Photography / Intensity / Measure

Leiden University
Deadline: Sep 10, 2025

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Call for Book Chapters.

Questions of measurement, and how it shapes or is problematized by photography, have become increasingly important in recent years. This has been provoked by the development and consolidation of digital networked imaging technologies, the massive expansion of social media, advances in machine learning, the sheer scale of image datasets, and the development of AI imaging platforms. Novel forms such as Point Cloud, Giga-pixel and Light-Field imaging, to mention just a few, have challenged accepted ideas of measure and how they structure the visual.

Reasons for the growing focus on measure have not been simply technical but also political, humanitarian and provoked by impending environmental disasters. Questions of measurement, scale and proportion are unavoidable in a world shaped by massive economic inequalities, widespread military violence, forced displacement of millions, and the overarching threat posed by climate change. Responses to these interlinked processes have also been forced to reckon with what seems to escape measure: the unscalable, the incommensurable and disproportionate.

Many approaches to this situation have stressed the extensive possibilities and problems of measure in the context of photography and elsewhere. But what about questions of intensity in these cultures and techniques of measurement? What does intensity denote in the context of photography today? What of the intensities – violence and desire, destruction or ecstasy - that interrupt or rupture the lives of individuals and populations alike? Given the need to understand today's forms and expectations of measurement and the modes of scaling they deploy, what critical purchase might be gained by examining the possibilities and problems entailed by measures of intensity? Is the term intensity just another form of extension, amenable to the same or similar forms of measurement, framing and control as, for instance, an exploitable geography or manipulable psychology? Or does intensity name something that is in principle incommensurable and unscalable?

Obviously, photography can measure intensity in a multitude of ways. Before it accrued the name of 'writing with light', photography was quantifying and qualifying radiance and luminosity as a mode of photometry (a branch of optics that deals with measuring light in terms of perceived brightness). Such concerns inaugurated a technical and critical discourse that, at least until recently, has shaped the machineries of photography. Successfully conceptualizing and thus controlling the registration of light intensities came to underpin wave upon wave of historical discourse on the way photography was taken to register the truth of appearances; how it promised to interrupt false or oppressive framings of the real; and how it seemed to serve as a 'certificate of

presence', whether by magic or science or some mixture of the two.

However, photographic measures of intensity are not limited to the disciplines of photography theory and history. From measuring celestial radiation in astrophotography to terrestrial eruptions in geology, from the acceleration of human population in demography to the dissolution of humanity in geopolitics, photography has routinely been set the task of measuring intensity beyond its own apparent boundaries. More prosaically, the photographic image became a mainstay in communicating the intensity of individual feelings, setting a kind of measure to emotional experience. This book sets out from the intuition that the nexus between photography and intensity finds a significant register in the affective qualities of the medium, in its ability to communicate non-conscious, pre-personal, and intermediary corporeal stimuli; that is, in its capacity to enclose and disclose our emotional impingements in the world.

Aspiring to understand these different measures of intensity, Photography / Intensity / Measure sets out to examine questions of intensity and its measures in photography. Or, to put it another way, it explores the photographic as a field of intensities that seem to exceed simple measure while, perhaps paradoxically, emerging from technical bases that are grounded on strict and unavoidable operations of measure.

We welcome disciplinary and interdisciplinary abstracts that reflect on the theme of "measures of intensity" through historical and contemporary photographic practices and discourses. The proposed topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

Photography &

-- Theoretical analyses of relations between measure and intensity
-- Affect/affectivity at the intersection of measure and intensity
-- Uses and abuses of measurement in geopolitical intensities
-- Visual politics of intensity today
-- Spatial/temporal intensities in the structuring of visual worlds
-- Intensity and measure as frameworks for visualizing climate disaster
-- Luminous intensity in historical and contemporary frameworks
-- Measuring intensities in Seismography, Geology, Cosmology and Ecology
-- Elemental intensities as critical measures of earth, water, air and fire
-- Celestial/terrestrial/aquatic realms of intensity
-- Intensity as a critical figure of technology
-- Algorithms and their intensities
-- Scalable and unscalable intensities
-- Corporeal intensities and their visualization
-- Measuring emotions and feelings
-- Intensity in normative measures of gender, sex and identity
-- Intensity in visualizations of race and ethnicity
-- Viral and contagious intensities

Abstracts:
We welcome abstracts, in English, of between 300 and 500 words. The abstract should engage with, and reflect on, the overall theme of the book through photographic practices and discourses.

Short, fragmented, or incohesive abstracts will not be considered. Please send your abstract and a short biography (max 150 words) to:

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A selected number of abstracts will be invited to submit a full chapter of 5,000 to 6,000 words in February 2026.

Photography / Intensity / Measure will be published by an academic publisher in 2026.

Schedules & Deadlines:
Submission of abstracts: September 10th, 2025
Communication of acceptance/rejection: October 30th, 2025
Submission of full chapters: February 28th, 2026
Provisional publication date: August 2026

Co-editors:
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--Dr. Ali Shobeiri

Reference:
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