



LYSC Retro Technologies Workshop: Making a Photogram and Creating a Positive Image

Using a Pinhole Camera is not the only way to create images using your photographic paper. A photogram is a simple image created by placing objects onto a sheet of photographic paper, and exposing the paper to light. This may seem simple, but can create some impressive images.

Creating a Photogram – step by step

1 Find your Subject

A good subject or set of subjects is the key to an interesting photogram. Try to find objects that have interesting outlines or shapes. Perhaps experiment with partially transparent objects to see the different effects they cause.

2 Compose your Photogram

It is best to practice different compositions before you even reach for the photographic paper. Decide on how you want to position your object(s) for the best image. Make sure you can reproduce it, as you will need to be able to do it in the dark!

3 Exposing the Paper

Before you begin this step, make sure you have everything you need. Make sure your photographic paper is to hand, you have your red photographic safe light (if you are using one), and you have a desk lamp. You will also need to be able to make the room very dark.

Once you are happy, turn off the lights and remove the photographic paper from the box, taking care the light sensitive surface is upwards, and that you hold it by the edges – fingerprints can disrupt your image.

Arrange your objects onto the light sensitive surface of the paper. Once happy, turn on the desk lamp to expose the paper. Depending on the brightness of your lamp you will need to expose your photogram for around 2 or 3 seconds. Be careful not to overexpose the image (this may require practice to produce the perfect photogram).

You are now ready to develop your Photogram! Be aware that the paper is still light sensitive, so it is best to develop your photogram straight away to avoid unintentionally exposing it to light.

Once you have mastered how to create Photograms, you can attempt to create a Positive image. You will have noticed that any images you have created (either photograms, or using your Pinhole camera) are in Negative – that is the subjects appear light against a dark background. This is not what we usually expect from a photograph. However, it is easy to create a Positive version. This is known as 'Inverting'.

Inverting works by using your original negative image as a 'mask' to expose a fresh piece of photographic paper. As the dark areas of the image prevent light from passing through, those areas on the new image appear dark – whereas light areas of the original allow more light through, and therefore these appear dark on the new 'positive' image.

Making a Positive Image – step by step

1 Choose the image you wish to invert

In order to invert an image, you must first find an image to invert! Ensure the image has been developed and is dry before attempting to invert it.

2 Exposing the image

You will need the same set up as if you were creating a Photogram. i.e. a desk lamp, a space able to be made dark, and a sheet of photographic paper.

Darken the space, and place your sheet of new photographic paper, with the light sensitive side up, onto the table. Place your image you wish to invert picture side down onto the photo paper.

Turn on the desk lamp briefly to expose the image. Times for exposure will vary depending on how dark your original negative image is, but a good guideline is 4 or 5 sec. You may need to experiment however to create the perfect image.

You are now ready to develop your positive image. Be aware that the paper is still light sensitive, so it is best to develop your image straight away to avoid unintentionally exposing it to light.

As well as creating positive images using photographic paper, it is also possible to create them digitally. In order to do this you will need a digital scanner and photographic software such as Photoshop, or similar. There are a host of free photo editing software versions available. A good program with a lot of functions is GIMP which is available here: <http://www.gimp.org/>

Making a Positive Image Digitally – step by step

1 Create a digital copy of your Image

You will first need to create a digital copy of your image. The easiest way to do this is using a digital scanner, or a photocopier with a built in scanner.

It is best to create your image in a file format that is widely used for photographs such as .jpg, or .tif

2 Invert your image

Firstly, you will need to open your image into the photo editing software you are using. We are using GIMP, so this is simply done using the Open option from the File menu.

Once your image is open in GIMP, you can invert it quickly and simply by selecting the 'invert' option from the 'Colours' menu at the top of the screen.

An alternative method if your phone or digital camera has the ability is to set it to take a negative image then photograph your own negative picture to produce a positive. This method is quicker but you have no control over contrast, brightness etc.