

aperture On Sight

Lesson 11: So Many Books!

Form + Content + Context = Meaning

Materials needed:

Computer
Digital projector
Cameras or smartphones
Photobooks of your choice

Reference works:

A selection of the teacher's favorite photobooks or library books that include photographs. If you would like to request photobook donations, please fill out **this form**. (Please note that it may take several weeks to receive the books, so we recommend giving as much advance notice as possible.)

Students will

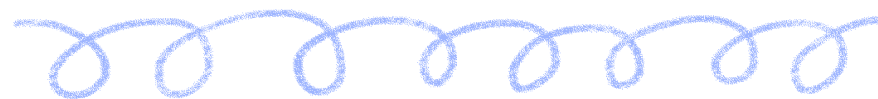
- ➔ **Know:** Photobooks have different formats, layouts, and varied approaches to themes.
- ➔ **Understand:** Context influences meaning. Strong photography projects can have themes that are explicit or subtle.
- ➔ **Do:** Articulate themes through groups of images gathered in photobooks.

Most of the time the photographs tend to be a prelude to the concept. With my earlier works . . . I carefully selected photographs to use from the pool I had accumulated after a number of years of shooting—all the while thinking about how to structure the pages of a book. To bring each [book] to completion, at the end I went out and photographed additional shots to create the imagery I wanted to depict.

—Rinko Kawauchi, *PhotoWork: Forty Photographers on Process and Practice* (2018), 108

Lesson plan

- **Discuss:** Photobooks often feature sequences of images with text playing a complementary, often essential, role. To introduce students to the format, share one of your favorite photobooks and discuss what makes it engaging. Consider: What do you notice about this book? What is it about? Why is it interesting? Can you note any themes? Are there interesting pairings of images jumping out? What do you like about the design of the book? How does the design reinforce the main idea, theme, or story of the book?
 - * Photobooks with work from one artist can be called monographs, but group photobooks can also be created with photographs made by many different artists. Both monographs and photobooks created by multiple photographers can be based on themes or concepts.
- Ask students to look through a selection of photobooks and choose one to which they respond. Then, ask the students to share their selected book with the class, explaining why they think it works well.
- **Photo exercise:** Invite students to choose a theme that they might consider for their photobook and identify or make photographs that could fit into the theme. This exercise should allow students to follow their stream of consciousness on the theme—a low-pressure and intuitive exercise just to get the ideas flowing. Encourage experimentation.



Going further

Do: Use the template provided to create a class rubric for a strong, engaging photobook. Fill in the columns together with suggestions from students on guidelines that each book or body of work should strive to achieve. For example, if book design, binding, and construction seem to be of interest to the class, include a graded category on the rubric for the design of the physical book. Other categories may include development of theme, use of color, use of captioning, etc. You can do this together on a chalkboard or overhead projector, or print out individual rubric templates for each student to fill in as each category is decided.

Watch: “What is the Value of a Photobook?”

Recommended photobooks referenced in this curriculum:

- Olivia Bee, *Kids in Love* (Aperture, 2016)
- Dawoud Bey, *Class Pictures* (Aperture, 2007)
- Kwame Brathwaite, *Black Is Beautiful* (Aperture, 2019)
- Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye* (Aperture, 2005)
- Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share* (Aperture, 2021)
- Tim Davis, *I'm Looking Through You* (Aperture, 2021)
- Bieke Depoorter, *As it may be* (Aperture, 2018)
- Awol Erizku, *Mystic Parallax* (Aperture, 2023)
- Elliott Erwitt, *Home Around the World* (2016)
- LaToya Ruby Frazier, *The Notion of Family* (Aperture, 2016)
- Jason Fulford and Tamara Shopsin, *This Equals That* (Aperture, 2014)

- Ethan James Green, **Young New York** (Aperture, 2019)
- Graciela Iturbide, **Graciela Iturbide on Dreams, Symbols, and Imagination** (Aperture, 2022)
- Qween Jean, Joela Rivera, and Mikelle Street, **Revolution Is Love: A Year of Black Trans Liberation** (Aperture, 2022)
- Rinko Kawauchi, **Illuminance** (Aperture, 2011)
- Tommy Kha, **Half, Full, Quarter** (Aperture, 2023)
- Gillian Laub, **Family Matters** (Aperture, 2021)
- Kimowan Metchewais, **A Kind of Prayer** (Aperture, 2023)
- Joel Meyerowitz, **Provincetown** (Aperture, 2019)
- Richard Misrach, **Richard Misrach on Landscape and Meaning** (Aperture, 2021)
- Philip Montgomery, **American Mirror** (Aperture, 2021)
- Nigel Poor, **The San Quentin Project** (Aperture, 2021)
- Wendy Red Star, **Delegation** (Aperture, 2022)
- Richard Renaldi, **Touching Strangers** (Aperture, 2014)
- August Sander, **August Sander: People of the 20th Century** (Aperture, 2022)
- Alex Webb and Rebecca Norris Webb, **Brooklyn: The City Within** (Aperture, 2019)
- Hank Willis Thomas, **All Things Being Equal** (Aperture, 2018)

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