ICMPhotoMag Reviews:
Pure Inspiration #1: Composites
by Malin Fabbri

(Reviewed by Stephanie Johnson)

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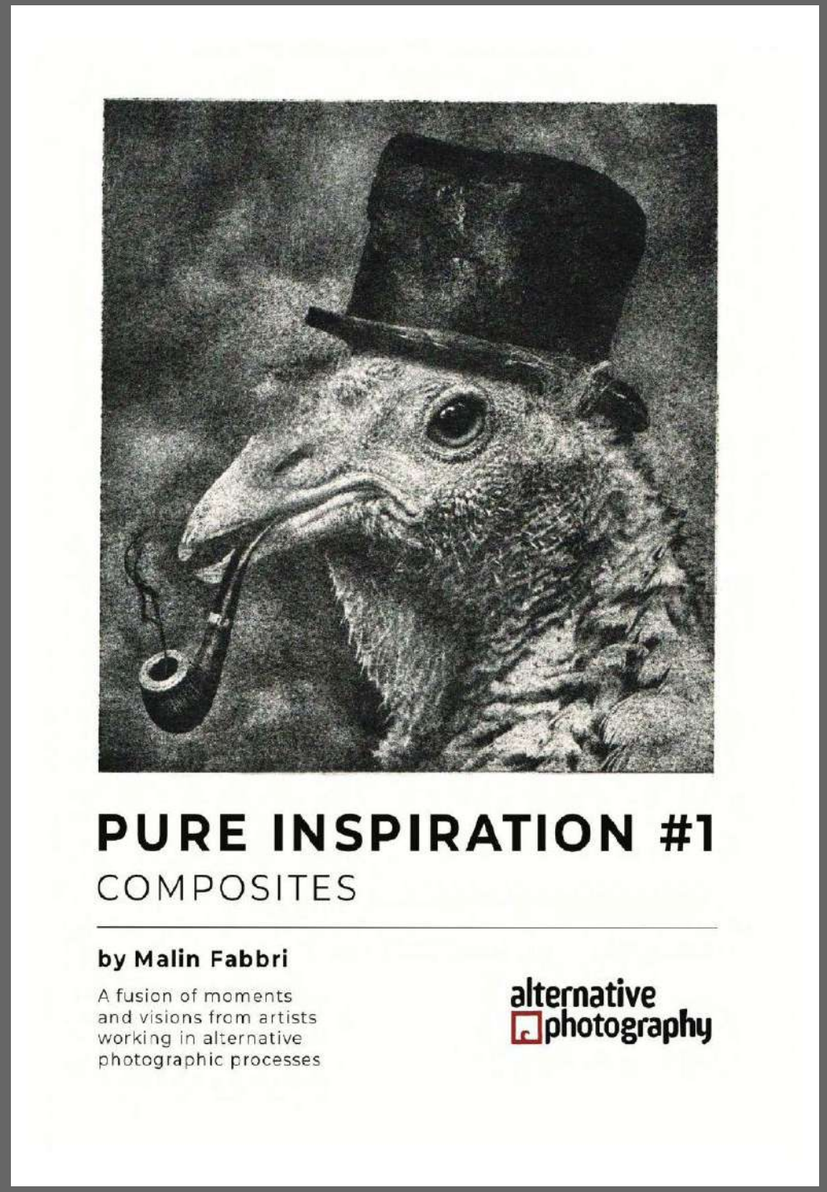
In 1999, Malin Fabbri began forming and developing her ideas for what would eventually become AlternativePhotography.com, which has grown into a vast collective of artists, resources, articles, books, and more, celebrating a multitude of alternative photographic processes. In those early days, Malin never imagined it would take off as it did. By October 2002, there were 50 artists represented in galleries on the website. Today, there are more than 400 artists represented and more than 900 articles on alternative processes and techniques.

I became aware of AlternativePhotography.com, Malin, and the 65K-member Facebook group in 2024 when my own journey with alternative processes began through learning to create cyanotypes. Over the past year, I have found the website, Facebook group, and Malin's generous spirit to be invaluable resources for the evolution of my own journey and artistic philosophy as I've been embracing many of these alternative processes and hands-on techniques to explore and express my own pure inspiration.



As ICM Photography Magazine is evolving and expanding to celebrate the Intentional Creative Moments of a broader range of techniques and processes, it feels fitting to share this book, which is a "fusion of moments and visions from artists working in alternative photographic processes."

- Published by Malin Fabbri, AlternativePhotography.com, 2024
- 110 pages

Pure Inspiration #1: Composites can be purchased in E-Book format for $20 or in print formats starting at $32 at www.alternativephotography.com/pure-inspiration-1.

Pure Inspiration #1: Composites is a book born from Malin's desire to allow the creative work submitted in response to the annual AlternativePhotography.com Calendar & Journal event to live longer, especially since calendars and journals tend to be put away or discarded once they've served their purpose. Malin wanted a way to keep the entries close at hand so they could be relished for longer than the ephemeral life of a calendar.

The "Composites" theme for the Calendar & Journal event was meant to celebrate the joy of experimentation. The artists featured in this book were all keen to explore how two or more ideas and techniques could be merged together to create stronger images while using a diverse range of alternative techniques beyond the realms of traditional film and digital photography.

This book claims that it shows the creative potential of blending different elements, ideas, and techniques into visually striking compositions, and it certainly does deliver on that claim. The images featured in this book reveal how the artists were able to use tangible, tactile, hands-on processes to bring their own uniquely individual visions and imaginations into the world.

While the pages are filled with the amazing work of nearly 100 artists from around the world, this book serves as a meaningful learning tool as much as it does a source of inspiration and artistry. In the opening section, alternative photographic processes are discussed and defined, and then additional space is dedicated to briefly explaining the various alternative processes used to create the images on the subsequent pages. Each image in the book was created using at least one alternative process, and in some cases by combining multiple processes together. A number of photographic terms are also defined and explained to ensure the reader views the images with a firmer grasp of the artistry involved for each print. Additionally, each individual artist provides details about their processes and techniques in creating their work.

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This book is a treasure trove of inspirational imagery, techniques, and processes. In addition to cyanotypes, which I have already been creating myself, there is a wide range of other alternative processes that intrigue me. This book provides a glimpse into the infinite possibilities for artistic expression.

As my own creativity has been evolving and expanding to include the use of alternative techniques beyond the camera, my vision for this magazine is to celebrate more of the types of processes on display in *Pure Inspiration #1: Composites*. Malin's vision for the platform she has built aligns with my own philosophy of wanting to champion the work of others and offer as much as possible to as many as possible in the spirit of creative community.

Similar to how ICM Photography Magazine has always been about so much more than just sharing pretty pictures or providing technical details alone, *Pure Inspiration #1: Composites* speaks to the heart of individual artistry. Even though there are plenty of technical details provided, the contents of this book go beyond the technical to encourage individual exploration by revealing the vast possibilities and potential of alternative processes.

For anyone interested in learning more about alternative processes or who may be starting to dip their toes into exploring beyond the camera, I highly recommend this book. *Pure Inspiration* truly is worthy of its name.

"I was in awe looking at this year's entries for the event, and how the artists stretched the boundaries, both in their creative visions and technically, combining two or sometimes three or four techniques into one piece of art. The visions complimented the techniques, and the techniques enhanced their vision. It was pure inspiration. I wanted to keep them all. And I wanted the world to see them all. That is how this book came to be."

— Malin Fabbri

The Most Beautiful Anthropocene # 01

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AINDREAS SCHOLZ

Born in Germany to an Anglo-Irish mother, Aindreas blends diverse influences from a bilingual upbringing. He graduated from TU Dublin and Goldsmiths College and was mentored by acclaimed Turner-Prize artists, and this shaped his creative voice. Training as a teacher at UCL, Aindreas now nurtures young artists. Since 2017, he has focused on human-impacted environments, advocating for sustainability. Aindreas has been featured in environmental exhibitions and collected by esteemed institutions and galleries.

The Most Beautiful Anthropocene # 01 is a cyanotype in combination with a lumen in a mesmerising dance of light and chemistry. A 19th-century Victorian photographic printing process – the cyanotype – was merged with the lumen process – creating a contemporary cyanolumen. Expired and exposed RC Ilford B&W photographic darkroom paper was coated with an altered cyanotype solution, adding depth, and enriching the creative narrative.

Cyanotype Combined with Lumen Printing

Fly Me To The Moon

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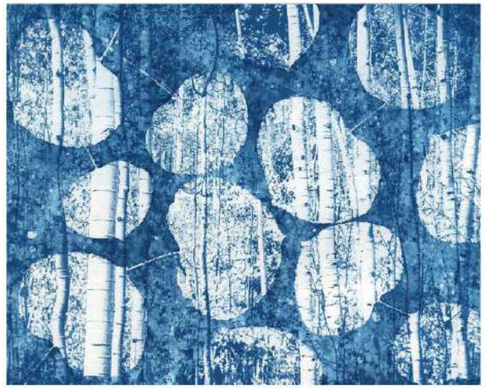
MARIAN FANNON CHRISTIAN

Marian is a well-travelled artist who grew up in beautiful and primitive surroundings in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland. There was no running water or electricity and her love of handmade arts and crafts was born. Marian has lived in Hong Kong where her son was born, the Philippines where her daughter was born, Indonesia, India, Ireland and now lives in England with her husband Anthony. She enjoys working with ink, pastels, watercolours, acrylics and cyanotypes and combining them. Marian's visual language is rooted in the natural world.

Cyanotype toned and with drawings. A cyanotype was created using Garden Speedwell. The moon was then drawn in metallic gold ink. The collaged butterflies are a combination of bleached and bleached-and-tea-toned cyanotypes. Marian is in constant search of things 'on the other side', the transcendental. It is reflected in her asemic writing pieces and with *Fly Me To The Moon* she hopes her art conveys a sense of serenity, allowing the viewer to re-live an atmospheric memory in their relationship to nature.

Toned Cyanotype Combined with Drawings



Floating Forest

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LEAH CAMPBELL

Surrounded by mountains and forests, Leah draws inspiration from the natural world around her. As a cyanotype artist, her work primarily features flora collected near her home. Leah loves the experimental nature of making cyanotypes as well as the use of natural elements, like water and the sun. The process deepens her appreciation for nature's hidden intricacies and creates a strong sense of connection to her surroundings. In addition to printing on paper, she also creates cyanotypes on glass and ceramics.

Wet and dry cyanotype. Aspen leaves were collected near Leah's home at a high elevation where Aspen trees especially flourish. The leaves were carefully arranged to look as if they were floating, then a mixture of water and salt was added to create the illusion of water. Post-wash, the paper received another coat of cyanotype sensitiser and was exposed again, using a digital negative of Aspen trees. A shorter exposure time left a lighter imprint on the leaves and "water," revealing a tranquil Aspen forest. Printed on Canon CP heavyweight watercolour paper.

Wet and Dry Cyanotypes Combined

A Misty Day in Rheinland-Pfaltz

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CHRISTINA OSBORNE

Christina Osborne is a writer, editor, and photographer. Having interviewed photographers from around the world, Christina was provided a great chance to challenge her visual vocabulary. When not making images, Christina writes books, curates the occasional exhibition and teaches infrequent, but popular, courses in darkroom practice and the application of alternative photography processes. She is also a regular contributor to a prestigious acclaimed photography magazine.

Christina came across this afternoon scene while hiking across Rheinland-Pfaltz. She chose to capture this misty scene with a 4" x 5" pinhole. The combination of infinite focus together with the trees disappearing into the mist adds to the visual sense of intrigue. She printed *A Misty Day in Rheinland-Pfaltz* using the lith printing process, and this amplified the sense of drama, and added the peach tones to the highlight areas. Christina was happy with the traditional darkroom print version of this image, however, the lith print version exceeded her expectations.

Pinhole Camera

Daisy Chain

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PAULA SMITH

Paula is a nature-inspired artist living in the Forest of Dean surrounded by an ever changing canvas. She explores flora and prepares to capture its beauty in the finest detail. Her creative practice tests the rules and concepts of the process, by using household spices to generate more imagination surrounding her subject matter. Her preferred method is the wet cyanotype process as this allows the boundaries to be pushed, printing on canvas making jewellery and sportswear. Paula says "Nature will only express, what it wants you to see".

Daisy Chain is a hand-painted cyanotype, created on a thick matt board with delicate foliage and a daisy, and exposed for 45 minutes. After exposure and allowed to dry, the daisy was painted in oils to bring its beauty forward. This original is an interpretation of spring, with the translucency of the white oil casting shadows on the petals, helped by the intensity of the Prussian blue background. The intricate design highlights the potential opportunities and widens the scope that the cyanotype process has to offer for those seeking creativity.

Hand-Painted Cyanotype

Lumen Photogram and
Fixed Gellatin Silver Print Collage

Atmospheric Microplastic

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FRANCIS BAKER

Francis has been an innovator in the field of alternative process photography for three decades. His work delves deeply into critical societal issues, with a focus on social justice, inequity, homelessness, mental health, and the complexities of the human condition. He critically examines the consequences of consumerism and its adverse effects on the environment. Francis's unique work has been showcased both nationally and internationally, including exhibitions in New York, Chicago, Santa Fe, San Francisco, Paris, and Switzerland.

Atmospheric Microplastic is a lumen print-out photogram in a collage of fixed gelatin silver prints. The title refers to the fact that microplastic is now swept up in the atmosphere and clouds, being delivered to pristine areas hundreds of miles away from populated areas. The print is part of a project that highlights society's reliance on plastic, using it as a potent symbol to critique human behaviour and its significant impact on climate change.

Awaiting spring

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MALIN FABBRI

Malin is the founder and editor of the non-profit organisation AlternativePhotography.com. She studied for her M.A. in Design at Central St. Martin's, London. Feeling her thesis marked a beginning, she founded the organisation in 2000 to merge academic knowledge with practical experience and the love of alternative processes. She researches, writes articles and hosts workshops. Malin has authored several books as well as spearheaded the World Anthotype Day. Today, Malin has her base in Stockholm, Sweden.

The base layer is an anthotype from 2011 of a pine tree. The anthotype was made using emulsion from stinging nettles. After the long winter waiting for the sun, Malin wanted to express the longing for spring and for new times. After the anthotype was printed, the paper was coated with cyanotype chemicals using the classic formula and equal amounts of A and B, 10% solutions. A cutout was placed over the pine tree and first last years dried leaves and then an evergreen Emerald Gaiety (*Euonymus fortunei*) were exposed to make the frame.

Anthotype Combined with Cyanotype

5-Image Composite in Gumoil

Smokin' Joe

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DAVID SYMONDS

David is a retired Lighting Designer originally from Birmingham in the UK. He moved to rural Scotland about 18 years ago to pursue his hobbies of photography and hill walking. He took up photography around 1984 and joined his local camera club. In 1992 he gained a Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society.
In 2000 David took up bromoil printing. His love of alternative processes gradually expanded to encompass oil printing, cyanotype, mordançage, photogravure, alcohol gel transfer and more recently, gumoil.

A five-image composite in gumoil. The print, *Smokin' Joe* was David's second attempt at gumoil printing. A five-image composite consisting of background, chicken, hat, pipe and smoke. The images were put together in Photoshop and a half-tone positive was produced. From this, a gumoil print was made on Bockingford Cold Press watercolour paper with Scheveningen Intensive black oil paint.