



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**Theories and practices that mutually
stimulate one another**

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Abstract

This essay highlights photographic projects developed within the Bachelor's and Master's programs in Photography and Cinema, reflecting the tension between theory and the experiential "eroticism" of practice, as noted by Susan Sontag and Henk Borgdorff. Ari Moura and Teresa Ribeiro's Impressions documents elderly participants from the Senior University of Vila das Aves, exploring shared learning and memory. Emanuel Constantino's De Zhejiang investigates the industrial community of Varziela, evoking a sense of estrangement between people, buildings, and landscape. Felícia Oliveira's Sem Passado engages with archival traces of abandoned children in Porto's Casa da Roda, transforming memory objects into visual testimony. Natalia Perulero's Quemadura experiments with photography's elemental materials—light and time—balancing figuration and abstraction. Together, these works reveal photography's critical, poetic, and transformative possibilities.

Keywords: Interrelationship of theories and practices, Photograph, Photography investigation, Teaching, Photography elements

Biography

Artist and teacher, João leao participates in solo and group exhibitions since 2001. His artworks use still and moving images as well as sound and they are presented in exhibition, projection and installation formats. His main interests as a practitioner are the ideas of structure (and its multiple connotations), the "proximity/distance" dichotomy and the ways of occupying the exhibition space. In 2005 won, ex-aequo, the "Pedro Miguel Frade" award, from the Portuguese Centre of Photography, with the work "Night Order". In 2018 won the acquisition award of the XX Cerveira Biennale. PhD in Visual Arts (practice based in installation, photography and videoart) from the University of South Wales in connection with the European Centre for Documentary Research. Worked in São João and D. Maria II National Theatres, RTP Portuguese television, and "Casa da Música". Full time professor in the Department of Image Arts P.Porto | ESMAD, full member of ID+ | IMAD – Research Group in Media Arts and collaborator of the CEAU | AAI – Architecture, Art and Image Research Group and UNIMAD research unit. Since 2017, João Leal works collaboratively with Mark Durden in photographing modernist European architecture, beginning with Álvaro Siza.

Essay

If the function of theory is to explain and enrich our understanding of images, there is also an 'eroticism' of experimentation and practice in the processes of photography that challenges these theories—something we cannot explain but must feel, as Susan Sontag suggests.

We believe that art "invites reflection, but eludes any defining thought about its content," as Henk Borgdorff wrote in his study on academic research through artistic practice.

In this publication, the expression is photographic. The works presented by alumni result from prolonged investigations and experiences, discussed and showcased through various mediums and contexts. All were developed in the context of the Final Project modules of the Bachelor's in Photography and the Master's in Cinema and Photography.

The 'Impressions' by Ari Moura and Teresa Ribeiro are the outcome of a semester spent accompanying a group of elderly participants from the Senior University of Vila das Aves. While researching and learning, they also shared their knowledge with a collective of individuals eager to learn more about how to express themselves through images. Until then, their interaction with photography was mainly through family photographs kept in albums or passepartouts.

Emanuel Constantino engaged with the community living in the industrial area of Varziela, in Vila do Conde, and produced a work entitled De Zhejiang. His curiosity about the place guided his exploration and helped the construction of the images; his persistence and care granted him access. The resulting images evoke a certain strangeness, seemingly stemming from an unclear attempt to integrate the buildings and people into the landscape.

Felícia Oliveira immersed herself in the archive of the Porto's 'Casa da Roda', housed in the city's District Archive. Her work, Sem Passado [Without a Past], focused on the 'signs' that could help identify children who were given up or abandoned. The artist photographically embraced and explored these memory objects within the archive's facilities. The building itself and the precision and care with which these objects are handled inspired a video where the memory of these children is evoked.

Natalia Perulero's Quemadura stems from experiments with the fundamental elements of photography: light and time. Her gaze moves between figurative images filled with a sense of strangeness and abstraction, rarely letting the subject disappear entirely. The interplay between high and low key and between distinct production contexts makes the work a visually challenging experience.

¹ Sontag, S. (2009). Against Interpretation. In *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (pp. 3–15). London: Penguin Classics.

² Borgdorff, H. (2012). The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research. In *The Conflict of the Faculties – Perspective on Artistic Research and Academia* (pp. 140–173). Leiden University Press.



*Saborear o sol do primavera
& fantástico...*



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