

MOHOLY-NAGY UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN BUDAPEST | DOCTORAL SCHOOL

PHOTOSPHERE

FROM ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAMS
TO DIGITAL PHOTOGRAMS

DLA DISSERTATION | THESES

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2018

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Photograms are photographic images created without using a camera or negatives, images recorded with the application of light, photosensitive materials and photographic chemicals – they are usually the shadow, the imprint of objects and shapes. Creating a photogram means using simple tools and methods to examine, develop and analyse the laws of reality. Photogram is a path to unbiased knowledge about the world, the process of its creation can confirm or utterly destabilise pre-existing traditions, but it can also become the radical embodiment of new and unknown events or means of expressions.

I. I conducted my experiments on the subject of photogram, from analogue photogram to digital photogram. It is my conviction that the difference between recording the signals constituting the image chemically, and recording them electronically is not only relevant, but in need of interpretation. I consider digitally coded images that can be processed by computers a specific, non-chemical version of photography. Alternative or digital photograms are nevertheless photograms, since they are not traditional photographs (having been created without a camera) and similarly to the analogue version, they are the most effective training ground for creativity.

II. After introducing the history of photogram technology and its most important practitioners, I will attempt to delineate the simplest photogram set-up through researching the interconnections of light, chemistry and space that photograms are composed of. To create the simplest photogram, we still need light and a photosensitive surface. When light hits photosensitive photographic paper, the discolouration of the paper will begin without the application of developing chemicals. If we place an object on photographic paper, the impression of illumination, the light-print of it remains, while its surroundings form a contrast, the darkness of which depends on the amount of light (that is, the duration and strength of illumination.) The functioning of a scanner includes light phenomena as it records digital processes without chemicals or photographic paper, and allows us to reinterpret the questions raised by analysing the possibilities inherent in traditional photogram. One form of imprints is concerned with documenting objects (even faces, body parts) in uniquely sensitive hazy close-ups, focused on a momentary state, while other forms experiment with spatial changes over time, the ornamentation of rhythmic formulae of motion. Unlike the naturally accurate imprints of chemical photogram, digital photogram records impressions from another reality, a “no man’s land.”

III. There exists a spherical or cosmic or universal harmony, behind which lies the miraculous symmetry of the cosmos. The light that touches us can affect us – the surface of our body reacts to the photons that arrive in the form of sunlight, and the light that enters our nervous system through our eyes allows us to experience the visible world – just like illumination leaves its mark on photosensitive paper. The music of the spheres doesn't affect all living beings the same way, and photons only have their curious effect on those who are sensitive to them.

My photograms (and chemo-photograms) often depict human faces – my masterpiece also consists of digital photograms that are living masks of human faces. For me, the human face is the most suitable site for getting to know myself and the other. The image of the face is concentrated, it is differentiated from the multitude of images. The unique and unchangeable deluge of signals written on a human face is a representation of the miracle of life, as well as the finite length of human existence. In my pictures, human faces appear as imprints of a sort, as if they were artefacts found in an extraordinary archaeological dig, which call attention to the fragile and sensitive nature of human existence, revealing something about the culture of a bygone era (our present), before artificial intelligence and automation began to rule the world.