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2024 Research Project 3: Brief Report

Perception and Evaluation of Artistic Photography

Notes

- The full report can be found here: <https://foto-psychologie.de/publikation/>. Citations should be taken only from the full report.
- This brief form presents results selectively. Methodology and limitations are detailed in the full report.
- Legend: * = significant; P = Professionals, A = Amateurs; Pm = male professionals, Pf = female professionals; Am = male amateurs, Af = female amateurs; A<59 = amateurs up to 59 years old, A>60 = amateurs over 60 years old; Bold: medium or large effect; Value 5 = high level/agreement, Value 1 = low level/disagreement
- Reading Example P+/A*: Professionals have a significantly higher mean than amateurs. Small effect.

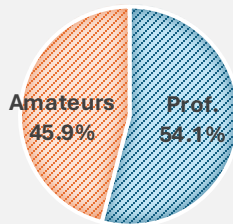
Sample

N = 431

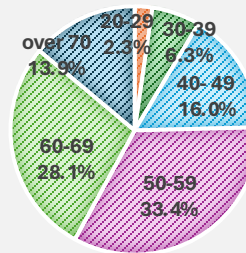
- N = 233 Professionals
- N = 198 Amateurs

Conducted in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, 2024

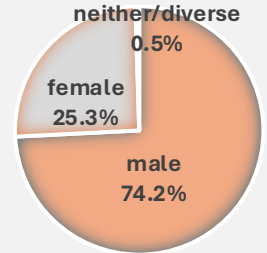
PROFESSIONALS
AMATEURS



AGE

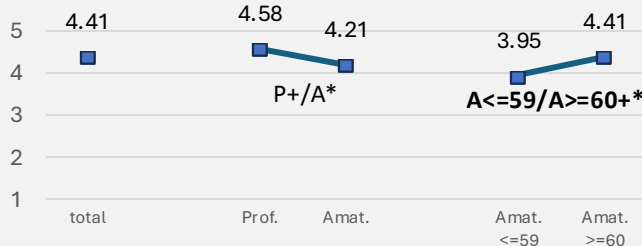


GENDER



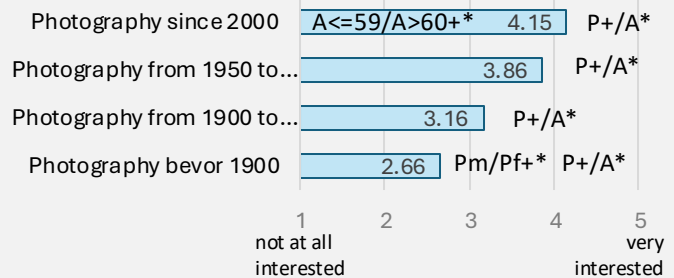
Interest in and Knowledge about Artistic Photography

Interest in artistic photography



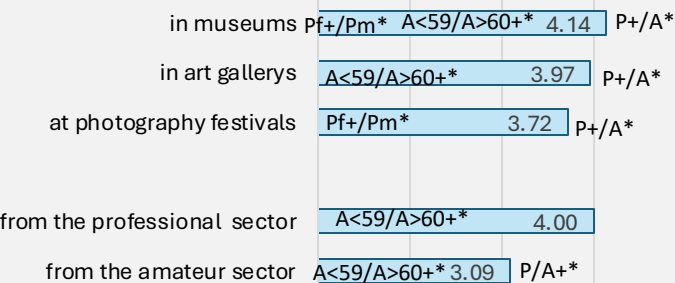
Interest in artistic photography is very high, especially among professionals and amateurs over 60 years old.

Interest in artistic photography from different Eras



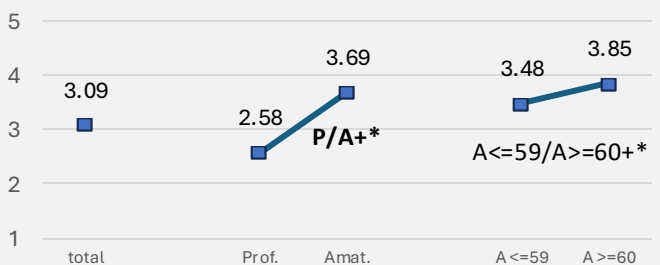
Photography since 2000 is the most interesting, while photography before 1900 is the least interesting. Professionals have a stronger interest in artistic photography from all eras.

Interest in artistic photography ...



High interest in artistic photography in museums and art galleries, especially among professionals.

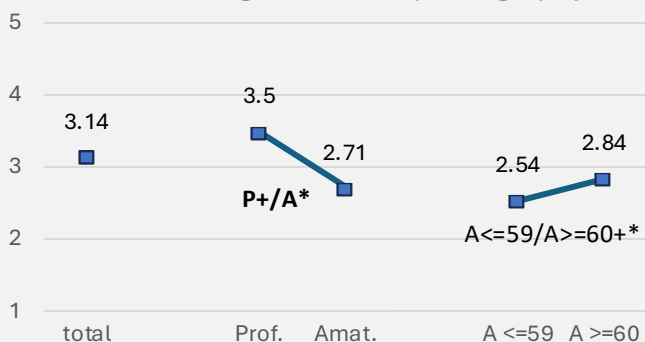
Interest in artistic photography from the amateur sector



Amateurs, especially those over 60 years old, are interested in artistic photography in the amateur field... professionals are generally not.

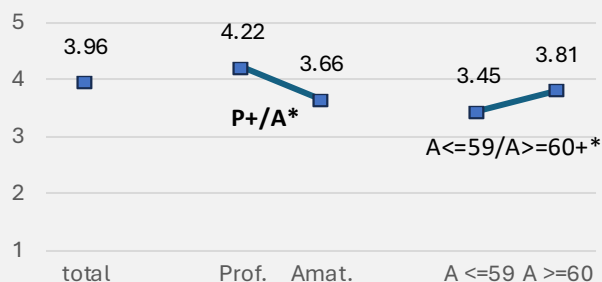
Knowledge of and Engagement with Artistic Photography

Knowledge of artistic photography



Knowledge of artistic photography is highest among professionals. Amateurs over 60 have more knowledge than younger amateurs.

Engagement with artistic photography



Professionals and amateurs over 60 frequently engage with artistic photography. The higher the interest, the greater the knowledge ($r = .57$) and engagement ($r = .72$). The higher the engagement, the greater the knowledge ($r = .70$).

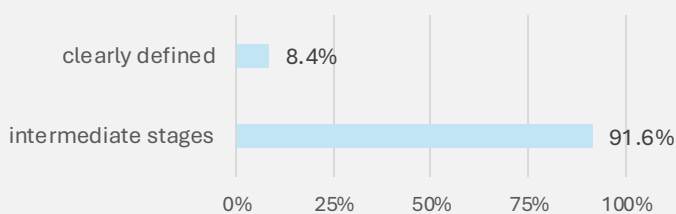
Assessment of artistic photography

An artistic photograph is a work of art



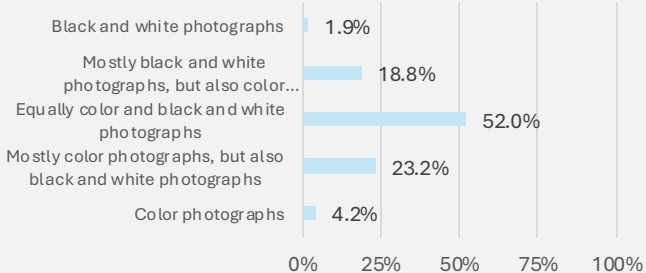
Artistic photographs are clearly regarded as artworks.

Artistic photography: Clearly defined vs. intermediate stages



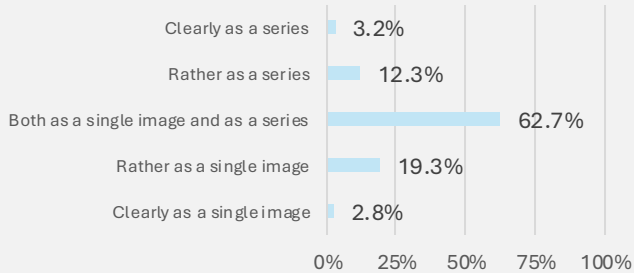
For a large majority, artistic photography is not clear-cut; rather, there are intermediate stages.

Preferences for black and white vs. color in artistic photography



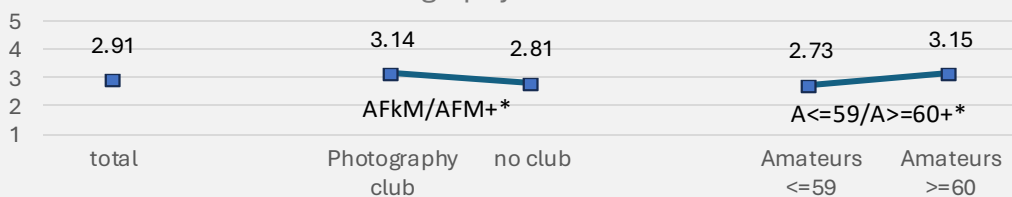
A majority equally prefers artistic photography in black and white and in color.

Preferences for single image vs. series in artistic photography



A majority equally prefers artistic photography as a series and as individual images (professionals tend to prefer series, amateurs tend to prefer individual images).

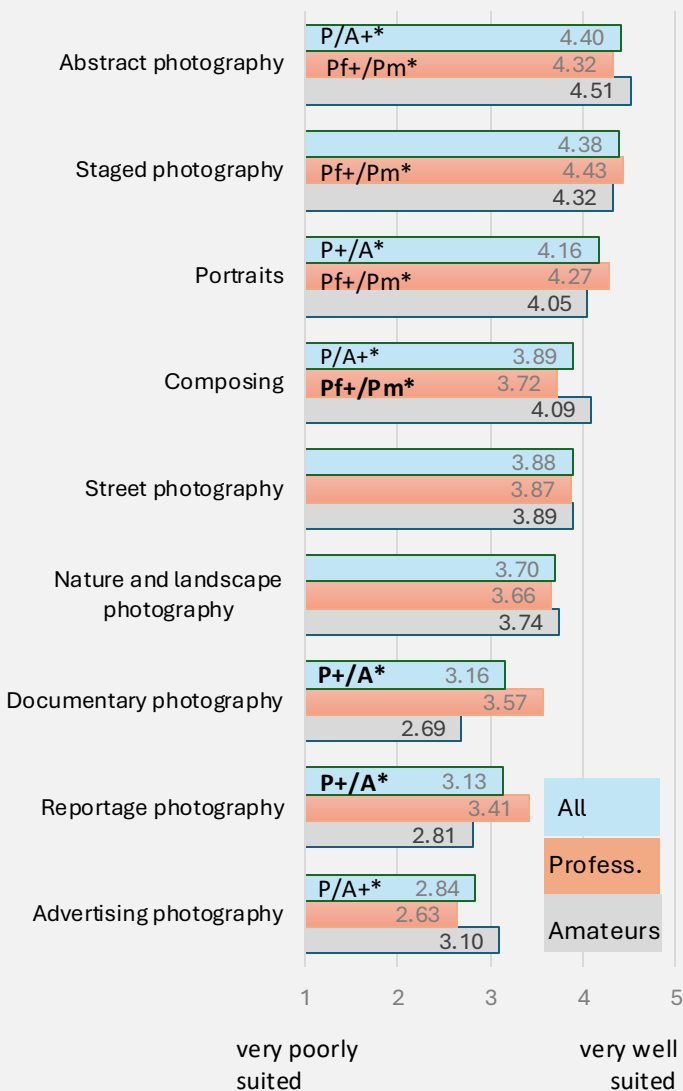
Significance of Technical Quality in the Assessment of Photography as Artistic



Technical quality has only a medium significance for the assessment of artistic photography.

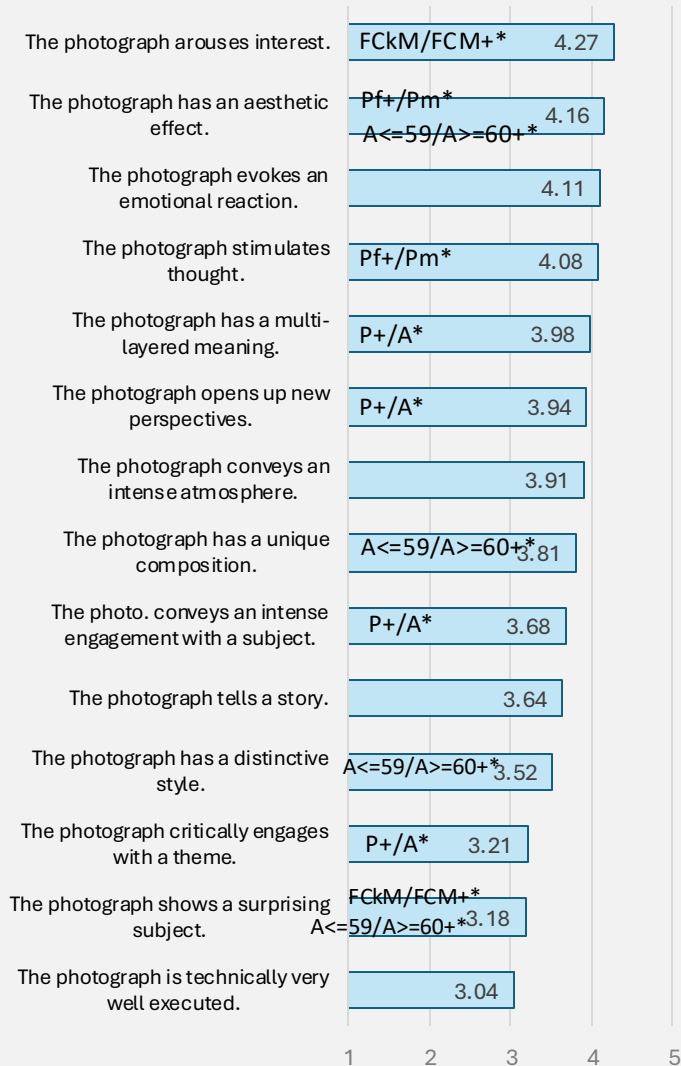
Suitability of Genres for and Criteria of Artistic Photography

Suitability of photographic genres for artistic photography



Abstract photography, staged photography, and portraits are considered the most suitable for artistic photography.

Criteria for artistic photography



For the assessment of a photograph as artistic, the most important factors are that the photograph evokes interest, followed by its aesthetic impact and the emotional reaction it generates. Only moderate importance is given to the technical excellence of the photograph and the presence of a surprising subject.

Factors for Evaluating Artistic Photography

To identify the underlying dimensions of the 14 statements, a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted.

Factor 1: Aesthetic-Emotional Impact (M = 4.11, s = 0.62)

The photograph evokes an emotional reaction; it conveys an intense atmosphere; it arouses interest; it has an aesthetic effect.

Factor 2: Deep Reflection and Narrativity (M = 3.75, s = 0.67; P+/A+)*

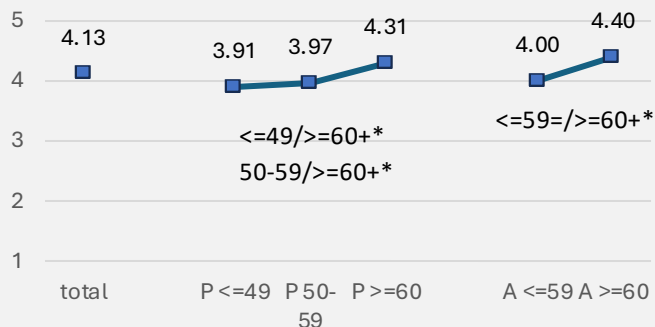
The photograph tells a story; it stimulates thought; it conveys an in-depth engagement with a topic; it has a multi-layered meaning; it critically engages with a theme; it opens new perspectives.

Factor 3: Uniqueness and Technical Excellence (M = 3.39, s = 0.64; A <59/A >60+*)

The photograph has a distinctive style; it features a unique composition; it is technically very well executed; it presents a surprising subject.

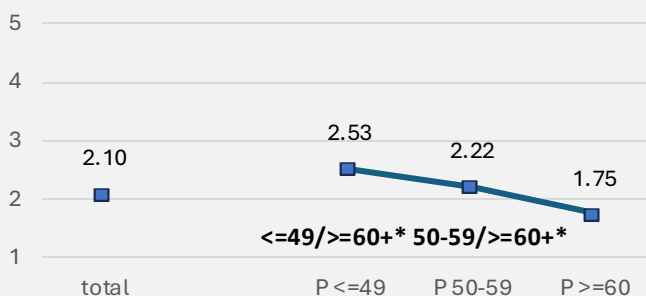
Context of Artistic Photography

An artistic photo should be convincing even without background knowledge



Artistic photos should be convincing without background knowledge, especially for professionals and amateurs over 60 years old.

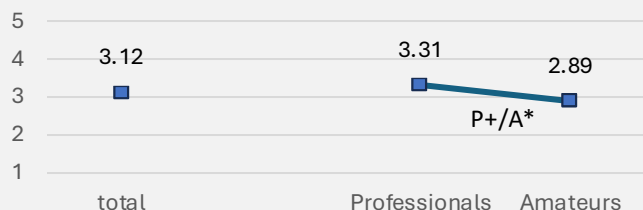
Assessment of a photo as artistic only with background knowledge



The idea that photos can only be considered artistic with background knowledge is mostly rejected, especially by professionals over 60 years old.

Evaluation Competence

Feeling confident in judging photography as artistic



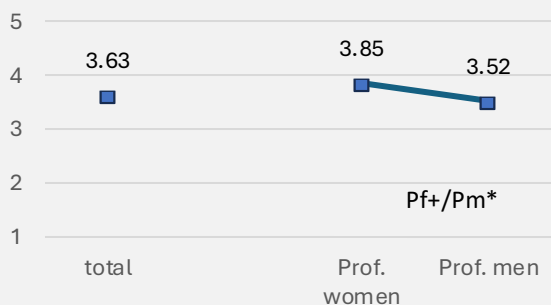
Confidence in evaluating artistic photography is only moderately pronounced, with professionals feeling more confident than amateurs.

Doubt about having the knowledge to adequately evaluate artistic photographs



Few doubts about their own evaluation competence among professionals, more among amateurs.

Perceiving intuitively whether a photograph is artistic or not



There is a tendency to perceive photography as artistic intuitively, especially among female professionals.

Perceiving a Photograph as Artistic Without Having a Clear Explanation for It



Only in the mid-range is photography perceived as artistic without an explanation. This happens significantly less with younger professionals.

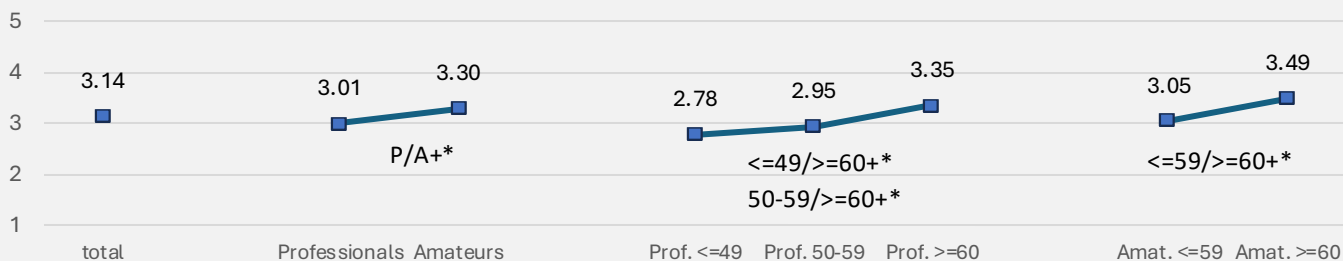
Unsure whether one understands the photographer's intention behind a photograph



There is only limited uncertainty about understanding the intention behind a photograph, with higher uncertainty among amateurs.

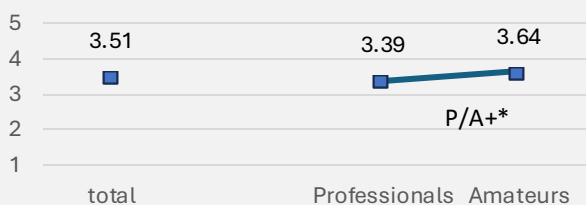
Context of Artistic Photography

Photographs that one perceives as artistic generally please



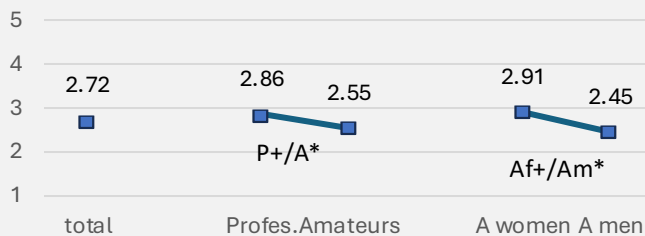
The perception of whether a photograph is considered artistic varies greatly. This is more common among older professionals and amateurs.

Assessment of whether a photograph is artistic or not is always subjective



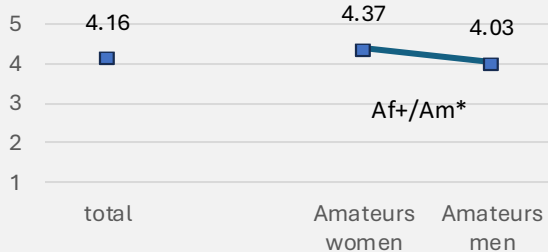
It is generally viewed that the assessment of photography as artistic is always subjective.

There are objective criteria for what constitutes an artistic photograph



The idea that there are objective criteria for artistic photography is generally not recognized, especially among amateurs.

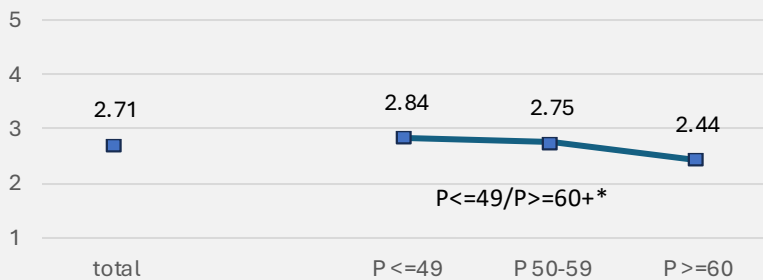
Judging of photos in competitions strongly depends on the preferences of the judges



The evaluations of judges in competitions are perceived as subjective, particularly by female amateurs.

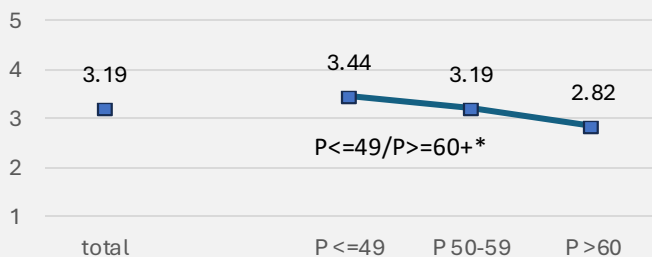
Importance of Expertise

Orientation to experts and curators in the assessment of artistic photography



In the assessment of artistic photography, there is generally no reliance on experts and curators, particularly among professionals over the age of 60.

Perspective of experts and curators is valued



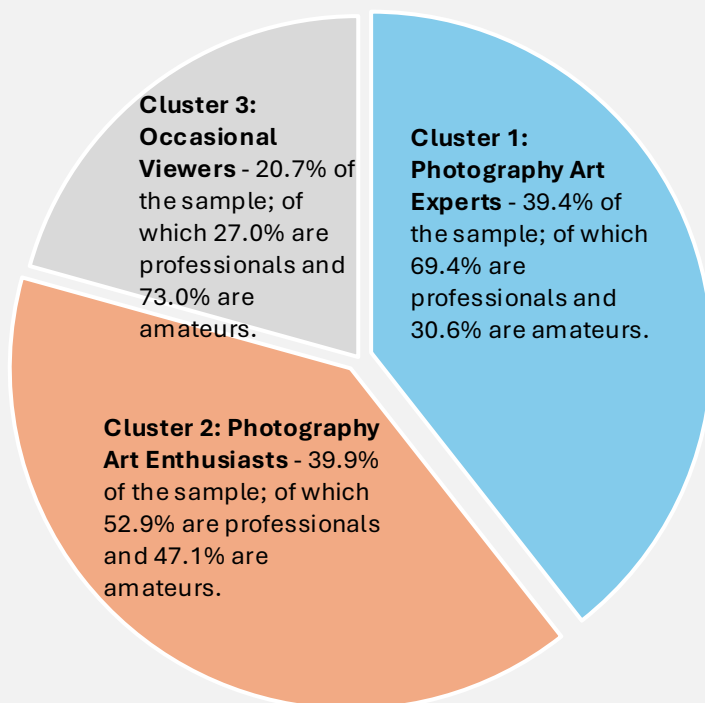
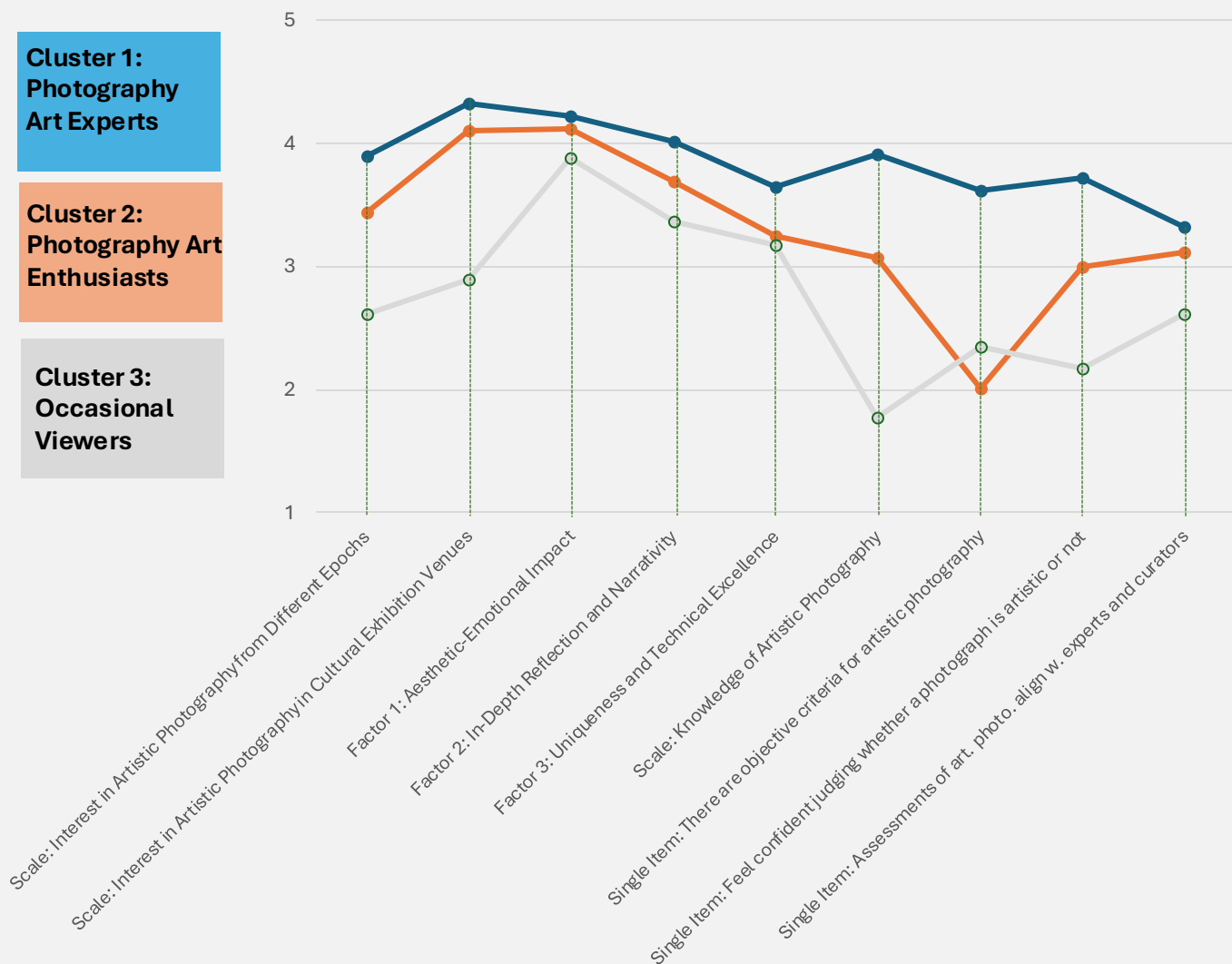
Expertise is only moderately valued, significantly more so by younger professionals.

Alignment of assessment of artistic photography with experts/curators



There is only limited agreement with one's own assessment of artistic photography.

Cluster analysis types of artistic photography



Cluster 1: Photography Art Experts

Highest interest in artistic photography, high valuation of aesthetic-emotional impact, deep reflection and narrativity, extensive knowledge, confidence in judgment, belief in the existence of objective criteria, and tend to align with experts.

Cluster 2: Photography Art Enthusiasts

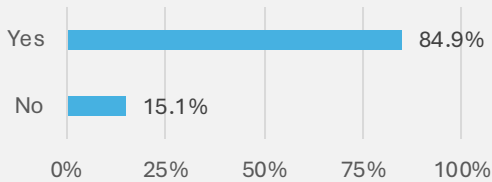
High interest in artistic photography, high significance of aesthetic-emotional impact, moderate reflection and narrativity, moderate knowledge, moderate confidence in judgment, skeptical about objective criteria, and moderate alignment with experts.

Cluster 3: Occasional Viewers

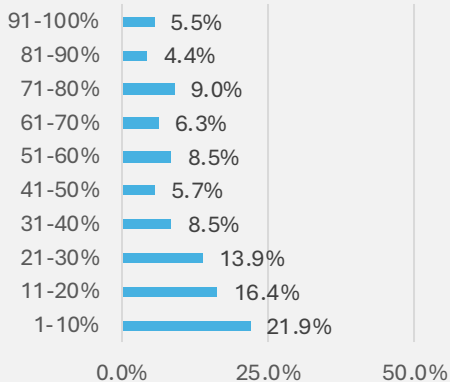
Low interest in artistic photography, moderate valuation of reflection, narrativity, uniqueness, and technical excellence, limited knowledge, skeptical about objective criteria, insecure in judging artistic photographs, and rarely align with experts.

Own Artistic Photography

Engage in artistic photography themselves

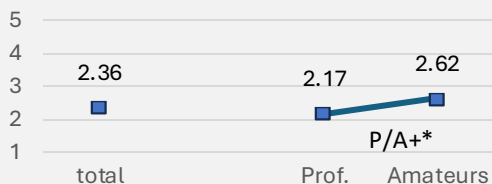


Proportion of own artistic photographs



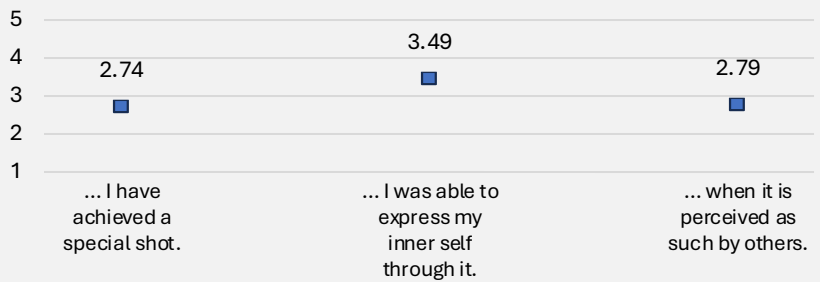
The vast majority engage in artistic photography themselves. Among professionals, 13.4% have more than 80% of their photography classified as artistic, whereas only 5.1% of amateurs achieve this proportion.

It is difficult to assess one's own photography as artistic



It is generally not difficult to assess one's own photographs as artistic.

Own photo is artistic if ...



A photograph is more likely to be perceived as artistic if it successfully expresses the inner self.

"Quasi-Experiment": Influence of Labeling on the Perception of Photography

Labeling as "professional photographer" vs. "amateur photographer"

	Photography 3 Amateur Photographer	Photography 4 Professional Photographer	Photography 5 Amateur Photographer
Photography is liked	no effect	no effect	no effect
Photography is touching	no effect	no effect	no effect
Photography is inspiring	no effect	no effect	no effect
Technical quality	labeling as professional was rated higher	labeling as professional was rated higher	labeling as professional was rated higher
Artistic quality	no effect	no effect	no effect

The designation of whether the photograph was taken by a professional or an amateur only affects slightly the assessment of its technical quality.

Image Description/Intention vs. No Description

Providing an image description leads to a higher evaluation only in a few cases among amateurs; this is not the case for professionals.

Mention of Awards/Prizes vs. No Mention

Mentioning awards or prizes has no effect on the evaluation of the photograph.

Evaluation of Professional vs. Amateur Photographs

Amateur photographs tend to be rated higher by amateurs, whereas this is not the case for professionals.

Correlations between categories

	Photography is liked	Photography is touching	Photography is inspiring	Technical quality	Artistic quality
Photography is liked	--	0,66* up to 0,79* large effect	0,76* up to 0,87* large effect	0,52* up to 0,72* large effect	0,68* up to 0,79* large effect
Photography is touching		--	0,70* up to 0,85* large effect	0,34* medium effect up to 0,59* large effect	0,51* up to 0,71* large effect
Photography is inspiring			--	0,46* medium effect up to 0,69* large effect	0,68* up to 0,77* large effect
Technical quality				--	0,57* up to 0,69* large effect

For all 9 photographs/images, there are very high correlations between all dimensions, indicating that photographs are evaluated holistically.

Summary

The present study investigates the interest in and perception of artistic photography among professional photographers and amateurs in the German-speaking region through an exploratory online study. Additionally, the impact of different labels on the evaluation of photographs was quasi-experimentally examined.

Interest in artistic photography is generally very high, especially among professionals. Contemporary photography (since 2000) is the most popular, while photography before 1900 receives less attention. Professionals show little interest in artistic amateur photography, in contrast to amateurs.

Artistic photographs are largely regarded as works of art, with intermediate stages also being recognized in the assessment of whether a photograph is considered artistic. Abstract photography, staged images, and portraits are deemed particularly suitable for artistic photography, while advertising photography is considered less suitable.

The criteria for evaluating artistic photography are diverse, with aesthetic impact being the most important. Technical quality and surprising subjects, on the other hand, play a subordinate role. A factor analysis identified three main factors: aesthetic-emotional impact, which encompasses both emotional and aesthetic reactions and is the most important factor; the factor "deep reflection and narrativity," which is particularly significant for professionals and includes cognitive engagement and interpretation; and the factor "uniqueness and technical excellence," which covers originality and technical quality but is comparatively less relevant.

A large majority of respondents believe that artistic photographs should be convincing even without background knowledge. The assessment of artistic photography is perceived as subjective, and objective criteria are generally dismissed. External expertise is only partially consulted and only valued to a limited extent.

The cluster analysis identified three types of viewers of artistic photography: "Art Photography Connoisseurs" have a strong interest in artistic photography and possess extensive knowledge in this area. Their standards for artistic photographs are very high, and they tend to believe more in objective criteria for artistic photography and are more likely to agree with expert opinions. This cluster consists predominantly of professional photographers. "Art Photography Enthusiasts" also show a high interest in artistic photography but have average knowledge of it. They are more skeptical about the existence of objective criteria. "Occasional Viewers" make up the smallest cluster, mainly composed of amateurs. Their interest in and knowledge of artistic photography is low. Objective criteria for artistic quality are rejected, and their confidence in evaluating artistic photographs is low. Their assessments rarely align with those of experts.

The professional status of the photographer or additional contextual information has only a limited impact on the perception and evaluation of photographs. Amateurs tend to rate amateur photographs higher than professionals do; however, the reverse is not consistently the case.

Across all nine photographs shown, there are high correlations between the evaluation dimensions such as technical quality, artistic quality, and emotional reactions. Viewers evaluate photos as a whole, where emotional reactions influence the perception of technical and artistic qualities and vice versa.

This study provides a solid foundation for further psychological research in the field of artistic photography.