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## Fine art photography as a form of visual art: Aesthetics, styles, and contemporary trends

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**Abstract.** The study aimed to analyse fine art photography as a form of visual art, its aesthetic characteristics, stylistic evolution, and contemporary developmental trends. The research was based on the analysis of art-historical works, exhibition catalogues, artistic practices of leading photographers, as well as content analysis of digital platforms and the non-fungible token market. The study established that fine art photography has transcended its traditional documentary function and acquired the status of an autonomous conceptual medium, integrating elements of painting, cinematography, performance, and digital technologies. It was found that the stylistic transformations of fine art photography have been accompanied by experiments with form, light, composition, and narrative structure, particularly evident in the development of such movements as conceptual, staged, and minimalist photography. The results confirmed that fine art photography has evolved into a multidimensional artistic practice that combines visual aesthetics with conceptual content and actively interacts with other art forms. It was revealed that contemporary photographers not only experiment with genres and techniques but also shape new modes of audience engagement through digital platforms, the non-fungible token technologies, and social media. The study demonstrated that digital technologies open new possibilities for photographers, particularly in algorithmic editing, generative art, and the non-fungible token economy, while simultaneously transforming the methods of presentation and artist-audience interaction. The findings may be applied in art education, curatorial practice, and the development of new digital exhibition formats

**Keywords:** pictorialism; postmodernism; non-fungible tokens; interactive media; cultural identity; conceptualism

### INTRODUCTION

Photography as an artistic practice has undergone a complex developmental trajectory, transforming from a documentary tool into an independent branch of visual art (Hirsch, 2024). Since 2005, fine art photography has become an integral part of contemporary visual art, demonstrating significant stylistic and conceptual breadth. The proliferation of artistic photographic practices, their recognition within high art, and the active integration of digital technologies have necessitated a comprehensive study of its aesthetic characteristics, stylistic features, and emerging trends. Research on fine art photography is particularly relevant due to its transformation under the influence of technological progress, shifting artistic paradigms, and the expansion of artistic discourse. The use of artificial intelligence,

algorithmic image editing, generative technologies, and augmented reality has given rise to a new form of photographic expression that remains understudied in academic discourse. These novel techniques have not only influenced the technical aspects of photographic creation but have also challenged conventional notions of authorship, composition, and conceptual structure in fine art photography, raising new ethical and philosophical questions regarding artistic autonomy.

Alongside traditional approaches rooted in pictorialist or modernist methodologies, there has been an active development of new conceptual strategies, particularly post-media photography, which integrates multiple visual mediums (Paić, 2021). Technological experiments with images, expanded photography, and hybrid

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media have become defining characteristics of contemporary photographic art, necessitating a re-evaluation of its aesthetic boundaries. Given the shifting artistic paradigms, an updated analysis of the stylistic typology of fine art photography is required – one that accounts for both traditional and experimental forms. Academic research on fine art photography has progressed along several trajectories, including historical-theoretical, stylistic, and technological inquiries. A comprehensive analysis of the evolution of photographic art is presented in the work of L. Wells (2021), which examines the transition from pictorialism to modernist and post-modernist practices. The study by G. Rose (2022) focused on contemporary artistic strategies, identifying key visual trends, particularly conceptual and staged photography. R.D. Winfield's (2023) research primarily addressed the question of photography's legitimacy as an art form, analysing its mechanical nature in contrast to traditional visual arts and exploring the challenges it faced in gaining recognition as a full-fledged graphic art medium. A. Abdul Rahman & N.N. Azmi (2024) examined fine art photography as a means of self-expression through the interplay of personal identity, emotional expressiveness, and artistic practice, analysing how photography transcends mere documentation of reality to become an instrument of personal and creative self-discovery. Their work emphasised the role of composition, lighting, subject selection, and post-processing in crafting images that facilitate emotional impact and the communication of ideas. A. Solomon-Godeau (2021) investigated postmodernist tendencies, including appropriation, performativity, and visual citation.

A portion of the research has been dedicated to technological transformations in photographic art. C. Liu (2022) analysed the interrelations between technology, humans, and digital-physical spaces through digital photography practices, exploring how social media and mobile applications influence the perception of photography and its aesthetic qualities. The existing academic literature contains gaps that warrant further investigation. The impact of cutting-edge digital technologies – particularly artificial intelligence and augmented reality – on artistic photography remains underexplored. Contemporary shifts in aesthetic criteria under the influence of technological progress also lack sufficient conceptualisation within scholarly discourse. Furthermore, the global dynamics of fine art photography beyond the Western artistic context have yet to receive adequate attention.

Within contemporary Ukrainian academic discourse, the study by O.L. Khramova-Baranova & V.S. Zytseva (2021) merits consideration for its analysis of the evolution of Ukrainian photographica through the lens of the interaction between realist and abstract visual structures. The authors focused on the influence of European and American theoretical schools on Ukrainian photographic practice, as well as tracing the stylistic

transformation of Ukrainian fine art photography within the framework of constructivist aesthetics. This approach provided grounds for regarding Ukrainian fine art photography as a distinct visual phenomenon with clearly defined historical and cultural parameters. Conversely, T. Mironova's (2021) work conducted a cultural-semiotic analysis of visualisation processes in media art, treating photography as a tool for shaping virtual artistic space. Particular attention is given to the interactive, communicative, and multimedia aspects of new forms of visual art, which significantly expand the possibilities of artistic expression and present considerable heuristic potential for analysing contemporary trends in fine art photography.

The aim of this study was to systematise the aesthetic characteristics, stylistic movements, and contemporary trends in fine art photography within the context of its interaction with technological, conceptual, and social factors. Identifying key stylistic tendencies and their correlation with traditional artistic criteria has allowed for outlining the principal directions of fine art photography's further transformation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted between 2024 and 2025 and involved an analysis of a broad spectrum of theoretical and practical sources related to the development of fine art photography as a form of visual art. To ensure a comprehensive approach, academic publications, art-historical monographs, exhibition catalogues, and works by contemporary photographers were selected. The analysed sources included theoretical works addressing the historical stages of fine art photography's development, questions of its aesthetics, stylistic shifts, and the influence of technological factors on the creation and dissemination of photographic works. Specifically, studies exploring the relationship between fine art photography and conceptual art, postmodernist tendencies, and digital technologies were utilised. The research incorporated exhibition catalogues from the Museum of Modern Art (1940; 1955; 1967; 1997), Tate Modern (2014; 2018; 2020), and Centre Pompidou (2024; 2025). Significant attention was devoted to examining the artistic practices of prominent fine art photography practitioners, including Cindy Sherman (Museum of Modern Art, 1997), Gregory Crewdson (Templon, n.d.), Andreas Gursky (White Cube, 2025), Barbara Kruger (1987), and Andrew Rovenko (Pictorial List, 2021).

A distinct focus of the research was the study of digital space as an environment for contemporary fine art photography. A content analysis was conducted on the representation of fine art photography across digital platforms, including Instagram, Behance, NFT marketplaces (non-fungible token), and online exhibition initiatives. This allowed for an assessment of how digital culture transforms modes of presentation and interaction between artists and audiences, as well

as its impact on the commercialisation of photographic art. The research was carried out in several stages, each aimed at a comprehensive examination of fine art photography in terms of its aesthetic features, stylistic evolution, and contemporary trends. The first stage involved an in-depth analysis of theoretical sources, enabling the identification of key concepts, categories, and frameworks necessary for further study. Materials documenting the historical development of fine art photography, shifts in stylistic approaches, and its transformation within the digital artistic milieu were selected and systematised. The subsequent stage entailed an examination of artistic practices through the analysis of selected photographic works. Each case study was evaluated according to criteria such as composition, chiaroscuro techniques, narrative structure, the application of digital post-processing methods, and the interaction of photography with other artistic genres. A comparative analysis of traditional analogue techniques and contemporary digital approaches was conducted, facilitating the identification of stylistic shifts and emerging trends in fine art photography.

Further analysis focused on the relationship between artistic photography and digital technologies. The study examined how algorithmic editing, artificial intelligence, and generative art influence the creation of photographic images. The technical possibilities of using cutting-edge software tools for artistic photography were explored, along with their impact on the aesthetics and conceptual structure of photographic works. A separate research direction involved evaluating the digital environment as a space for the functioning of fine art photography. The study analysed the specifics of presenting photographic art on digital platforms such as Instagram, Behance, and NFT marketplaces, as well as shifts in communication strategies between artists and audiences. Digital exhibition formats, NFT auctions, and the influence of social media on the public perception of artistic photography were also investigated. Thus, the materials and methodological approaches employed enabled a comprehensive analysis of fine art photography, encompassing historical, aesthetic, technological, and socio-cultural aspects of its development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, fine art photography gradually established itself as an autonomous art form integrating technical and conceptual experimentation. In the first decades following its invention (1830s-1840s), photography was predominantly perceived as a means of documenting reality, playing a crucial role in scientific, journalistic, and archival practices (Pavlidis, 2022). However, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – particularly with the rise of Pictorialism in the 1880s-1910s – artists began actively employing photography to express conceptual and aesthetic ideas, striving to elevate its status as an artistic medium on par

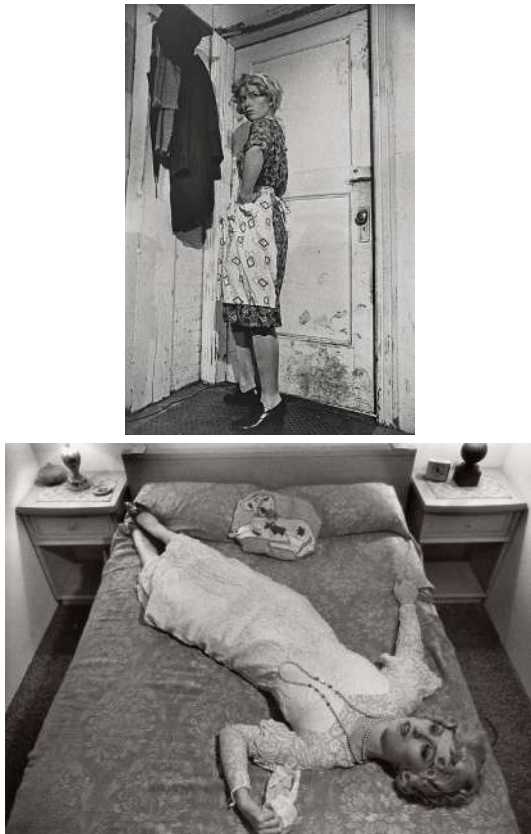
with painting and other art forms (Sailor, 2022). This process intensified further in the 1920s-1930s with the emergence of experimental and avant-garde photography, advanced by proponents of *Neues Sehen* (New Vision) and Surrealism. One of the overarching trends of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a significant expansion of thematic range and formal experimentation, marked by a shift from classical landscapes and portraits to conceptual staging, abstract compositions, and multimedia works (Stuart, 2014). During this period, photography gradually liberated itself from purely documentary functions, demonstrating its capacity for subjective expression. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transition from analogue to digital photography enriched artists' technical possibilities (editing, collage, compositing, etc.) while simultaneously raising questions regarding authenticity and the limits of image manipulation. Thanks to cutting-edge digital technologies, photographers gained the ability not only to edit images but also to combine different media, creating visual narratives that transcend traditional photographic formats.

In the course of its development, fine art photography gave rise to a number of stylistic movements. These reflect diverse aesthetic approaches and authorial concepts, evolving under the influence of socio-cultural shifts and technological innovations. Contemporary artistic photography has demonstrated a tendency towards genre synthesis, the use of new technologies, and integration with other art forms, making it a vital component of today's visual environment. Conceptual photography is a movement in which the photographic image serves primarily as a vehicle for conveying an idea rather than merely documenting reality (Elshafie, 2023). Artists in this genre employ photography as a tool for visualising concepts, which may encompass social commentary, identity exploration, or the deconstruction of cultural stereotypes. Within this approach, artists frequently utilise symbolic imagery or composite techniques, creating multilayered compositions. One of the most iconic examples of conceptual photography is the work of Cindy Sherman, particularly her *Untitled Film Stills* series (1977-1980) (Fig. 1).

Cindy Sherman's photographs from the *Untitled Film Stills* series demonstrated a profound integration of cinematographic techniques into photographic art, evident in the specific framing, compositional structure, and use of lighting effects (Nappo *et al.*, 2024). The visual structure of her works adheres to the principles of cinematic imagery. The camera is often positioned at an angle, employing both low and high shooting perspectives. Such techniques contribute to the creation of a dramatic effect, heightening the expressiveness of the scene and generating visual tension. Light and shadow played a pivotal role in the composition of the works, aligning them with the aesthetics of film noir. The conceptual foundation of the *Untitled Film Stills* series was rooted in the deconstruction of female



archetypes entrenched in mass culture (Museum of Modern Art, 1997). Sherman embodied stereotypical characters from popular cinema, such as the housewife, secretary, or film star, using them as a means of critically analysing the representation of women in society. Sherman's heroines appear at a moment of potential narrative development, yet this artistic concept remains open-ended, compelling the viewer to construct the subsequent scenario independently.



**Figure 1.** Cindy Sherman's Untitled Film Stills series  
**Source:** Museum of Modern Art (1997)

Another prominent direction is staged photography. This style is characterised by meticulously planned scene arrangements prior to shooting, akin to a cinematic approach (Strožek, 2016). Photographers construct elaborate sets, work with actors, lighting, and special effects to achieve a single, perfected frame. Gregory Crewdson is one of the most renowned practitioners of staged photography. His works are distinguished by their cinematic scale and atmospheric quality (Özbek, 2023). For instance, the *Eveningside* series (2021-2022) consists of large-format black-and-white photographs depicting twilight suburban scenes. Each of Crewdson's shots results from an extensive preparatory process involving detailed storyboarding, set construction, actor coordination, and complex lighting setups. The series captures frozen moments from the mundane life of American provincial towns (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** "The Corner Market" from Gregory Crewdson's *Eveningside* series  
**Source:** Templon (n.d.)

Crewdson also employs cinematic visual techniques – particularly those of film noir and Edward Hopper's aesthetics – such as dramatic lighting, fog, and rain, to imbue his scenes with a melancholic, sometimes gothic, mood. The evolution of staged photography can be traced from the vibrant, often brightly coloured tableaux of the 1980s-1990s (e.g., the works of Jeff Wall) to contemporary complex narratives, as seen in Crewdson's oeuvre, where every detail within the frame is laden with symbolism. *The Corner Market* is constructed according to principles of perspectival depth, reminiscent of classical cinematic compositions. The vertical and horizontal lines of electrical wires, building facades, and road markings form visual axes that guide the viewer's gaze into the depths of the scene. A slight deviation of the central element – the female figure – from the geometric center lends the frame a sense of naturalism and dynamism.

Abstract and minimalist photography focuses on forms, colours, textures, and the structural arrangement of the frame, departing from traditional narrative conventions. Such images approach the realm of abstract painting or graphic art, often devoid of a conventional focal point. Many of these works are large-scale, emphasising minute details and transforming them into monumental patterns (Bence, 2022). One of the most iconic contemporary artists in this vein is Andreas Gursky, renowned for his expansive colour photographs that depict a globalised world through generalised imagery – stock exchange floors, building facades, industrial spaces (Fig. 3). At first glance, his scenes appear realistic; however, Gursky extensively employs digital editing to create perfectly symmetrical or repetitive structures, eliminating incidental elements (White Cube, 2025). Such interventions lend the photographs a minimalist, universalised appearance, aligning them with the conceptual framework of abstract art.



**Figure 3.** Architectural photographs by Andreas Gursky

Source: White Cube (2025)

Figure 3 depicts the facade of a bank building in Shanghai, composed of geometrically arranged light panels. The composition is built upon the repetition of modular elements, creating a visual rhythm and sense of order. The contrast between warm lighting and the darkened structural details enhances the photograph's expressiveness and intensifies the perception of spatial depth. The symmetry of the composition and the rigorous organisation of elements align this image with the formal language of minimalism, where the architectural object becomes an autonomous artistic creation, and its utilitarian function assumes secondary importance. Figure 3 presented a building facade featuring a textual logo. The visual composition relies on the contrast be-

tween white panels, red accents, and a monochromatic sky, emphasising the structure's austere functional character. The image's structure is based on precise geometry, rationality, and formal simplicity. Vertical elements introduce a point of tension, disrupting the rhythmic monotony. Figure 4 showcased a minimalist space dominated by the colour red. The expansive solid surfaces evoke the painted canvases of Barnett Newman or Mark Rothko, in which colour itself becomes the subject of aesthetic inquiry. The inclusion of human figures in the lower portion of the composition disrupts the scene's absolute abstraction while accentuating the contrast between human presence and the monumentality of architectural space.



**Figure 4.** Andreas Gursky's photograph "Review"

Source: White Cube (2025)

The minimalist and abstract photography exemplified in Andreas Gursky's works demonstrated an expansion of traditional photographic vision. By focusing on form, colour, and structure, these works eschew direct narrative in favour of aesthetic engagement with the viewer. The architectural compositions, perfectly

balanced forms, and interplay of colour planes create an effect in which reality is transformed into a visual concept. The integration of text with photography has given rise to a distinctive style situated at the intersection of photographic art and graphic design, where verbal messaging becomes an intrinsic component of the

visual image (Chiocchetti, 2021). The incorporation of text – whether as a slogan, quotation, or commentary – adds an additional semantic layer, often altering or amplifying the primary perception of the image. This approach enables photography to transcend purely visual form, transforming it into a medium for social commentary and critical reflection.

One of the key figures in the development of this direction is the American artist Barbara Kruger, who, since the late 1970s, has produced collages combining found photographic images with brief, often provocative textual phrases. Her signature style – featuring bold, crisp typography against high-contrast backgrounds – has become iconic in contemporary art. Statements such as “I shop therefore I am” employ irony and sharpness to engage with pressing social issues (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Photograph “I shop therefore I am”  
by Barbara Kruger

**Source:** B. Kruger (1987)

B. Kruger’s aesthetic strategy was rooted in the visual language of mass culture (Smith, 2022). With a professional background in graphic design and magazine layout, she appropriated the stylistic conventions of advertising posters to capture the viewer’s attention while simultaneously subverting their standard function. Contemporary photo artists actively experiment with narrative, technique, and presentation formats, synthesising multiple genres and interpreting current sociocultural realities (Filimowicz, 2023). One of the defining trends in contemporary photography is the fusion of documentary realism with conceptual imagery, enabling artists to craft deeply personal yet universally resonant narratives. A striking example of this approach is the *Rocketgirl Chronicles* (2020-2021) series by Ukrainian-Australian photographer Andrew Rovenko (Fig. 6).

A. Rovenko created this series during the pandemic lockdown, photographing his daughter dressed in an astronaut costume. This childhood game acquired symbolic significance, as the familiar domestic space, constrained by quarantine measures, was transformed into an uncharted planet for the young protagonist. Thus, the series combined documentary elements (capturing

pandemic-era realities) with a fantastical conceptual narrative, reflecting a child’s capacity for imaginative world-building. The photographs are distinguished by meticulously composed frames reminiscent of cinematic aesthetics. Each shot balances the environment and the protagonist – for instance, in the scene with industrial containers, the architectural structure of the space evoked a sense of alienation, while the child-astronaut became the focal point, symbolising isolation. A key aspect of the series is its stylistic treatment, particularly the use of analog film as a medium. This imparts a soft, nostalgic colour palette, evoking retrofuturist aesthetics. As such, *Rocketgirl Chronicles* not only conveyed an intimate family story but also crafted a universal allegory of contemporary reality, in which individuals must adapt to unprecedented circumstances.



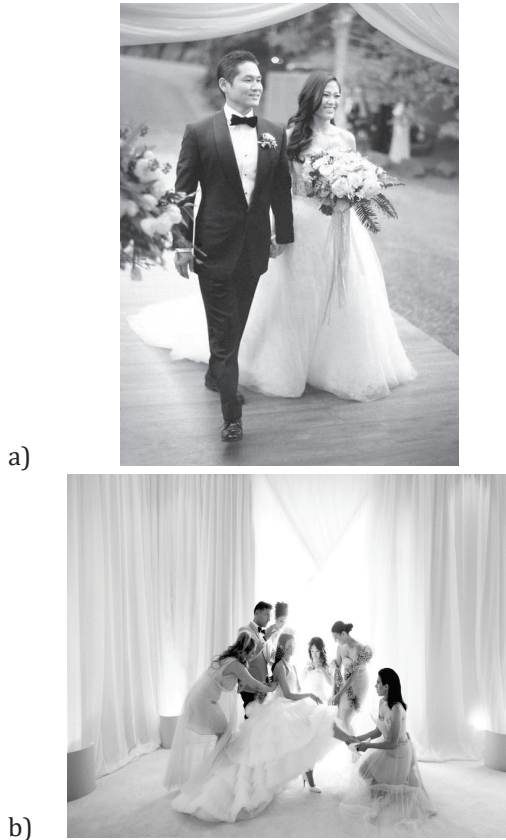
**Figure 6.** *Rocketgirl Chronicles* photo series  
by Andrew Rovenko

**Source:** Pictorial List (2021)

Of particular note is the contemporary Fine Art Weddings movement – artistic wedding photography characterised by a bright film aesthetic, soft lighting, deliberate composition, and emotional expressiveness. This style merges documentary authenticity with artistic vision, elevating wedding photography to the realm of high art. Among its most renowned practitioners are Jose Villa and Elizabeth Messina, whose works are



distinguished by refinement, chromatic depth, and meticulous attention to detail. Their contributions have shaped a new aesthetic within wedding photography, gaining recognition not only in commercial circles but also in the fine art world (Fig. 7).



**Figure 7.** Fine art weddings photography

**Note:** a – Jose Villa; b – Elizabeth Messina

**Source:** Jose Villa (n.d.); E. Messina (n.d.)

Modern technologies have significantly influenced fine art photography practices, unlocking new creative possibilities and expanding channels for the presentation and dissemination of photographic art. The emergence of NFTs in 2021 impacted various spheres of digital art, including photography. NFT technology, based on blockchain, enables the authentication of ownership for digital images, ensuring their uniqueness and facilitating direct sales without intermediaries (Beckman, 2021). This allows photographers and collectors to transact directly via specialised marketplaces, bypassing traditional galleries or auction houses. Photography has proven particularly suited to the NFT format, as most images in contemporary society are primarily consumed digitally on screens. This has not only enabled the commercialisation of digital copies but also introduced the concept of digital scarcity, previously difficult to achieve in digital art. Many prominent photographers, including Joel Meyerowitz, Gregory Crewdson, and Alec Soth, began

tokenising their works or archival materials during the NFT boom, experimenting with this new distribution model (Wiley, 2023). In response to growing demand for NFT photography, dedicated platforms and marketplaces (OpenSea, Foundation, SuperRare) emerged, specialising in the sale of digital photographs as NFTs.

The NFT phenomenon in fine art photography has a dual impact. On one hand, it grants photographers direct access to a global collector base, allowing them to retain greater profits while offering buyers certified uniqueness. This has disrupted traditional distribution systems, where galleries and dealers played a pivotal role in determining value and commercial viability. In this context, NFTs have democratised the art market, creating alternative models for monetising creativity (Cooke, 2024). On the other hand, the NFT market proved to be speculatively overheated during its rapid growth, casting doubt on the long-term artistic value of such sales. A significant portion of the NFT art market operated on the principle of financial speculation, where collectors purchased tokens for resale purposes rather than out of artistic interest (von Wachter *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, even after the hype subsided, NFTs remain an important tool for the distribution of photography. Contemporary museums have begun digitising their collections as NFTs, while photographers explore the possibilities of new digital concepts of ownership and scarcity.

Significant changes in the ways photography is exhibited and popularised have also occurred due to social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and Behance (Patricio, 2024). These platforms have created a new ecosystem for Fine Art photographers, enabling artists to engage directly with audiences, build their personal brand, and even sell their works without traditional intermediaries. Instagram, in particular, has significantly influenced the expansion of photographic art, making it accessible to millions of users worldwide (San Cornelio, 2022). It has fostered not only the popularisation of photography but also the emergence of new visual strategies aimed at engaging viewers through dynamic content. Social media, in general, facilitates the development of photographic communities, providing authors with opportunities to participate in online competitions, flash mobs, and thematic projects. For instance, photographic challenges stimulate knowledge exchange and new forms of visual expression. For emerging artists, these platforms also serve as a potential launchpad, as curators and gallerists increasingly monitor social media in search of new talent.

However, challenges exist. Social media algorithms shape a certain visual aesthetic that may influence artists' creative processes. Since algorithmic mechanisms promote images that receive the most engagement (likes, comments, reposts), this may encourage photographers to adopt uniform, "catchy" visual solutions that do not always align with their artistic intentions

(Siang Yang, 2023). Despite these contradictions, maintaining a presence on social media has become almost obligatory for photographers seeking professional growth. These platforms complement traditional modes of communication (galleries, festivals, print publications), allowing artists to promptly present their works to audiences and initiate discussions around their art.

NFTs and social media have fundamentally transformed the ways photography is created, distributed, and popularised. NFTs have opened new avenues for monetising digital images and emerged as an alternative art market mechanism, though debates about their artistic value persist. Social media, in turn, have redefined how photographers interact with the public, creating new opportunities for self-presentation, community-building, and creative experimentation. These transformations indicate the continued expansion of photography as an artistic medium that integrates traditional practices with digital and virtual formats. Regardless of the contentious nature of these changes, they confirm that contemporary photographic art is in a state of constant evolution, opening new perspectives for artists and audiences alike. The exhibition strategies of photographic art in leading global museums attest to its established position in contemporary artistic discourse and demonstrate diverse curatorial approaches to its presentation. An analysis of the exhibition policies of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Modern in London, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris has revealed how photography is integrated into broader museum discourse, unfolds its thematic, historical, and conceptual dimensions, and how these institutions shape contemporary perceptions of its role within the system of visual arts.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was one of the first institutions to grant photography full-fledged artistic status, establishing a dedicated department in 1940 under the leadership of Beaumont Newhall and later the legendary curator Edward Steichen (Museum of Modern Art, 1940). A pivotal moment was the exhibition *The Family of Man*, which affirmed photography as a universal language of human experience (Museum of Modern Art, 1955), while the *New Documents* project defined documentary photography as a means of artistic expression (Museum of Modern Art, 1967). In the 1990s, the museum continued its active engagement in this direction, exemplified by the acquisition of Cindy Sherman's entire *Untitled Film Stills* series in 1995, ensuring the preservation of this seminal cycle in a public collection (Museum of Modern Art, 1997). MoMA's collection encompasses thousands of photographs, ranging from classics such as Alfred Stieglitz and Robert Frank to contemporary figures like Wolfgang Tillmans and Nan Goldin. The museum's exhibition strategy is based on an integrative approach: photographic works are incorporated into the broader museum narrative alongside painting, video art, and installations,

underscoring their equal standing in the artistic process of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. At the same time, the museum employs innovative formats, including digital archives and interactive platforms, allowing audiences to explore photographic heritage in depth.

Unlike the Museum of Modern Art, London's Tate Modern does not have a dedicated photography department, yet since its opening in 2000, it has consistently incorporated photography into its exhibition spaces. Tate's strategy is rooted in a conceptual approach that positions photography as a medium evolving through interaction with other arts and societal challenges. The project *Shape of Light: 100 Years of Photography and Abstract Art* (Tate Modern, 2018) explored the interplay between photography and abstract painting, demonstrating how these two fields developed in parallel and influenced one another. Another exhibition, *Conflict, Time, Photography* (Tate Modern, 2014), innovatively presented war photography not through a traditional chronological lens but through the duration of time after the event, examining how photographic memory shifts depending on the temporal distance between the moment of capture and the viewer's experience. Tate has also actively investigated performativity in photography, as vividly demonstrated in the Zanele Muholi exhibition (Tate Modern, 2020), where photography converged with installation and textile materials. This approach seeks to blur genre hierarchies and illustrates that photography can not only document reality but also serve as a medium reflecting on social, political, and aesthetic phenomena.

The Centre Pompidou in Paris is one of the most influential institutions in photographic art, housing one of the world's largest photography collections, comprising over 45,000 prints and 60,000 negatives. Since its founding in 1977, the museum has placed particular emphasis on avant-garde and conceptual photography, including works by Surrealists, proponents of the New Vision movement of the 1920s-30s, and post-war humanist photography. A key feature of the Centre Pompidou's collecting policy is its strategy of retrospective representation, aimed at filling gaps in the photographic canon, particularly through the active inclusion of works by women photographers and artists from Africa, Eastern Europe, and other historically underrepresented regions. The Centre Pompidou's exhibition projects often adopt a research-oriented approach, as seen in *Corps à corps – histoire(s) de la photographie*, which re-examined the nude genre and representations of the human body beyond traditional portrait categories. This strategy underscores the museum's curatorial activism in championing photography as an equal art form – one that not only documents reality but also shapes its cultural reinterpretation.

An analysis of the exhibition strategies of these three leading museums reveals a shared tendency towards integrating photography into broader artistic



discourse, affirming its status as an autonomous artistic medium. The Museum of Modern Art emphasised historical continuity and innovation, merging classical and contemporary photography within a cohesive narrative. Tate Modern approaches photography through the lens of intermedial connections, exploring its potential within the context of social and conceptual shifts. The Centre Pompidou focuses on curatorial activism and expanding photography's historical representation, ensuring its full inclusion in museum spaces. This approach attests to the maturity of photography as an artistic practice engaged in constant dialogue with other visual arts while remaining a key instrument for reflecting on cultural, historical, and social processes.

Based on the research findings, fine art photography can be characterised by internationalisation (photographic artists from various countries gaining access to a global audience) and integration with related arts (performance practices). This confirms that fine art photography is a mature, conceptually rich field of art that is actively evolving. The obtained results demonstrated that fine art photography occupies a central position in contemporary artistic discourse, affirming its status as a fully-fledged form of visual art. It serves not merely as a means of documenting reality but also as a conceptual tool for artistic expression, integrating diverse media, including painting, cinema, graphic design, and digital technologies. This multidimensionality makes photography a unique platform for experimenting with visual language and modes of presentation. It also demonstrated its ability to adapt to new cultural contexts and respond to contemporary challenges while retaining its artistic potential. The study confirms that contemporary fine art photography is neither static nor an isolated domain; rather, it exists in dynamic dialogue with other artistic practices, necessitating continuous reinterpretation. This approach is crucial not only for artistic practice but also for scholarly analysis of transformations in the contemporary visual sphere, as it allows for tracing the interplay between technological advancements, societal changes, and artistic experimentation.

Results of the study demonstrated that the expansion of stylistic possibilities in artistic photography throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a complex yet logical process. Beginning with Pictorialism, which sought to legitimise photography's artistic status by emulating painting, photography gradually moved beyond its purely documentary function. Experimental movements, particularly *Neues Sehen* (New Vision) and Surrealism, played a pivotal role in this process by challenging traditional principles of photography as a mechanical reproduction of reality. *Neues Sehen* fostered the development of novel compositional techniques, experimenting with angles, lighting, and contrasts, thereby significantly broadening photographic expression. Meanwhile, Surrealism employed photography as a means of visual manipulation and subversion

of established perceptions of reality, actively utilising photomontage, double exposures, and staged scenes. The expansion of genre boundaries had profound consequences, including the gradual emergence of conceptual photography, staged photography, and minimalist compositions, which are now defining features of fine art photography. Thus, the findings indicate that photography progressively departed from its initial representational function and evolved into an autonomous artistic discourse in which conceptual depth and formal presentation hold equal significance.

One of the key aspects of the study was identifying the role of conceptual photography in shaping contemporary artistic strategies. The research confirmed that this movement, exemplified by artists such as Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Sophie Calle, and others, became an essential tool for the artistic analysis of social constructs, political realities, and cultural codes. Cindy Sherman's works demonstrated that photography could serve not only as a medium of visual communication but also as an instrument for critically examining societal norms. She employed photography to deconstruct archetypal female representations in mass culture, inviting viewers to critically reassess established portrayals. This aligns with the findings of T. Zheng & X. Lin (2024), who argued that conceptual photography utilises cinematic aesthetics and symbolic language to foster viewer reflexivity. The study's results corroborated this, demonstrating that conceptual photography not only expands the boundaries of photographic art but also fulfils a socio-critical function, enabling artists to engage with pressing social issues. Furthermore, conceptual photography today increasingly integrates digital technologies, enhancing its expressive potential. Contemporary artists experiment with interactive installations where photography functions within a multimedia environment or employ algorithmic generation to create new imagery, thereby augmenting its critical capacity.

Another crucial aspect of the study was understanding the relationship between photography and cinematography, particularly in the context of staged photography. The research revealed that the works of photographers such as Gregory Crewdson exhibit a direct connection to cinematic visual strategies. This is evident in meticulous scene planning, the use of cinematic lighting, compositional structuring, and even the application of post-production techniques typically employed in the film industry. The findings confirmed that photography borrows cinematic elements such as framing, dramatic lighting, and scene sequencing. This indicates a gradual expansion of photographic art's boundaries, where traditional expressive means are supplemented by cinematic techniques to create complex narrative structures. In this context, staged photography can be regarded as a form of visual storytelling occupying an intermediary position between traditional photography and cinematography.

An additional significant aspect of the study was clarifying the role of minimalist and abstract photography in the contemporary artistic context. An analysis of Andreas Gursky's works confirmed that contemporary photography increasingly gravitates toward abstraction, utilising digital editing tools to create meticulously structured compositions. This reflects a shift away from the traditional understanding of photography as a medium of reality representation, transforming it into a self-sufficient artistic object. The study found that digital post-processing not only influences the technical aspects of photography but also alters its perception, bringing the photographic image closer to painting. This trend opens new possibilities for integrating photography with other media, which is particularly relevant in the context of postmodern art.

An analysis of photography's interaction with emerging technologies revealed that the distribution of photographic art has undergone significant changes with the advent of NFTs. The study found that NFTs create new opportunities for artists in terms of commercialisation and copyright, consistent with the conclusions of M. Beckman (2021). This confirms that photography has become an integral part of the digital art market. However, the research also identified risks associated with this phenomenon: the NFT market is often speculative, casting doubt on the long-term artistic value of such transactions. This trend correlates with the findings of V. von Wachter *et al.* (2022), who emphasised that NFTs may contribute to the devaluation of art due to excessive commercial exploitation of the technology.

Another significant discovery was the identification of social media's influence on the distribution and popularisation of fine art photography. Social platforms such as Instagram facilitate the expansion of photographic art by creating global networks for artists and audiences. This aligns with the research by S.L. Patriocio (2024), which confirmed that social media serves not only as a means of display but also as a mechanism for forming artistic communities. However, the results also revealed that algorithmic mechanisms may negatively impact the creative process, compelling photographers to adapt their works to popularity criteria. This corresponds with the conclusions of G. San Cornelio (2022), who noted that social media often dictates visual trends, which may constrain experimentation in photography. N. Shmarko & N. Grechanyk (2023) emphasised that the development of aesthetic culture requires not only exposure to art but also conscious reflection and emotional engagement – aspects that risk being undermined when visual content is shaped primarily by platform algorithms.

The obtained results hold substantial significance in both theoretical and practical aspects, as they confirm that contemporary fine art photography is a multilayered phenomenon that transcends traditional notions of artistic practice. This study demonstrated that

fine art photography is not merely a medium of artistic reflection but also an active participant in interdisciplinary dialogue with other forms of visual art, including painting, cinema, digital media, and interactive technologies. Thus, the research has not only broadened the understanding of the evolution of photography but also proposed new approaches to its analysis within the context of contemporary aesthetics. Overall, the findings confirm that fine art photography remains a key medium for the aesthetic interpretation of modernity and a response to shifts in visual culture. The evolution of this field continues through integration with modern technologies, enabling the expansion of expressive possibilities and the formation of new conceptual approaches in 21<sup>st</sup>-century art.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study established that fine art photography is an autonomous and multifaceted art form that integrates painterly, cinematographic, and digital techniques while adapting to changes in visual culture. The research confirmed that fine art photography has evolved from the documentary recording of reality to a conceptual medium of artistic expression encompassing a wide spectrum of stylistic approaches. It was determined that the development of fine art photography in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries occurred through the progressive expansion of its aesthetic and technical possibilities. The study revealed that Pictorialism contributed to the recognition of photography as an art form, avant-garde movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century laid the foundations for experimentation with form, and digital technologies of the late century transformed its methods of creation and perception. As a result, the research confirmed that contemporary photographers actively combine documentary and conceptual approaches, crafting personal yet universal visual narratives.

The analysis of specific stylistic movements in fine art photography demonstrated that conceptual photography plays a crucial role in shaping social and cultural discourse. The works of representatives of this movement, such as Cindy Sherman, illustrated that photography can be used not only for the aesthetic exploration of form but also as a means of critically analysing societal norms. The study also confirmed that staged photography increasingly approximates cinematographic art, employing complex lighting systems, compositional techniques, and scenography to create visually rich and dramatic imagery. Minimalist photography, in turn, rejects traditional narrative, focusing instead on the interplay of colours, textures, and geometric forms. Ultimately, the research affirmed that fine art photography is a complex and multilayered phenomenon that continuously evolves and adapts to contemporary challenges. The obtained results constitute a significant contribution to the study of photographic art and provide a foundation for further inquiries into

the integration of traditional and digital methods of visual expression.

The study is limited by its chronological framework (20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries), its focus primarily on the works of Western photographers, and its analysis of curatorial strategies in leading museums, which does not fully encompass the global diversity of approaches in fine art photography. Future research prospects include exploring the relationship between fine art photography and virtual and augmented reality, the influence of social media on the formation of visual strategies among contemporary photographers, and the analysis of aesthetic shifts in photographic art under the impact of artificial intelligence. Based on the obtained results, it is recommended to expand research on the influence of digital technologies on the development of fine art

photography, particularly investigating the relationship between traditional and computer-generated imagery. Another promising direction is the analysis of photography within the context of new media and the visual culture of social networks. Further studies may focus on changes in artistic strategies under the influence of algorithmic systems that shape visual trends in digital space.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this study declare no conflict of interest.

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## Fine art photography як форма візуального мистецтва: естетика, стилі та сучасні тенденції

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**Анотація.** Дослідження було спрямоване на аналіз fine art photography як форми візуального мистецтва, її естетичних характеристик, стилістичної еволюції та сучасних тенденцій розвитку. Дослідження базувалося на аналізі мистецтвознавчих праць, виставкових каталогів, художніх практик провідних фотографів, а також контент-аналізі цифрових платформ і non-fungible token-ринку. У процесі дослідження було встановлено, що художня фотографія вийшла за межі своєї традиційної документальної функції та набула статусу самостійного концептуального медіума, що інтегрує елементи живопису, кінематографу, перформансу та цифрових технологій. Виявлено, що стилістичні трансформації fine art photography супроводжувалися експериментами з формою, світлом, композицією та наративною структурою, що особливо проявилось у розвитку таких напрямів, як концептуальна, постановочна та мінімалістична фотографія. Результати дослідження підтвердили, що fine art photography перетворилася на багатовимірну художню практику, яка поєднує візуальну естетику з концептуальним змістом та активно взаємодіє з іншими формами мистецтва. Виявлено, що сучасні фотографи не лише експериментують із жанрами та техніками, а й формують нові способи взаємодії з аудиторією через цифрові платформи, non-fungible token-технології та соціальні медіа. Дослідження підтвердило, що цифрові технології відкривають нові можливості для фотографів, зокрема у сфері алгоритмічного редагування, генеративного мистецтва та non-fungible token-економіки, водночас змінюючи способи презентації та взаємодії художників з аудиторією. Отримані результати можуть бути використані в мистецькій освіті, кураторській діяльності та розробці нових форматів цифрової експозиції

**Ключові слова:** пікторіалізм; постмодернізм; невзаємозамінні токени; інтерактивні медіа; культурна ідентичність; концептуальність