

# HUNTINGTON WITHERILL

## 2006 SILVER GELATIN PRINT ANNOUNCEMENT



### **Huntington Witherill Silver Gelatin Print Availability**

As of **January 1, 2006**, I will no longer be accepting orders for the printing of new silver gelatin prints to be made from my film negatives. I will however continue to offer, for sale and for exhibition, any previously produced silver gelatin prints that remain in my existing silver gelatin print archive.

#### **Background**

Over the past 10-12 years, advancements in digital imaging have been both remarkable and undeniable. And though conventional film-based approaches to the medium will remain valid and vital, from an industry-wide perspective, the predominate method by which photographs will be made, both now and in the foreseeable future, will (in my view) continue to progressively migrate toward digital imaging. The fact that manufacturers are increasingly reducing the scope of their offerings of films, film-based cameras, black and white silver gelatin printing papers, chemistry, and other related conventional tools and materials serves only to reinforce this reality.

In my own work I have gradually (over the past 15 years) adopted these new approaches to the medium as digital tools and materials have continued to advance and improve. And I have concluded that the technology has now finally progressed to the point that both the physical and aesthetic qualities I strive to achieve in my own work can now be fully met, without compromise, using digital tools and materials. As a direct result of ongoing changes in the medium, and my own choices, I have not used a film-based camera since 2002, and the most recent conventional enlargement I've made from my film-based negative archive was produced in 1995.

In 1996, I began to produce silver gelatin prints using a "hybrid" process. That process employed the use of both conventional and digital tools and involved 3 separate steps. Step 1- A digital scan was made from the original film negative. Step 2- The digital scan was then used to produce a digitally generated film internegative (using an imagesetter). Step 3- The resulting film internegative was then contact printed in a conventional wet darkroom, using traditional chemical-based printing techniques, resulting in silver gelatin contact prints up to 16" x 20" in size. Parenthetically, as a result of the increased aesthetic potential and unparalleled technical control available through the use of digital components in the hybrid process, I was, from 1996-2005, able to produce what I believe to be some of the very best silver gelatin prints that I was ever able to achieve.

Nevertheless, everything in life seems to involve some form of trade-off. One of the least admirable aspects of digital-based photography is the fact that the technology is continually evolving and changing. What that means is that the ongoing advent of

new and improved technologies will continue to render the technologies they replace, as obsolete. Such is the case with the imagesetters required to produce the digital film internegatives. Imagesetters are still around, but they are rapidly disappearing. By the beginning of 2005, it had become nearly impossible to obtain a usable imagesetter internegative because so many of the most reliable service bureaus had begun to replace their imagesetters with newer direct-to-plate technologies.

During this same period of time, inkjet printing technologies progressively evolved and improved to the point that (as of 2006) an inkjet printer employing archival pigment inks is fully capable of producing an aesthetically uncompromising rendition of a photographic image, possessing its own unique and admirable qualities, and deserving of no apology or excuse. Further, pigment ink prints themselves are now approaching a 300 year life span in terms of their archival permanence. Again, deserving of no apology or excuse.

I decided to first attempt to incorporate digital methods into my personal photographic process back in 1991. In the beginning, the tools and materials were quite crude by today's standards. It took many years of concentrated effort, ongoing education, and re-education to become familiar and proficient with such a relentlessly evolving set of tools and materials. Nevertheless, the aesthetic rewards gained through the application of the technology – together with significant improvements arising from the inevitable and ongoing improvements in the technology itself – have caused me to come to the conclusion that digital-based photography has now indeed arrived to the point of being the very best way for me to approach my photography, now, and into the foreseeable future.

As a result of the above determination and my ongoing commitment to the future of my photographic pursuits, I have discontinued producing silver gelatin prints, entirely, and will no longer be accepting custom orders for silver gelatin prints to be made from my past film negatives. However, I will continue to offer, for sale and for exhibition, those silver gelatin prints that remain (and continue to be maintained) in my existing print archive. I am currently in the process of cataloging the archive and those prints should remain available for exhibition and sale into the foreseeable future.

While subjectivity will continue to reign supreme when it comes to one's individual preferences for one type of photographic printing process over another, the subjective nature of those personal choices thankfully remain the very source from which art derives one of its most beneficial pleasures.

**Huntington Witherill** • September 1, 2008