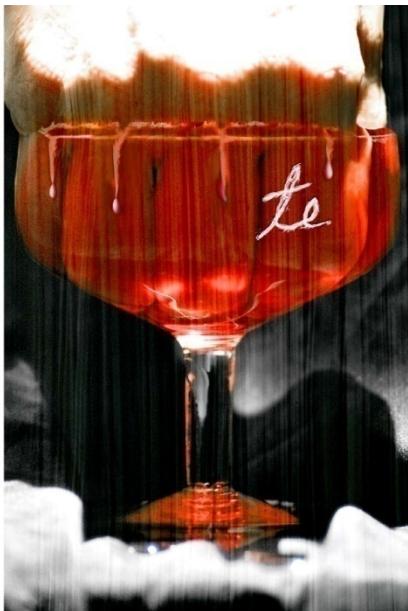


SILABIC PHOTO - COVERINGS.

From the Intervened Photographic Negative to Artificial Intelligence
Future Projection and Participatory Model

Nadal Antelmo
2003–Present



Silabic Photo-Coverings is a visual research project initiated in 2003 that explores the relationship between language, image, and thought through the syllabic fragmentation of words and their translation into an expanded photographic system. The work unfolds as a continuous process that moves across different technologies—analog photography, digital media, and artificial intelligence—without abandoning its original conceptual logic.

The project originated in Cuba from an accidental technical discovery in the photographic laboratory of a sugar mill. A series of errors during the printing of negatives revealed the possibility of manually intervening the photographic support with words divided into syllables. From that moment on, the word ceased to function solely as a linguistic sign and became image, material, and gesture.

In its initial phase, **Silabic Photo-Coverings** were produced through direct intervention on 35 mm color negatives. Each syllable is written, scratched, or covered onto the frame, establishing a physical relationship between text and image. The negatives are then printed onto photographic paper, where the word is visually reconstructed through the accumulation of its fragments. This procedure disrupts the linearity of written language and proposes a non-sequential reading in which meaning emerges from visual and emotional experience.

With the arrival of digital photography and editing tools in the late 2000s, the technique moved into the digital environment. Manual intervention was replaced by digital processes that replicate the original gesture: writing, covering, and fragmentation. This transition expanded the project's formal possibilities and circulation without altering its foundational logic.

From 2015 onward, following a geographical and cultural relocation to the United States, **Silabic Photo-Coverings** began incorporating words in English. This linguistic shift does not function merely as an idiomatic translation, but as a reconfiguration of thought through a new language. The project thus assumes an intercultural dimension in which language becomes a space of friction, learning, and identity reformulation.

In a more recent phase, the project expands into artificial intelligence. Through the training of AI models in the conceptual logic of **Silabic Photo-Coverings**, new works are generated from words previously fragmented into syllables. AI does not replace the original concept, but amplifies it, introducing new visual interpretations that raise questions of authorship, control, originality, and human-machine collaboration.

This latest phase is not conceived as a point of arrival, but as an open field of experimentation. The project advances toward a participatory model in which anyone can generate their own **Silabic Photo-Covering**, expanding the scope of visual language and challenging traditional boundaries of artistic creation in the algorithmic era.

Silabic Photo-Coverings thus takes shape as a sustained investigation over time, in which each technological stage does not replace the previous one, but contains it. The work functions as a living archive of visual thought, capable of adapting to new media without losing its conceptual core: the word as image, and the image as a way of thinking.



Concept and Methodology

A **Silabic Photo-Covering** begins with the selection of a word charged with meaning—emotional, social, or existential.

- The word is divided into syllables.
- The syllable is manually written onto the negative and intervened through scratching or paint.
- Finally, the negatives are printed, and the word emerges reconstructed as a unified visual and conceptual whole.

This procedure dismantles the linearity of written language and replaces it with a hybrid experience situated between photography, painting, calligraphy, and physical action, opening an unprecedented expressive field.

Evolution of the Project

1 — 2003–2008 | Cuba • Analog Phase

Origin of the project and development of the first series through manual intervention of 35 mm photographic negatives.

2 — 2008–2015 | Cuba • Digital Transition

Incorporation of digital photography and editing tools, transferring the technique into the digital environment while preserving its conceptual structure.

3 — 2015–2022 | Miami • Cultural and Linguistic Expansion

Introduction of the English language into the project, reflecting cultural crossing and the reformulation of visual thought through geographical displacement.

4 — 2022–2026 | Artificial Intelligence • Algorithmic Expansion

Training of artificial intelligence models in the conceptual logic of the **Silabic Photo-Covering**, generating new works from syllabically fragmented words and opening critical questions around authorship and human–machine collaboration.

5 — From 2026 onward | Future Projection and Participatory Model

Development of an open system that allows anyone to generate their own **Silabic Photo-Covering** through AI tools trained in the technique.

1 — 2003–2005 | Cuba • Analog Phase

Origin of the project and development of the first series through manual intervention of 35 mm photographic negatives.

In 2003, while living in Cuba—a country marked by restrictions on freedom of expression and limited technological access—I accidentally discovered a way to transform photography into a critical and poetic language.

Without academic training in art and working in the photographic laboratory of a sugar mill, a series of technical errors during negative printing revealed the unprecedented possibility of manually intervening photographic frames with words fragmented into syllables.

This first stage of the project comprises more than twenty series, in which I explored doubts and questions related to my reality. To illustrate the process, five of the most representative series are presented here.

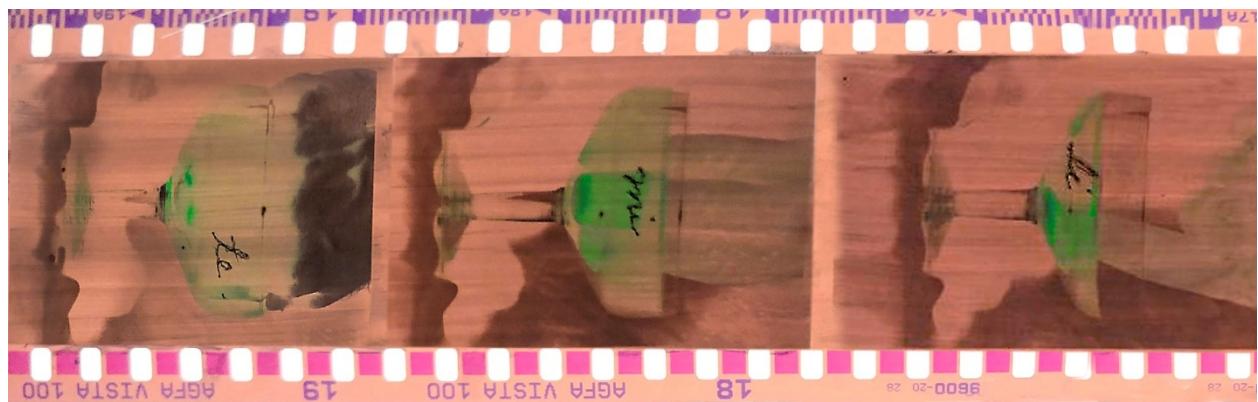
The procedure involved capturing images associated with the central idea of the selected word and then intervening them directly on the 35 mm negative by manually adding the corresponding syllable and the necessary coverings. Each resulting work articulates word and image within a hybrid space between photography, painting, and writing.



35 mm photographic negative ready for printing, used to create the work *Peligro* (Danger).



Silabic Photo-Covering *PE LI GRO*. Year 2003. Final result of this series after printing the three frames that compose the work.



35 mm photographic negative ready for printing, used to create the work *Limite* (Limit).



Silabic Photo-Covering *LI MI TE*. Year 2003. Final result of this series after printing the three frames that compose the work.

2 — 2008–2015 | Cuba • Digital Transition

Incorporation of digital photography and editing tools, allowing the technique to be transferred into the digital environment while maintaining its conceptual structure.

For the creation of these **Silabic Photo-Coverings**, the images corresponding to each syllable were captured digitally and subsequently intervened on a computer using Photoshop, where the syllable was incorporated and the coverings were applied digitally.



Silabic Photo-Covering *TA TUA DA*. Year 2008. Digitally captured photograph after intervention.



Silabic Photo-Covering *VIOLA CION*. Year 2012. Digitally captured photograph after intervention.

3 — 2015–2022 | Miami • Cultural and Linguistic Expansion

Introduction of the English language into the project, reflecting cultural crossing and the reformulation of visual thought resulting from geographical displacement.



Silabic Photo-Covering *RE LA TION SHIP*. Year 2016. Digitally captured photograph after intervention on a computer.



Silabic Photo-Covering *POI SON*. Year 2024. Digitally captured photograph after intervention on a computer.

4 — 2022–2026 | Artificial Intelligence • Algorithmic Expansion

Training of artificial intelligence models in the conceptual logic of the **Silabic Photo-Covering**, generating new works from syllabically fragmented words and opening critical questions around authorship and human–machine collaboration.

At this stage, **Silabic Photo-Coverings** expand into artificial intelligence as a conceptual extension of the process initiated in 2003. AI is not incorporated as a technical tool or an automation resource, but as a system capable of internalizing the project's visual and conceptual grammar and operating from within it.

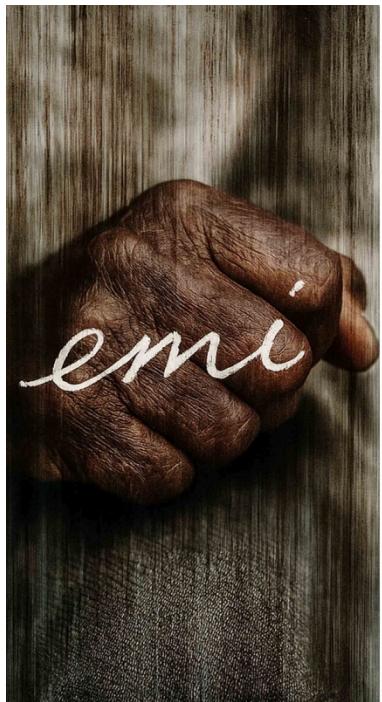
The training of the artificial intelligence is based on the transfer of that logic: the syllabic fragmentation of the word, its visual translation, and the tension between control, chance, and error. Drawing from the written concept of the **Silabic Photo-Covering** and references to the original works created through manual intervention of 35 mm photographic negatives, the system is prepared to generate new visual configurations without relying on predefined themes or guided aesthetic decisions.

The **Silabic Photo-Coverings** generated through artificial intelligence thus reveal a partially autonomous behavior of the system. The AI receives only the word divided into syllables; the result emerges from the interaction between human language, conceptual structure, and algorithmic logic. This unguided production introduces a new layer of uncertainty into the creative process and shifts authorial control toward a shared and negotiated territory.

Rather than offering formal answers, this phase opens critical questions around authorship, originality, error, and human–machine collaboration. Artificial intelligence does not replace the project's initial gesture; instead, it reactivates its foundational core: the loss of control as a condition for allowing the image to think.



Silabic Photo-Covering *PO LI TIC*. Year 2025. Work generated using ChatGPT



Silabic Photo-Covering *EMI GRANT*. Year 2025. Work generated using ChatGPT.



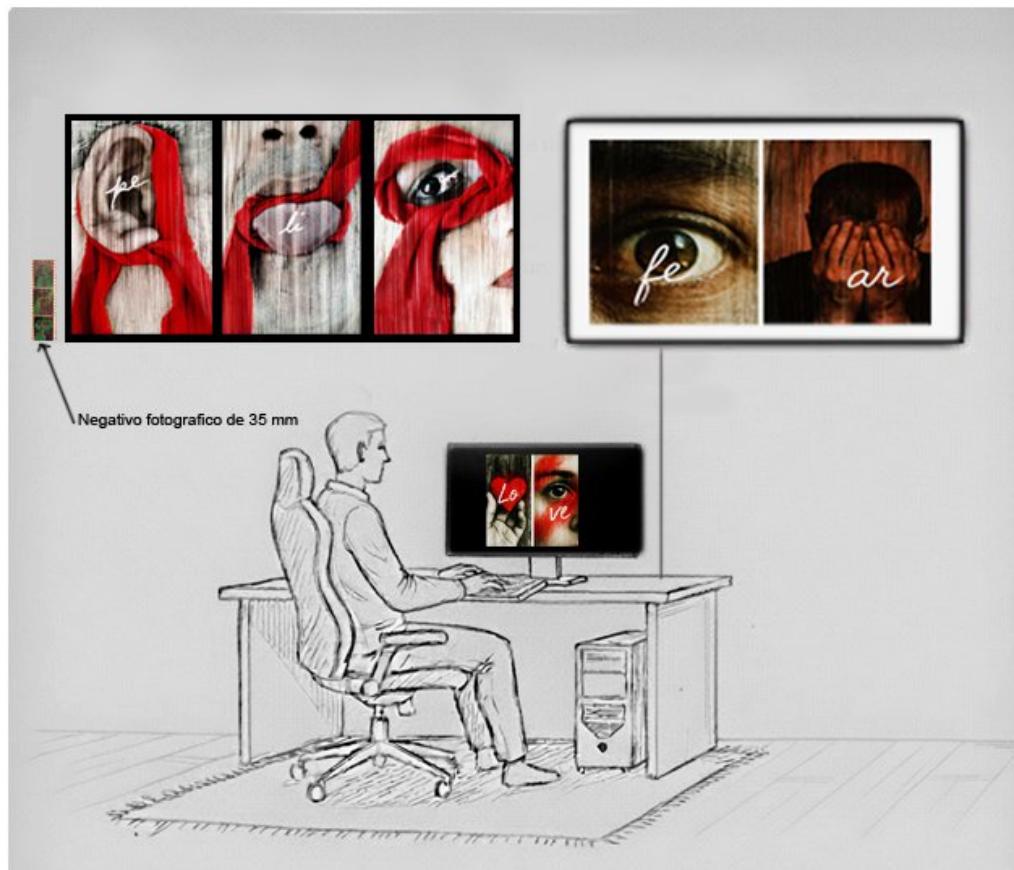
Silabic Photo-Covering *HO PE*. Year 2025. Work generated using ChatGPT.

5 — From 2026 onward | Future Projection and Participatory Model

Development of an open system that allows anyone to generate their own **Silabic Photo-Covering** through AI tools trained in the technique.

The final work proposed, **Silabismos Fotocubiertos (Silabic Photo-Coverings). Future Projection and Participatory Model**, is conceived as an open and evolving artistic platform. Through a computer equipped with artificial intelligence, the audience gains access to a co-creative process in which the production of meaning is not guaranteed, and where error, deviation, and discomfort are constitutive elements of the experience.

An individual enters a word divided into syllables into an artificial intelligence system trained in the conceptual grammar of the **Silabic Photo-Covering**—for example, the word “Lo Ve.” From this single input, the system generates a unique and unrepeatable **Silabic Photo-Covering**. The result does not conform to prior expectations or aesthetic validation criteria, but emerges from the interaction between human language, conceptual structure, and algorithmic logic.



The generated **Silabic Photo-Coverings** are presented continuously through an on-screen slideshow, forming a real-time archive. Alongside this digital projection, a **Silabic Photo-Covering** created through the manual intervention of a 35 mm color negative is exhibited, establishing a direct dialogue between the project's material origin and its contemporary algorithmic expansion. The dimensions of the installation are variable and adapt to the available exhibition space.

Silabic Photo-Coverings cease to function as a closed artwork and become an active system exposed to error. The incorporation of artificial intelligence does not represent a technical solution or a linear evolution, but rather the conscious opening of a field of uncertainty in which authorship is displaced and control is put at risk.

In its participatory phase, the creator defines the conceptual grammar of the system, artificial intelligence acts as an autonomous agent, and the viewer becomes integrated as a generator within the process. This model introduces central questions: what happens to failed **Silabic Photo-Coverings**? Is everything that is produced archived? Who decides what remains? Can the system make mistakes and produce meaning through error?

The work thus takes shape as a living and conflicted archive in expansion, where the intervened 35 mm negative, the digital image, and contemporary algorithmic production coexist. **Silabic Photo-Coverings** do not conclude; they are activated, transformed, and risked, reclaiming error as the core of creative thought.