



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

## **Contemporary Photography Discourses**

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## Contemporary Photography Discourses

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### Abstract

This essay highlights the photographic experimentation of Carolina Lino and Luca Zangrandi, whose projects reflect the diversity of artistic approaches cultivated at the Faculty of Fine Arts. Lino, trained in Painting and holding a Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Photography Discourses, presents *A escrita que nasce*, where drawing and writing merge through natural metamorphic processes. Her work evokes Walter Benjamin's "optical unconscious," revealing a poetic vegetal script in which light inscribes thought and perception. Zangrandi, a Multimedia Art student, explores photo-chemical processes in *Remains of a Portrait*, producing chemigrams that analogise bodily metamorphosis with photographic transformation. Through the interplay of developer, fixer, and light, his images evoke portraits in continuous states of becoming. Both artists foreground photography's experimental dimension, situated within the Faculty as a speculative laboratory bridging artistic disciplines and expanding the medium's possibilities beyond digital certainty.

Keywords: Contemporary Photography Discourses, Photographic medium, Photographic experimentation, Chemical processes, Mutations

### Biography

**Rogério Azevedo** holds a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of Valencia (2011) and a degree in Architecture from the Technical University of Lisbon (1989). His work investigates territorial use's social, economic, and political conditions and has been exhibited in various national and international group and solo exhibitions. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, a CIEBA researcher, and the Bachelor's in Multimedia Art coordinator.

**Victor dos Reis** is Professor in the Multimedia Art Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, where he was also President between 2014 and 2019. He is a researcher at CIEBA and holds a PhD in Image Theory from the University of Lisbon (2007). His research has explored the relationship between art and science in the stereoscopic photographic work of Portuguese naturalist Francisco Afonso Chaves (1857–1926). He has curated exhibitions, including *A Imagem Paradoxal: Francisco Afonso Chaves*, held at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum of Natural History and Science, and the Carlos Machado Museum. He has published widely and participated in numerous international conferences..

### Essay

*The selection of students Carolina Lino and Luca Zangrandi as representatives of the work produced at the Faculty of Fine Arts stems from the fact that their projects embody distinct fields of experimentation within the photographic medium, which, in some way, reflect different paths taken within the Faculty. Carolina Lino completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Photography Discourses after finishing her undergraduate degree in Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, in 2018. Luca Zangrandi is currently pursuing a degree in Multimedia Art. The wide range of possibilities for photographic experimentation, shaped by these different artistic backgrounds, has led to a fascinating heterogeneity of outcomes, which is what we aim to showcase through the selection of these students. The unifying thread between their works lies solely in the exploration of photo-chemical processes within their production.*

*Carolina Lino's project is rooted in "writing" as a nascent form of constructing and signifying the photographic gaze. The rhythm analysis<sup>1</sup> of drawings triggered by natural metamorphic processes forms the core of her work, titled *A escrita que nasce*. In the synopsis of this project, Carolina writes:*

*"Photography happens, each time, as a risk (a risky mark) that emerges on the immaculate white — a sign that stains the untouchable, which is the virgin paper, never before exposed but always waiting for that moment: for a ray of light to kiss it. *A escrita que nasce* reveals a drawing that emerges from the forest, composed of lines that our gaze follows — lines that rise from the earth and the snow, stiff and lush, or fall into them, bent and twisted, forming drawings that the attentive eye fixes upon, which the hand's movement, as it writes, prolongs. These are physical, immersive drawings that stimulate thought and are formed through what overflows from the mind.*

*With images, I write; with words, I imagine: I create images. The one who writes is, therefore, the one who observes — the observer is the one who writes: both are the same, crossed by poetry, which guides, draws, and presents the gesture, repeatedly, without end."*

*Carolina Lino's writing seems to evoke that stimulating but underexplored concept of the "optical unconscious" coined by Walter Benjamin<sup>2</sup>, using photography as a medium to reveal an invisible or illegible form of writing — a vegetal script. This poetic revelation reads only what the "light kisses." These are poetic "operative images," images that probe the very nature of perception through what Christopher Bollas refers to as the "unthought known,"<sup>3</sup> or, as Carolina Lino puts it, what "overflows from the mind."*

<sup>1</sup>Lefebvre, H. and Elden, S. (eds) (2004) *Rhythm analysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London: Continuum.

<sup>2</sup>Benjamin, Walter (2006) *A obra de arte na época da sua possibilidade de reprodução técnica, e Pequena História da Fotografia in A Modernidade*, Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim (pp.207–241 e pp.243–261).

<sup>3</sup>Bollas, Christopher (1987) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis and the Unthought Known*, New York: Columbia.

Luca Zangrandi has created a series of chemigrams that explore the analogy between the metamorphic nature of being and photo-chemical processes. In this series, the programmed and random alternation of developer, stop bath, and fixer creates conditions for the continuous mutation of colour and tone in the images, which were produced as part of the Experimental Photography course taught by José Luis Neto. Through photo-chemical agency, *Remains of a Portrait* seeks to draw an analogy to the embodiment of becoming. Vital processes and silver-based photographic production result from light interactions and chemical reactions that determine the permanence or impermanence of materials. Fascinated by the site of bodily mutations and the parallel he found in the chemical processes of photography, Luca Zangrandi developed a series focused on the possibility of portraiture without reference. A constantly mutating photographic image that, through chemical stains, evokes portraits in various stages of decomposition.

Luca's work exemplifies the excitement of discovering a medium of experimentation far from pixels' certainty and rigid speed.

Both approaches are infused with a plasticity that arises from the unique space photography occupies within the Faculty of Fine Arts. It exists in an interstitial space between other visual approaches, structured within degree-awarding programmes.

This complementary space of relative freedom has strived to establish itself as a laboratory of experimentation, a speculative territory expanded by the nature of the environment in which it develops, the resources available, and the diverse knowledge drawn from the seven departments housed there.



