

MAN RAY

RAYOGRAMS

In this essay I will investigate photograms and camera less photography and also discuss how photographs can be made with light and without the need for a camera, therefore creating a 'photogram.'

The first image I will analyze was made in 1923 by Man Ray titled 'Untitled Rayograph'. This photogram is of different varying objects, including curved and stretched spring. This captures the abstract

impression of said
spring created by the
light exposure on light-
sensitive paper / camera
less.

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Rayogram series he
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darkroom in France.

Rayographs

In the early 19th century artists did use the
technique of placing objects on light-sensitive
paper, but in the late 1921 whilst Man Ray was in
Paris darkroom when an unexposed sheet of
paper ended up in a developing tray. Then
placing a funnel, graduate, and a thermometer on
the paper, he exposed it to light, resulting in a
distorted and refracted image. **CYANOTYPE**

19th century light sensitive
photography is called
'Cyanotype'.

In 1923 Man Ray created this piece titled 'Untitled Rayograph'. This photogram is of different varying objects, including curved and stretched spring. This captures the abstract impression of said spring created by the light exposure on light-sensitive paper / camera less. This is one of many in his Rayogram series he accidentally discovered in his darkroom in France.

Directly after Man Ray discovered the 'rayogram technique', obviously, he was quite excited and then

immediately went to create a series of his own camera less

photographs using multiple different everyday / household objects with nearby items including: his hotel

room key, a handkerchief, pencils, a brush, a candle, and a

strand of twine to create a selection of his own images on

dry light-sensitive paper.

.This image was made using gelatin silver print, tools and house-hold items (as said in previous page), fabrics and materials, glassware and liquids (glass funnels, bottles, measuring vessels, and a thermometer), the type of film he used was a spiraling roll of 35mm movie film, he also apparently collected leaves to put in, his own body part such as his hand which is used quite often, specifically in "Hands" and "One Hand". He also cut up paper shapes to include in his 'rayographs'. Not everything listed here was used in the specific image that I am doing this part of my essay on, but, this image is one of several in his series of rayographs so the remaining items would be included in other photograms in the series.

In multiple of his rayographs, explicitly those that's focal point is on hands, Man Ray saw this as his way of being "*in the composition and not behind it*" which adds an autobiographical quality to his work. Now whilst I mentioned that he used body parts (his hand specifically) in his rayographs and whilst I did

say he used his own hand, he did also use other people, often including his lovers and 'muses'. A famous example of when he used someone else is in "Rayograph: The Kiss, 1922".

This image was created in Paris, France, 1922 (these images have no specific dates to them, just the year, according to historians). Man Ray created this image as a part of his progressive attempt to revamp the way photography is made and seen. He also did this to continue, push, and search for how far he could go with this light sensitive paper stuff which he eventually named 'Rayographs' so in a way 'celebrating chance' and also explore Surrealist ideas through his new invention of a camera less technique. This technique has had such an everlasting impact on photography because he proved that photography didn't

only need to be for documentation, but it can also be for artistic, technical, and conceptual purposes. Artistic: Rayographs encouraged photographers to shift towards it being a form of avant-garde art and expression, providing an image in unneeding of a camera, lens, or a true subject. Technical: He created new techniques such as light as an expressive tool, photograms, and abstract composition through everyday objects. Conceptual: His new-found style helped other photographers be inspired to push beyond the traditional forms of photography at these times (early 20th century). In this image he used the silhouettes of a pair of hands and two heads, the people these belonged to was himself and his then-lover and muse, Kiki de Montparnasse, also

known as, Alice Prin. His goal was to make the familiar become the 'unfamiliar' by using human anatomy in this conceptual way that allied with surrealist ideologies.

By using body parts, he created images that were both personally and universally symbolic of playing with shadow and form to evade 'rational' thought.

Kiki de Montparnasse and Man Ray

The next image I will analyze was made in 1922, once again created by Man Ray and it is titled 'Rayograph; Comb, Straight Razor Blade, Needle, and Other Forms.'" This image is another from his rayograph series and to create this he placed everyday objects directly onto a sheet of photosensitive paper and then exposed it to light.

When Man Ray was creating this work he placed everyday objects including a comb, a straight razor blade, a needle, and other various forms. These

were then placed onto a sheet of photosensitive paper and then exposed it to light. This resulted in 'abstract' and 'ghostly images' with stark white outlines against the black background, an artwork that hovers between abstract representational forms, aligning with the specific look of the Dada and, later on, surrealist movements.

In **conclusion** I believe Man Ray to be the best photogram photographer, not only because he created it and you know what they say "no one is better than the original", but also because I think his work is the most pleasing to look at, he uses objects that look good in photograms and they come out sharp and clean.

I believe that in my work, even before I knew of Man Ray's existence there is similar aspects to it such as sharp objects, clean cuts, and body parts (I use my finger in it sometimes), but now that I do know

of him I try my best to stay in this kind of style of light sensitive photography.

At first, I called my 'style' just a bit creepy and to make it look like objects you would find at a crime scene as I quite like this eerie creepy look about it and I think Man Ray's work has some similar aspects to it. I think he reaches out a bit more; he uses more household / everyday objects and swirls / coils as he has more freedom as he had his own dark room in Paris so therefore had bigger work space and more objects at hand to use.

"It has never been my objective to record my dreams, just the determination to realize them"

