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## Experimental Performative and Analog Photography

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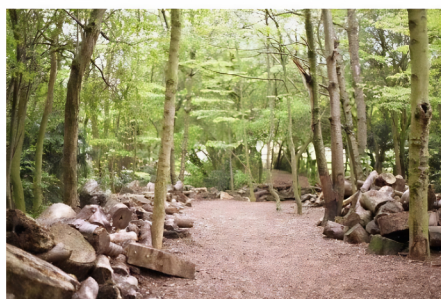
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## Experimental Performative and Analog Photography

### Cover Page Footnote

Chapman, R. (2023). *Empire of normality: Neurodiversity and capitalism*. Pluto Press.



*Experimental Performative and Analog Photography (2019).*

## Emily Coghlan

*Irregular Balance (2019)* is an experimental performative and analog photography project. This work attempts to interrupt binaries between the organic and the inanimate, nature and man, carrier bags and tools, the beautiful and the ugly, the straight and the twisted, the neurodiverse and the neurotypical. The objects in the photographs represent social apparatus and constructions used as tools to normalize those with disabilities.

I trialed materials such as pins, potatoes with rhizomatous roots sprouting, string, and medical paraphernalia such as tape. I also explored the forms taken by arboreal deconstructions and re-constructions in local parks in London. I photographed these formations using an analog SLR camera and 35mm color film.

During a performance for my MA, I unraveled taut twine from a Singer sewing machine and reworked it loosely with rose bush leaves. While slowly de-tangling and reconstructing this object during a seminar, I spoke further

about some ideas related to the actions and materials I was working with, such as Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's rhizome theory of non-hierarchical knowledge, represented by horizontal plant stems.

This project was initially formulated with the condition of scoliosis, a curvature of the spine, in mind. However, with hindsight, especially since receiving my diagnosis of autism spectrum condition in 2023, I now see that the concepts explored in *Irregular Balance* are relevant to both invisible disabilities, since they address various forms of deviation from physical and neurological societal expectations.

In *Empire of Normality*, Robert Chapman (2023) explores the relationship between the body as a productivity machine within neoliberal competitiveness. This text goes beyond simplistic understandings of neurotypes. The structures in *Irregular Balance* may capture some essence of Chapman's thesis:

Traditionally—across the globe—both mental and bodily health were typically conceptualized as a matter of balance or equilibrium. This was either within the body or between body and environment. But the capitalist mode of production and the Industrial Revolution began to bring a new conception of health and ability. The body and mind were increasingly seen as machines, and the new concept of normality began to be used to determine whether these machines were working or broken. (p. 44)

The works were created in the spring of 2019 at the following locations: Deptford, South-East London, and Haggerston Park, East London. The sewing machine performance was presented at the London College of Communication in Elephant and Castle.



*Experimental Performative and Analog Photography (2019).*



*Experimental Performative and Analog Photography (2019).*

**Emily Coghlan** is an artist, photographer, and researcher from the north of England. She holds an MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography from London College of Communication. Emily creates photographs informed by ecology and the Land Art movement, while also incorporating sculptural and archival approaches into her work. She has worked at the Natural History Museum and Angela Marmont Center for UK Nature. In 2023, she exhibited at the Royal Academy, London and OUTPOST Gallery, Norwich. She was recently awarded an Arts Council England grant to develop her research on yew trees as a multidisciplinary body of work.