

## SOHO PHOTO

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### WINNERS OF SOHO PHOTO'S 7TH ANNUAL JURIED ALTERNATIVE PROCESSES COMPETITION 2011

Contrary to popular opinion, alternative process practitioners today are neither technophobes nor luddites. While some artists certainly disavow the use of digital devices and commercially available products, many of the images we see today are made through a combination of antiquarian and contemporary technologies. Digital capture, digitally enlarged negatives, and commercially marketed alternative process chemistry are all in wide use.

Even with modern advances and easily accessible materials, the complexities and challenges of working with alternative processes can be daunting to the uninitiated. The allure and satisfaction of producing tangible, hand-made, and often unique photographs comes not without a substantial commitment of time and effort and a willingness to accept and work through the numerous, sometimes uncontrollable idiosyncrasies inherent to the processes. Chemical reactions, paper formulas, water quality, and even weather conditions can all have a substantial effect on the final image. The rewards of all that effort however, is an experience that many photographers today have either forgotten or have never known. It is the magic of photography as observed by the inventors and early practitioners of the medium – an experience unmatched by today's standard practices.

It can often seem that the alt process community is divided into two camps – those whose goal it is to exercise absolute control of materials to produce images of technical excellence and those who are more willing to accept imperfection, sometimes even exacerbating flaws, for the sake of expressive intent. There is certainly no shortage of skilled technicians using historic and other atypical photographic processes, but without a concept or a distinctive point of view, even the most meticulously crafted work leaves us with little to discuss beyond process. Neither technique nor expression alone makes for great art or even interesting pictures.

My criteria for selecting work for this exhibition included technical proficiency, compelling imagery, and consistency of vision. I looked for work that was intelligent, thoughtful, engaging, entertaining, humorous, challenging, and devoid of kitsch, cliché, and the obvious. Above all, my priority was to reward those artists whose work communicated distinct ideas through the effective use of their chosen process.

While it took dozens of viewings and much deliberation to decide which work to select for the exhibition, my top choice was apparent at first sight. Barbara Ciurej & Lindsay Lochman's exquisite portraits of elderly women adorned with botanical specimens by way of cyanotype photograms is a elegant elegy to old age and the passage of time. This work also nicely references Anna Atkins, an English botanist and the first recognized female photographer, who is credited with publishing the first book of photographic illustrations, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*.

Denyse Murphy's Polaroid emulsion transfers of flowers were my second choice, but not until I realized that these flowers were actually fashioned from arterial images of her mother's cardiac stent procedure. This is another smart match of process and concept, a veritable bouquet of contemporary floral images reminiscent of Irving Penn's flowers, and a fitting tribute to the artist's mother.

David Zimmerman's landscapes were my third choice. These prints avoid the traditional characteristics of the platinum/palladium process, namely rich dark shadows and long tonal scale, in favor of a high key, almost mirage-like quality suggesting the extreme conditions of the desert.

I'd like to thank Soho Photo and Maria Burns for allowing me the opportunity to jury the Soho Photo Alternative Process Competition. Most importantly, I wish to thank all the artists who submitted photographs for consideration. It was a pleasure to see such a wide range of process, subject matter and individual approaches to the medium.

Michael Paris Mazzeo  
NYC, September, 2011

The following photographers were selected for the November show:

FIRST PLACE	Barbara Ciurej & Lindsay Lochman	Chicago, IL
SECOND PLACE	Denyse Murphy	Haverhill, MA
THIRD PLACE	David Zimmerman	Taos, NM
HONORABLE MENTION	Barbara Dombach	Holtwood, PA
HONORABLE MENTION	Danielle Ezzo	Brooklyn, NY
HONORABLE MENTION	Carol Flueckiger	Lubbock, TX
	Laura Shill	Denver, CO
	Herbert Hoover	New York, NY
	David Adams	Tempe, AZ
	Anna Han	San Francisco, CA
	Monika Ozog	Brooklyn, NY
	Matel Rokke	Lincoln, NE
	Will Salley	Laguna Beach, CA
	Emma Powell	Ames, IA
	Alan Vlach	Trenton, ME