



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

ABSTRACT

This research project provides the students with practical experience in the management of a fine art photography lab and darkroom. The students will learn how to mix and store photographic chemistry, provide assistance to undergraduate and graduate photography students, and generate ideas for improvements to the lab. The students will contribute to the revision of a lab manual that specifies best practices and operating procedures for photography lab monitors. The students will also assist other students with digital printing, as needed. Additionally, the student will improve his/her 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.

SUMMARY

During this practicum, we acquired unique skills in managing and maintaining a black and white darkroom and two fine art archival inkjet printing stations. Our responsibilities included providing feedback, reviewing equipment usage, mixing chemicals, and maintaining printers, all while navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic. Despite this, we were able to create a productive, supportive, and safe environment for our peers.

EQUIPMENT



Epson SureColor P7000



Epson Scanner Expression 12000



Epson SureColor P7570



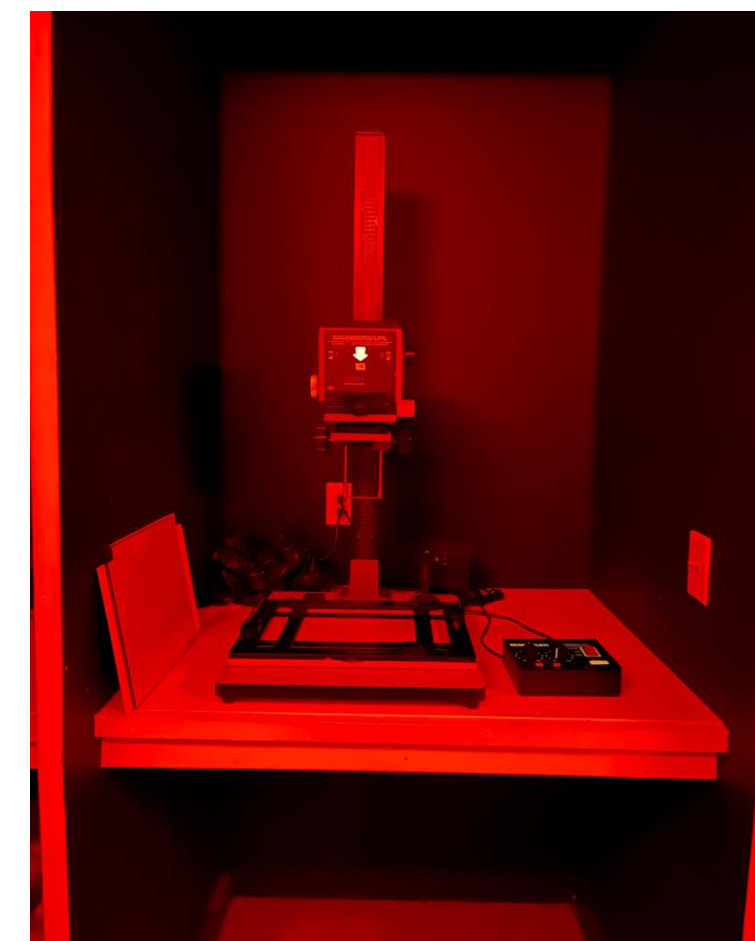
Darkroom Printmaking Sink



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
- 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

As undergraduate research fellowship students, we acquired valuable communication skills and expertise in fine art photography instruction. This knowledge can benefit our future academic pursuits. Our contributions to the Department of Art and Design can aid in its enrollment and retention goals and advance the University's vision. This fellowship has opened doors for us professionally while supporting the University's objectives.