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# Currents In Photography

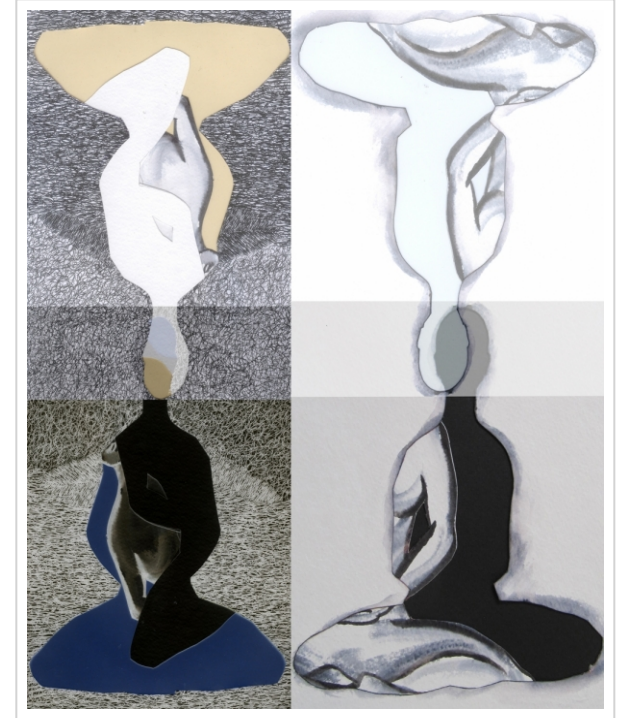
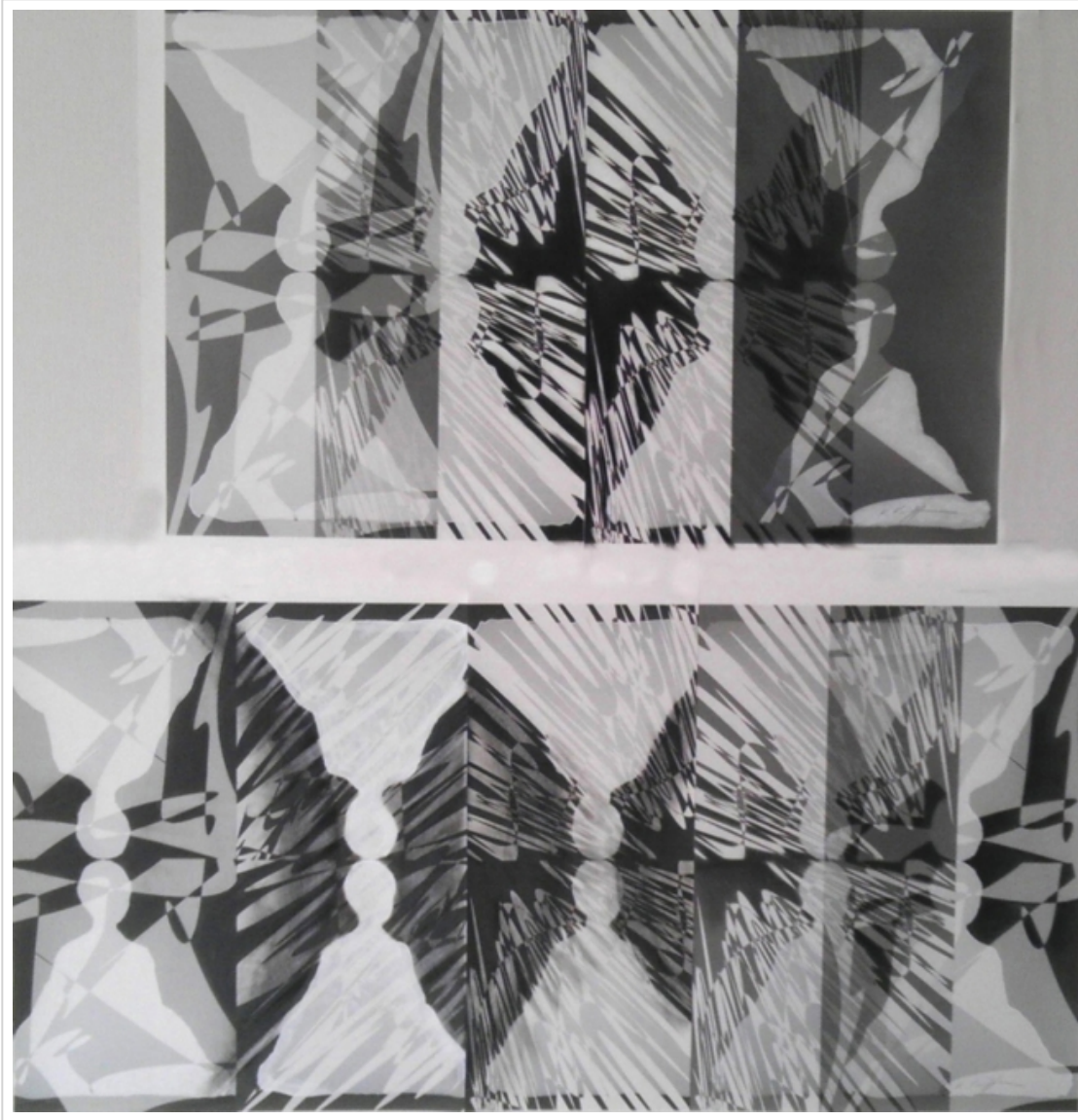


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Submitted by christopherhar... [\(/users/christopherhartchambers\)](/users/christopherhartchambers) on June 21, 2016 - 06:36

**Topics:** [Art Review \(/art\)](#) *Currents In Photography* comprises five adventurous artists in a thematic exhibition that explores the boundaries of photography; what a camera can do, or perhaps what the word photography even means. How far can one step outside of the box and still be in it? I needed to ask if Kaethe Kauffman's work was part of the exhibition, thoroughly confused as to whether it was a photograph at all. The work looks like collaged charcoal drawing on paper. Turns out charcoal drawing is employed along with several other techniques, photographed and reproduced by an inkjet printer, then worked back into again. The resulting mystical images are neither directly figurative nor abstract. Those leaning more towards abstraction still appear to be some thing -- perhaps visions experienced by the meditating figure pictured in the other works. His or her corporeal form is seated Buddha style surrounded by a shattered aura that bursts into monochromatic fragmentation. Paired with Ms. Kauffman in the placement of artworks, Bert G.F. Shankman's close up shots of flowers are plainly photographs, yet they strive toward ethereal, other worldly exotica -- like a shamanistic vision. Can art be both subtle and bold? It seems so.

Back to the question, "Is that a photograph?" Nolan Preece's contribution to the query is several



chemigram digital prints. I don't know what the heck a chemigram is or how it's done. The gallery staff is non-communicative. If we want to know anything about the art they gesture obliquely at the beautifully produced brochures. Okay, it seems to have

something to do with manipulating chemicals and other sorts of smelly stuff in a dark room. Out here in the light they smell fine. There is once again an exotic essence permeating the work; a lot of scratchy-scratchy marks that together come together to form images of forests, crops, mountains, in black and gold. The

overall effect resembles a lithograph by a Japanese Anselm Keifer, except without the tragic sense of loss. Instead, Preece's art delivers a moody yet explosively tranquil enthusiasm. These words contradict one another, but you will know what I mean when you see his work. It depicts life -- budding, evolving, springing forth. The exhibition is housed in three rooms -- well two, one is bifurcated by a temporary rolling wall. Sol Hill's work was displayed in two groups: there were a couple of bright lights big city blurry nocturnal cityscapes as well as five blurred figure in city streets pictures, imbued with a grainy pastel feel so that they seem like detail shots in reverse -- as if getting closer in made the images more blurry rather than the other way around. But, the word farsighted is not appropriate. They quite resemble paintings by Louis Renzoni. Hill calls his process, "Mixed Media Energy Painting." After reading about it I still don't know what that means, except it has to do with some sort of digital manipulation... maybe.



And there were five splashy water shots of crashing waves by Sandra Gottlieb. So far as I could tell, these were the only unaltered, essentially "straight" photographic C-Prints in the exhibition, unless you think of the use of zoom lenses and rapid shutter speeds as altering an image. Her subject is the intensity of roiling water in our atmosphere; the droplets frozen in time

and space as they splatter white water against the shoreline, as they smash and disintegrate into wild, pure light and form. As I left the show I could smell salt water and hear the sounds of the surf crashing in my head.

The exhibition begs the question, what is a photograph in this day and age? Certainly the phrase, "the camera doesn't lie" is a completely outdated anachronism. Not all of these artists even use camera or film. Not all of them use any one method of printing, or anything else, for that matter. All of the work is fairly small by today's standards, which is to say nothing was on display that couldn't comfortably fit into an average sized bed or living room. What the works did have in common is a focus on the organic, which belies the artists' fascination with technology in their approaches. Also the work is generally positive in its message; nothing too creepy or angry, although sometimes moody. In all, the show presented interesting and thought provoking techniques utilized to create imagery that stirs one's life affirming emotions and imagination. – *Christopher Hart Chambers*

*Mr. Chambers is an artist and writer. He also occasionally curates exhibitions. His artwork currently represented in NYC by Causey Contemporary.*



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