

Rachael Ferranti

Editor-in-Chief

What if the darkroom didn't have to be so dark? What if you could use any object to make a photograph? What if everyone could be an artist?

With Henrieke Strecker's freshly designed class for Spring '13, all of these fantasies are possible.

PT-1025-01 Alternative Photo Processes is, as of this writing, open for enrollment. Alternative photography is a twist on traditional photography, where the images on photo negatives are transferred onto light-sensitive photo paper in a very controlled environment. Strecker's new class deviates from this atmosphere of restriction to produce art that is unique and painterly, ethereal and mystifying.

Strecker did not invent alternative photography, although she has taken to it with flair. "Alternative processes are often called historical, or non-silver, processes. Most of these processes were invented over 100 years ago and were used by early photographers," says Strecker. The class combines an historical art form with modern darkroom equipment and technology, allowing for a hands-on and highly creative experience in the classroom.

No camera is needed for the course, although Strecker has an impressive collection of antique pinhole cameras that students may use. Students also have the option of building their own working pinhole camera. Pinhole cameras replace a lens with a tiny pinhole, through which light enters into a chamber with a light-sensitive piece of photo paper against the back. Onto this photo paper, an image is imprinted. There are

no wires, no batteries, nothing electronic, save for perhaps an exterior light source.

"One can transform almost everything into a (pinhole) camera," says Strecker, "even a pumpkin!" The smallest camera Strecker has ever made was from a small matchbox, with three matches functioning as a tripod. Her matchbox camera made two television appearances in Germany.

Once equipped with cameras, photo paper, and anything else students might want to involve in their alternative photographic process (ink, cloth, flowers, or flames are a few suitable examples), students are encouraged to play. Make prints in the sun that would otherwise be developed in a darkroom. Run water over a sheet of photo paper. The essence of the course is an emphasis on experimentation.

"Simplicity & visual poetry," Strecker says, is

the greatest quality of this form of art. "The quest for simplicity of materials and purpose in action presents the greatest challenge for direct expression." A challenge, perhaps, but the outcome is a beautiful piece of art like no other.

"My intention is not to document an isolated moment or paint a realistic picture like a report," from Strecker's artist's statement. "Rather, I want to give an account of small movements and atmospheres, and share what I have experienced within that time."

"Alternative Photographic Processes" will be offered next Spring to all students, and will count as a Photography Art Class. No pre-requisites are needed to enroll. Student work will be published in a book compiled by Strecker at the end of the semester, and each student will receive a copy.

Some rules were meant to be broken

Alternative Photography in the Spring with Henrieke Strecker

You HELPED ME FIND BALANCE,

BOTH IN THE

DARKROOM AND IN MY

OWN LIFE. THANK YOU SO

MUCH. I WISH

YOU WELL, ALWAYS.

HAYDEN