

WRITTEN RESPONSE

Draft 1

January 23

Through this exploration of lumen prints, several critical questions emerged around control, variability, and the temporality of the medium. How can I achieve different results while working with the same paper ? Which variables - placement of objects, duration of exposure, intensity of light - can I influence without compromising the experimental nature of the process ? The weather and sunlight are unpredictable, so can controlled UV light provide consistent conditions without denaturing the origine of the process ? The act of waiting for the sun rays to react with the paper highlights the tension between the slow, time-dependent process and the desire for immediate results, challenging the principles of instant photography.

The project itself raised these questions because each print evolves unpredictably, producing colours and forms that I cannot fully anticipate. Iterating became essential : repeating exposures and interventions allowed the observation of patterns and differences, revealing the medium as both process and material.

For a studio-based experiment, I propose varying object (starting with fruit), layering, and timing. I will document each step and outcome, exploring how small manipulations influence colour, shadow, and texture. This will allow me to understand the factors that are most influential while retaining the experimental unpredictability that defines lumen printing.

Luna Maurer, Edo Paulus, Jonathan Puckey and Roel Wouters' Conditional Design Manifesto (2013) provides a useful framework through which to analyse my lumen print project. The Conditional Design Manifesto proposes that design should emerge from systems of rules, conditions and inputs rather than towards a determined outcome. This approach directly relates to my use of lumen printing, a process that relies on sunlight, time and objects placed on photographic paper, and that resists full control.

In this project, logic functions as a tool rather than a means to predict results. Similar to scientific experimentation, I established a set of initial conditions in order to see different reactions. The inputs became the material themselves : sunlight, photographic paper and the objects I position on its surface. Once these conditions are set, the process unfolds independently. As stated in the Conditional Design Manifesto, 'factors will influence the design, rules and properties' (Maurer et al, 2013, p.V) allowing forms to appear through the interaction of the sun with the objects. I think those parameters influenced the design as much as the design changed them. In this way, my work behaves almost like an organism, shaped by external forces rather than by my intention alone.

Letting go of control is central to this process that relies on the chance of having a good weather. Instead of designing a final image, I designed a system. This raised questions about the role of outcome in my work. Rather than functioning as a finished artefact, the lumen print became a trace of an event organised by my hand. The work

shifts from object-based to performative. It no longer aims to preserve a plant in the encyclopaedic sense, but instead to record an action.

This process became apparent with the apple, the act of cutting the apple felt almost violent, which shifted my attention away from the visual result and toward the physical gesture. While the lumen print process usually assumes that the plant remains still over time, I began to question what would happen if I recorded the act of cutting the apple as part of the work. This introduced movement, duration and action into a process that was supposed to be static.

The instability of the lumen prints became even more evident when I scanned the images a second time and noticed that it had changed from the original, despite having preserved them in opaque bags. The images had continued to evolve. This connects to Hito Steyerl's idea of the poor image as a copy in motion, although in my case the degradation occurs physically rather than digitally. This led me to a new question : are the images truly preserved if the prints are not fixed ?

If the image continues to change, then the work never fully concludes. The photographic paper becomes a canvas for recording actions, time and transformation. The process, the performance and the outcome collapses into one.

Draft 3

February 06

After three weeks of working on this project, I decided to return to the origins of photograms and lumen prints.

They are cameraless photographic processes originally used to record plants with a level of accuracy that preceded drawing. The process relies on natural conditions such as sunlight and time. It is activated by the human hand but does not require a machine. The resulting images are imperfect, require repetition, and retain visible traces of human intervention.

Lumen printing had become part of my almost daily routine. The repeated gestures of placing the materials, cutting, and waiting became central to the process and revealed human intervention. The iterations themselves operated as a ritual embedded in my everyday life. Mundane habits and repeated actions begin to function as rituals, or as a form of iteration. Rather than capturing a single plant as a stable object, my work shifted toward recording human movement.

The act of cutting an apple introduced a performative dimension to the process, shifting the emphasis from preservation to action. This approach relates to the Conditional Design Manifesto, which frames design as a system shaped by rules instead of fixed outcomes. Rather than working intuitively toward a predetermined image, I defined a set of conditions and allowed the work to unfold independently. The images were not composed but produced through a system, emerging from the interaction between time, light and materials.

This further complicated the ephemeral nature of lumen prints. Because the images are not fixed, they continue to change over time, raising questions about whether

preservation is ever truly achieved. Instead of conserving an object, the photographic paper became a surface that records time, action, and transformation.

The prints will be contained in a publication as a set of iterations produced without the use of any machine, such as a scanner or printer, remaining completely analog. When the publication is opened, the pages will be exposed to sunlight, allowing the process to continue until the images are eventually fully marked. The fact that the prints cannot be shown without fading led me to question whether they function as acts of preservation at all.

References

Blauvelt, A., Maurer, L., Paulus, E., Puckey, J. and Wouters, R. (2013) Conditional Design Workbook. Amsterdam: Valiz, pp. ii-xiv.

Steyerl, H. (2012) 'In Defense of the Poor Image', in The Wretched of the Screen. Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp. 31-45.