

**BLACK+WHITE**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY**

COOL, CREATIVE AND CONTEMPORARY





COMMENT

susanburnstine.com

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# AMERICAN CONNECTION

**Diana Bloomfield's** ephemeral chlorophyll prints portray incomplete narratives that radiate an 'imperfect kind of beauty'. She talks to Susan Burnstine about torn edges, multiple interpretations and seasonal restrictions.

For the past 35 years, Diana Bloomfield has specialised in 19th-century printing techniques such as gum bichromate, platinum, palladium and cyanotype. Traditionally, her labour-intensive, one-of-a-kind imagery frequently evokes a bridge to the past that focuses on connections, whether literal or linked directly to her dreams and memories. Her most recent body of work further complicates that suggestion by using chlorophyll printing on leaves, which results in an exemplary exploration of imperfect beauty.

Early in her creative journey, Bloomfield's work was predominantly documentary based and was shot with large-format cameras and film. The resulting images were printed work in silver gelatin, but she never enjoyed working in the darkroom. After happening

upon a collection of breathtaking platinum/palladium prints hanging in a gallery, she learned about the process and was intrigued by the idea of printing in ambient light. 'I went home and bought supplies, found a couple of how-to books, and proceeded to teach myself how to print in platinum/palladium,' she says. 'I was enamoured with the entire process of mixing my own emulsion and brush-coating that emulsion on an array of beautiful papers.'

While taking a class at the International Center of Photography with James Luciana, she refined her platinum/palladium printing technique but felt constrained by the limitations of the process and was eager to move beyond

monochrome. 'I started using cyanotype, and then cross-processing cyanotype with platinum/palladium, which offered a bit more depth and allowed for more individuality and interpretation,' she says. Soon after, she began printing in gum dichromate, cross-processed with platinum/palladium, but still felt limited. Fifteen years ago, she began learning tri-colour gum printing and that remains the process that most inspires her to this day.

Prior to the pandemic, Bloomfield had been working on a series entitled *The Old Garden*, which consisted of images made from flowers in her backyard. After the lockdowns began, it

made sense to continue using elements from the garden on her property and that's when she decided to begin printing in chlorophyll. 'It was also the summer, so it was easy to print by the sun with long exposures,' she says. 'I love the organic and ephemeral nature of chlorophyll printing, so it all seemed right at the time.'

Bloomfield first dabbled in the chlorophyll process years ago but hadn't returned to it until the summer of 2020. Initially, she made photograms of luna moths on hosta leaves before progressing to printing figurative work onto leaves using positive transparencies.

The technique of chlorophyll printing is essentially simple, so the challenge for Bloomfield was to find images that fit aesthetically within the confines of a leaf's shape. 'I had to look for images that, even when cropped, will fit just so and look like a

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complete narrative within the leaf,' she says. 'Cropped images embedded in leaves seem a lot like half-written narratives where the complete story isn't given, but multiple interpretations and meanings are still offered. And no matter what's occurring in these incomplete narratives, they are rife with imperfection, as seen in the leaves themselves. But it's those marred bits and the torn edges that create this imperfect kind of beauty that essentially shapes a narrative and gives it meaning.'

When considering what

images to use, she decided to repurpose figurative images of her daughter created over the last four to five years, which were part of a larger ongoing series she's been working on for 20 years. The process of printing with chlorophyll has its limitations, since the sun has to be at its greatest intensity to be successful. 'The only time I can print this way is in the summer. Exposure can take up to six or seven hours, even in the intense heat of the American South,' she says. 'So, chlorophyll printing is a seasonal project, restricted

by availability of leaves and sun intensity.'

Currently, Bloomfield is working on a collection of one-of-a-kind artist books with hand-printed images on various papers, typically with cyanotype. This past year, Bloomfield was honoured with the 2021 Denis Roussel Award based on some of those handmade books. This coming September her work will be featured in a three-person exhibition titled *Alchemy of Nature* at the Cardinal Gallery in Toronto.

[dhhloomfield.com](http://dhhloomfield.com)

## EXHIBITIONS USA

### BOSTON

**Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston**

*Until 27 February 2022*

Deana Lawson

[icaboston.org](http://icaboston.org)

### CHICAGO

**Museum of Contemporary Photography**

*Until 20 February 2022*

American Epidemic:

Guns in the United States

[mocp.org](http://mocp.org)

### DETROIT

**Detroit Institute of the Arts**

*Until 17 April 2022*

The New Black Vanguard:

Photography Between Art and Fashion

[dia.org](http://dia.org)

### LENOX

**Sohn Fine Art**

*Until 31 January 2022*

Jeff Robb: Capturing the Invisible

[sohnfineart.com](http://sohnfineart.com)

### MIAMI

**HistoryMiami**

*Until 17 April 2022*

Anastasia Samoylova: FloodZone

[historymiami.org](http://historymiami.org)

### ST LOUIS

**Saint Louis Art Museum**

*Until 20 February 2022*

Jess T Dugan: Currents 120

[slam.org](http://slam.org)

### SEATTLE

**Seattle Art Museum**

*Until 6 February 2022*

Imogen Cunningham: A Retrospective

[seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

### TAMPA

**Florida Museum of Photographic Arts**

*Until 23 January 2022*

Glenna Jennings: At Table

[fmopa.org](http://fmopa.org)