

Essential Pleasures New Happiness

The darkroom is a good place to gossip, talk about the city, discuss grant applications, exchange accounting tips, listen to industrial music and meditate to the sound of water flowing through the washing tray. The darkroom is “cheaper than therapy.” Just kidding! The darkroom is just a stuffy, dusty, windowless room. Some imbue it with a form of liquid intelligence, but at times, the whole endeavor just feels clumsy if not slightly dumb and anachronistic. In any case, when in a quest for *Essential Pleasures* and *New Happiness*, it’s easier to persevere when you’re not alone in the dark.

Over the last few months, the eleven artists involved in the making of this communal photomural developed their own approaches to making images with light, sensitized materials and chemistry. Some built makeshift rigs for shooting lasers through negatives or developed ways to make contact prints from laptop screens. Others enlarged and collaged from negatives found in abandoned satellite fields or taken to fulfill highschool projects. Felix Rapp gently guided and hosted this happy mess in the cramped photo lab that came into existence through his residency at Malaspina Printmakers.

For many, the printmaking part of photography is perhaps the least democratic/the most obscure part of the ‘medium.’ Crowded like moths to a flame under the dim light of the enlarger, we looked for ways to establish contact between objects and surfaces, and between our different practices. We didn’t want to be precious but still had to be organized. Some found new things for themselves along the way while others were just happy to momentarily forget themselves in the process. From the heat of summer and into the fall, we came in and out of the darkroom, always happy and exhausted when pushing the glass doors that give onto Howe Street. Often, we were surprised to find that it was already night and that the rain was still falling on the fountains of downtown Vancouver.

Text by Emile Rubino & Felix Rapp