



# Photography Practicum: Learning the Basics of Managing a Fine Art Photography Darkroom

## ABSTRACT

The photography practicum provides Art and Design student researchers with the practical experience of managing a fine art photography studio. Students learn how to operate, manage, and maintain industry-standard fine art archival inkjet printers as well as a fourteen-station traditional black and white darkroom. This project provides essential expertise and knowledge that students, as lab monitors, both share with other students and incorporate into their own fine art practice and professional activities. Student researchers learn how to mix, store, and dispose of photographic chemistry, provide daily assistance to undergraduate and graduate photography students, and generate ideas for improvements to the lab. Additionally, students improve their knowledge of various analog and digital photographic processes through self-directed research with the goal of helping other students learn how to further develop and understand their work. Students also contribute to the ongoing revision of the Photography Lab Manual, which specifies best practices and operating procedures for future photography lab monitors. The practical knowledge gained from this experience is highly valuable to colleges, universities, community colleges, artist co-ops, and professional photography labs that seek to employ individuals to manage and teach both digital and analog photographic practices. This research was funded with an Undergraduate Research Fellowship.

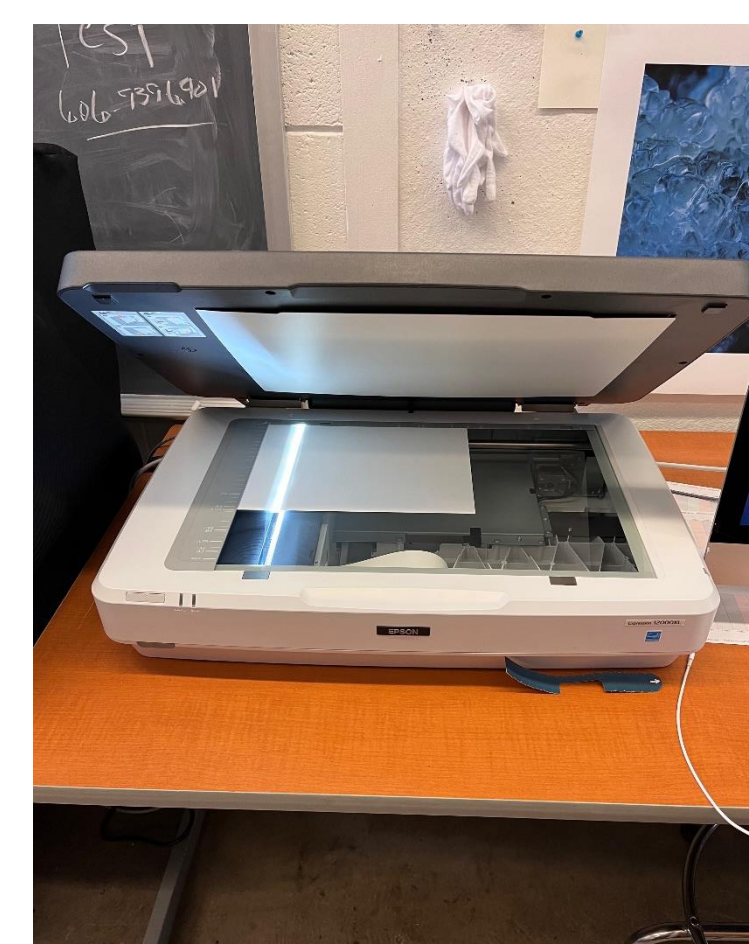
## SUMMARY

This practicum provided us with the opportunity to learn a unique set of skills. We have worked together to manage and maintain both a black and white darkroom as well as two industry-standard fine art archival inkjet printing stations. Our responsibilities include providing editorial feedback, reviewing the use of various equipment in the lab, mixing and replenishing photographic chemicals, and daily maintenance of the archival inkjet printers. All of this came during a time when, due to a global pandemic, working face-to-face with students and peers is challenging. Nevertheless, we were able to provide a productive, supportive, efficacious, and most importantly safe working environment for our peers.

## EQUIPMENT



Epson SureColor P7000



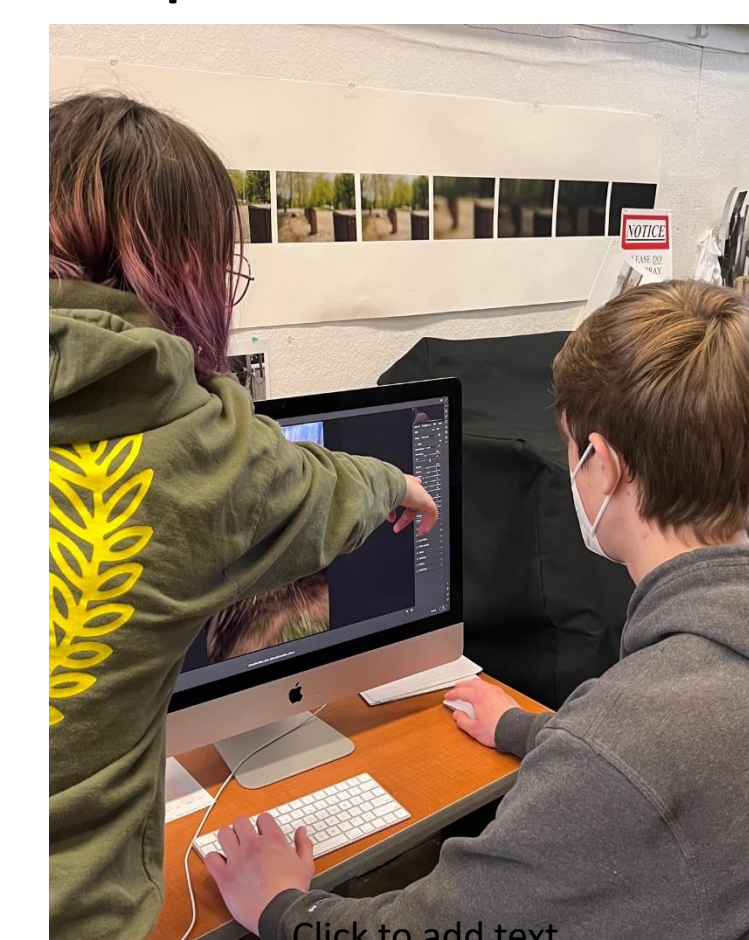
Epson Scanner Expression 12000



Epson SureColor P7570



Darkroom Printmaking Sink



Helping a Student Edit



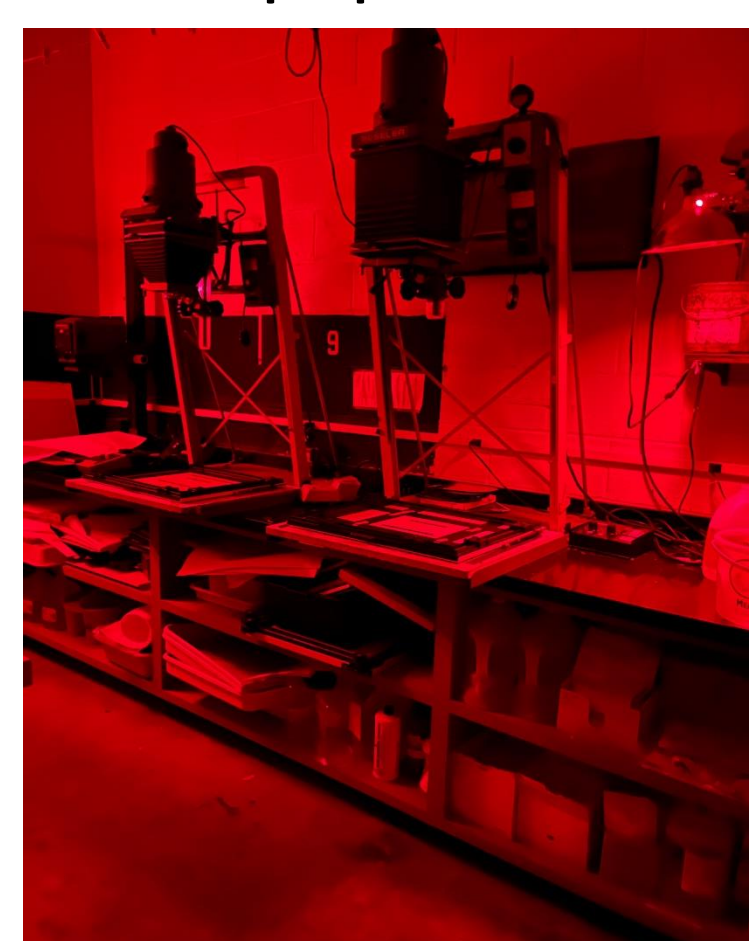
Film Processing Equipment



Saunders/LPL Enlarger



ULF 28 UV Exposure Unit



Bessler Large Format Enlarger

## GOALS

- Provide assistance to photography students from all academic backgrounds and disciplines
- Maintain fine art archival inkjet printers and aid students with print production
- Maintain traditional analog darkroom and aid students with print production
- Continue to develop Photography Lab Manual
- Ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff in a teaching and learning environment

## EXPERTISE GAINED

- Knowledge of how to mix photographic chemicals from stock solutions as well as how to dispose of those chemicals responsibly
- Experience helping students understand fine art photography which includes analog, digital, and alternative photographic processes
- Knowledge regarding the maintenance and operation of professional fine art archival inkjet printers
- Knowledge regarding the maintenance and use of the UV exposure unit to produce alternative process prints including salted paper prints and cyanotypes
- Improved communication skills needed to teach and instruct others including providing constructive criticism on student work

## CONCLUSIONS

The expertise that we gained through this undergraduate research fellowship has allowed us to learn effective communication skills to work with others in the field fluently as well as how to teach others about the processes of fine art photography. The knowledge that we gained will help us in postgraduate applications if we choose to pursue photography in an academic setting further in the future. Our contribution to the life of the Department of Art and Design will help further the department's enrollment and retention goals. Through this undergraduate research fellowship we have opened the door for more opportunities for ourselves while furthering the vision of the University.