

Exploration of Fine Art Photography as a Medium for Self-Expression

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ethics of fine art photography through the lens of self-expression. Specifically, the study focuses on privacy, permission, and the creative utilisation of human experiences. My ability to express myself through photography could be beneficial. Using both observation and case studies, we investigate how the influence of fine art photography on self-expression arises. People are able to visually represent their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the medium of fine art photography, which also alters their self-expression and contributes to the process of self-discovery. Through the use of high art photography, this research evokes feelings and recollections. The composition, lighting, subject matter, and post-processing techniques all contribute to the creation of well-considered photos. Within the realm of fine art photography, this study promotes the exploration of self-expression through the creation of photographs that generate feelings, conversations, and identities.

Keywords: *Fine art, Photography, Self-expression, Self-discovery*

INTRODUCTION

Fine art photography has long been acknowledged as a powerful form of artistic expression, allowing individuals to capture and communicate their innermost thoughts, feelings, and experiences through visual imagery. The importance of personal identity exploration and self-discovery grows in a society that frequently imposes rigid societal expectations and norms. Amidst the era of constant visual stimulation from social media, commercials, and digital displays, photography remains a powerful means of self-expression. Fine art photography goes beyond simply documenting moments; it serves as a medium for artists to express their feelings, thoughts, and distinctive viewpoints on the world. According to Thomas & Mackenzie (2020), "fine art photography doesn't have a definition of its own. But it does attract those who share a specific vision. Fine art photographs are created as carefully as paintings. They're often difficult to create in one session. They stand out because of their details, compositions, and meanings". This investigation explores the domain of fine art photography as a means of self-expression. Self-expression is a notion that is very commonly and very positively used in contemporary popular culture in the U.S. Self-expression is a notion that is closely associated with a horde of positive concepts,

such as freedom, creativity, style, courage, self-assurance, and even healing and spirituality (Kim & Ko, 2011).

This introduction seeks to provide answers to the key questions posed in the abstract, shedding light on the significance of fine art photography as a medium for self-expression, the development of personal identity, and self-discovery. This research acknowledges first and foremost the limitations of conventional forms of self-expression in capturing and articulating the complex depths of the human experience. Language, whether verbal or written, frequently falls short in conveying the complexities of emotion and personal narrative. Fine art photography emerges as a dynamic alternative that empowers individuals to visually express themselves, utilising the transformative power of imagery to communicate on a profound level.

Personal identity exploration and self-discovery are crucial in modern society. The pressure to conform to societal norms can obscure one's true self, resulting in a disconnection between one's internal experiences and external presentation. Fine art photography affords individuals a one-of-a-kind opportunity to delve into the depths of their being, investigate their personal identities, and express their genuine selves through visual storytelling. Various techniques and approaches exist within the realm of fine art photography to facilitate self-expression. Composition, lighting, subject matter, and post-processing techniques play crucial roles in the creation of evocative and introspective photographs. Moreover, artistic styles such as conceptual photography, surrealism, and documentary photography provide unique avenues for communicating personal narratives and emotions. To comprehend the effect of fine art photography on self-expression and self-discovery, it is necessary to consult existing literature, empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and specific case studies. These sources contribute to a greater understanding of how engaging with fine art photography can evoke profound emotions, capture personal narratives, and allow individuals to explore and define their identities.

This introduction concludes by laying the groundwork for exploring the significance of fine art photography as a medium for self-expression, the development of personal identity, and self-discovery. By examining the distinctive characteristics of fine art photography and its potential impact on the lives of individuals, this investigation seeks to shed light on the transformative possibilities offered by this medium. Photography has long been used to record our surroundings. Photographers have always tried to tell stories, evoke emotions, and explore human experience. Photography has evolved with art. Fine art photography offers a fresh take on visual storytelling and self-expression. This study explores fine art photography and self-expression. Fine art photography is less structured than traditional photography. Fine art serves as a medium through which individuals can express themselves. It's technical components, fine art photography, is a very intimate pursuit that enables individuals to convey their most profound emotions, experiences, and stories through visual representation. It offers a medium to express the intricacies of the human experience, surpassing linguistic obstacles and resonating with the viewer's innermost being.

Unlike factual or commercial photography, which frequently serves particular objectives or interests, fine art photography is unrestricted by such limitations. The artwork incorporates ambiguity, symbolism, and abstraction, encouraging viewers to interpret and emotionally engage with the imagery. Every snapshot serves as a mirror of the artist's mind, capturing brief instances filled with intricate significance and intense emotion. It forces photographers to try new methods, materials, and ideas. In today's image-driven society, self-expression is crucial. We try to express ourselves honestly. Fine art photography allows artists to express themselves beyond traditional techniques and narratives. This study examines fine art photography and self-expression to illuminate individual creativity. Fine arts, psychology, and visual communication can help us understand fine art photography as a form of self-expression. Furthermore, fine art photography provides a refuge for deep contemplation and personal exploration. By engaging in the creation and curation of images, artists undertake a voyage of self-discovery, addressing their anxieties, wants, and vulnerabilities. The camera serves as an extension of one's self, capturing not just the external environment but also the inside realm of ideas and emotions.

Moreover, fine art photography functions as a catalyst for social and cultural critique. Artists employ their perspectives to illuminate urgent matters, question established conventions, and stimulate

intellectually stimulating discussions. Through the utilisation of visual storytelling, they enhance the influence of voices that are frequently marginalised or disregarded, promoting empathy and comprehension among many cultures. During this journey, we will traverse the intricate landscape of fine art photography, deciphering its intricacies and revealing its capacity as a means of self-expression. By examining the works of different artists, we will explore how photography surpasses the limitations of time and location, making a lasting impact on the shared awareness of humanity. This research examines fine art photography's expressive potential using theoretical analysis, qualitative research, and visual analysis. We aim to enrich arts and psychology knowledge by studying fine art photography's history, artists and photographers' perspectives, and aesthetic and narrative elements. Finally, this research expands our understanding of fine art photography as a tool for personal expression by revealing its potential to empower individuals, foster personal development, and deepen our collective understanding of the complex relationship between art, self-expression, and the modern human experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article reviews Fine-Art Photography by Thomas and Mackenzie (2020) discusses art photography. Fine art photography expresses the vision of the artist. Fine art photography conveys a concept, message, or emotion. This is distinct from representational photography, such as photojournalism, which depicts objective reality rather than the subjective intent of the photographer, and commercial photography, which advertises products. Regardless of the topic, it will affect you. It should not motivate you to conquer the globe. The concept of beauty is subjective. No one can define fine art. Photography revolutionized art in the same way that the printing press revolutionized literature. In this study, however, information about fine art photography captures the artist's vision, ideas, and emotions, distinguishing it from photojournalism and commercial photography, which are not comparable. It has a subjective beauty that has varying effects on viewers, regardless of the subject matter. As the printing press revolutionized literature, photography transformed the art world.

Christian (2007) examines Nikki S. Lee's 1997–2001 project photographs and their relationship to culture and identity. Lee imitates different cultures in this series. Lee challenges the subject-object relationship in snapshots, casting doubt on their authenticity. The Projects series encourages viewers to create their own narratives to reconcile the uncertain connections between Lee, her hosts, and the audience, especially regarding cultural representation. These ambiguities raise questions about the complex and problematic visual portrayal of identity and how it reinforces and challenges dominant visual cultural norms. Therefore, the information in this study can be used to generate better ideas for questioning identity.

Pivac & Zemunik (2020) in *The Self-Portrait as a Means of Self-Investigation, Self-Projection, and Identification among the Primary School Population in Croatia*, to help find a new corpus of knowledge in understanding the artist's personality. The self-portrait is both a visual, physical representation of the artist's personality and a psychological medium for self-exploration and communication. The self-portrait allows for self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-acceptance. It has subjective, objective, and archetypal values. Since the self-portrait is not only a means of introspection for artists but also for the entire population, from early childhood to old age, its projective and reflexive features were used for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. However, the therapeutic concept in this study will not be analyzed in depth due to the limitation of the study to only identity and self-portraits.

Qian (2021) examines art photography, social media, and digital culture. It emphasizes that art photography has become digital and now exists on social media platforms. Art galleries and photographers use social media to promote and exhibit their work, which increases popularity and audience aesthetics. Some photographers use social media as a studio to discuss popular photography, gender, and themselves. Social media and digital culture could have a big impact on art photography. The article suggests art photographers and institutions use social media to increase their influence and offer new aesthetic experiences. Art photography can also explore social media's identity, privacy, and selfie

culture issues. The article shows how technology shapes art and how artists can address societal issues and change. To better understand art and social media, future research should include more artists, photographers, institutions, and art forms. The article suggests looking at graffiti and street art, which are also shared on social media. This expanded analysis seeks to explain the relationship between art and social media and show that photography should be viewed in a broader context. Therefore, this study will try to maintain the way the exhibition is carried out more effectively, not only for visitors but also for the artist himself.

In an interview with Lucas Blalock in 2020 regarding experimental photography, he said that in an era of unprecedented compatibility and transparency between viewers and artists, these artists are at the forefront of a dynamic facet of contemporary art photography that intentionally speaks to the universality of digital image capturing and sharing in daily life (Cotton, 2021). Their work encourages us into the experimental terrain of this completely new media environment, where the origination, behavior, and reading of photographs have been culturally upended.

Winton (2016) in *Using Photography as a Creative, Collaborative Research Tool* examined research concerns related to creative, collaborative photography. The research detailed here had modest results but allowed reflection on the more significant epistemological and methodological circumstances surrounding participatory, youth, and visual techniques. This project's approach was relevant and meaningful to participants. It was proper, not age-appropriate. In a more personal sense, photography is a fulfilling research tool, especially for my research. In the meantime, this research helps me share with people through the creative process, which may be an organically meaningful element of the research encounter. I support situating knowledge in youth research for several reasons. However, creative, reflective, and multifaceted selves are later revealed: a partnership between visual researchers and social art therapy practitioners would help creative photography in research reach its full potential. This experimental, collaborative research project motivated me to employ innovative techniques to improve research practice.

Ferreira (2012) in *Imperfect Depictions – Experimental Practices in Photography* said a photograph's success or failure depends more on aesthetic preference and viewer expectations than on its light portrayal. Most photographers follow visual standards or aesthetic trends. Others are resisting. They (re)discovered and (re)invented new media possibilities and interpretations by following their visions. These people think the image may give a poetic, metaphorical, or critical reaction to the world beyond the camera's instrumental or formal view. More photographers Educational function and communication advantages of thematic photography in the 5G era based on educational psychology intentionally making technical blunders to generate flawed images. Their presence may be a reaction to digital photography's standardization. These photographers reject the prevalent realistic, dull, severe, and impartial photos of the previous 30 years. Julia Margaret Cameron's retort to the 19th-century photographic establishment may justify experimental photography today: Who can reject or disapprove of an artistic choice, and how is failure indicated? Artists learn from failure. Failure is brave because it defies convention and explores new creative grounds. Artistic failure can spur medium-term improvement and discoveries. Contemporary photography includes diaristic, abstract, and personal aesthetic explorations, nostalgic emulsion experiments, and analog photochemical processes.

Article *The Choices Hidden In Photography* explained photography, like painting, preserves light measurements precisely. This article uses film and smartphone photos to demonstrate that photography involves color, tone, and perspective decisions like painting. Thus, understanding picture perception involves recognizing photography as one technique to produce pictures. These decisions affect graphical perception, which might lead to novel imaging approaches (Hertzmann, 2022). More study is needed. Furthermore, this research will define a new photography concept based on the photographer's identity.

Based on Fox and Caruana (2012) the ideas do not exist in a void – nothing is absolutely new. You bring your own unique vision to any body of work and that vision has been informed and influenced by everything you have researched along the way. Embarking on research can feel daunting and overwhelming. Take a step back and draw up a plan or map to help you navigate the options you have

ahead of you. As a result, the concepts presented in order to build an artist's identity will be the primary emphasis of this research. The process of getting to know oneself through the skills of photography is highly subjective, but it is still possible if adequate study and references are used.

Guan (2021) in *Educational Function And Communication Advantages of Thematic Photography In The 5G Era Based On Educational Psychology* explained psychology studies learning, intervention, teaching, and school-organized social psychology. Educational psychology applies psychology to education. Educational psychology can develop courses, enhance teaching techniques, encourage students, and help them deal with growing up. Educational psychologists do theoretical work and research, while school psychologists work in schools or related settings. Educational psychology studies student development. Special education pupils are prioritised in practical work.

METHODOLOGY

The process that begins with assessing and interpreting creative works, literary and art criticism enriches cultural dialogue. Both disciplines analyse the aesthetic and intellectual value of literary and artistic works. They have distinct but overlapping objectives. Literary criticism analyses novels, poems, plays, and essays. Examining plot, character, language, symbolism, and themes. Critics investigate how these components generate meaning and evoke emotion. They may also investigate the historical, social, and cultural conditions that influenced the creation and reception of the work. In contrast, art criticism evaluates paintings, sculptures, photographs, and other forms of visual art. Composition, colour, texture, and technique are evaluated by critics.

They investigate the artist's intent, message, and audience response. Art criticism also investigates the artwork's historical and cultural contexts, as well as its relationship to larger creative movements. In both disciplines, critics impact public opinion and artistic production. Their evaluations can enhance the aesthetic experience of the audience by disclosing a work's complexities. Artists and writers can enhance their skills and vision by receiving constructive feedback. Literary and art criticism analyse subjectivity using concepts and methods. Critics analyse utilising formalism, structuralism, postmodernism, and feminism. Culture and the arts are enhanced by literary and art criticism. They inspire critical conversations, deepen our understanding of creative works, and promote artistic expression. Through critique, literature and art can query, enlighten, and captivate us.

RESULTS

German-born fashion photographer Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1969) innovated and influenced. His experimental approaches, surrealistic compositions, and pioneering colour use made him famous. Blumenfeld was born on January 26, 1897, in Berlin. He became interested in art and photography as a child in a middle-class Jewish family. He lost one eye in the German army during World War I. Blumenfeld became an Amsterdam commercial photographer in the 1920s. He took portraits and stunning fashion photos for advertising agencies. The Nazis were increasingly persecuting Blumenfeld and his family. Blumenfeld, his wife, and three children fled Nazi persecution to Paris in 1936. He photographed for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* in Paris. As shown in Figure 1, Blumenfeld demonstrated his talent with a series of images such as this one of the model Lisa Fonssagrives striking a vertiginous pose on the structures of the Eiffel Tower. It was published in the May 1939 issue of *Paris Vogue*.



Figure 1. In Vogue: Lisa Fonssagrives on the Eiffel Tower, Paris, 1939
(Source: *Delpire, 2023*)

Blumenfeld's avant-garde techniques, odd stances, and darkroom modifications defined his style during this time. Blumenfeld fled again during WWII. His family fled to New York City in 1941. He worked with major fashion periodicals and captured post-war elegance there. Blumenfeld's US work was lauded, making him a notable photographer. He explored colour photography with elaborate arrangements. His unorthodox perspectives and cropping questioned beauty standards. Blumenfeld worked with famous models like Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, and Marlene Dietrich. His pioneering fashion photography style shaped the business. Erwin Blumenfeld worked prolifically for decades until his death in Rome, Italy, on July 4, 1969. His aesthetic vision, technical skill, and fashion photography contributions live on. His work still inspires and captivates.

In September 2021, there was no well-known self-expressionist artist called Chyntia Morris Sherman. She may be an up-and-coming artist whose work became popular after my knowledge cutoff date. I don't know enough about Chyntia Morris Sherman to critique her art or self-expressionism. If she has become an artist after my previous update, I suggest searching current art databases and sources for information on her work, style, and self-expressionism effect. Self-expressionism is a movement that values uniqueness and self-expression. This movement's artists typically express themselves via their works.



Figure 2. Untitled #126 (1983)
(Source: *Delpire*, 2023)

Based on Figure 2, self-expressionism values subjectivity and encourages artists to express themselves. Critics of self-expressionism sometimes challenge the line between art and self-expression.

They claim self-expression should not dominate technical proficiency, idea development, or greater social issues. Some critics also believe that concentrating on personal expression might lead to self-indulgent work that doesn't appeal to a wider audience. Self-expressionists see it as freeing and honest art. They think art based on real feelings and experiences can be powerful and move people. Self-expressionism allows artists to express themselves without limits. As with every art trend, self-expressionism is debated and interpreted by the art world.

Sophie Calle, a modern artist, uses unusual self-expression. Her works frequently blend art and life, highlighting important themes about privacy, identity, and voyeurism. "The Hotel," one of her most famous works, shows her unique flair. In "The Hotel," Calle secretly photographed guests' things and wrote about her experiences as a Venetian hotel chambermaid.

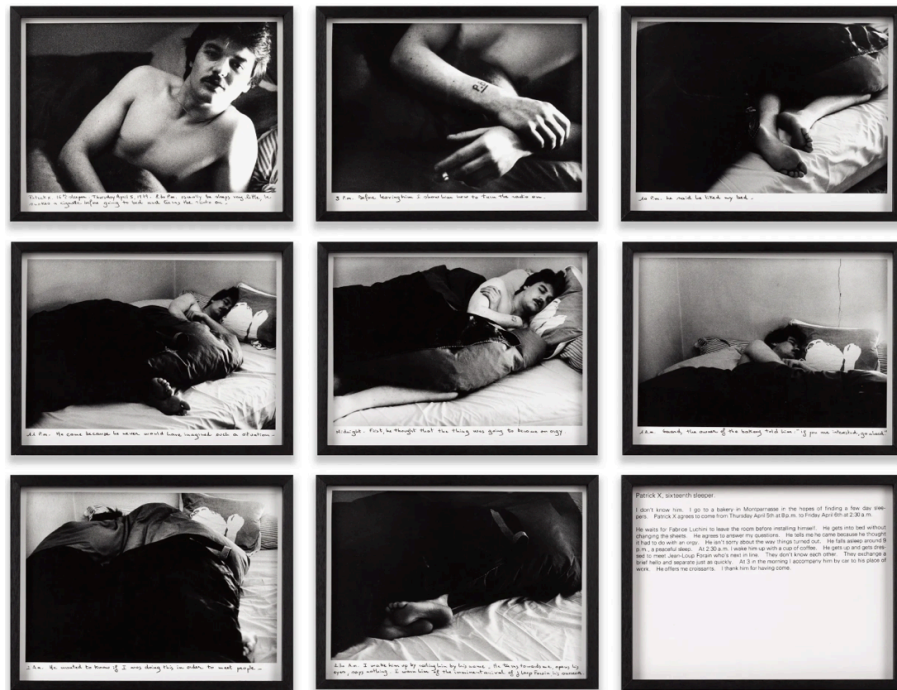


Figure 3. Patrick X, Sixteenth Sleeper, 1979
8 gelatin silver prints & 1 text panel, 19 x 24-3/4 inches (overall, approximately) [48.3 x 62.9 cm],
edition of 3 English & 3 French
(Source: Delpire, 2023)

This work as shown in Figure 3 has been criticised for violating strangers' privacy and exploiting vulnerable people. Contemporary art debates the ethics of voyeuristic art. Calle also mixes self-expression with self-indulgence by incorporating her personal life into her work. In "Exquisite Pain," she shared her anguish following a breakup. While brave, this degree of sensitivity raises issues about the artist's aim and public exhibition. Calle's insightful narrative engages listeners despite the criticism. Her work explores the human mind by challenging viewers' limits and social standards. Sophie Calle's self-expression is intriguing and controversial. Her immersive and challenging work raises questions about privacy, ethics, and the artist's creative process. Calle's work continues to spark art industry debate about self-expression and its effects on artists and audiences.

DISCUSSION

Self-expression is the act of communicating to others or to oneself one's thoughts, emotions, ideas, or identity. It is the process of sharing and communicating one's personal experiences, beliefs, values, and uniqueness in a manner that reflects one's genuine self. Self-expression can take many forms, including art, music, writing, fashion, body language, speech, and other expressive or communicative channels. Self-expression is a fundamental aspect of human nature that is essential for personal development, emotional health, and forming relationships with others. It permits people to articulate their individuality, assert their identity, and assert their autonomy. People can communicate their perspectives, desires, and emotions through self-expression, promoting understanding, empathy, and connection with others whose expressions resonate with them.

Fine art photography is a subgenre of photography that aims to create visually arresting and artistically expressive images. It is a form of artistic expression that enables photographers to communicate their emotions, thoughts, and ideas through visual narrative. Fine art photography, unlike commercial or documentary photography, is driven by the artist's personal vision and creative

interpretation. Fine art photography is distinguished in part by its emphasis on aesthetics and artistic composition. Photographers carefully consider elements such as lighting, framing, perspective, and colour to create visually engaging photographs. Rather than merely presenting a realistic depiction of the subject, the objective is to elicit emotions and stimulate thought in the viewer.

Fine art photography is also characterised by its exploration of subjective and conceptual themes. Artists frequently use abstract concepts, symbolism, and metaphorical representations to communicate deeper meanings and invite viewers to interpret the images themselves. Fine art photographers use their creative vision to transform ordinary subjects into extraordinary visual narratives that challenge conventional perspectives and elicit reflection. Creating photographs of fine art requires both technical skill and artistic vision. To achieve the desired effect, photographers may experiment with various techniques, such as long exposure, multiple exposures, or unconventional camera angles. In addition, they may use various post-processing techniques to enhance or alter the image, thereby adding a distinct artistic touch.

In addition to its artistic qualities, fine art photography has gained legitimacy as a visual art form. Fine art photographs are displayed in galleries, museums, and art fairs, where art enthusiasts and collectors admire and collect them. In addition to technical skill, the value of a fine art photograph is determined by the artist's unique vision, creativity, and ability to convey a compelling message. Fine art photography is a medium that combines technical proficiency, artistic vision, and individual expression. It permits photographers to transcend the limitations of documentation and enter the realm of creativity and emotion. Fine art photography enables artists to communicate their innermost thoughts, ideas, and experiences through careful composition, conceptual investigation, and visual aesthetics, inviting viewers to engage with the images on a profound level.

Personal identity, in the context of the exploration of fine art photography as a means of self-expression, refers to an individual's distinct sense of self and comprehension of who they are. Fine art photography provides photographers with a visual platform to explore and express their individuality. Photographers can capture and communicate aspects of their own identities and broader human experiences through the creation of images. This visual medium enables a direct emotional connection, allowing viewers to intuitively engage with the photographer's personal identity. Fine art photography serves as a catalyst for introspection, self-reflection, and personal development, enabling individuals to embrace and assert their unique identities.

In the context of the main topic of exploration of fine art photography as a medium for self-expression, self-discovery refers to the process of gaining deeper insights into oneself, revealing hidden aspects of personal identity, and fostering personal growth and development. Fine art photography can serve as a catalyst for self-discovery by allowing individuals to visually express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. By creating and interacting with fine art photographs, individuals can explore their inner world, confront their personal beliefs and values, and gain a deeper understanding of their unique identity. This process of self-discovery through fine art photography can result in increased self-awareness, purpose clarity, and a heightened sense of authenticity and fulfillment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study on fine art photography and its influence on self-expression provides compelling evidence that photography is an effective instrument for self-discovery and personal development. Individuals can visually express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences through fine art photography, leading to a greater understanding of themselves. By investigating various elements such as composition, illumination, subject matter, and post-processing, individuals can create emotive and memorable photographs.

In addition, the study highlights the ethical considerations involved in self-expression through fine art photography. To ensure that photography remains a respectful and responsible form of self-expression, it is vital to address issues such as privacy, permission, and the creative use of human experiences. Overall, the research highlights the positive impact of fine art photography on self-expression and encourages its use as a tool for self-exploration. Photography has the potential to encourage conversations, gather emotions, and shape identities through visuals. By embracing fine art photography, individuals can not only enhance their self-discovery but also foster advancement and personal growth. As such, photography is a valuable and enriching medium for individuals pursuing artistic and introspective expression.

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