

Mid-Year Report

CTL Teaching Fellowship

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Project Overview

My CTL Teaching Fellowship project focuses on reimagining Josef Albers's foundational color experiments through photography and photographic printing. While Albers's exercises remain central to foundation color education, they were originally developed through painting and paper-based color systems. This project investigates how those principles may be translated into contemporary photographic practice, a medium shaped by light, materiality, chemistry, digital mediation, and print production.

Building on my course The Color of Photography, the project explores new pedagogical approaches that position color as an intentional and constructed component of photographic practice rather than a preset determined by cameras or software. Instead of relying on traditional Color Aid materials, the proposed exercises engage color theory through photographic processes including analog Type C printing, calibrated digital output, exposure testing, filtration, iterative test printing, and comparative critique.

The broader goal of the fellowship is to develop a photography-centered framework for teaching color that bridges foundational theory, material practice, and contemporary photographic production. The long-term outcome will be the development of a Handbook for the Study of Color in Photography designed for both students and educators.

Project Development

During the first half of the fellowship period, I focused on research, faculty dialogue, conceptual development, and the design of prototype exercises for photographic color study.

Initial work included identifying key Albers principles including interaction of color, relativity, simultaneity, transparency, and perceptual color shifts.

These concepts are currently being re-examined through photographic processes rather than paper-based color systems. Prototype exercises are being developed through photographic printing methods including analog Type C printing, calibrated digital output, filtration, exposure testing, and iterative print production.

Particular attention has been placed on photographic printing as the primary site of inquiry, encouraging students to understand color through light, chemistry, material response, and repeated print variation rather than through software presets or screen-based workflows alone.

While the redesigned exercises have not yet been formally implemented in the classroom, preliminary conversations with current students in The Color of Photography have already informed the direction of the project. Discussions centered on the pedagogical and material differences between constructing color studies in the analog darkroom versus through inkjet printing workflows. Students consistently expressed that analog darkroom printing more directly engages the material foundations of photography and provides a deeper understanding of how color is physically produced and perceived through photographic processes.

These early conversations reinforced one of the project's central research questions: how analog photographic printing may foster a more immersive and critically engaged understanding of color within photographic education.

As the research and development phase has progressed, the project itself has begun to evolve. Initially, my intention was to recreate Josef Albers's color exercises specifically through photography and photographic printing. However, through ongoing research, faculty dialogue, and conceptual development, I have begun reconsidering the project not simply as a translation of Albers's exercises into photography, but as an opportunity to develop entirely new color experiments designed specifically for photographic practice.

While Albers's work remains the conceptual foundation of the project, I am increasingly interested in creating photography-based exercises that respond to the unique material and perceptual conditions of the medium, including light, exposure, chemistry, sequencing, scale, and print production. Rather than functioning solely as reinterpretations of existing exercises, these new studies aim to expand color pedagogy through experiments that could

only exist through photographic processes.

I am also interested in pushing beyond the primarily formal and perceptual structure of Albers's original exercises to investigate how color operates emotionally, psychologically, culturally, and experientially. Influenced by contemporary literature, poetry, and interdisciplinary discussions around perception and affect, the project is beginning to explore how color may hold memory, emotional resonance, and personal association within photographic practice. This shift opens the possibility for new assignments that connect color not only to optical interaction, but also to language, embodiment, narrative, and lived experience.



Faculty Collaboration & Interdisciplinary Research

An important component of the fellowship has been interdisciplinary dialogue with faculty and professionals whose work engages color, perception, materiality, and spatial experience.

Conversations with Anne Turyn, Professor in the Photography Department, focused on expanding experimental approaches to color-based assignments and classroom exercises. Together, we brainstormed projects that would encourage students to investigate additive color, perception, and the physical behavior of light, including exercises involving colored gels projected onto walls and the photographic documentation of blended light and shifting color relationships.

Discussions with Sara VanDerBeek in the MFA Photography Department centered on the pedagogical structure of the project and the relationship between analog and digital processes. We discussed beginning with color swatches produced in the analog darkroom and ultimately returning “full circle” through the creation of inkjet-based color swatches, allowing students to engage both historical photographic processes and contemporary

digital output while more fully embracing Albers's original exercises through photography.

Conversations with Barbara Huelat, healthcare designer specializing in healing environments, explored the emotional and psychological dimensions of color perception. Together, we discussed ways of creating color swatches and assignments that connect color to emotional response through language, memory, and written text, including the incorporation of poetry and reflective writing into color-based exercises.

Additional conversations are planned for the end of May with Tori Purcell, Assistant Chair of Photography and professor, and Brian Brooks, professor in the Foundation Department who teaches Light, Color, and Design.

These forthcoming meetings will further support the development of photography-based adaptations of Albers's exercises and strengthen interdisciplinary connections between Foundation and Photography curricula.



Research & Theoretical Development

My research during the fellowship period has focused on color theory, historical color systems, and contemporary approaches to teaching color through language, perception, and photographic practice.

I have been re-reading Josef Albers's *Interaction of Color* alongside the recently published *Interaction of Color: A Practical Guide to Josef Albers's Color Experiments* by Fritz Horstman. These texts have provided both historical grounding and practical pedagogical

frameworks for reconsidering Albers's exercises through photographic processes.

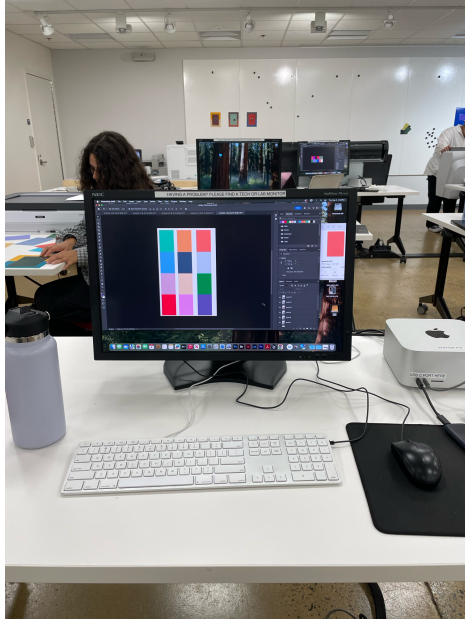
In addition, I have been studying the history and construction of color systems through texts including *Color: A Visual History from Newton to Modern Color Matching Guides* by Alexandra Loske. This research has helped frame larger questions surrounding how color systems are built, standardized, taught, and culturally understood.

I have also been researching Emily Noyes Vanderpoel's *Color Problems: A Practical Manual for the Lay Student of Color* (1902), which addresses subjects including color theories, color qualities, color blindness, color harmonies, historic color, and the colors of nature. Vanderpoel's early attempts to systematize and analyze color relationships have been particularly relevant in thinking about how photographic color studies and swatches may function both analytically and experientially within the classroom.

Alongside these historical and pedagogical texts, I have been engaging with literary works that approach color through emotion, memory, perception, and embodied experience. Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* is currently used within my Junior Research course to generate discussion, image-making, and written reflection around the psychological and poetic dimensions of color. Similarly, Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* has informed my thinking about how color can operate energetically and emotionally within language and visual culture. I have also been reading *Água Viva* by Clarice Lispector, whose writing as both an artist and author explores the relationship between artmaking, color, perception, and interior emotional states.

More recently, I have begun researching the cultural dimensions of color through John Gage's *Color and Culture*, expanding the project's inquiry into how color acquires meaning historically, socially, and symbolically across different contexts and traditions.

Together, these texts continue to shape the conceptual framework of the fellowship project and expand its approach beyond formal color theory alone, positioning color as both a material and emotional language within photographic practice and pedagogy.



Materials & Documentation

Materials developed and collected during the fellowship period include:

- prototype photographic color exercises
- assignment concepts and pedagogical notes
- research annotations and reading notes
- process documentation
- comparative color references
- visual references for future classroom implementation

In addition to the written and conceptual research, I have also been conducting practical experiments in the analog darkroom through the production of photographic color swatches. These studies investigate color interaction, filtration, exposure, chemistry, and material response through iterative analog printing processes. The swatches function both as experimental teaching tools and as visual research into how photographic color can be constructed, perceived, and experienced materially through print.

Color photographs documenting these darkroom-generated swatches will be included as supplemental visual material within the final report.

These materials will contribute to the continued refinement of the project and the eventual development of the proposed Handbook for the Study of Color in Photography.



Next Steps

During the second phase of the fellowship, I plan to:

- continue refining prototype exercises
- expand interdisciplinary faculty collaboration
- further integrate analog and digital printing methodologies
- begin classroom implementation and testing in Fall 2026
- document student outcomes and feedback
- develop additional pedagogical materials for future classroom use

Future work will focus on strengthening the integration of foundational color theory and photographic practice while continuing to build a sustainable teaching framework centered on color, materiality, perception, and print-based learning.