

LIFE THROUGH A LENS

BY: FRANS SMIT

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Department of Photography

Faculty of Human Sciences

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Recipe for Art World Success

Take one pinch first rate work.

Add a smidgen of controversy.

Stir with rich social connections.

*Let simmer with critical attention and
the consensus of the art world that
the work is important.*

Decant and let sit for ten years.

*Improve flavor with frequent exhibitions
and publication of work.*

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INTRODUCTION

Photography is art. It is the new art of the 19th and 20th centuries, and is constantly being explored and developed.

Photography is about being creative, and being creative means thinking and being on the look out for new things and ideas all the time.

Each photograph communicates the meaning of a particular moment in time. The camera is only a technical means of artistically expressing what we feel. Edward Steichen once said: "For it is the artist that creates a work of art, not the medium. It is the artist in photography that gives form to content by a distillation of ideas, thought, experience, insight and understanding." (Markowski, 1984:25)

Creating a market for the work of an artist is an art in and of itself. It is virtually impossible for an artist to create these conditions alone. Help and support of a knowledgeable, experienced, and well-connected art dealer are required.

There is nothing like being in the news for making art more marketable. Recent controversies surrounding obscenity have done wonders for the market for the works of Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe.

Social connections are important. There are surprisingly few truly important players in the art and photography world. Use your connections. Socialise!

THE INFLUENCE THAT PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART HAD ON ONE ANOTHER

"Photography is more than art", Lawrence Gowing recently remarked. It is difficult to prove the two-way influences between photography and painting. Painters on the one had constructed their pictures and photographers on the other hand mostly search for a ready-made scene. Both mediums are affected by the norms set by critics, editors, art dealers and graphic designers. Modern art seem to have no functional use nowadays. As Paul Hill said, "Art, after all, cannot exist without art".

Those sometimes fear the power of creative expression in authority. As Queen Victoria said, "Beware of artists, you do not know where they have been!". So photographers should probably stop trying to seek respectability and status in the art world and concentrate more on trying to make sense of the world, their place in it and expanding their own creativity. Before you condemn someone else's work, try to find out what the maker's intention was. People tend to dislike or fear what they cannot understand. Blind prejudice can be destructive, but by exploring new possibilities you can develop your intellectual capabilities and expand your creative thinking.

In the 19th Century, photography had an enormous effect on artists. Out of focus and blurred images, the capturing of human gestures and positions and the unique ways in which the photographic frame crops things interested the impressionists.

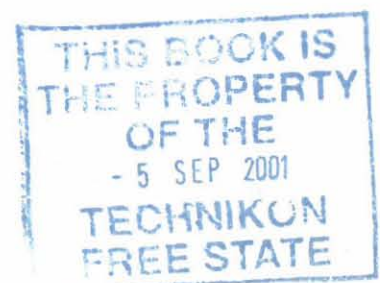
In France, back in 1874 painters Renoit, Picasso, Monet and others formed a secessionist group. In the same year they held a exhibition in Nadar's (a French photographer) recently vacated Paris studio. Nadar believed in encouraging young artists and doubtlessly helped in the enterprise.

One work shown, 'Impression: Sunrise', provided a name for the new group, who were thereafter known as the impressionists. (Langford, 1986: 19)

An atmosphere of light and shadow. Objects lack of firm outlines are characteristic of most impressionistic paintings. A lot of these paintings were done outdoors and changes in natural conditions can be observed in these works.

Most of these artists' work that were shown on exhibition, held in France between the years of 1876 and 1886 were received with hostility. Painters preferred not to admit that they used photographs although they often commissioned them for reference. The further development of black and white photography as a form of art encouraged impressionist painters to emphasise use of colour. The need to distance themselves from photography influenced painters' movement towards more personal expression and less to realism.

Multiple images and frozen movements were utilised by modernist painters in the early 20th Century. Photography played an important role in the developing of Dada, Surrealism, Photo-realism and conceptual movements.



JOHN HEARTFIELD

John Heartfield, the son of a socialist poet, was born in Berlin by the name of Helmut Herzfeld, but anglicised his name in 1916. He did commercial work when he was an art student in Berlin and became associated with politically involved artists. An important year for Heartfield was 1917, when he met the painter George Grosz. They collaborated for many years and were very close friends.

"The Montage-Poster Heartfield" that Grosz made of his friend in 1920, is most likely a comment on Heartfield's devotion to his chosen medium. This Montage, a photograph of some mechanical cluster is mounted over the area of the heart.

FIGURE 1



"Montage-Poster Heartfield." 1920

LEE MILLER

Lee Miller was a 22 year old American who sought an aesthetic, rather than a personal, identity through Surrealism. Went to Europe to pose nude for a well-known New York photographer. In New York she was already a well-known photographic model.

Edward Steichen, told her to become a photographer and offered to introduce her to Man Ray. In 1929 she went to Paris in search of a more adventurous and open-minded lifestyle. She was crushed when she found out that Man Ray had left for the summer. When they met by chance in a café she introduced herself as his new student. He replied that he was leaving for Biarritz the next day and that he had no students. "Captivated he allowed her to accompany him. I never looked back since, she said".

A belief that photography was an art inferior to painting was a view shared by Miller and Man Ray. To free Man Ray to paint she offered to do the straining darkroom work her self. In 1929 and 1932 they worked so closely together that they could not remember which one of them made a specific photograph.

One day Miller was working in the darkroom and a chance discovery led to the first salaried photographs:

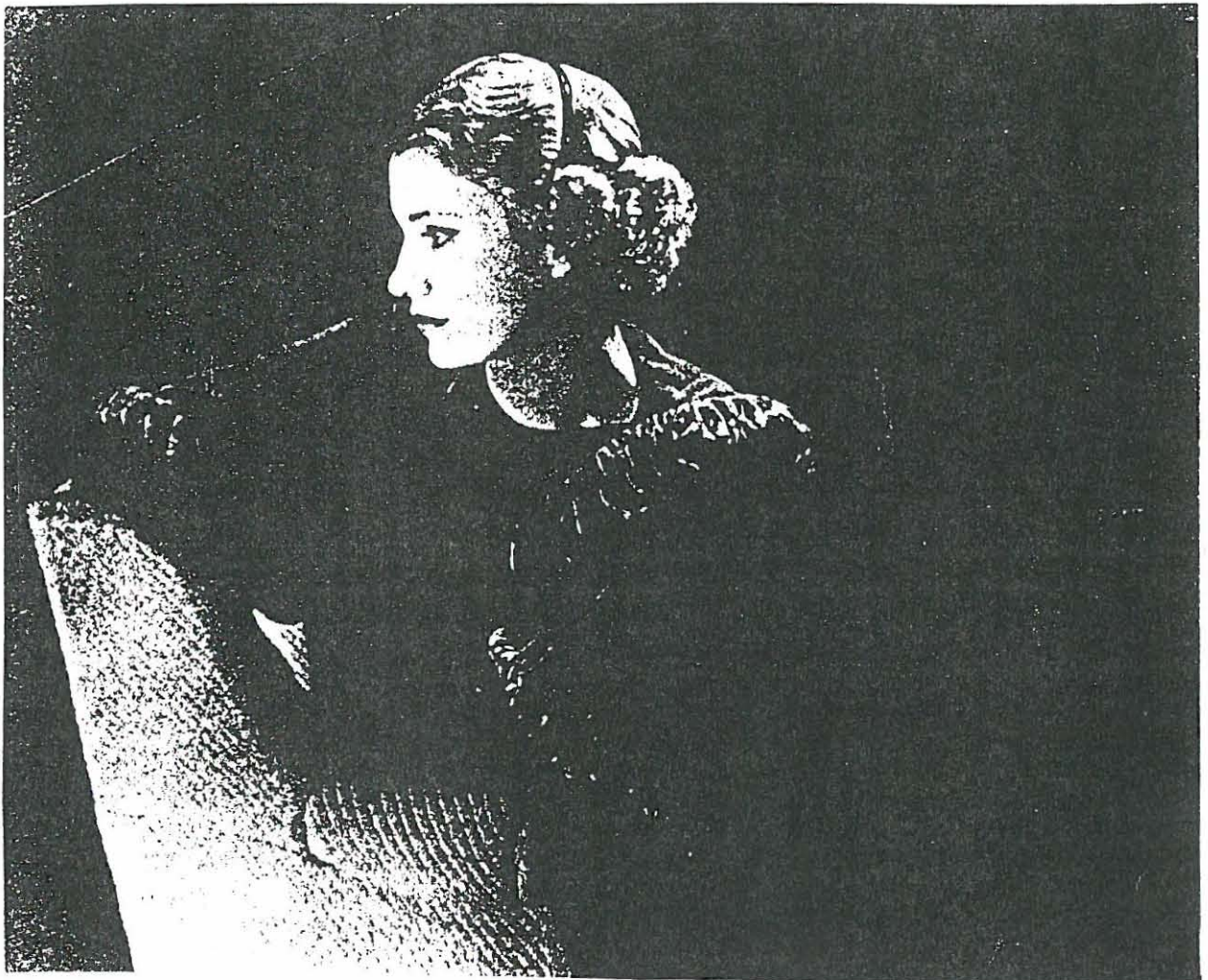
"Something crawled across my foot in the darkroom and I let out a yell and turned on the light. I never did find out what it was, a mouse or what. Then I quickly realised that the film was totally exposed: there in the development tanks, ready to be taken out, were a dozen practically fully-developed negatives of a nude against a black background.



Man Ray grabbed them, hypo and looked at them later. He didn't even bother to bawl me out, since I was so sunk. When he looked at them, the unexposed parts of the negatives, which had been the black background, had been exposed by this sharp light that had been turned on and they had developed, and came right up to the edge of the white, nude body.... It was all very well by making that on accidental discovery, but then Man had to set about how to control it and make it come out exactly the way he wanted each time".

Both of them used the solarization technique in their work. Her first exhibition she gave in 1933 at a New York gallery that was owned by Julian Levy included many of these photographs.

In 1932, after she left Paris, she opened her own studio in New York City.



For many people the photograph is something of a mystery. What is a photograph? This question will have as many answers as there are photographs. However, there will be, in all probability, an overlapping of ideas and definitions.

ANSEL ADAMS:

"A photograph is not an accident - it is a concept. It exists at or before the moment of exposure of the negative. From that moment on to the final print, the process is chiefly one of craft; the pre-visualised photograph is rendered in terms of the final print by series of processes peculiar to the medium. But when a photograph has the 'feel' of an etching or lithograph, or any other medium, it is questionable - just as questionable as a painting that is photographic in character".

HARRY CALLAHAN:

"The photographs that excite me are the photographs that say something in a new manner; not for the sake of being different, but ones that are different because the individual is different and the individual expresses himself".

EDWARD STEICHEN:

"As photography, I would like to include colour images directly projected on a screen by coloured beams of light, even when made without the intervention of the camera".

Each of these photographers knows exactly what a photograph is, and what it is not, and what it can be. The main thought is that creativity, self-expression and the individual experience are of the utmost importance to the photograph.

Composition means the choice and arrangement of the subject matter within the confines of the finished picture. The camera can only record what is imaged on the sensitive material, and the photographer must control this, for example, by choice of viewpoint: its angle and distance from the subject, by controlling the placing of the subject within the picture space; or by suitable arrangement of the elements of the picture.

COMPOSITIONAL DEVICES

Composition must contribute to the expression of the photographer's idea. The photographer must be able to construct and focus his idea clearly in order to convey the message effectively. When he has formulated a specific idea about what he wants to say, he must know which elements to include or exclude. As he plans his still life image, his ultimate goal should be to combine the visual elements with the elements of design in such a way as to successfully express the idea. The compositional decisions the photographer makes will affect the reaction of the viewer.

THE GOLDEN SECTION

It is also known as the "Rule of Thirds", this is an aid to strengthen your composition in a photograph.

The principle is based on the idea that you divide a space into thirds, both vertically and horizontally. The eye then focused most comfortably at the points where these lines cross each other. When you arrange the important elements of the picture on these points, you can be assured that the observer will receive your intent.

In the first chapter of *Genesis* we read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "let there be light", and there was light".

Light enables us to see; it gives form. Light is the medium that forms the photograph and is controlled by the photographer (mostly in the studio).

In black-and-white photographs, one has a greater sense of light, the whites are read as light itself and all the blacks and greys as the absence of light.

In at least two respects, colour photography is in comparison to black-and-white and the perception of colour. First, the emotional responses to colour are extremely powerful, which could change the photographers perception of light. And second, the physics of colour (the scientific study of) as well as optical, pigment and light-colour are all subjects that require separate discussions.

Once the photographer understands the theory of colour and can distinguish the differences between the quality of light or brightness present in hues and colours and light itself, he has without a question a most powerful tool to work with.

There are two types of light: Natural light and artificial light.

Outdoor light (natural) is constantly changing from moment to moment; shadows shift, gets brighter and darker. As atmospheric changes occur and the sun moves across the sky - natural light is constantly changing. As the seasons and the earth's distance from the sun change, so do the qualities of light.



Then there's artificial light. Generally, flash photographs show a flatness of modelling and lack of texture, with thin shadows giving little suggestion of any volume. But flash lighting can be controlled and as the universe - square law states: The further the object is from the source of light, the less light will fall upon it, with the effect that the background goes black and lacks detail while the foreground is often brightly lit.

4.2

SHAPE

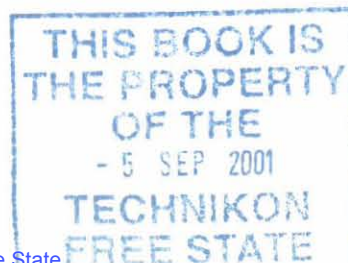
The first step for a photographer in composing a shot is the visualising of shape, form, texture and colour. However, there is no hard and vast rule that one picture should contain all these elements for it to succeed.

Shape in image-building is often considered the starting point of the usual elements, since it is shape that one reads first. Shape is the logical starting point because it is, for the photographer's purpose, the simplest component, suggesting only vertical and horizontal dimensions.

By using different lenses, various shapes can be achieved. By forgetting about the 'normal' appearance all together, the photographer may be able to find many non-representational shapes in a scene.

Shape can be used to provide information directly linked to an object. It can even serve as the main photographic subject. Contrast can be emphasised between shape in a scene. These shapes may echo each other and can carry specific messages.

To lend strength and interest to a shape, it can be placed against simple, contrasting backgrounds, or the basic means of repetition and variation can be used. If a shape is silhouetted against a contrasting background volume is eliminated and shape is emphasised.





The above photograph depicts a lily that are gently modelled by light and creates volume with it's paper thin wall. Just the front tip is in focus - leading the eye into a hart-shape form with a lozenge shape projecting from the centre.

The photograph was shot on FP4 with a 35mm camera. A 80mm lens atF4 was used. The flower was lit with a single light from the bottom. A contrasting black background accentuates the flower.

4.3 *TONE*

Light creates tones and tones assists in the building of visual elements as volume, texture, space and shadows - giving shape.

For photography, 'tone' or more 'zone' replaces the term 'value'. The zone scale, like the value scale, is a simple series of tones arranged from white to black, covering about eight greys. The photographer who understood the zone scale and the zone system, as created by Ansel Adams, could - like the painter or draughtsman - manipulate the zone scale at will to create images high in contrast; low-key or middle-key.



Under normal lighting conditions, all subject matter will contain many gradations of tone between black and white that extend beyond the zone scale. The range of tones depends upon lighting conditions and the properties of the materials such as colour, density, transparency, texture and the ability to reflect. One of the most valuable tonal functions is to convey a sense of volume and form. When lighting conditions are hard and come from a single direction, exposure averaged from the lightest and darkest areas will produce a wider range of tones that gently moves from one zone to another can be most effective in creating a sense of volume and in establishing the illusion of the third dimension.

Low-key tones can produce images which evoke a sense of the mysterious, the forbidding. High-key images on the other hand tend to give a sense of space, softness and delicacy.

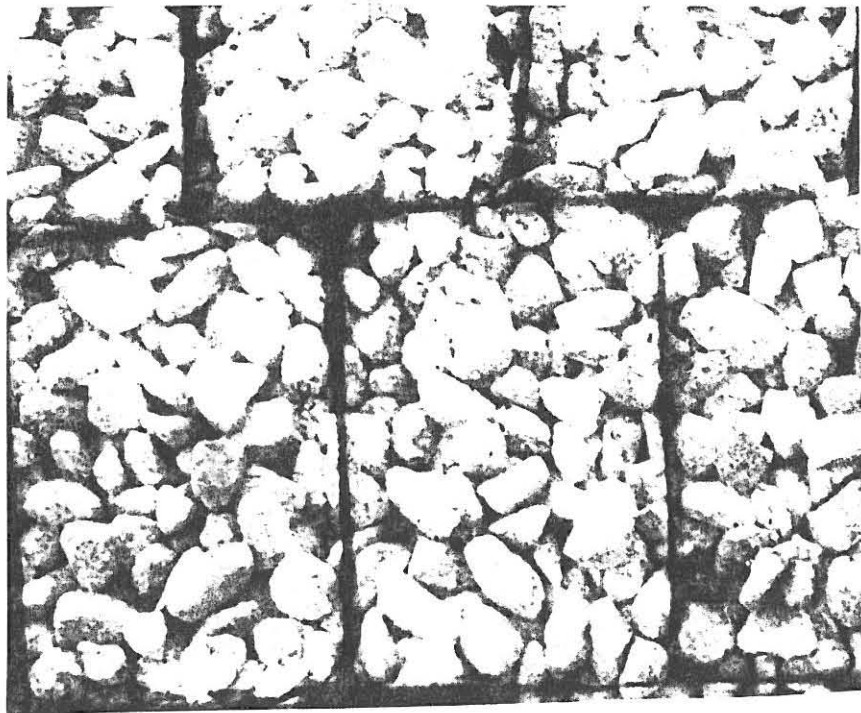
In the photograph the following a monochromatic, dreamy mood is created by these tones. At first glance it appears to be composed of four or five tones, but with time one discovers that the image is a collection of many greys, black and white.

The composition (the lines moving across the picture) also functions as a method that divides the major tone into three distinct areas.

Even though photographic images have flat surface, they can evoke texture, which is by its nature three dimensional, with remarkable success. Modern lenses and film can capture the finest details of a surface, and a variety of lighting techniques can exploit, or even simulate any sort of textural quality - jagged, glossy or anything in between.

Photography is with all certainty the medium that records texture the most convincingly. By using the right type of lighting and by controlling shadows and highlights, surfaces of photographs can become almost touchable. The quality of the light must be the first consideration when a photographer wants to reveal texture. Highlights and shadows create texture.

To exaggerate or to emphasise any delicate texture, the light should be strong, directional and angled to pick out the highlights.



Introducing colour to photography broadens creative possibilities by employing the most compelling quality of vision – but it also demands subtle judgements to get the most out of the addition. Too much colour or unsuitable colour relationships can all frustrate a photographer's intention.

Yet, once the challenge is met, colour adds another dimension in visual boldness. Colours can be selected, concentrated or muted to create a degree of perception scarcely available to the eye in its routine scanning of the world.

Colour is a dominant element in the visual arts, but not necessarily the most important. Colour represents reality, you perceive life in colour and that is why most people prefer photographs and illustrations in colour.



Patterns can be created out of any number or combination of lines, shapes or colours. When these elements are repeated many times, a rhythm develops and a significant pattern is created. A pattern needs a centre of interest to control it, otherwise it would become disorganised. Patterns surrounds us everyday, we use them to decorate our homes and nature provides us with an endless number of patterns. For example, the stripes on animals that works as camouflage and the patterns on plants, fruit and vegetables that is used to attract attention.

Patterns differ from texture, which also displays repetition, because patterns do not necessarily imply a third dimension, as texture does.

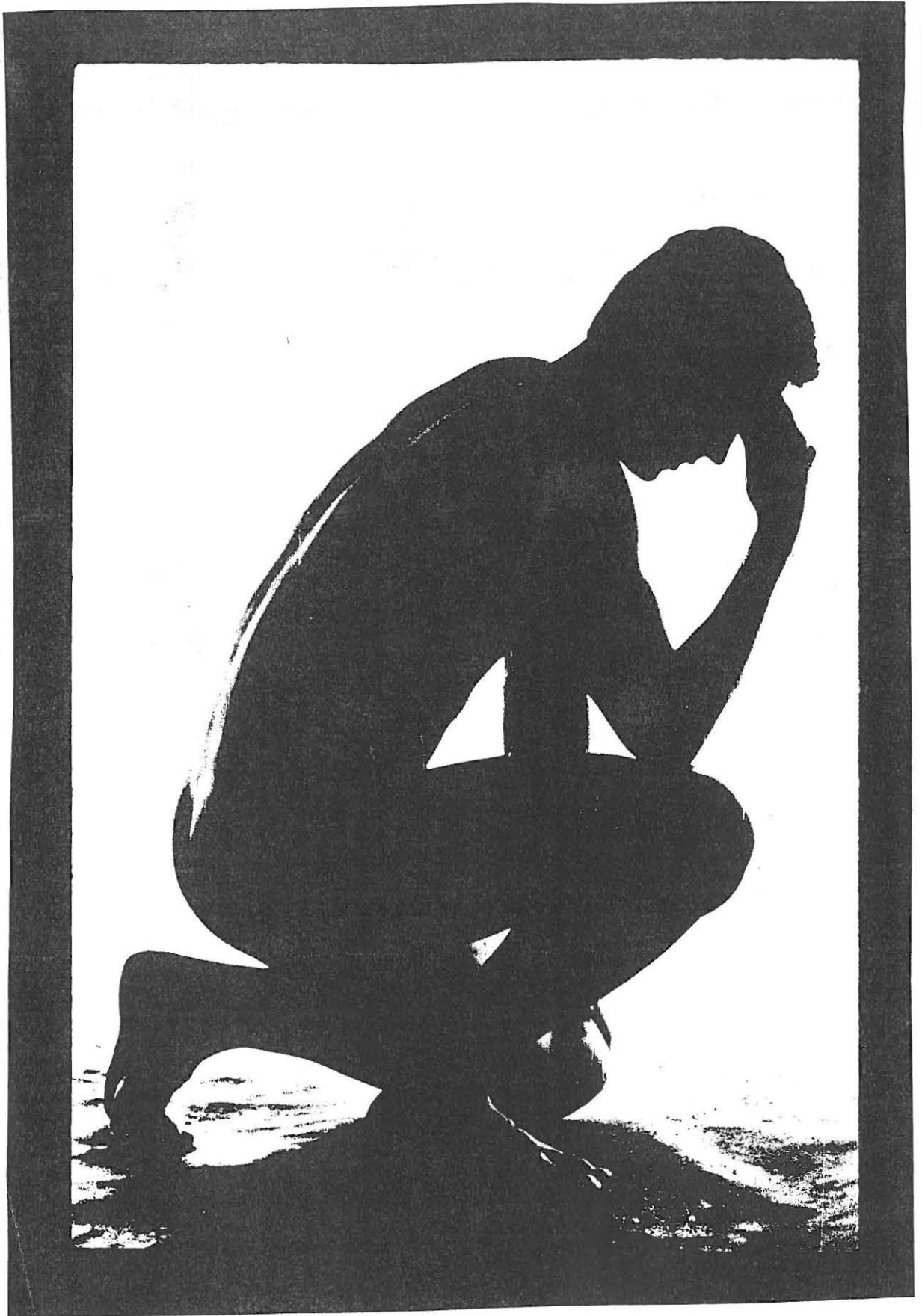
It is perhaps because pattern is a kind of order and our minds seek order in the world around us that the eye searches, consciously or not, for patterns in the surrounding scene.



GEORGE TICE: *Tree No. 19, California*, 1965

Contrast in a photographic image is both a visual impression and a measurable characteristic. Visually, contrast is the degree to which image tones and colours are distinctly and vividly separated from one another. The total impression is partly related to the intensity of the individual tones, and partly to the intensity of adjacent and surrounding tones. Contrast can be measured as the degree of difference between various silver densities in black-and-white images, or dye densities in colour images.

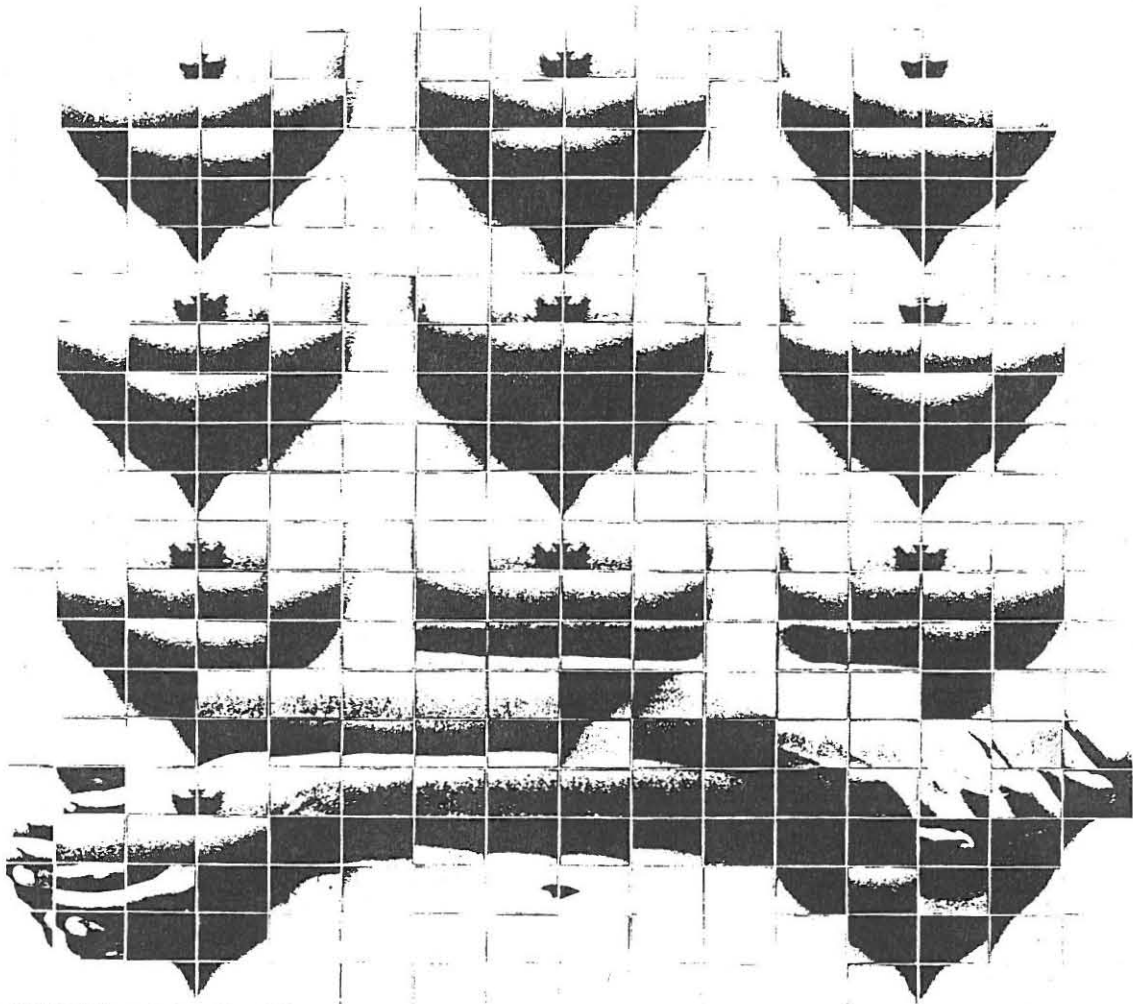
When we speak of the "contrast" of an image, we usually mean the overall contrast - the difference between the maximum and minimum densities. This may be called "scale", or in measured terms, "density range". In a black-and-white print, contrast most often refer to the difference between pure white paper base and the maximum black that can be produced.



5.1

MONTAGE

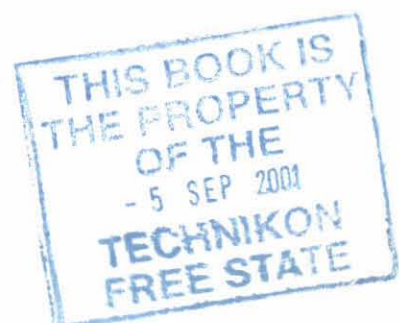
Few darkroom techniques provide more scope for creativity or just sheer fun than photomontage. By simply cutting out parts of some prints and sticking them down on another, you can create virtually any image you want. Bizarre, amusing, realistic, poignant - whatever you choose. Prints can be montaged in many ways, but there are two main approaches. Montages can either be 'rough cut' so that all the joints show up clearly and there is no doubt that the picture is a montage, or the joints can be hidden so that the picture seems to be just one photograph.



SU OKUHARA: *Woman with Crossed Arms*, 1973

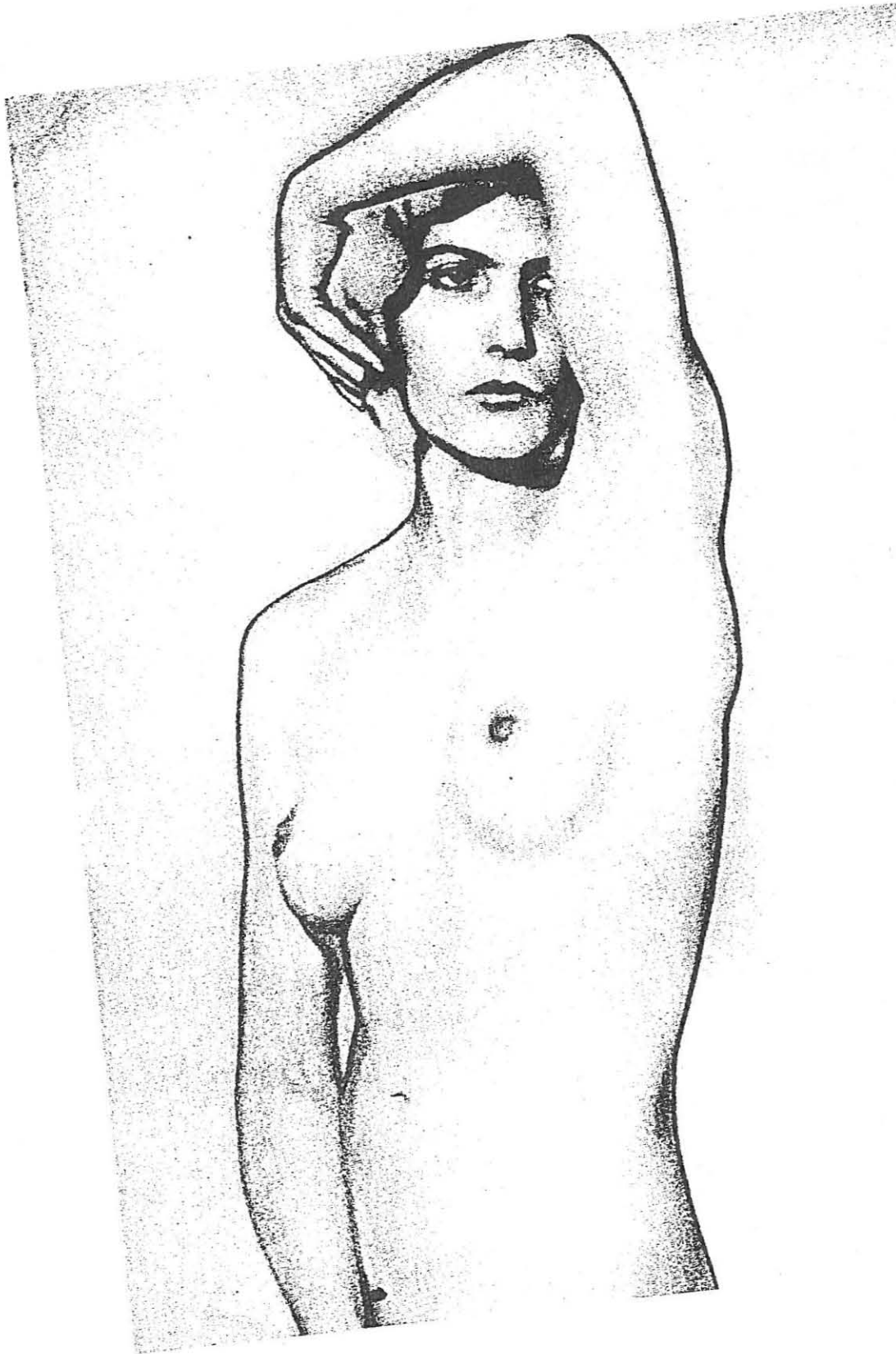
Toners enable you to add colour or mood to a black-and-white print. The best known is sepia, which lends prints an air of antiquity; blue toner gives them the chill of winter; and you can extend the technique to produce multi-colour prints in which the colours can be as true as creatively unnatural as you care to make them. Most toners are available in ready to use packs.

Colouring black-and-white prints by hand is one of the simplest and cheapest of all darkroom techniques. Yet, the subtle, pastel hues that can be achieved and the fine control over colour is unmatched. By skill full hand colouring, you can breath delicate life into grey print, highlight different parts of the picture, or create an entirely new image.



Although the term solarization has come to be used to describe the sabattier effect, in fact the partial reversals of tone photographic prints to which both terms refer are differently caused. True solarization occurs when an intense light source, like the sun, is visible in a photograph that has been extremely overexposed in the camera, usually accidentally. The overexposure causes the light source to appear dark in the print. The sun becomes a black disc, but the reversal of tones is limited to this area of the print.

The Sabattier effect, named for Armand Sabattier (1834 - 1910), which discovered it in 1862, is an intentional darkroom technique, employed to produce tone reversals. The procedure is to partially develop a negative or print, momentarily expose it to light, then continue the normal development process. Tone reversal in completed prints principally occurs in background dark areas, which become appreciably lighter. At edges, between areas of the print where reversal has occurred and where it has not, a distinct black line is visible, particularly if it was the negative rather than the developing print that was flashed with light. Results of the Sabattier effect are somewhat unpredictable.



DISCUSSION OF OWN WORK

Figure 1



"Rae", 1997

Photographed with a Mamiya R6 6x7 camera on Agfa RSX 100 ISO film.
Developed with C41 process to give a reversal effect.

The yellow skintone gives this portrait a whole new feel than what it would have had, had it been photographed on normal negative film. The facial expression contributes to the mood of the image, an almost dreamy feeling, something mysterious.



Figure II



"Ogi", 1998

Photographed with a 35mm Pentax camera, using a 70mm zoom lens. Optima 100 ISO film was used with a red filter attached to the lens.

The red enhances the real personality of this cat, because shi is known for her bad temper and for being 'snappish'.

Figure III



"Untitled", 1998

Photographed at Rustler's Valley in the Eastern Free State. This photograph was taken with a 35mm on FP4 black and white film. The camera was set on Panoramic Mode to crop the image, for a stronger effect. During the printing process a technique was employed to create soft focus feel.

The image has a feeling of being photographed in the Wild West, the tents reminding of something out of the era of Cowboys and Indians.

The repetition of triangles leads the eye throughout the image. Even though it was shot on FP4 film, the image has an infra-red feel to it.

Figure IV



"Untitled", 1998

Photographed with a 35mm camera on Ilford SFX 200 ISO film. A 70mm lens was used wt on F11.

The white clouds against the dark sky, the movement of the clouds, the wind visibly blowing and the model wrapped in a thick, fluffy rug gives an overall feeling of it being very cold. The high contrast of the image also adds to this.

Figure V



"Unititled", 1998

Photographed with a Mamiya RZ 6x7, using a 90mm lens. Agfa Ultra 50 ISO film was used to give more saturated colours.

The front figure is out of focus and catches the eye first leading the eye to the second figure. The overall green cast is caused by the reflection of the walls and adds to the expression on the girl's face. As the saying goes: "Green with envy".

Figure VI



"Yield", 1998

This image was photographed on Optima 100 ISO film. The image is very rich in colour, contributing to the fact that when something is bright, is dangerous and poisonous.

The lines of the floorboards lead the eye to the image that is brought to a stop by the yellow wall. The repetition of the triangles also adds to the concept of danger.

Figure VII



This image was photographed on Agfa Optima 100 ISO film. Side lighting was used to pick up the texture of the plastic the models were wrapped in. Purple, having a sexual connotation, adds to the concept of the image. The tall iron object enhances the composition, because of the main focus being the two figures, are almost in the middle of the image.

Figure VIII



This image was photographed on Agfa Optima 100 ISO film. I selected three different coloured leaves:

Yellow, Magenta and Green. I placed the leaves on a small light box and photographed directly from above.

The image is called "Triptiek" and I think when enlarged it would make a nice wall-hanging.

CONCLUSION

More and more people are turning to photography as a medium of expression as well as of communication. The leavening of aesthetic approaches that we have noted continuous. While it is too soon to define the characteristics of the photographic style of today, one common denominator, rooted in tradition, seems in the ascendancy: The direct use of the camera for what it can do best, and that is the revelation, interpretation, and discovery of the world; man and nature. The present challenge to the photographer is to express inner significance through outward form. (Newhall 1982:294)

We are living during one of the most exciting times in the history of photography. It is a time of revolution, a time when all the rules of photography are up for review, a time when all the wholes of photography are up for review, a time when new skills will have to be learned and some old ones retired as absolute. The new area arose as a result of the personal computer revolution, and more specifically, from the availability of affordable equipment which allows an image to be put into a computer, manipulated and then put onto a piece of paper and film. (Bresfen, 1990:22)

None of the images in this script has been manipulated. Although digital imaging is the new revolution in photography, I personally believe that it takes the art out of photography.

I tend to create a high quality, relaxed feel with my images. My inspiration comes from the photographer Olaf Martens. In his book "Frosty Fire" all his images has a very relaxed feel to it, almost as if the images he photographed are "happy snappies", but the quality of the images is very good.

The market for Fine Art Photographers may not be that great, but I believe that it all depends on oneself. If you are willing to go all the way, there will be light!

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