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Blueprints
Javier Talavera (Spain)

About the exhibition

In technical language used in engineering and architecture, a blueprint is a detailed drawing or guide for construction. Javier Talavera adopts that concept and transposes it onto the human body and its representation, creating a series of life-size cyanotypes on fabric that serve as imprints, as plans of a corporeality defined not by individuality but by collectivity, symbolism, and what remains beyond what is visible. Made with sunlight, seawater, and direct contact with human bodies, these works do not aim to portray a specific person but to explore what remains when presence becomes trace. The figures appear as silhouettes suspended in blue, each one both identical and distinct, as if speaking to a shared universal body. Talavera plays with the paradox of showing absence: bodies that are present in their absence, identities dissolving, physical memories fading into a common fabric.

The cyanotypes arranged together are meant to be read as one collective work. The installation invites us to see our own reflection not as isolated individuals but as part of a human constellation made of light, water, and time.

Artwork details

Title: Blueprints
Artist: Javier Talavera
Technique: Cyanotype on fabric at life size (1:1)
Process: Direct sun exposure plus bodily contact and seawater wash
Year: 2024
Location: Spain
Description: A set of human silhouettes recorded using cyanotype. The fabrics display entire bodies in neutral positions, floating in various shades of blue. The variations among them stem

from both physical processes and the gesture of each model, creating a subtle choreography of printed presences.

Initial observation: Attentive viewing

When observing Blueprints, the first impression is not portraits of individuals but silhouettes suspended in intense blue. A body appears, not as a concrete figure with features, but as an outline, a trace, a quiet presence. Facing these faceless, nameless human figures, the gaze is compelled to linger, examine minimal details: variations in posture, slight differences in the imprint, tonal nuances, areas where sunlight left more or less visible marks.

From this observation arise fundamental questions: What does this image tell us about a body stripped of visible identity? What remains of someone when there is no expression, context, or words? Is this an individual figure or a representation of many possible bodies?

The silhouettes, both the same and different, seem to belong either to a single person or to everyone. Can we imagine these figures as part of one collective body, a community? Or do they evoke emptiness, absence, the physical memory of someone no longer present?

The cyanotype technique, with its deep blue color and handmade process, reinforces this sense of suspension, of time paused. Knowing the works were made with sunlight and seawater, the viewer may ask: does this feel like a trace left in the world, a kind of bodily echo? How does knowing the body was in direct contact with the fabric and light influence perception? What part of that experience remains in the image?

Critical analysis: Deep reflection

Blueprints does not seek to portray an individual but to reflect on what remains of the body when it is no longer present. Through cyanotype, Javier Talavera transforms the fabric into an archive of absent presences, a body map in which identity becomes anonymous, shared, universal. This invites a core question: what is a body when it stops being individual? What role does the collective play in this series of images?

The choice of life-size scale and direct bodily contact introduces a nearly ritualistic dimension to the process. The bodies were not photographed or drawn but printed by sunlight, as if each figure were etched by the daylight itself. This suggests a close bond between body and landscape, between humans and natural elements. What does this work say about the relationship between the body and environment? What kind of connection is proposed with time, with the passage of light, and the mark that remains?

Conceptually, Blueprints questions the place of identity in visual representation. By removing face and names, the work rejects any attempt to classify or recognize. What appears is not a “who” but a shared “what”: a shape, a gesture, a presence. In that sense, one can ask whether this could be read as a collective self-portrait. What does it mean to portray humanity anonymously? What kind of truth is revealed when there is no personal story—only a silhouette?

The installation also invites reflection on memory and absence. The figures seem to float between being and not being. Are these bodies vanished, remembered, awaiting recognition? What space does forgetting occupy in this work? And what is communicated, through these voiceless bodies, about fragility and endurance?

Finally, as a collective work, Blueprints challenges the idea of a single work or artist as central. Instead of a creator imposing vision, there are bodies surrendering, materials transforming, natural elements participating. Everything is built from a sum of presences, times, and gestures. This open, participatory, ephemeral logic questions the classic concept of art as a finished product. What does it mean to think of a work not as a closed object but as a living constellation of bodies, light, and time?

Creative activity

We propose making your own body silhouette on large fabric or paper. Use natural pigments like turmeric, coffee, or plant dyes to paint the outline and then expose it to sunlight so that time can transform it. Alternatively, draw only the silhouette and fill it with words that describe you today, then invite someone else to intervene with what they see in you. What does that reveal?

You could also create a collective installation: each person contributes their own silhouette (drawn, painted, or cut out) and these are displayed together as Talavera’s work, to explore what kind of common “body” emerges.

Debate, critical dialogue, and interpretive play

A triggering question might be: how much of who we are is contained in our form? From there, discussions could explore the meaning of the body across cultures, its representation throughout history, and new ways of portraying using techniques like cyanotype.

Another interesting dynamic is a “body reading journey”: each participant chooses a silhouette and imagines its story. How old is this body? What does it do? What does it remember?

Projecting what we believe we see in a faceless body often speaks more about us than about the figure.

You could also propose a poetic game: if this blue body could speak, what would it say? What message would it leave on its fabric?

Incongruent questions

Does a body without a name have a history? Can you embrace a silhouette? What does a body do when we are not watching? Can you recognize yourself in a shadow you did not make? And what if all of these bodies were really one?

Reflective closing

Blueprints does not aim to make portraits but to raise questions. It places us before figures that feel familiar yet anonymous—bodies that are at once presence and void. In an age when images often flood and define too much, Talavera proposes returning to the essentials: light, water, form. As if art could be a kind of archaeology of the human, not to find answers but to allow ourselves to be affected by what we do not fully understand.

These blue imprints invite us to pause, to look at ourselves with less haste and more openness. They remind us that we too are landscape, that our story is inscribed on our skin, and that sometimes, to truly see ourselves, we need to disappear a little.

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Educational Support Guide for the Exhibitions at
the Experimental Photo Festival

Introduction

We are the Experimental Photo Festival in Barcelona, an international gathering specializing in experimental photography. Since our beginnings, our aim has not only been to showcase images, but also to create spaces for collective learning, critical reflection, and visual production grounded in horizontality. We believe that everyone has something to teach and something to learn when we look at and think about an image together.

This booklet was created as a tool to accompany our photographic exhibitions. It is especially intended for teachers, cultural mediators, and anyone working with groups in schools, community centers, or civic spaces, and who wishes to use photography as a starting point for dialogue, exploration, and the construction of shared meaning.

Goals

The main goal of this booklet is to offer an accessible and flexible guide to activate meaningful experiences around experimental photography. Far from traditional teaching based on rote memorization, we propose a participatory and critical approach, where looking at images becomes an act of collective discovery.

Through a theoretical and methodological foundation, along with specific activities, resources, and strategies, we seek to make each exhibition visit an opportunity to foster critical thinking, stimulate aesthetic sensitivity, and promote personal and group expression.

We aim to strengthen an inclusive and transformative visual education that enables people of all ages to critically read photographic language, identify its ideologies, connect with their

emotions, and generate collective knowledge from what is observed, reflected upon, and felt in front of a work of art.

Theoretical Framework

Susan Sontag – Photography, Memory, and Awareness of Pain[1]

The American writer and essayist Susan Sontag dedicated much of her work to reflecting on the power of images, especially photographs. In books such as *On Photography* (1977) and *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), she analyzes how images affect us, how they build memory, and what it means to look at—and consume—others' suffering.

Sontag argues that we live in a culture saturated with images, and that photography has become a kind of "portable memory." In her words: "Memory freezes frames; its basic unit is the single image… in an era of information overload, photography provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact way of memorizing it" (Sontag, 2003, p. 22). Photos act as visual quotes: brief, striking, easy to remember.

But Sontag warns that every photographic image is a construction, not a transparent window to reality. Photography is inevitably an act of selection: to frame something is to exclude something else. That's why she insists images are not neutral. We must ask: What does this photo show? What does it leave out? From what perspective was it taken? What decisions did the photographer make? This booklet constantly revisits these questions, helping participants to read images attentively and critically.

One of the most delicate topics Sontag addresses is the representation of suffering. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she warns that we often look at photos of war, violence, or poverty as if they were visual spectacles, which can lead to indifference. "Photographs of suffering should not be beautiful," she writes (Sontag, 2003, p. 76), because beauty distracts from the content and may lead us to admire the form without questioning the meaning.

This idea is key in educational contexts: How do we teach with harsh images without trivializing them? How can we prevent students from becoming desensitized to the suffering of others, as if it were distant or inevitable? This booklet proposes activities that encourage debate on these

[1] Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Sontag, S. (2003). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

ethical dilemmas and promote emotional connection with what is seen, without falling into voyeurism or cynicism.

Sontag also emphasizes that context is fundamental. An image without explanation can be ambiguous or even manipulative. She therefore recommends accompanying photographs with captions, titles, or stories to guide their interpretation. In this sense, the booklet always seeks to contextualize the works by providing information, testimonies, or references that complete what the image alone cannot say.

In summary, Sontag reminds us that viewing a photograph is always a loaded act. Looking is never innocent, and educating the gaze involves developing a critical and ethical sensitivity. That is also one of the central goals of this pedagogical project.

Luis Camnitzer – Art, Critical Thinking and Emancipation[2]

Luis Camnitzer, an artist, educator, and theorist born in Germany and raised in Uruguay, is one of the most influential voices when it comes to art as an educational tool. In his approach, art is not something that teaches how to make "beautiful things," but rather a medium to think about the world, question it, and transform it. In his book *Didactics of Liberation* (2017), Camnitzer argues that art should be understood as a form of knowledge.

More than technique, what matters is the thought behind what we do. According to him, "art can be defined as a meta-discipline that allows for the subversion of established orders and the exploration of new, alternative ones," fulfilling "its most important function: helping to clarify the areas of the unknown" (Camnitzer, 2017, p. 113). In other words, art helps us discover what we didn't know we didn't know.

Camnitzer also criticizes what he calls the "craft tradition" in art education—the idea that giving students pencils and brushes to practice technical skills is enough, without questioning the purpose. For him, that's educating for repetition, not for thought. Instead, he proposes "entering art through the door of thought" (p. 82): inviting students to define for themselves what art is, what it is not, and why. This turns them into active agents of their own learning.

In educational terms, this proposal is deeply emancipatory. Camnitzer defends a pedagogy in which each student can construct their own canon before being given an imposed one, thus

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[2] Camnitzer, L. (2017). *Didáctica de la liberación*. En P. Perelló & C. López (Eds.), *Ni arte ni educación* (pp. 43–119). Madrid: Ediciones Catarata / Red de Arte y Escuela.

gaining tools to question what they are taught rather than accept it as absolute truth. In this way, learning is not an act of obedience, but an exercise in freedom.

This approach also challenges the traditional role of the teacher. For Camnitzer, true education is not based on teaching, but on stimulating self-directed learning. As he says, “Teaching is based on the transmission of information; true education, on the other hand, encourages autodidacticism” (p. 45). The teacher stops being the sole source of knowledge and becomes a facilitator of discovery experiences.

All of this directly inspires the design of this booklet. Instead of offering closed answers or single interpretations, we propose activities that invite participants to think, to question, and to interpret from their own perspectives and in conversation with others. At its core, it’s about applying Camnitzer’s idea: using art—and in this case, photography—as a tool for free thought.

John Berger – Seeing Before Speaking: Ideology and the Power of the Image[3]

Another fundamental author supporting the approach of this booklet is John Berger, British art critic, novelist, and thinker. His book *Ways of Seeing* (1972) radically changed how many people think about images. Berger does not write from the perspective of abstract theory, but the everyday experience of looking, seeing, and being seen.

From the very first page, Berger reminds us of something basic yet profound: before we speak, we see. In his words, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (*Ways of Seeing*, 1972, p. 7). This phrase gives us the key: seeing is the first language, and as such, it is full of meaning—even if we don’t always notice it.

Berger warns that there is no fixed relationship between what we see and what we know. Our gaze is always influenced by culture, education, emotions, and context. That is why it is important to teach how to see. Before asking someone to interpret an image, it is useful to invite them to observe it without haste. In this booklet, that translates into activities where students or participants explore their first visual impressions before naming or judging what they see.

Another key point in *Ways of Seeing* is that every image contains a way of seeing. A photograph is not a simple copy of reality—it is the result of choices made by the person who created it. What is included and what is left out? Where was it taken from? What story does it suggest? At the same time, each viewer brings their own way of seeing to the experience. Therefore, the

[3] Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation / Penguin Books.

image does not have a single meaning but becomes a field of tension between the author's intention and the viewer's interpretation.

This has very clear educational implications. In this booklet, participants are invited to work with questions such as: Who made this image? From what perspective? What interpretation do you make and why? The goal is to dismantle the idea that the image "speaks for itself" and to show that meaning is always constructed—sometimes even ideologically.

Berger also encourages us to look beyond individual images and think about the tradition surrounding them. In his analysis of European art history, he argues that many works have been seen through the lens of dominant social classes, who imposed their way of seeing as if it were universal. That's why he believes that to see the present clearly, we must be aware of the ideological filters that shape what we see.

This critique is very useful for thinking about how to view photographs in an exhibition. What do they represent? Who do they show and who is left out? From what position are we being asked to look? With children, teenagers, or adults, a rich dialogue can emerge from questions like: What do you think this image expects from you as a viewer? How would it change if it had been taken by someone else, from a different place?

In summary, Berger teaches us that seeing is not a neutral act. It is a process full of meaning, and therefore, educating the gaze is also educating awareness. His ideas run through many of the proposals in this booklet, where looking is always the first step toward thinking, feeling, and building knowledge together.

Hans-Georg Gadamer – Playing, Interpreting and Transforming the Artistic Experience[4]

German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer is known for his work in hermeneutics, a branch of philosophy that focuses on how we understand and interpret meaning. In *Truth and Method* (1960), and especially in his writings on aesthetics, he proposes powerful ideas to think of art not as something to be "read" or "understood" in a single way, but as a shared and transformative experience.

One of his most inspiring ideas is that art functions like a game, and that this game only makes sense if someone plays it. In his essay *The Play as Symbol of the Aesthetic*, Gadamer explains that real aesthetic experience is not passive, as if the viewer were merely an external observer.

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[4] Gadamer, H.-G. (1960). *Wahrheit und Methode* [Verdad y método]. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Instead, one enters into a “serious game,” participating, responding, becoming part of the process. “There is no clear distance between the one who plays and the one who watches: the spectator participates and also becomes a player” (Gadamer, 1986, p. 41).

From this perspective, looking at a work of art, such as a photograph, is not simply receiving information, but opening up to a play of interpretations, of possible meanings, of questions posed by the image and returned by the viewer. For that reason, this booklet constantly proposes that visitors not only observe the photos but also engage with them, react, imagine, invent stories, and ask questions. All of this is part of the interpretive game.

Gadamer also discusses the idea of a “fusion of horizons.” Each person who encounters a work brings their own background: knowledge, emotions, memories, and cultural references. The work itself also has a horizon: it was created in a specific context with certain intentions. When these two horizons meet, a new understanding emerges, unique to that moment and person. This process is the heart of aesthetic learning.

Therefore, the booklet does not aim to offer a single interpretation of the photographs. Instead, it encourages a diversity of perspectives. In the activity sheets and proposals, participants are encouraged to share their own associations, emotions, and thoughts in response to the images. As Gadamer says, meaning is not predetermined, but constructed through interaction.

Another key idea is that the experience of art transforms us. Gadamer says that if a work truly touches us, we do not leave it the same as we entered. Something changes in our way of seeing the world. “If one has truly had the experience of art, the world becomes lighter and brighter” (Gadamer, 1986, p. 53). This phrase beautifully summarizes what a photographic exhibition with pedagogical mediation seeks to achieve: to leave a mark, to ignite something.

That is why, at the end of each visit or activity, it is recommended to create a moment for reflective closure. What changed in the way we see? What new idea appeared? What feeling are we leaving with? These questions aim not only to assess what was learned but also to value the inner transformation, the personal growth that can emerge from the encounter with an image.

Pedagogical Curation – Mediation, Learning and Collaboration[5]

[5] Amengual, I., Hoff, M., Pérez-Barreiro, G., Camnitzer, L., & Salanova, M. (2022). *Comisariado ¿pedagógico? Exploraciones transformadoras de la práctica curatorial*. Barcelona: Consonni / Red de Arte y Escuela.

In recent years, several theorists and collectives have challenged the idea that art is displayed on one side and taught on the other. From this intersection has emerged a concept increasingly present in museums, cultural centers, and festivals like ours: pedagogical curation. This way of working combines curatorial practice with a clear educational intention, promoting exhibitions that are not only visited but also experienced, reflected upon, and discussed.

One key voice in this field is Irene Amengual, curator and researcher, who along with other authors coordinates the publication *Curatorship: Pedagogical?* (2022). There she explains that this kind of curatorship aims to integrate art and education as inseparable practices, and that the exhibition space should be conceived from the start as a learning environment. Far from being a closed or decorative event, what she proposes is a process where the public, educators, and artists engage in constant dialogue.

In the same publication, Brazilian artist and researcher Mônica Hoff emphasizes that education cannot be a secondary or outsourced service to art. For her, education must be part of the curatorial process from the beginning. Her proposal is to view education as a collective political responsibility within the cultural institution (Hoff, 2022, p. 39). This view is especially inspiring for projects like ours, where the goal is for each exhibition to also become a platform for shared thought.

Also in that volume is the voice of Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, contemporary art curator and theorist, who offers a powerful image: the “third shore” between art and education. That is, an intermediate space where both disciplines mix and transform one another. According to him, mediation is not about translating what is difficult into something easy, but about creating common ground where everyone can engage in conversation with the artworks (Pérez-Barreiro, 2022, p. 56).

Philosopher and critic Marisol Salanova expands this perspective by stressing the need for open, collective processes that include the voices of the public from the very design stage of the exhibition. It’s not just about offering activities “for” the public, but working “with” the public from the outset. This logic of collaboration and listening runs through many of the proposals in this booklet.

EVE Museos e Innovación. (2021, 1 de junio). *Cómo se produce la mediación cultural*. https://evemuseografia.com
Pedagogías Invisibles. (s.f.). *Proyectos de mediación y aprendizaje*. https://pedagogiasinvisibles.com
Transductores. (s.f.). *Archivo de proyectos*. https://transductores.net

Luis Camnitzer, previously mentioned, also contributes to this discussion. In the same collective book (*Curatorship: Pedagogical?*, 2022), he states that pedagogical curation should focus on helping visitors formulate their own questions, not on providing ready-made answers. This implies a deep shift in logic: the public is no longer seen as a passive receiver, but as someone capable of creating meaning and generating knowledge.

This is aligned with practices developed for years by collectives such as *Invisible Pedagogies* or *Transductores*, in projects where exhibition design includes interactive modules, spaces where the public can leave comments, participatory maps, or graphic interventions created by visitors. These experiences show that an exhibition can become a space of co-creation, not just contemplation.

Similarly, initiatives promoted by *EVE Museums and Innovation* argue that cultural mediation should no longer be thought of as simply explaining art, but as accompanying the process of discovery. One of their articles states that the cultural mediator acts more as a facilitator than as an expert (EVE, 2021), which is also what we advocate for in this festival.

When applied to photography, this approach involves several concrete strategies:

- Designing exhibitions with dialogue in mind: including questions, areas to write or draw, and on-site activities to activate participation.
- Providing tools for teachers and mediators so they can adapt the material to their own contexts with flexibility and creativity.
- Proposing collaborative activities where audiences not only interpret images but also produce, compare, or question them based on their reality.
- Questioning who participates, how, and from where: it's not enough to invite participation; we must ask whether decisions are truly shared and whether there is space for diverse voices from the neighborhood, the classroom, or marginalized communities.

In short, working from a pedagogical curatorial perspective does not simply mean making an exhibition "more educational." It means recognizing that every art show already educates in some way, and therefore, we must take responsibility for how it does so—ensuring that the learning it offers is more open, fair, and horizontal.

Methodological Guide for Teachers and Mediators

This booklet is designed as direct support for those who lead educational experiences, whether in a school, cultural center, or guided visit. Its goal is to offer concrete suggestions, useful tips, and pedagogical references to help make the most of the exhibition and proposed activities.

One of the first ideas proposed is to shift the perspective on the role of the educator. Rather than someone who transmits closed content, the teacher or mediator is presented here as a facilitator: someone who guides, asks questions, listens, and creates the conditions for the group to build knowledge collectively. This aligns with the ideas of Paulo Freire and Luis Camnitzer, who advocated for an education that stimulates independent thinking rather than repeating information. It is not necessary to have all the answers; sometimes it is enough to pose a good question and allow time for ideas to flourish.

For this reason, one of the most repeated suggestions is to practice active listening. Instead of saying “that’s right” or “that’s not correct,” it is suggested to respond with “Why do you think that?”, “What do you see in the image that makes you say it?”, or even return the question to the group: “Does anyone see it differently?” This helps create a real conversation where all voices are valued.

It’s also important to come prepared, but not rigidly. If possible, it’s helpful to preview the exhibition or at least review the booklet carefully. Have a sense of the artworks, themes, and dynamics that may work well. But at the same time, be open to what arises: each group is different, and often the most meaningful moment is the one that wasn’t planned. Cultural mediation has that magic—it does not seek predefined outcomes, but rather meaningful experiences.

For that, it’s recommended to have several proposals ready and choose which to use depending on the interest and energy of the group. There are also some practical guidelines that can help with organization: for example, how many people one mediator can comfortably manage (ideally no more than 15), how long to spend on each image (with children, it’s best to rotate every 5 minutes; with adults, you can go deeper), what materials to bring (pencils, post-its, printed copies if you plan to write or draw), and how to adapt the language depending on age or context.

Another key point is creating a trusting environment. For people to feel comfortable participating, they need to feel that their perspective is welcome. This starts with small gestures: sitting in a circle instead of in rows, starting with an icebreaker activity (for example, imitating a

pose from a favorite photo), establishing basic rules of respect, and modeling that openness yourself: sharing a personal anecdote, admitting when you don't know something, thanking every contribution.

Since every group is diverse, the guide encourages viewing diversity as a resource. If people come from other countries, invite them to share how that topic is lived where they're from. If someone knows about photography or art, ask them to explain a concept. If there are kids who are good at drawing, invite them to sketch on the board. Giving small roles and moments of protagonism helps everyone feel included.

The guide also offers ways to connect its work with the school curriculum. The activities address key competencies such as artistic expression, communication, critical thinking, historical memory, and values education. They can also be linked to specific subjects like social studies, language, ethics, and visual arts. This helps teachers justify their use in class without having to stretch the curriculum.

Finally, simple ways to evaluate or close the experience are suggested—not through grades, but through reflective dynamics: asking each person to say a word that summarizes their experience, creating a mural with drawings of the most impactful photos, writing a message to the author of an image, or putting together a small exhibition with the group's work. All of this leaves a trace and helps make the process visible.

In summary, this methodological guide is not meant to be a recipe, but a map with ideas, possible paths, and shortcuts. It is designed to strengthen the role of the educator as a bridge between the image and thought, between the exhibition and each group's world. And above all, so that looking at a photo is not just looking, but also learning, imagining, conversing, and transforming.

Suggested Activities

Personal File: Educational Use of the Artwork Sheets

The artwork sheets are pedagogical resources designed to activate a reflective, creative, and participatory experience around the images presented in an exhibition. Their purpose is not to provide a closed or definitive interpretation, but to offer a set of tools that invite the public to observe closely, imagine, discuss, and construct new readings based on the photographs.

Each sheet is structured around the exhibition and begins with a set of informational data. These include the exhibition title, the name of the artist, the year the work was made, the technique used, and a brief contextualization that helps situate the image within a genre or artistic current. The goal of this first section is to provide a starting framework that helps clarify whether the image belongs, for instance, to documentary, artistic, historical, experimental, or conceptual photography, as well as its place within a broader project.

Building on this foundation, the sheet proposes a series of questions intended to spark attentive looking. Inspired by methodologies such as Visual Thinking Strategies, these initial questions focus on the act of seeing deeply. Some examples include: What do you see in this image? What details catch your attention? What do you think is happening? How does it make you feel? The value of these questions lies in the fact that they do not demand correct answers. Instead, they encourage individual expression, active listening, and the sharing of diverse perceptions. They serve as a first step in moving beyond automatic responses and beginning to observe more consciously.

Once this stage of initial observation is complete, the sheet moves toward more complex questions. In this second phase, the aim is to critically analyze the image, its language, and its context. Questions may include: What reality does this image represent? Is it showing everything or just a part? What is not visible in the photo? Who created it, and with what intention? Was it okay to photograph this? These questions seek to open reflection on photography as a constructed act—with biases, decisions, points of view, and effects. Here, concepts related to representation, ethics, the power of images, and the gaze of the other come into play. Theoretical frameworks from authors like Susan Sontag, John Berger, and Luis Camnitzer support this critical layer.

In addition to visual and conceptual analysis, each sheet includes a small creative activity intended for group or individual work. Suggestions might include writing an imaginary photo caption, composing a short narrative from the perspective of a character in the image, finding a personal photograph that relates to the analyzed work, or physically recreating the scene with one’s body. These dynamics invite the public not only to observe but also to intervene, play, interpret, and use the image as a point of departure for creating new meaning.

The questions and activities in the sheets can be adjusted in complexity according to the age and context of the participants. Some are designed for young children, others for teenagers, and others for adults or audiences with more experience in critical reflection. This flexibility allows

each teacher, mediator, or workshop leader to adapt the sheet to their educational goals, the group, and the setting.

In summary, the artwork sheets are not recipes or interpretation manuals. Rather, they are open tools that function like toolboxes for activating processes of observation, critical thinking, collective dialogue, and creative production. They are useful for working inside the exhibition space or in formal and informal educational contexts. Their ultimate goal is very clear: to use photography not only as an aesthetic object, but as a spark for seeing the world differently—with greater attention, empathy, and awareness.

Intertextual and Connection Activities

These proposals aim to connect the visual with other languages, other experiences, and other worlds. They are about building bridges between the image and the word, between what is seen and what is felt, between what the photograph shows and what each person brings with them. One very effective idea is to ask participants to choose a song that could accompany a particular image. The style doesn't matter—it can be a soft melody, powerful lyrics, or a rhythm that "sounds" like what the photo conveys. Then they share their choice and the reason behind it. It's a simple but powerful way to work on emotional atmosphere.

Texts can also be used. For example, distribute short poems, phrases, or literary excerpts and ask participants to match them with images from the exhibition. Or do it the other way around: observe a photo and write something associated with it—whether a description, a thought, a memory, or a short story. The goal is not to get it "right," but to create connections, to find personal meaning.

Another way to connect is through personal experience. Ask: What does this image remind you of? Have you ever experienced something similar? What does it make you think about your neighborhood, your family, your story? In this way, the photograph stops being a distant object and becomes a doorway for speaking about oneself, one's surroundings, and shared memory.

These activities invite a dialogue between different forms of expression—image, word, music, emotion, experience. They also help break the idea that there is only one correct way to interpret something. As Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests, every viewpoint adds something new, and interpretation is always a shared construction.

In addition, these activities allow for the inclusion of different voices and talents within the group. Some people are better at writing, others have strong musical memory, and others relate through personal experiences. Everyone can participate from their own strengths, and that enriches the collective experience.

Critical Observation Activities

These proposals focus on looking attentively and analyzing what appears in a photograph, without rushing to interpret it from the outset. They are exercises to train and refine the gaze, and also to share what each person sees. For example, a simple and very effective dynamic is the “visual detective.” Participants are given an image and asked to write down everything they observe: objects, people, actions, colors, expressions, gestures. Then observations are compared, and hypotheses are built: What is happening? Who are these people? Where are they? Why?

Another very interesting activity is the “circle of observation.” The image is placed in the center, and the group forms a circle around it. Each person says something they see, but without repeating what others have already said. At first, it seems easy, but over time subtleties emerge: background details, small gestures, relationships between characters. It becomes a collective way of seeing, where each contribution enriches the shared gaze.

You can also work with contrasts. For example, look at an image in silence for one full minute, without saying anything, and then exchange impressions in pairs. Often what one person notices is something the other hadn’t seen. This exercise reinforces the idea that we don’t all look the same way, and that sharing helps expand our perception.

These activities connect directly with John Berger’s thinking, where seeing is not a passive act, but a form of knowledge. The more we observe, the more questions arise. And the more we share what we see, the richer the collective experience becomes.

The role of the teacher or mediator in these activities is to accompany, to ask, not to correct. Phrases like “What makes you say that?” or “Is there something you hadn’t seen before that you now notice?” can help deepen the observation without imposing a single reading. The goal is to construct meaning together, starting from the image and moving toward thought.

These activities are easily adaptable to different age groups. With young children, it can become a kind of search game—finding certain objects or colors in the photo. With teenagers and

adults, you can introduce technical vocabulary like framing, composition, point of view, or contrast, which will later be reinforced in the glossary. In this way, a shared foundation for visual reading is built—without rigidity, but with depth.

Production and Creation Activities

These proposals invite participants to move beyond being spectators and become creators. After observing, commenting, and reflecting, it's time to create. One of the most powerful ways to work with images is through participatory photography. This means that the students or participants themselves take photos that reflect their world, their ideas, or what matters to them. You don't need fancy equipment—mobile phones, a simple camera, or even a tablet are enough.

For example, after visiting the exhibition, you can propose going out to photograph scenes from their surroundings that relate to the exhibition's themes: identity, diversity, territory, memory, the everyday. Later, these photos can be shared in class, discussed, and, if desired, exhibited in a shared space as a small collective show. In this way, the cycle is completed: from looking at others' photos to producing their own.

You can also propose creative interventions using the same exhibition photographs. Distribute printed copies (in black and white or color) and invite participants to reinterpret them: drawing on top, writing phrases, changing the order of a sequence, inventing alternative titles. This allows for experimentation with how an image can acquire new meanings depending on context, text, or intervention. It's a way to play with the power of montage, something Susan Sontag insightfully analyzed: photography is never neutral.

A group-friendly idea is to create a fanzine or collective booklet. Each participant contributes an image and a text, and together they build a small publication that brings together different perspectives on the same theme. These kinds of projects not only encourage creativity but also boost self-esteem: seeing your photo or text published has a strong emotional and motivational impact.

Beyond these general dynamics, the booklet proposes specific activities for each exhibition. These suggestions are designed in direct relation to the work and approach of each artist or collective, taking into account their techniques, themes, and visual strategies. Some activities explore alternative photographic processes such as cyanotype, collage, image intervention, or working with ephemeral materials. Others invite participants to build personal archives, visual

stories, collective installations, intimate performances, or exercises in visual and narrative rewriting.

This approach not only allows for deeper connection with the artworks but also broadens the expressive possibilities for participants, adapting to different levels, ages, and contexts. Thus, activities are no longer generic exercises but become personalized paths of exploration, in tune with the questions each exhibition raises. These practices require more time and organization, but their pedagogical value is immense. They foster not only artistic expression but also the capacity to speak visually, to construct personal narratives, and to engage in dialogue with others through what one creates. As Luis Camnitzer once said, art makes sense when it becomes a tool to think, to transform, to say something that could not be said in any other way.

Debate, Critical Dialogue, and Interpretative Play Activities

At this point, the images have already been observed, discussed, and even reimagined. But there is still something essential left: conversation. Not just any conversation, but one that allows for the exchange of ideas, perspectives, questions, and positions. These activities aim to open up dialogue about what photography provokes, questions, or brings to the table, expanding the experience from visual perception to spoken reflection.

A direct way to do this is through structured debate. It can be organized in the classroom or even inside the exhibition space, dividing the group into two sides with opposing views on a controversial topic raised by the exhibition. For example: “Is photography art or documentation?”, “Should harsh images be shown to children?”, “Who has the right to tell certain stories?”, “Can an image change reality?” The aim is not to declare winners but to practice argumentation, to listen to different reasons, and to embrace difference. Through these exchanges, critical thinking is developed, and ethical, aesthetic, and social issues are explored in greater depth.

Another option is to implement a “World Café” dynamic. Multiple themed tables are set up, each with a different question inspired by the exhibition. A small group starts at each table, discusses for a few minutes, and then rotates to the next, carrying ideas from the previous conversation. At the end, conclusions are shared with the whole group. It’s a horizontal, dynamic, and participatory format that allows for all voices to be heard and for ideas to evolve collectively.

This dialogical approach can also be transferred directly to the exhibition experience. Instead of a traditional guided visit, the mediator can pose open-ended questions in front of each artwork

to spark spontaneous conversations with visitors. Questions like “What does this image make you feel?”, “What story do you imagine behind this scene?”, “What is not shown here, and why?”, or “What does this make you think about today, from your own reality?” allow individuals to connect personally, and the group to build collective interpretations. In this process, the mediator doesn’t impose answers but supports, listens, reframes, and opens new meanings.

In all these cases, the role of the teacher or facilitator is key. It’s not about having all the answers but about holding space for shared thinking. This means actively listening, helping people articulate their ideas, being mindful of language, pausing if something is uncomfortable or unclear, and encouraging those who haven’t spoken yet to contribute. Dialogue becomes a powerful pedagogical tool when it is built within a framework of respect, curiosity, and openness.

And since not everyone expresses themselves through spoken language, playful approaches are also included to explore images through other forms of engagement: dramatization, humor, body movement, or games. For example, invent a scene between characters from a photo, play “Who am I?” using visual clues, act out a situation from the image using shadows or sounds, or write a monologue from the perspective of a photographed object. These activities stimulate imagination, foster empathy, and allow participants to embody the image in a more visceral and creative way.

Additionally, the booklet proposes interpretation activities tailored to each exhibition. These are designed in conversation with the specific themes, languages, and sensibilities of each work. Some begin with visual materials (like thermal receipts, photosensitive plants, or family archives) to explore questions about memory or identity. Others play with the idea of the invisible, the discarded, or the altered. Each proposal is adapted to the ways of making and expressing found in the artistic project it accompanies, creating a deeper and more meaningful experience.

Hans-Georg Gadamer reminded us that art has a component of play. Playing with what we see, staging it, acting from the image, imagining what is missing—this too is a form of understanding. These activities aim for just that: for each person to find their own way into the image—whether through talking, debating, interpreting, or performing what they see. And in that encounter, to not only learn about photography, but also about themselves and the world around them.

Incongruent or Poetic Questions: Looking According to the Tone of the Work

Sometimes, an image doesn't need to be explained—it needs to be inhabited. It doesn't demand analysis, but rather wonder. For such moments, incongruent questions are useful: those that do not seek correct answers or concrete data, but instead open up play, spark the imagination, or provoke us through the unexpected. These are questions that may seem to lack logic… and that is precisely what allows them to open new worlds.

These questions emerge from poetic disorientation. They break away from the linear language of traditional analysis and activate a more emotional, intuitive, and sensory kind of reading. They are not concerned with "what the image represents," but rather with what it stirs up, what ghosts it awakens, what invisible layers it sets into motion. They work particularly well with abstract, symbolic, or experimental works—but they can also be powerful with documentary images if the goal is to disrupt fixed ways of looking.

Incongruent questions are not meant to be judged or corrected. They are thrown into the middle of the group like stones into water, and the ripples go wherever they need to go. Some examples include:

- If this image were a sleeping animal, what would it dream of?
- What part of your body lights up when you look at this?
- What if the shadow were the true protagonist?
- Does this photograph keep secrets or invent them?
- What story would this image tell if you let it speak all night long?

These questions work well as prompts for automatic writing, free drawing, object theater, playful conversations, or introspection. They can also be used to open or close an activity, offering a way to soften the tone and invite other forms of knowing beyond rational thought. In a world that demands certainty, efficiency, and control, incongruent questions return us to the fertile ground of uncertainty. They remind us that art doesn't always have to explain—it can also simply accompany, unsettle, or gently touch us.

Poetic questions, on the other hand, are oriented toward awakening imagination, sensory perception, and symbolic meaning. They don't look for exact answers but open up paths of subjective interpretation and emotional resonance. These are especially powerful when working

with intimate, experimental, or abstract works, where the goal is not to explain, but to feel, inhabit, or imagine. Examples of such questions include:

- What does this image dream of when no one is watching?
- If this object had a voice, what would it say?
- What part of you is activated when you see this scene?
- What color would the memory awakened by this photo be?
- Could this shadow tell you a secret?

Choosing one type of question over another doesn't mean closing off other ways of interpreting. In fact, the richness often lies in combining both—in shifting from analysis to play, from direct questions to lyrical detours. The key is to respect the tone of the work and the group's moment: some images invite thought, others invite silence, others open wounds, and some provoke laughter.

Using poetic questions is not about "sweetening" the experience of working with images—it's about recognizing that sometimes the best way to see is by suspending language and letting go of the need for certainty. And using congruent, structured questions doesn't mean turning art into a rigid class—it's about providing tools to help read the world with greater awareness.

In this spirit, the booklet proposes for each exhibition a set of questions adapted to the language and sensibility of the project. Some challenge with force; others whisper softly. All of them, if well chosen, can open up a fruitful dialogue between the viewer and the image—and also among the people who look together.

Conceptual and Visual Glossary

At the end of the booklet, a glossary is provided as a quick-reference tool for teachers, mediators, and participants. This glossary is not intended to be an academic appendix, but rather a practical and understandable toolbox that can accompany the entire experience.

On the one hand, it includes key terms that appear throughout the text or activities. Concepts such as "gaze" (inspired by John Berger), "empathy," "framing," "visual memory," or "pedagogical curation" are explained in simple language. The goal is for anyone—regardless of

their background—to understand and use them. Short examples are included to illustrate the terms. For instance:

- *Framing*: the part of reality that appears in the photo.
  Example: if a picture shows only a close-up of a face, the framing emphasizes emotion and leaves out the broader context.

The glossary also contains basic technical vocabulary related to photography: types of shots (wide shot, detail, close-up), types of lighting (natural light, top light, backlight), and compositional elements (lines, contrast, symmetry). Ideally, these terms are accompanied by small images or diagrams that visually explain them. That way, when someone hears “high angle” or “black and white,” they can easily understand what it means—especially useful for children or audiences unfamiliar with photographic language.

Additionally, the glossary can include specific words linked to the exhibition’s themes. If, for example, the show deals with migration or historical memory, terms like “exile,” “border,” “testimony,” or “diaspora” are likely to appear. Having these terms clearly defined in a few lines helps ensure that everyone in the group can discuss the topic with confidence.

If considered relevant, the glossary can also be presented in a bilingual version (Spanish–Catalan), especially considering the Barcelona context and the inclusive public service focus of Pati Llimona. Terms that come directly from the theoretical framework of the booklet—such as “Gaze* (John Berger): the way we perceive art, influenced by culture, context, and our past experiences”—can be marked with an asterisk. This encourages readers to return to the sources if they wish to go deeper.

Beyond its explanatory function, the glossary can also be used in group dynamics. You can play games like “charades” (someone acts out a term and others guess it), crossword puzzles using definitions, or ask students to create a sentence using three glossary concepts. In this way, visual language stops being a barrier and becomes shared territory—accessible to all.

Ultimately, the glossary is another element of the booklet’s pedagogical approach: to democratize access to visual culture, offer tools without elitism, and encourage each person to take ownership of image-based language in order to understand, express, and transform their view of the world.

Best Practices in Pedagogical Curation and Visual Mediation

To close the booklet, it is worth highlighting some best practices that emerge from everything previously discussed. These are not rigid formulas but ideas that have proven effective and may inspire those who design educational activities linked to art and photography.

One of them is to commit to participatory design of materials. Including teachers, mediators, or even students in the creation of the booklet makes it more relevant, better aligned with real needs, and easier to implement. Listening to what interests audiences, what questions they have, what they find confusing or inspiring—this improves both the content and the reach of the material.

Another key practice is to always keep accessibility in mind. This means using clear and direct language, adapting materials for people with visual or hearing disabilities if needed, and avoiding overly specialized references that might exclude those unfamiliar with the art world. It also means being thoughtful about the images shown: including diverse bodies, backgrounds, ages, and situations, and avoiding stereotypes.

Visual ethics is also a critical point. Images that portray pain, poverty, or vulnerability must be treated with care and respect. It's important to avoid voyeurism or the spectacle of suffering. As Susan Sontag wisely warned, looking at the pain of others carries responsibility: it's not enough to feel moved—we must also ask ourselves what we do with that emotion. For this reason, it can be helpful to include questions or activities that invite viewers to go beyond emotional impact and consider action, however small.

It's also recommended to foster intergenerational or diverse group encounters. For example, older adults might share memories sparked by a historical photo, or teenagers might accompany children in creative activities. These types of group combinations enrich the experience, facilitate knowledge exchange, and help build community.

Finally, document the process. Take notes on what works and what doesn't, collect quotes from participants, save drawings or photos created during the sessions, and share the results with other centers or collectives. This not only showcases the value of the work but also helps improve future activities through reflection and feedback.

All these good practices point in the same direction as the rest of the booklet: using photography as a powerful excuse to learn, to converse, to see differently—with curiosity, with respect, and with the desire for visual culture to become a space where everyone can meet, express themselves, and grow together.

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Glossary

Support analysis
Study of the materials, surfaces, and formats that sustain an image or content.

Anthotype
Alternative photographic technique using natural pigments (from flowers, fruits, leaves) to create light-sensitive images revealed through prolonged sun exposure.

Emotional archive
Artistic concept using objects, images, or gestures to build a subjective collection of memories, emotions, or personal experiences.

Genetic archive
A metaphor referring to biological information transmitted across generations.

Poetic archive
A collection of objects or images that narrate personal or collective experiences from a symbolic perspective.

Living archive
A constantly evolving collection where elements may grow, change, or disappear.

Ephemeral art
Artworks intended to disappear or transform, as a poetic gesture or critique of permanence in art.

Process-based art
An art form in which the creative process is as important as the final result.

Collective self-portrait
An artwork built from multiple subjects to create a shared image of identity.

Emotional cartography
Subjective representation of space through memories, emotions, or personal recollections.

Cyanotype
Historic photographic process known for producing blue-toned images, using sun exposure on a surface treated with a photosensitive iron solution.

Chlorotype
Photographic technique using chlorophyll from plants to create images through direct solar exposure. Very fragile and short-lived.

Collage
Artistic technique that assembles various materials onto a surface.

Photographic collage
Visual composition combining fragments of photographs, paper, or graphic materials into a single image or surface.

Stitched canvas
Mounting technique where images or objects are sewn onto a support, adding texture, three-dimensionality, and symbolic craftsmanship.

Technological body
Philosophical and aesthetic idea reflecting on the transformation of the human body through its relationship with digital tools, algorithms, and emerging technologies.

Capitalist culture
Economic and symbolic system based on consumption, private ownership, and capital accumulation, influencing values, behaviors, and social representations.

Genetic diary
An artistic or symbolic format gathering elements transmitted through emotional, familial, or biological inheritance, manifested through images, words, or gestures.

Photographic emulsion
Light-sensitive coating applied to a support (paper, fabric, glass) that allows image capture through exposure and chemical development.

Photosensitive emulsion
Chemical layer applied to a surface that reacts to light, enabling photographic image capture.

Relational aesthetics
Art movement focused on human interactions as a form of creation and meaning.

Photogram
Photographic image made without a camera by placing objects directly on a photosensitive surface and exposing it to light.

Photomontage
Artistic technique combining multiple photographs into a single image, visually manipulating reality and meaning.

Nuclear heritage
Concept referring to the genetic, social, and symbolic consequences passed down after events such as atomic bombings or radioactive exposure.

Hyperconnectivity
Contemporary condition of constant connection to digital devices and networks.

Consumer identity
How acts of consumption (products, brands, services) shape a narrative or image of who we are in contemporary society.

Visual identity
Symbolic representation of a person or collective through images, colors, and structures.

Latent image
Invisible image formed on a photosensitive surface, later revealed through a chemical process.

Camera-less image
Any photographic process that doesn't use a traditional camera, such as photograms, direct exposure, or physical contact with the support.

Dystopian imaginary
Representation of a future or society marked by decay, control, or catastrophe.

Camera-less print
Photographic technique not using a camera, such as photograms or cyanotypes.

Digital infrastructure
The technologies, materials, and systems that enable the functioning of the internet, digital devices, and communication networks.

Art installation
Contemporary art form using space as an integral part of the work. May include photography, sound, objects, video, and performance.

Immersive installation
Three-dimensional work that transforms the exhibition space and envelops the viewer sensorially.

Artistic intervention
Alteration of an object, space, or situation for expressive or critical purposes.

Inherited memory
Memories, emotions, or knowledge transmitted across generations beyond direct experience.

Microhistory
Brief, specific narrative that illuminates broader social, economic, or emotional aspects.

Consumption microhistory
Narrative built from small everyday acts of purchasing, revealing aspects of contemporary culture and subjectivity.

Found object
An item not originally intended as art but re-signified through artistic incorporation.

Memory-object
A physical element that evokes a personal or collective experience from the past.

Algorithmic landscape
Visual space configured or mediated by digital systems, programming, and algorithms—opposite of a natural landscape.

Sensorial landscape
A space perceived not only visually but through all the senses.

Photographic performance
Artistic action combining body, gesture, and image as part of a single act of creation and visual reflection.

Performative
Related to performance—an artistic action carried out live or recorded as expressive act.

Phototransfer / Transphotography
Art technique transferring photographic images to various supports (wood, fabric, paper) using emulsion or heat, creating a unique texture.

Polawrongs / Hotharoids / Les Instants Physiques
Terms used by Kevin Hoth to describe his manipulated instant film works where errors, imperfections, and visual scars are intentionally part of the process.

Alternative processes
Nontraditional photographic techniques using historical or experimental methods.

Chemigram
Hybrid technique between painting and photography where chemicals are applied directly onto photosensitive paper without using negatives.

Aesthetic reception
How a work is perceived, interpreted, and emotionally experienced by the audience.

Thermal receipt
Document generated by heat-based printers, whose ink fades over time, used in art as a symbol of ephemerality.

Photographic residue
Any leftover or fragment from the photographic process (exposed paper, damaged negative, decomposed chemistry) incorporated into a work as aesthetic material.

Visual residue
Trace or mark left by an element that is no longer present.

Expanded portrait
Contemporary form of portraiture that goes beyond showing face or figure: includes objects, fragments, shadows, or traces representing identity.

Silicon
Chemical element found in nature (sand, quartz) and technology (chips, screens). In art, it symbolizes the connection between organic and digital.

Silhouette
Outline or projected shadow of a figure, often used to represent symbolic presence or absence.

Solarigraphy
Photographic technique recording the sun's movement over time in a single image through extremely long exposures.

Shadow as presence
Aesthetic and symbolic device using shadow not as absence but as a form of representing what is no longer there but has left a trace.

Curatorial text
Reflective writing that accompanies an exhibition, offering context and interpretation of the works.

Photosensitive time
Concept playing with the idea of time as a substance that can be recorded, altered, or revealed through photographic processes.