

MA CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY; PRACTICES AND PHILOSOPHIES





APPROVED

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London
College	Central Saint Martins
School	C School
Programme	CSM Art (L027)
Course AOS Code	CSMMAPHOX01
FHEQ Level	Level 7 Masters
Course Credits	180
Mode	Extended Full Time
Method	Face to Face
Duration of Course	2 years
Teaching Weeks	60 weeks
Valid From	2025/26
Collaboration	N/A
UAL Subject Classification	Fine Art
PSRB	N/A
Work placement offered	N/A
Course Entry Requirements	<p>The standard entry requirements for this course are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An honours degree <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An equivalent EU/international qualification.

	<p>AP(E)L – Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning</p> <p>Exceptionally applicants who do not meet these course entry requirements may still be considered. The course team will consider each application that demonstrates additional strengths and alternative evidence. This might, for example, be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related academic or work experience • The quality of the personal statement • A strong academic or other professional reference <p>Or a combination of these factors.</p> <p>Each application will be considered on its own merit but we cannot guarantee an offer in each case.</p> <p>English language requirements</p> <p>IELTS level 6.5 or above, with at least 5.5 in reading, writing, listening and speaking (please check our main English language requirements webpage).</p>
<p>Selection Criteria</p>	<p>We select applicants according to potential and current ability in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of your practice • Ability to devise and develop a self-directed programme of study • The ability to develop and contextualise work in written form • The ability to analyse and evaluate in both visual and oral terms • Eagerness to contribute to the learning environment at postgraduate level. <p>What we are looking for</p> <p>We are seeking imaginative, resourceful individuals who are committed to exploring and developing a strong individual visual language.</p>

Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

Year 1

Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Certificate (Exit Only)	60

Year 2

Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Diploma (Exit Only)	120
Master of Arts	180

Scheduled Learning Split by Level	
Level 7	14%
Total Scheduled Learning Split	14%

Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

Aim/Outcome	Description
Aim	Develop your creative abilities to instigate and produce work that is innovative, critical and explores the boundaries and contexts of contemporary photographic practice.
Aim	Enable you to evaluate and position your work within a contemporary critical framework.
Aim	Prepare you for ongoing professional practice, or for progress to further study.
Aim	Provide you with a challenging, supportive and inclusive environment for the production of art and related research.
Aim	Develop collaborative, self-reflective skills to build a practice that responsibly engages with questions of climate, social, and racial justice, whether in its content or approach.
Outcome	Develop a professional practice that engages in and/or challenges the field of photography.
Outcome	Articulate an in-depth critical understanding of theories, contextual issues and debates relevant to your practice.
Outcome	Demonstrate a highly developed and appropriate synthesis of practical, research, evaluative and reflective skills.
Outcome	Communicate creative concepts, complex knowledge and critical thinking effectively through both visual and written forms.
Outcome	Initiate, manage and realise a purposeful and feasible programme of original creative practice.
Outcome	Develop an art practice through awareness of sustainability and ecological concerns.

Distinctive Features	
1	Expanded Photography: We encourage experimentation with the idea of what photography is. We offer an approach to art practice which is rooted in histories and theories of the image, while supporting students to explore how images can be made by looking to a wide range of mediums, including sculpture, painting, digital technologies, performance, installation, and sound.
2	Research Led: This MA guides students towards developing (or deepening) a research-led practice. Through taught seminars, in-class discussion, and tailored support, we champion an approach which integrates making with thinking.
3	Group Curation: Through on and off-site installs, students learn how to curate and present their practice, and work together as a curatorial group. This offers valuable practical and professional experience.
4	Post-Studio: The course is housed in a dynamic, multipurpose space which serves as a teaching room, artistic laboratory, and gallery. We take a post-studio approach, preparing you for life beyond university by establishing sustainable working practices that you can maintain after your degree.
5	Extended Full Time: The extended full-time mode of study will allow you to develop your practice and research over a two-year period.

Course Detail

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies begins from a fluid and interdisciplinary understanding of photography, situating it in relation to fine art and through an engagement with contemporary philosophy and theory. The course is located in photography's 'expanded field', wherein traditional, medium-bound notions of what constitutes a photograph find themselves challenged by other forms of making, including film and video, installation, sculpture and assemblage, performance, and painting. Taking photography as a starting point—but not an end—this course understands the practice of image-making as central to the condition of contemporary society.

In our current landscape, visual literacy is more important than ever. By learning to think with and through photography (whether or not you employ it in your practice), you will be inspired to critically engage with images: both those that you make, and those which you are surrounded by. You will be asked to look beyond framing devices like racial, gendered and geographic hierarchies, and to consider not only what these capture but what they leave out. By attending to photography and other image-making practices, the complex systems in which we work and live can be unpacked and re-formed.

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies invites students and staff to learn from each other through taught seminars, group critiques, workshops and exhibitions. This will help you to integrate your making and thinking, developing your practice as both an artist and a researcher. Academic and teaching staff will support you as you refine your work, helping you to position it within a field of discourse appropriate to your interests.

What to expect

- **Practice as process:** The extended full-time mode of study allows students to cultivate their practice over two years, balancing it alongside work and other life commitments. This gives students the time and space to commit to their practice as a process, and to develop at their own pace.
- **Artistic development:** We create a flexible, supportive, and curiosity-driven space for students to explore their practice, and to experiment with new materials and ways of working. We encourage you to take risks, and by doing so, to come closer to what drives you as an artist.
- **Critically engaged practice:** You will cultivate a practice that responds to the politics and ethics of image making, developing your artistic work alongside a body of independent research. Students are encouraged to work sustainably and collaboratively as they explore photographic methods in the context of climate crisis and the ongoing collapse of binary thinking.

Employability, professional practice and opportunities

This MA attracts students from around the world, and from different artistic and/or professional backgrounds. Students are part of the wider postgraduate art community and come together around shared exhibitions and events, creating dynamic and diverse spaces for exchange.

Events hosted by the wider Art Programme will give you the opportunity to hear from visiting artists and we have a number of public facing exhibitions and events during the two years of MA study. These opportunities bring together students from across the Central Saint Martins postgraduate Art Programme community and include the Interim Show (Year 1), Editions (Year 2), and the Showcase (Year 2). These events depend on students' collective participation.

Optional, extra-curricular opportunities that arise will be advertised to all students on the course. These might include additional opportunities to expand and develop your practice, such as exhibitions and publications, interdisciplinary partnerships, and site-specific events in both real and virtual environments.

Course Units

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies is structured around four assessed units, each of which include teaching events (including personal tutorials, group critiques, lectures, workshops, inductions, and public facing events) to facilitate the development of your thinking and practice. Throughout the course you will also be expected to engage in independent practice and research. The four units build on each other, and are supported by a range of specialist staff and guest lecturers.

In Year 1 of the course, teaching is more intensive, and group work submerges you in the development of your practice. Year 2 continues with an emphasis on independent study, as your practice evolves towards exhibiting in the Showcase.

Unit 1: Exploring Practice and Research

In Unit 1 we explore different ways of practicing. Through a weekly taught seminar, you will be introduced to key histories and concepts relating to photography: not just as a medium, but as an idea. By 'thinking photographically,' we will explore what it means to make images across different mediums, establishing a critical context for the development of your own practice. You will begin to carve out your own independent research interests, supported by tutorials, installs and group critiques.

Unit 2: The Collaborative Unit

This unit provides opportunities for cross-course creative and collaborative practices in relation to global challenges. The unit explores a range of thematic, experimental, and applied approaches to cross-disciplinary research, enquiry, and knowledge exchange. The aim is to establish a framework for co-operation and social responsibility across the College in relation to our shared values.

Unit 3: Developing Practice and Research

In Unit 3, you will continue to develop your research interests and to articulate how your practice is positioned against them. This is a largely self-led unit, supported by tutorials, seminars, and an academic tutor who will oversee the progression of your independent research. The unit culminates with the submission of a research paper, which will inform the continuing development of your work and focus your practice as you begin Unit 4.

Unit 4: Realisation of Practice and Research

In Unit 4, you will be supported to create a cohesive body of work, building from your research interests and practice to date. Professional development events will enhance how you position your work in relation to an audience, and prepare you for life after graduation. Unit 4 culminates with the Showcase, a public facing exhibition which all students participate in.

Teaching Events

Lectures and Seminars take place throughout the two years of study. The Y1 seminar programme will help you position and contextualise your practice. Postgraduate lectures offer the opportunity for all members of the MA-level Art Programme to meet for debate and engage with contemporary issues that are shared by all disciplines. Events organised by the Art Programme will give you the opportunity to hear from visiting artists, and to enhance your professional practice.

Group tutorials will allow you to discuss and develop your practice in conversation with peers and staff.

Personal tutorials are held with different members of staff. They are an opportunity for you to share developments in your practice and research, and to receive direct feedback.

Group installs and crits are held across the two years. These are an important opportunity for you to share and critique your work with peers and tutors, to learn how to install your work, and to test it physically in different spaces.

Workshops and technical inductions help support your use of the designated Art Programme facilities in the College. Alongside inductions arranged by the course, you are encouraged to independently engage with these spaces where additional support is available within the workshops.

Independent, collective, and collaborative work. An important emphasis of the course is self-organisation and co-operative working. As you develop more independence over the course, you will also have opportunities to engage with a variety of projects or practices that involve a level of collaboration and co-operation.

Exhibitions and public facing events. There are a number of publicly facing exhibitions and events during the two years. These opportunities bring together students from across the Central Saint Martin's Postgraduate Art programme and include the Interim Show (Year 1), Editions (Year 2), and the Showcase (Year 2). These events depend on students' collective participation.

- **Interim Show** provides you with opportunities for sharing practice and experience with the broader post-graduate community across the art programme. It creates an opportunity to test your ideas and consider audience engagement with your developing work.
- **Editions** is an annually changing public-facing event which gives you direct experience of commercial enterprise. Based on the format of an edition, each student will produce a number of prints which will be for sale. All second-year students contribute to the preparation and running of the event. Proceeds contribute to further student Showcase activities.
- **Showcase** takes place at the end of the course and is an opportunity to show your work publicly. The exact format and location is determined each year.

Additional opportunities: optional, extra-curricular opportunities that arise will be advertised to all students on the course. These might include additional opportunities to expand and develop your practice, such as exhibitions and publications, interdisciplinary partnerships, and site-specific events in both real and virtual environments.

Students are encouraged to independently engage with opportunities for further collaborations, project work, exhibitions, and research outside of the course, programme, or college, but must however inform their tutor and Course Leader and ensure it does not affect their ability to engage with the course.

Important note concerning academic progression through your course:

If you are required to retake a unit you will need to cease further study on the course until you have passed the unit concerned. Once you have successfully passed this unit, you will be able to proceed onto the next unit. Retaking a unit might require you to take time out of study, which could affect other things such as student loans or the visa status for international students.

CSM Academic Support is delivered by a team of academics and practitioners working alongside your course to help you progress and achieve your maximum potential as a student. Academic Support can help you to develop your skills in different areas, including critical thinking, research and writing, time management, presentations and working independently and collaboratively. These may be offered as part of your timetabled classes or as bookable tutorials and workshops.

Mode of study

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies is offered in extended full-time mode which runs for 60 weeks over two academic years. You will be expected to commit 30 hours per week to study, which includes teaching time and independent study. The course has been designed in this way to enable you to pursue your studies while also undertaking part-time employment, internships or care responsibilities.

Credit and award requirements

The course is credit-rated at 180 credits.

On successfully completing the course, you will gain a Master of Arts (MA degree).

Under the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, an MA is Level 7. All units must be passed in order to achieve the MA but the classification of the award is derived from the marks for the second and third units.

If you are unable to continue on the course, a Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) will normally be offered following the successful completion of 60 credits, or a Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) following the successful completion of 120 credits.

Learning and Teaching Methods

The learning and teaching methods devised for this course include:

- Briefing materials, written guidance and meetings
- Inductions and technical support
- Lectures, seminars and guest speakers
- Personal and group tutorials
- Shared teaching events across the Art programme
- Collaborative project opportunities
- Presentations and sharing events
- Installations and group critiques
- Recommended reading and viewing
- Independent practice and research
- Optional and/or mandatory workshops and projects
- Public-facing events including the Interim Show and Showcase
- Self-evaluation
- Assessment feedback

Assessment Methods

Formative and Summative Assessments holistically assess a number of different formats, including:

- Participation in lectures and seminars
- Research and preparatory work
- Outputs from group project work and assignments
- Documentation of work
- Group presentations
- Written work
- Self-evaluation
- Realisation of individual programme of practice

Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:

- The Learning and Teaching policies of the University of the Arts London
- College policies and initiatives
- HE Level Descriptors
- Art and Design Benchmark statement
- Experience of contemporary photography practice
- External professional organisations
- UAL Framework for Embedding the Principles for Climate, Racial and Social Justice

Course Diagram

MA Contemporary Photography; Practices and Philosophies – PLEASE NOTE DUE TO VACATION DATES, SPECIFIC DELIVERY WEEKS MAY CHANGE.

S=summative assessment

Level 7 - Year 1																																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
Unit 1: Exploring Practice and Research (40 credits)												S		Unit 2: The Collaborative Unit (20 credits)						S	Unit 3: Developing Practice and Research (60 credits)											
Level 7 - Year 2																																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
Unit 3: continued						S					Unit 4: Realisation of Practice and Research (60 credits)																		S			

The University will use all reasonable endeavours to provide the Course and the services described in this Output. There may be occasions whereby the University needs to add, remove or alter content in relation to your Course as may be appropriate for example the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, or in response to student feedback, or to comply with applicable law or due to circumstances beyond its control. The University aim to inform you of any changes as soon as is reasonably practicable