

Photography: A Hands-On History

Faculty: Faculty: David Todd, BA and BFA '06, Photographic Artist and eCornell Course Facilitator

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Week Two: July 12 – 18, 2026

Schedule: Monday - Friday, 9-12 and 1:30-3:30; no class Wednesday afternoon.

Location: Sibley Hall, room 142; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; Jaden Darkroom

Dear CAU Photographers,

Welcome, and thank you for joining *Photography: A Hands-On History*! We're looking forward to meeting you all in July as together we explore photography's evolution from the earliest darkroom experiments to contemporary digital practices.

This course is designed to bring photography's history to life through direct experience. Throughout the week we'll move between the studio, the darkroom, and Cornell's museum and library collections. You'll develop your image-making skills with a range of printing methods—including cyanotype, salt paper, Van Dyke brown, silver gelatin, and fine art inkjet—while also examining original artworks from Cornell's extraordinary archives.

Each technique we investigate will connect to a moment in time from photography's history. You'll learn how early photographers applied their mastery of light-sensitive chemistry and materials, then carry those ideas into your own work. By the end of the week, you'll have created a portfolio of prints that show your hand at crafting a subject or concept across time through multiple processes. We'll celebrate our work in an exhibition during the CAU Summer Farewell Banquet.

You can help to maximize your experience, and avoid a few common frustrations, by coming prepared with the following:

- Dress for the darkroom: Clothing that you don't mind getting a little messy is ideal. While the darkroom processes we'll be using are relatively non-toxic it is possible for chemistry to stain clothing. Lab aprons and gloves will be provided, but please consider the potential for unplanned splashes when choosing your attire for the week. Closed-toe shoes are required. Layers are also helpful to be comfortable in both the warm summer sun as well as the air conditioned buildings.
- Get ready to get creative: Make sure to bring a notebook for ideas, instruction and observations. This truly is a unique opportunity to see your photographs through a new perspective. Be sure to bring an open mind along with your open eyes.

Before you arrive we ask that you send us two images that you would like to work with during the week. The plan is to print these images in each of the photographic processes. To make the most of our short time together we will prepare the negatives for you in advance.

If you have prior experience with photography or in the darkroom, that's wonderful, but absolutely not necessary. This course welcomes beginners and experienced photographers alike, and the week is designed so that everyone can enjoy learning something new.

To help us prepare for your arrival on campus, please email us with a brief note introducing yourself. We'd love to hear a little about your background and what interests you most about photography. If you have any questions before the course begins, please don't hesitate to reach out. It is easiest to reach us by email at jmg393@cornell.edu and det25@cornell.edu. We're excited to share this week of experimentation, history, and hands-on image making with you!

Warmly,

Jennifer Gioffre Todd & David Todd