
CONTROL MEASURE	<i>How are you going to minimise the risk associated with the hazards you've identified?</i> <i>i.e. weigh down light stand with sandbags</i>		

Please continue your risk assessment, adding additional pages as necessary.

HAZARD	Equipment	RISK OF	Equipment falling
CONTROL MEASURE	Ensure all equipment is serviced and maintained at all times. Also ensure that equipment is used inline with usage guidance.		
HAZARD	Stands / Tripods	RISK OF	Trip hazard to myself and others using darkroom
CONTROL MEASURE	Use of signage to raise awareness of trip hazard posed by tripod legs		
HAZARD	Darkroom Chemistry	RISK OF	Splashing into eye
CONTROL MEASURE	Ensure eye wash station is located and in serviceable order. Ensure to be aware of the venues first aid procedures also. Ensure use of PPE to protect eyes.		
HAZARD	Darkroom Chemistry	RISK OF	Harm from ingestion
CONTROL MEASURE	Ensure that all darkroom chemistry is used inline with manufacturer recommendations and that necessary precautions are taken. Only trained individuals will be using the chemicals.		
HAZARD	Darkroom Chemistry	RISK OF	Possible adverse reactions on skin from chemistry
CONTROL MEASURE	Ensure the provision of PPE to help protect the skin.		

HAZARD	Broken Glass	RISK OF	Cutting or other injuries related to glass and broken glass
CONTROL MEASURE	Where it is necessary to use broken glass, ensure that cleaning equipment is ready for use and that the glass is being used in a controlled and safe way.		
HAZARD	Darkened conditions	RISK OF	Walking into other people and or fixtures within the darkroom
CONTROL MEASURE	Where possible use safe lighting. Where not possible, a full awareness of the room and the people and fixtures in it is essential.		

On site risk assessment: these are control measures that arose on your shoot	
Emergency Information and Procedures	
Phone	Charged mobile phone with full signal / Nearest Payphone / Landline
Medical Expertise	Are you or a member of your team First Aid qualified? Do you know where the nearest one is?
Emergency Procedure	In the event of an emergency dial 999 or 112 ensure that you or someone with you can accurately describe where you are (ideally nearest postcode)
Medical Treatment	Minor Injuries Unit, Falmouth Hospital Open weekdays 8am to 8pm A&E Treliske Hospital, Truro, Open 24 hours
Evacuation procedures	Ambulance can evacuate from main road.
Incident/accident reporting	All incidents or accidents should be reported to tutor at Falmouth University

Assessment carried out by	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have ensured that I have reviewed the hazards and risks associated with this project and taken necessary steps to remove hazards where possible or reduced the risks associated with the remaining hazards to a minimum. I have recorded the main hazards, risks and control measures in this document. I have ensured that those working with me have been briefed on the nature of the tasks they are to perform, and are aware of the hazards associated with the task and the measures in place to reduce the risks associated with those hazards. (if applicable) I will continually assess hazards and risks 'live' on site to ensure that nothing has been overlooked or has changed since initial assessment. 	
Signed: 	Date: 11 th October 2020

Assessment reviewed by

Ethical Considerations

Although the non-representational nature of my intended photographic practice limits the immediate ethical considerations, I feel that it is important to consider the use of darkroom methods in relation to the possibly impact of those methods and materials on the environment. With growing international concern of the impact of humans to our planet, it would be ignorant of me not to research and consider the potential environmental impact of us 'chemical photography' for the production of images. This will feature further in my research and CRJ, however it is important that I state here that I must ensure that any and all chemicals used in the production of 'Transcendent Forms' are disposed of in the correct and safe manner.

Bibliography:

Books:

- Baker, S. & de L'Ecotais, E. (2018). *Shape of Light: 100 Years of Photography and Abstract Art*. London: Tate Publishing.
- Bates, D. (2016). *The Key Concepts: Photography: Second Edition*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Wells, L. (Ed.). (2003). *The Photography Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Websites:

- Abelardo Morell. (2020). *Photograms*. Retrieved from: <https://www.abelardomorell.net/project/photograms/>
- Chris Francis. (nd.). *Threshold Concept #5: Photographs are abstractions, shaped by technology*. Retrieved from: <https://www.photopedagogy.com/threshold-concept-5.html>

Figures:

1. Shape of Light at the Tate Modern by Andrew Paul Hayward, 2018
2. Shape of Light at the Tate Modern by Andrew Paul Hayward, 2018
3. Triangle: Photogram – Salt and Water on Film by Abelardo Morell, 2012
4. Microcosmos: Photogram of Water on Film by Abelardo Morell, 2012
5. Prisms by Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020
6. Glass by Andrew Paul Hayward, 2020