

# LINES, SHAPES AND SIMPLE PHOTOGRAMS

ONE DAY WORKSHOP IN SIMPLE PHOTOGRAM PRINTING COMBINED WITH DRAWING TECHNIQUES

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## ONE DAY WORKSHOP

# LINES, SHAPES + SIMPLE PHOTOGRAMS

**OVERVIEW:** Students create various themed images using a combination of

- basic photogram printing principles
- still life drawing techniques

**THEME:** **THE ENVIRONMENT AND ME**

**MATERIALS:**

1. ILFORD Multigrade IV RC DELUXE (17,8x24cm/7x9½in) glossy photographic paper, (or equivalent). (approx 3 sheets per student)
2. dark room with equipment and chemicals for printing
3. handouts (see appendix)
  1. PHOTOGRAM PRINTING
  2. MAKING A POSITIVE
  3. INTERACTION OF LIGHT AND MATERIALS
4. previously collected objects of a suitable size for photograms found in the immediate environment.
  - eg. objects made of paper, plastic, glass, metal and sand, organic materials (dead and alive) such as leaves, flowers, feathers etc.
5. Personal objects of a suitable size for photograms brought from home that typify/symbolize the personality, ideas (or just a favourite piece) of the student.
  - eg. jewellery, glass and plastic beads, lace, tights, open weave fabrics, sweeties and their wrappers, cotton wool cutlery, tools chains, small kitchen implements etc
6. Drawing paper
7. Charcoal of varying thickness
8. Putty gum

**OBJECTIVES :**

1. Students will explore and learn about the basic principles of photogram printing.
2. Students will experiment with the fundamentals of light sensitivity and simple printing techniques.
3. Students will create photogram images based on the theme:  
**'the environment and me.'**
4. Students will familiarize themselves with an overview of the history of photography and photographers:

**Discovery:** Fox Talbot, Daguerre.

**Development:** Nadar, Cameron, Muybridge,

**Experimentation:** Man Ray, Rodchenko, Heartfield.

**Identity + Application:** Prince Sherman, Gilbert & George.

4. Students will research topics via the internet:  
**Possible links:** (See Appendix for a brief description of the site photos)

- <http://www.arts.arizona.edu/are476/Davis/files/fotogr.htm>
- <http://www.nancyworld.com/OptioImages.htm>
- <http://www.spelthorne.ac.uk/student/jsteph33/fotogram/fotindex.htm>
- <http://www.webgrrls.com/eva/photograms.html>
- <http://www.libarts.ucok.edu/journalism/Photogram.html>

5. Students will compose still life contour line drawings in charcoal. They can use a combination of items collected from the environment and from their own personal space. The goal is to find a connection between the objects either through line, shadow, perspective or form. This requires careful study of the shape and line contour of the objects.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Familiarise the students with the basic principles of photogram printing. (see handout 1 and 2)
2. Discuss the plans and procedure for the day.
3. Class splits into groups of 10 or 12. One group will work with photograms (approx 1 hour session), while the others complete objectives 4 through 6.  
**NB. These objectives can be easily adopted to suit facilities or school curriculum requirements**
4. Photogram group will split into pairs and follow either handout 1 or 2  
PHOTOGRAM PRINTING  
INTERACTION OF LIGHT AND MATERIALS
5. After one and a half hours the groups swap activities
6. Teachers and students gather in the last hours of the day for group/s discussion over the days activities.
  - Each pair has a turn to share and exchange photos and comment on the days activities, (success stories, failures, difficulties or pure luck).
  - Teachers and students invited to give comment on the images they found the most striking, thought provoking, innovative use of objects, best depiction of theme etc.
  - Compare and contrast the still life drawings with the photographic images
  - Discuss the results of researching and gathering information, (via internet and books), before undertaking a task. Compare with Group 1, (since they began immediately with photogram printing).
  - Open discussion, (time permitting)

**ASSESSMENT:**

1. Was the theme '*the environment and me*' represented in the work?
2. Was the procedure easily followed and a basic level of photographic printing principles reached and understood?  
Ask questions.
3. Did other factors play a role in achieving a good result? eg luck, chance, mistakes?
4. Were there detectable comparisons and contrasts in the still life drawings and the photogram images?
5. Were the benefits from the intensive study of one form/shape apparent?
6. Were the images influenced by the historical and internet research carried out by the groups? Were there direct advantages from this?

## **APPENDIX**

- 1. Photogram Printing**
- 2. Making a Positive**
- 3. Interaction of Light and Materials**
- 4. Historical Overview  
Teachers Notes / Reference)**
- 5. Website Links**

## HANDOUT 1

# PHOTOGRAM PRINTING

Before beginning with Photogram Printing you should have a collection of objects preferably smaller than and definitely not much bigger than (17,8x24cm / 7x9½in) from two different sources.

1. objects found in the ***immediate environment***.
  - eg. all objects made of paper, plastic, glass, metal and sand, organic materials (dead and alive) such as leaves, flowers, feathers etc
2. ***personal objects*** brought from home that typify or symbolize your own personality, ideas, thoughts, hobby or just a favourite thing.
  - eg. jewellery, glass and plastic beads, lace, tights, open weave fabrics, sweeties and their wrappers, cotton wool cutlery, tools nuts and bolts, chains, small kitchen implements etc

The idea is to create an image that shows a relationship between the objects from the two differing environments. This can be simply an aesthetically pleasing image or maybe you would like to make a statement or show a contrast. It doesn't have to be too complex or difficult to achieve a striking image.

For example:

- you have bought your favourite gold chain from home and in the environment you found a plastic sandwich bag. For the photogram you tie the plastic bag in knots with your gold chain
- you have brought a kitchen utensil from metal and in the environment you have picked wild daisies. For your photogram you decide to frame a static image of the utensil with the flowers.

## PROCEDURE

1. Split into pairs and decide on the objects you are going to use. **Keep it simple.** The more intricate, the longer it takes. I suggest using only two objects but if it **really** is necessary then you may work with three.

For ideas see Handout 2 INTERACTION OF LIGHT AND MATERIALS

**DON'T FORGET THE THEME:  
'The environment and me'**

2. Since there are 6 groups and 3 enlargers, half of the group works first and while they are developing their images, the second half can use the enlargers.  
**NB. This means that you cannot alter the height or aperture of the enlarger. This will be set for you before you enter the darkroom.**
3. Cut one sheet of the photographic paper into 2 strips. These will be used as your test strips.
4. Place one of the test strips under the enlarger and set both of the objects you have chosen on top. (you can even overlap in the middle if this is a possible variation in your photogram)
5. **Make a test strip as follows**
  - Set the enlarger timer to 2 secs.
  - Cover  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the photo paper with an opaque piece of board. Expose for 2 secs
  - Move the board to now cover  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the paper and make a second (2 secs) exposure.
  - Repeat covering  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the paper.
  - Remove the board completely for the last exposure.
  - You now have a test strip with exposures for 2, 4, 6 and 8 secs.

6. Once developed, stopped, fixed, washed and dried, your result should look like this:



*Don't forget to write exposure times on the test strip (in pen) next to the corresponding strip. It is TOO easy to forget when you need to refer to it later on.*

7. Study your test strip and should one of the exposures be to your satisfaction then proceed to step 9. If one exposure on your test strip is slightly too dark but the exposure next to it is too light then the chosen time should be somewhere in between.
8. If the test strip is unsatisfactory then make a new test strip adjusting the exposure times as follows:

*Check with your teacher if unsure of your choice.*

RESULT	SOLUTION
Too dark	Shorter exposure time
Too light	Longer exposure time

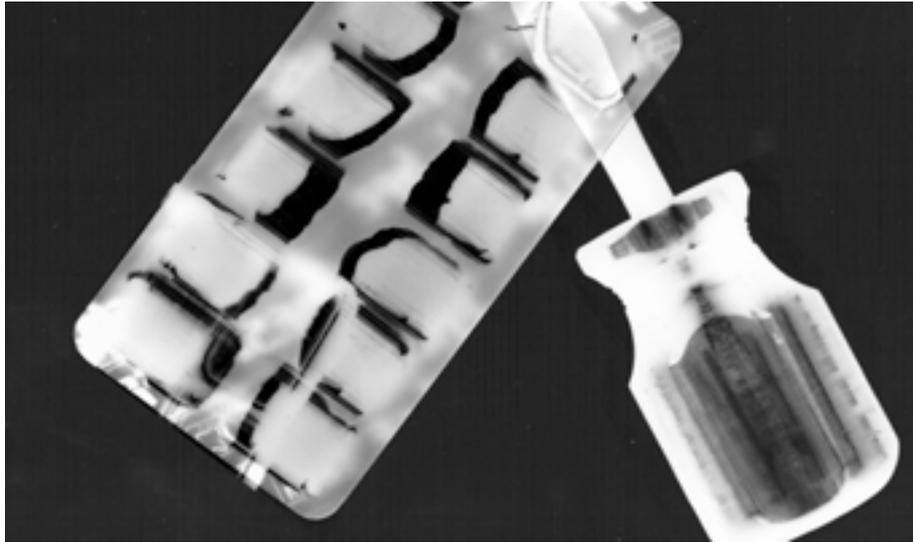
9. You will now have one test strip with exposure times for two objects lying flat on the photographic paper. (maybe even an overlap)

*Time permitting repeat the same process (Steps 1 to 4) with the two objects placed on a glass plate 15-20cm above the photographic paper.*

10. Now you have the fun of deciding your composition. Write your plan down with exposure times and positions of objects. Drawing a small diagram can also be helpful. Use the space below and don't forget to consult:

Handout 3 **INTERACTION OF LIGHT AND MATERIALS.**

Prepare your photogram. It will look something like this

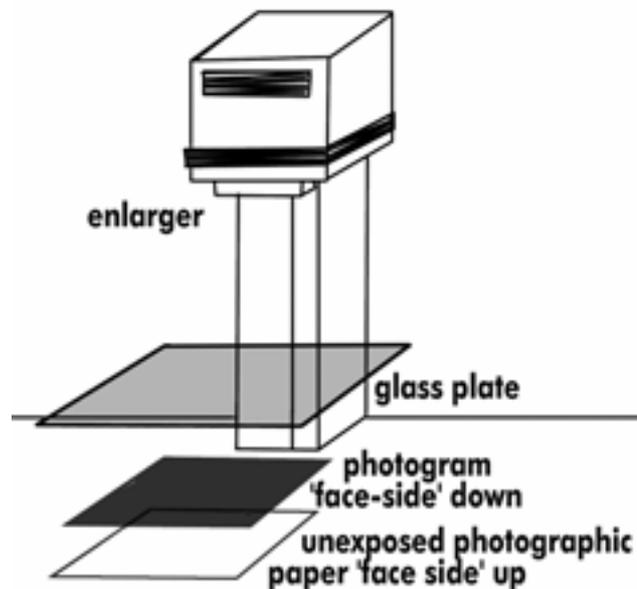


11. Proceed with Handout 2 **MAKING A POSITIVE PRINT.**

## HANDOUT 2

### MAKING A POSITIVE PRINT

1. Take a piece of unexposed photographic paper that is the same size or slightly bigger than your photogram.
2. Place unexposed paper **face side up** under the enlarger.
3. Place photogram **face side down** on top of photo paper.
4. Secure in place by setting a glass plate on top.



#### 4. Make a test strip as follows

- Set the enlarger timer to 2 secs.
- Cover  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the photo paper with an opaque piece of board. Expose for 2 secs
- Move the board to now cover  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the paper and make a second (2 secs) exposure.
- Repeat covering  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the paper.
- Remove the board completely for the last exposure.
- You now have a test strip with exposures for 2, 4, 6 and 8 secs.

5. Once developed, stopped, fixed, washed and dried, your result should look like this:



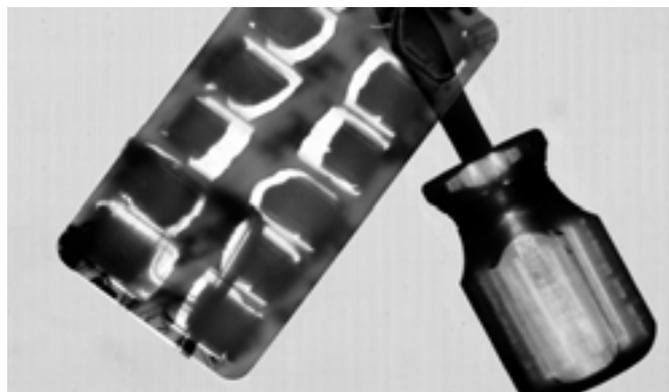
6. If one of the exposures is to your satisfaction then proceed with steps 1 to 4 and expose the whole piece of paper with the exposure time of choice. If one exposure on your test strip is slightly too dark but the exposure next to it too light then the chosen the time should be somewhere in between.

***Check with your teacher if unsure of your choice.***

Don't forget like previously, write your exposure times on the test strip. If unsatisfactory, make a new test strip adjusting your exposure times as follows.

RESULT	SOLUTION
Too dark	Shorter exposure time
Too light	Longer exposure time

7. Once you are satisfied, print a positive.  
(Remember to make a second copy so you both have something to show from your days work.



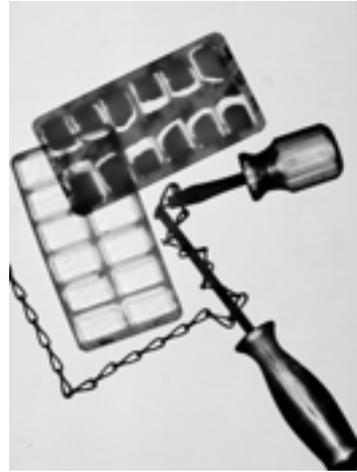
***If there is time you can create another negative by using exactly the same procedure and exposure time with your positive photo***

## HANDOUT 3

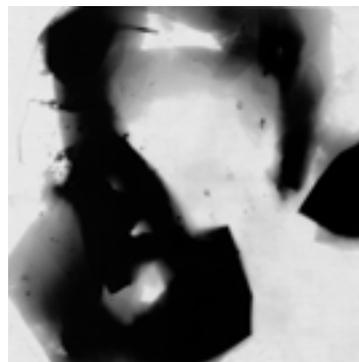
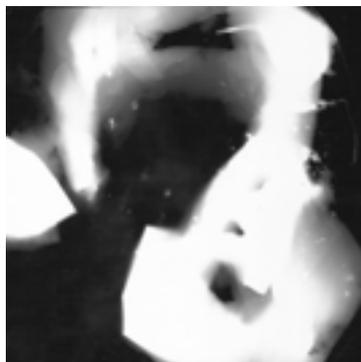
### INTERACTION OF LIGHT AND MATERIALS

- Before starting here are some ideas to think about:
- An objects properties will affect the result that you will achieve:
  - transparent, translucent, opaque
  - thick, thin, (2D/3D)
  - patterned, plain cut, torn, smooth or ragged edges

#### SOME EXAMPLES TO THINK ABOUT:

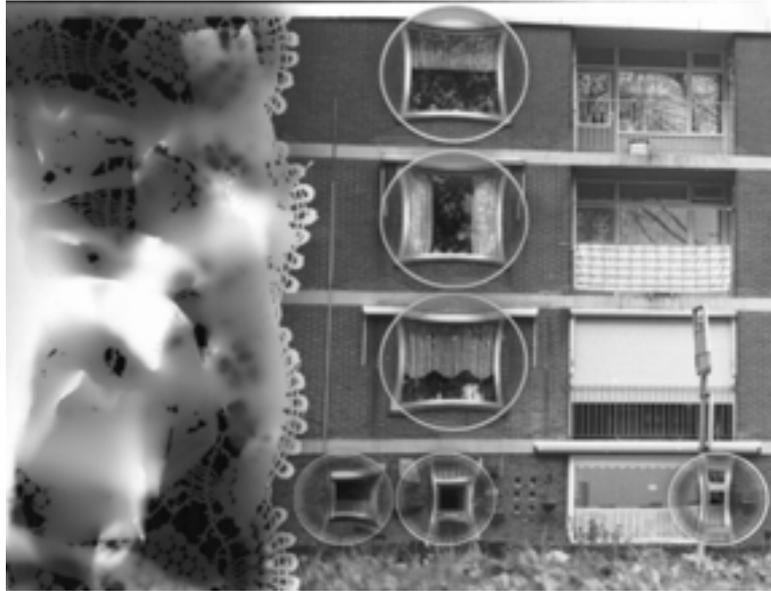


Objects laid flat give a sharp contour, clear edge. The screwdrivers, chain and chewing gum packages show this clearly in the above photograms.



Objects laid on a glass sheet held a short distance above the paper softens the edge. The example above is a plastic sandwich bag with a strip of white plastic tape inside and rested on glass.

## Objects :



Objects can be combined with a normal negative. Here thick glass disks were used to distort the windows in the negative image. The other materials used were lace from a curtain with randomly laid pieces of shredded tissue paper

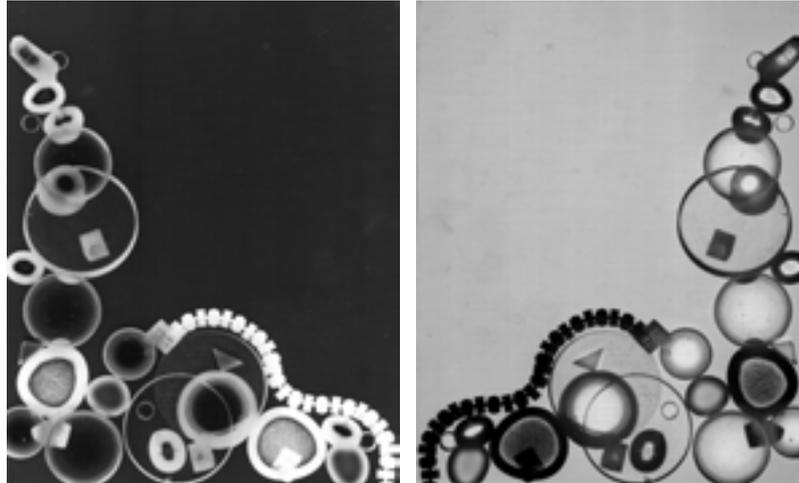


Objects that are organic matter (fresh flowers/leaves etc), give an almost life like positive image. In the image here, small daisies and green leaves were arranged on the photographic paper.

Objects can produce a varying range of greys by removing or altering the position from the beginning to the end of the total exposure time. This is best achieved by using a series of short exposures. See the following website for good examples of varying grey tones:

<http://www.libarts.ucok.edu/journalism/Photogram.html>

## Other Objects:



glass beads and lenses give a great variety of grey tones. Experiment with them held a few centimetres above the paper. These were simply placed on top of a glass plate laid on the photographic paper hence a relatively sharp contour.

You can simply use a black and white drawing you have created. So long as the contrast is good enough and the paper isn't too thick. Newspaper print for example can add a great effect.

objects that are 3 dimensional and angled against the light source can also give an interesting shadow and object distortion effects.

Experiment with liquids, either on glass or direct on the paper, (use fixer or developer brushed or dripped on paper, vaseline to stop the process)

NB. Fixer = white and Developer = darker

- **There are of course many more interesting variations. Just look at the websites below. Today we will keep it simple due to the time limit but don't let this stop you thinking about experimenting in the future.**

<http://www.arts.arizona.edu/are476/Davis/files/fotogr.htm>

<http://www.nancyworld.com/OptioImages.htm>

<http://www.spelthorne.ac.uk/student/jsteph33/fotogram/fotindex.htm>

<http://www.webgrrls.com/eva/photograms.html>

<http://www.libarts.ucok.edu/journalism/Photogram.html>

#### 4. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW (Teachers Notes/ Reference)

- Camera obscura was already discovered (Aristoteles, Leonardo)
- In 18th Century Heinrich Schuze discovered chemical process
- However, took until 1826 for Niepce to fix the first light image. (Took 8 hours for exposure time)
- **QUESTION: Why did it take so long before someone combined the principles of the camera obscura with the chemical process?**
- **ANSWER: In the 18th Century there was little desire for such a form of realism. That however began to change around the turn of the 1800's. There was a definite movement in the painting world for the use of an "open scene" (Goya, Gericault, Delacroix, Corot).**
- Daguerre (France) and Fox Talbot (England) worked simultaneously, but with different methods, towards improving the photograph in the mid 19th century.



**Daguerre** Photoplate 1838  
Boulevard du Temple Paris



**Fox Talbot** Open Door 1843  
Paper print from negative

- The work from painters, in the latter half of the 1800's, showed a trend towards an authentic and naturalistic view of life often from a distant observation point. They preferred the topic of the "here and now" and no one so beautifully captured the moment than Degas.

**QUESTION: Study the three works from Degas and those from 3 photographers of the same era. What are the comparisons and contrasts? It is sometimes said that Degas borrowed his compositions and observation from the photograph. Do you think this is true?**



Ballet rehearsal 1874



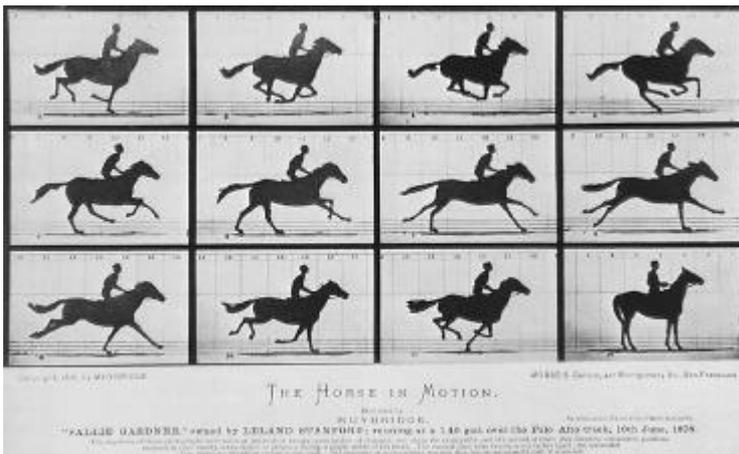
Ironing women 1884



Women outside cafe 1877



The Echo 1868



Galloping Horses 1878      Muybridge



Photographers Wife  
1853      Nadar

**ANSWERS:**

- All images of reality, 'what is actually happening at that moment', especially Muybridge, (almost scientific).
  - Portrait Photography a little composed, fabricated in comparison with others.
  - Photography is simple composition and focus is on a single element (generally taking central position) whereas
  - Degas work is much more complex and tells a whole story from a captured moment from out of the keyhole perspective.
  - You can therefore not agree that Degas was influenced by photography. In fact it is the daring development, with new compositions and observations, of the painting in the late 19th Century that spurred on the advancement of the photograph.
- Further technical developments allowed new possibilities and more freedom
    - choice of subject
    - lighting conditions
    - sharpness of photo

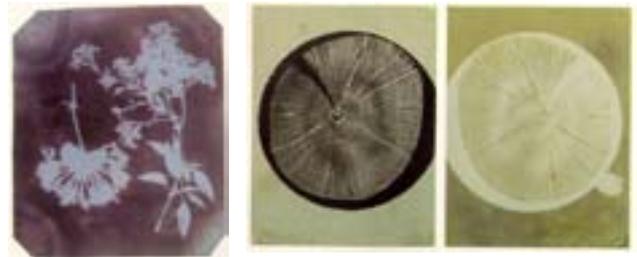
1826:	8 hour exposure time
1840:	5 minutes
1880:	fraction of a second

- This discovery of a "new realism" was, in the beginning, extremely impressive. However, after a period the following questions were raised:
    - Did the photograph simply serve as a way of reproducing reality?
- OR
- Was the photograph a medium whereby the "here and now" could be used as another art form?
- Naturally the artistic side of photography developed and with its status firmly embedded, the early 1900's saw a growing distinction between reportage and more experimental photography.



**May Ray:** Photograms  
He called them Rayographs and claimed that he had discovered them first. We know that isn't true as Fox Talbot was already doing this a bit less than a century before but certainly not as experimental as Man Ray. Man Ray even entered into the world of advertising.

The images on the right are the photograms made by Fox Talbot. This process was used in the scientific world to record images of plant life. Coupled with drawing this gave an incredible degree of accuracy as to what the sample looked like.



**RODTSJENKO:** He was renowned for choosing an unusual viewpoint or perspective. He also had a great flair for capturing unusual light situations, especially shadows.



**HEARTFIELD:** His photomontages were a common feature in the anti-fascist magazine, AIZ during the second World War. His work is best known for its single-minded devotion to anti-Nazi political activism. His early montages were collaborative efforts and resembled that of the Dada movement.

- **The photograph continued to find its own place as an art form:**
  - The reportage photo not only relays the truth of the moment but confronts the viewer with social/ moral/ political or timeless issues. (see Dorothea Lange)
  - A consciousness of the concept of "**the decisive moment**" (see Henri-Cartier Bresson).
- **In the last decades of the 20th Century we see the photograph taking on a whole new identity:**
  - There was the ability to manipulate or fabricate an image.
  - Artists who used existing images or image conventions were trying to make the public aware of the fact that images are a representation of, and play a great part, in our society and ideology. (See Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman)



**Dorothea Lange**  
Migrant Mother 1936



**Henri-Cartier Bresson**  
(Alicante), Spain 1932



**Cindy Sherman**  
Untitled film still 1980



**Richard Prince:** Made famous for his Marlboro Man photographs. He simply used the original images and removed any logos or advertising. The pop icon cowboys, riding into the sunset with deadpan determination, became somewhat ridiculous symbols of American heroic mythologies.

## 5. WEBSITE LINKS

- <http://www.arts.arizona.edu/are476/Davis/files/fotogr.htm>  
Good history, Talbot, Wedgewood.
- <http://www.nancyworld.com/OptioImages.htm>  
Try and guess what objects she has used.
- <http://www.spelthorne.ac.uk/student/jsteph33/fotogram/fotindex.htm>  
Not many images but great use and creation of depth.
- <http://www.webgrrls.com/eva/photograms.html>  
Flower and plant images.
- <http://www.libarts.ucok.edu/journalism/Photogram.html>  
General method and procedure with history and some great examples.
- <http://www.masters-of-photography.com>  
great site with essential famous photographers and their photos. Also good resources page and additional articles