Photo Arts 2 Winter Quarter 2010.2
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General Instructions for Working in RIT/SPAS Darkrooms:

In addition to the supplies you'll need for processing film and printing, you will need a locker on the 3rd or 4th floor to store your all of your darkroom (and studio) supplies. It is extremely inconvenient (and time consuming if you forget something) to haul everything you need to and from the Photo building every time you will be working.

In our assigned lab time you will each work in a black and white wet/color darkroom in the "F" Series. You must present your ID and bring a towel and all the necessary supplies in order to be checked into a darkroom. If you do not bring the proper towels when we are working in black and white, you will not be able to check out a darkroom.

Sign-in with your name, social security # and note the time; present your ID card and you will be given a key which will give you access to the chemistry tap. **Your assigned darkroom space will only be held for 20 minutes .**

You will be held responsible for all of the equipment in that room. Whenever you check into a darkroom, familiarize yourself with the inventory list on the wall and then check to make sure everything is present and in good condition. **If you have anything missing or if any item is broken or badly damaged, you must file a discrepancy report with the "Cager" within 30 minutes of check-in.....otherwise you could be held liable for that equipment.** The same holds true for a darkroom that is dirty (fixer stains in the sink, etc..) If the darkroom isn't in perfect condition, you should report it so you won't be held liable. (Unfortunately, once you've checked into a dirty darkroom, you will have to clean it.....filing the discrepancy report would help bring the situation to the attention of the previous user of the room.) All of these rules and regulations are intended to keep the facilities in good condition, so broken and missing items can be repaired or replaced and so that you will continue to have access to fully functioning facilities.

If you do not understand the operation of any of the equipment in the darkroom or finishing area, please ask for assistance from me, your TA, GA or the Cager. Some of the equipment is relatively fragile and will either jam or break if used incorrectly or if forced.

There is a main power switch for all of the power outlets in each darkroom. It must be turned on in order to get power. The light switches just inside the door control the white lights, the safe lights and the "in use" red light outside the Upperclass darkrooms. Some darkrooms also have white light switches on the sink, at the base on the outside of the sink, just above hip level for most people.

Within each sink you will find three small quart containers and two one gallon containers. The smaller ones are used to get chemistry from the Chem-mix area. Since these bottles are usually unmarked, you should mark them with masking tape and write the name of the chemical you'll be putting into each container so you don't mix them up. Whatever you choose to do, rinse them out thoroughly with hot water before filling with chemistry so you won't contaminate fresh chemistry with any residue from that which previously had been used. The larger containers are for Indicator Stop Bath and for Fixer (or hypo, same thing). Whenever you are through with the Stop Bath or Fixer you've been using, **POUR THEM BACK INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTAINERS... DO NOT EVER DUMP ANY FIXER DOWN THE DRAIN!** Stop Bath and Fixer can be used more than once and used fixer contains a fair amount of silver, which can be recovered. If the Stop Bath indicates that it's still good (it's still yellowish, not purple) pour that back into its respective container.

When you first begin working in the darkroom **TEST THE FIXER** with the fix test kit. These should be available in each darkroom, if not get one from Chem-Mix or the Cage. They may or may not provide this currently. I use Edwal Hypo Check. Make sure your Fix is good, otherwise your photographic prints will stain and fade over time.

The fix test kit has a small glass vial and a bottle with a dropper.
- Half fill the glass vial with fixer from the container in your darkroom.
- Place an equal amount of water in the vial and mix
- Put a drop of hypo-test from the small bottle into the fix/water mix.
- IF THE FIX TURNS WHITE OR A MILKY WHITE PRECIPITATE FORMS, THE FIX IS EXHAUSTED AND SHOULD NOT BE USED.

• If your fixer is exhausted, take the container to the Chem-mix area and exchange it for fresh fix. If you use exhausted fix your film or prints will be ruined.

• IF THE FIXER IS NOT EXHAUSTED WHEN IT IS FIRST TESTED, DO NOT PRESUME THAT IT WILL BE FINE FOR THE DURATION OF YOUR DARKROOM SESSION. THE FIX SHOULD BE TESTED PERIODICALLY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR WORK IS STABILIZED.

If, for some reason, there is no fix in your darkroom, go to Chem- mix or talk with your TA or a Cager.

The next step to follow is to get the chemistry you will need for processing. **Make sure that you use the appropriate developer for the material that you're using.** Film developer is not the same as paper developer. There are also a number of chemicals which require specific dilutions... one developer will not give you the same result as another. Please be careful and consistent.

Always use an 8" x 10" tray to carry chemistry from the chemistry taps to your darkroom. Any spills resulting from the trip must be kept in the tray and off the floors. When fixer hits any surface, it eventually dries and forms a white corrosive powder. Other chemicals will stain or corrode as well. Wet, spilled chemistry creates a safety hazard for anyone walking on the floor after you. If you do happen to somehow spill chemistry on the floor, please clean it up immediately with warm water.

Wet prints must also be carried in trays at all times, there are no exceptions to this rule.

All containers and trays should always be washed in HOT water before each use. This will clean off any residual chemistry from the previous user.

Never leave water running unattended in your darkroom.

Always use the PVC fitting for the drain, it helps prevent flooding.

Your TA and I will both be available during lab time to review your processing and printing as you work. We can save you a lot of time and energy if you consult one of us. It will take awhile before you become skilled at evaluating your progress and deciding what to do with a print or how best to work with a particular negative. In addition, lab time is the best opportunity to advise you in regard to your work individually. Please take advantage of this time. You may find that sometimes while working independently, you may make hasty printing or editing decisions and will later have to re-do something. Lab time is essentially teaching time - I need to keep in touch with your work as much as you do, in order to assist your progress. If I do not see you showing myself your prints as you are working, I will consider you to be absent. I need to see your work in progress to help you become a better printer/photographer.

All prints are to be printed full frame, with a black border around the photograph. No cropping, in the future, you will learn to crop in the camera, and you can, as we progress, crop the image with a window matt at presentation.

When you're finished working and are ready to clean up, wash and wipe out all trays, quart jugs, and all containers - everything that is used on the wet side of the darkroom. Once everything is washed, you must dry everything including the sink, squeegee it first, then towel dry. Be sure that everything is absolutely dry before you ask to check out. If not, you'll have to go back to your darkroom and finish the job. **Each darkroom must be clean, dry and restored to its appropriate order before you ask to be checked out.** Our lab time ends at 5:50 pm, plan on starting your clean up by 5:00 pm to allow sufficient time before check out. If you finish earlier, you can request permission to check out beforehand. However, since lab time is part of our class time, you should work during most of the lab time which is allotted for the class.

These procedures are intended to keep facilities and equipment in the best operating condition possible. The rules and regulations are designed to help you form excellent work habits that you can carry throughout your career.