Photography is something we take for granted today, at least in the western world. In a time when even mobile phones have cameras, and photography is widely used to record family history, express ideas and to communicate, it is interesting to reflect on how the concept of a photograph was perceived at its birth.

The same enthusiasm for the machine that drove the industrial revolution, and literally changed the landscape, was the engine behind people finding new ways of capturing images of themselves in that landscape. Making an image soon became something anyone could learn, no artistic skills necessary. Many portrait painters laid down their brushes and took up photography or went out of business. Even so, it would be a long time before photography would be accepted as an art form.

Today, when we have the technology to take the “perfect” photograph, freezing a moment exactly as it is, and are able to print it in minutes, many photographers take a step into the world of alternative processes. It may be out of curiosity of how the chemistry can bind a moment of time to the fibers in the paper. It may be out of the joy of making something by hand, from start to finish. It may be the delight in seeing an image emerging on paper floating in the developer bath. Or, it may be that a specific process embodies a unique texture, enhancing the idea or expression of the artist. The reasons for choosing to work in a specific alternative process are many and varied, but whatever the reason is, the journey there is often an enriching experience.

The interest in this book was bigger than I could have dreamt of. Over half of the artists represented on AlternativePhotography.com have participated. Over 14 Gigabytes of pixels have been downloaded over the wires, in almost 1000 emails. I am now on a first name basis with the postman (postwoman actually!), who turned up with stacks of letters every day, especially in the last two weeks before the deadline.

Each of the artists here has included a little about themselves, their work and their choice of process. The images are great inspiration. A wide variety of processes, concepts and ideas can be found here. To me, that too is pure inspiration, and that is the purpose of this book - to inspire.

Malin Fabbri
Stockholm, 2006
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Edwardo Aites

Edwardo has worked extensively in intaglio printmaking, holography, and alternative photographic processes such as cyanotype, kallitype, salt print, and Polaroid image transfer. His work has been exhibited in the USA, Britain, China, Japan, Latin America, and Australia, and is part of many public and private collections. Edwardo lives and works in Seattle, but finds inspiration in his travels, particularly in Italy and Scotland. Edwardo’s comprehensive website has technical information and examples of many alternative processes.

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“Rio Tera is a vandyke print of a hidden canal in a sestiere of Venice. Vandyke got its name from the subtle brown tones used by the Dutch painter Vandyke. This piece was created from contact printing a digital negative. I felt that the sepia tone was perfect for capturing the atmosphere of Venice, a city of ancient mysteries and sublime reflections. Lacock Abbey in England was the home of Sir William Henry Fox Talbot. Fittingly, this image is a salt print, made using the same process that Talbot used. The image pays homage to Talbot’s discovery. After visiting Lacock Abbey and exposing the image onto film, I enlarged the negative and used the sun to make a contact print.”