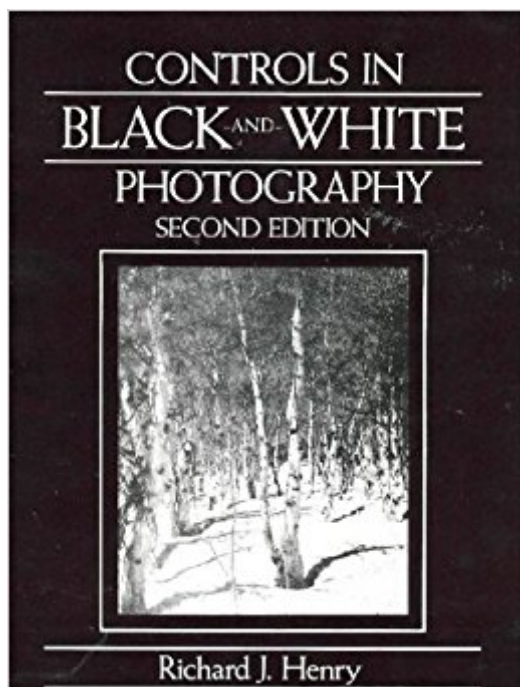




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Controls In Black-And-White Photography



Synopsis

Richard Henry, *Controls in Black and White Photography* (1983, 1986) -- After a career as a much published researcher in clinical chemistry, Dr. Henry turned to photography. He was appalled by the lack of scientific rigor in popular books and articles written by non-scientific photographers. "They frequently make statements of fact which are totally unsubstantiated and sometimes utterly absurd." So he equipped his laboratory with sophisticated testing equipment and set about checking much that is commonly "known" about photography. "Nearly all the experimental work performed for this book was done with step wedges, etc. -- not pictures. In most instances, but not all, a picture actually gets in the way of accurate measurements that need to be made regarding the performance of film and paper." Following good scientific practice, Dr Henry mentions assertions of others, cites references, describes his experiments so others can replicate them, and reports conclusions. This is a refreshing contrast to the approach of writers who imply that because they are excellent photographers, readers should believe their unsupported opinions. Among the findings that contradict popular myths are: 1.The maximum black a paper can make does not depend on its silver content. 2.There is no difference in print values produced by condenser and cold light enlargers if negatives for the latter are developed longer to make print contrast the same. 3.Prolonged print development in Dektol does not increase contrast; it only makes a print darker. 4.Dissolved solids, such as silver salts, do not sink to the bottom of a print washer. 5.Amidol does not produce darker blacks than Dektol 1+1. This book is extremely valuable for anyone who is seriously interested in making black-and-white photographs -- especially from small negatives. It is a special joy for already well-informed photographers to find so much new information.

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Customer Reviews

Richard Henry, *Controls in Black and White Photography* (1983, 1986) -- After a career as a much published researcher in clinical chemistry, Dr. Henry turned to photography. He was appalled by the lack of scientific rigor in popular books and articles written by non-scientific photographers. "They frequently make statements of fact which are totally unsubstantiated and sometimes utterly absurd." So he equipped his laboratory with sophisticated testing equipment and set about checking much that is commonly "known" about photography. "Nearly all the experimental work performed for this book was done with step wedges, etc. -- not pictures. In most instances, but not all, a picture actually gets in the way of accurate measurements that need to be made regarding the performance of film and paper." Following good scientific practice, Dr Henry mentions assertions of others, cites references, describes his experiments so others can replicate them, and reports conclusions. This is a refreshing contrast to the approach of writers who imply that because they are excellent photographers, readers should believe their unsupported opinions. Among the findings that contradict popular myths are: 1. The maximum black a paper can make does not depend on its silver content. 2. There is no difference in print values produced by condenser and cold light enlargers if negatives for the latter are developed longer to make print contrast the same. 3. Prolonged print development in Dektol does not increase contrast; it only makes a print darker. 4. Dissolved solids, such as silver salts, do not sink to the bottom of a print washer. 5. Amidol does not produce darker blacks than Dektol 1+1. This book is extremely valuable for anyone who is seriously interested in making black-and-white photographs -- especially from small negatives. It is a special joy for already well-informed photographers to find so much new information.

Mr. Henry is first & foremost a scientist, and it shows. Just to give you an idea, the book starts off with a glossary of terms, and in "pH" (which for me would have been sufficient to call a level of alkalinity or acidity of a substance) is described as follows: "symbol of the negative logarithm of the effective hydrogen-ion concentration or hydrogen-ion activity in gram equivalents per liter. a scale of acidity, usually 0 to 14, acidity increasing as you go down the scale. Below pH 7 the solution is increasingly acid, and above 7 the solution is increasingly alkaline. pH 7 being "neutral". Most developers are alkaline; stop baths and fixatives are acidic." The book is reassuring and disconcerting all at the same time. Mr. Henry often brings up the big guns of the Zone System and

frequently disagrees with their unscientific way of pushing myths through their teaching, on other occasions he agrees. Adams, Vestal and Picker are the names most frequently mentioned. The book is nothing but graphs, math and tests. Has no photographs except for the cover. But author drives his points home with substantial experimental data and comprehensive list of references. He is obviously a quality scientist who needs a hard proof to call it proven. I call this "reassuring AND disconcerting", because while it shows how one can determine proper processing, it also kills a lot of well advertised myths. At first, book seems difficult and un-fun. But, if you manage to get through the first few pages and actually read it cover to cover, it changes into a relatively nice read with lots of bits from Zone System "gurus" and his take on it. Ultimately, the book gives a solid background to do your own testing, if you choose to do so, or you can rely on his findings and go from there. Even today, with many fewer B&W materials available, it is still one of the best values for a photographer who prefers tight control over unpredictability. These days you can get a copy for a song (just got mine for \$15 in near new condition) and, if you are in B&W own processing, it applies the same as ever. On top of that, if nothing else, it will show you how important it is experiment and test and how NOT to rely on many claims put forward by many so called "experts" in the field, in fact the same applies to ANY expert in ANY field.

I really like technically-oriented manuals on anything, and this volume is no exception. Gets right down to the nitty-gritty of the magnificent art of B&W photography. Well-written and to the point....an excellent addition to my photographic library.

Although much has changed in photography and in the darkroom since this book has been written, and although many films and papers tested here are no longer available, this book is still a precious source of information and testing methods for serious darkroom workers. If you can only afford one book, buy the second edition of *Way Beyond Monochrome 2e: Advanced Techniques for Traditional Black & White Photography* including digital negatives and hybrid printing. But if you can afford two, Henry is the one to go for.

a good book to find specific items that can boost your quality when you improve them. It's a technical book.

As an experimental physicist, I take off my hat to Richard Henry (who was a research chemist and M.D.) for the quality of his work to produce a reference book for experienced photographers. Much of

the book is rather technical, but there is also a more general narrative that is useful to a broader, but still experienced audience. For example, he neatly deals with the old myth of the innate superiority of diffusion enlargers over condenser enlargers with blind-test comparisons once one matches the negative + enlarger + VC paper to the subject. He really understood the scientific method. The book is also a convenient reference to several ANSI (now ISO) standards. It is a treasure trove of information that must be digested by the reader as needed. Simply reading cover-to-cover would be tough going. The only shortcoming is that he did all of his film processing in a rotary drum with the goal of uniformity and reproducibility of results, but as a side effect he could not evaluate adjacency effects of developers such as Rodinal. Seen as a whole, this is a very small defect. Highly recommended to serious black and white photographers who are willing to dig deeper into how and why film and paper do what they do. This book does not treat non-quantifiable, aesthetic effects. Keep in mind, however, that the Second Edition was released in 1988, and some of the products discussed are no longer available.

Out with the old wives tales and the unproven, anecdotal legends that persist among so many "experts" in the world of photography! Mr. Henry is a retired clinical chemistry researcher who found many of the accepted methods to be unfounded and not actually true when careful, scientific methods were used to verify them. If you are interested in the fine points of darkroom work and in developing a neutral starting point with your own materials, you will find this a valuable read. It's well written, well organized and everything is meticulously documented and verified.

This is an amazing book. Richard Henry took a very scientific approach to testing. The book has *real* data about what goes on in B&W processing including fixing and washing. Even if you don't do your own B&W darkroom work this book is well worth reading and will contribute to your understanding of how film and paper work.

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