

Interview with Henrieke Strecker

Thank you for speaking with me, Henrieke. I love your work. It's a natural fit for The Hand Magazine as it combines photography and printmaking. Can you tell us about your artistic training?

Thank you for your kindness and interest, Adam, I'm honored. It is a pleasure meeting with you.

I could say I am "self-taught". But who is self-taught? We don't live in vacuums.— In truth, from early childhood to now, life and nature have taught me and still do. As a child I observed the flora of the Black Forest, its changes, and how it unfolds as time works upon it— from bud to fruit— every step reveals its own distinctive beauty. Or look at a wilting flower and how it transforms to a unique

beautiful gown. I am that wilting flower as well.

I learn from nature. Nature is my teacher. Nature knows.

Do you think that attention to time and slow change, led you to photography? Does photography, or printmaking, or the making of art itself, have a meaning to you in that sense of time and how things unfold?

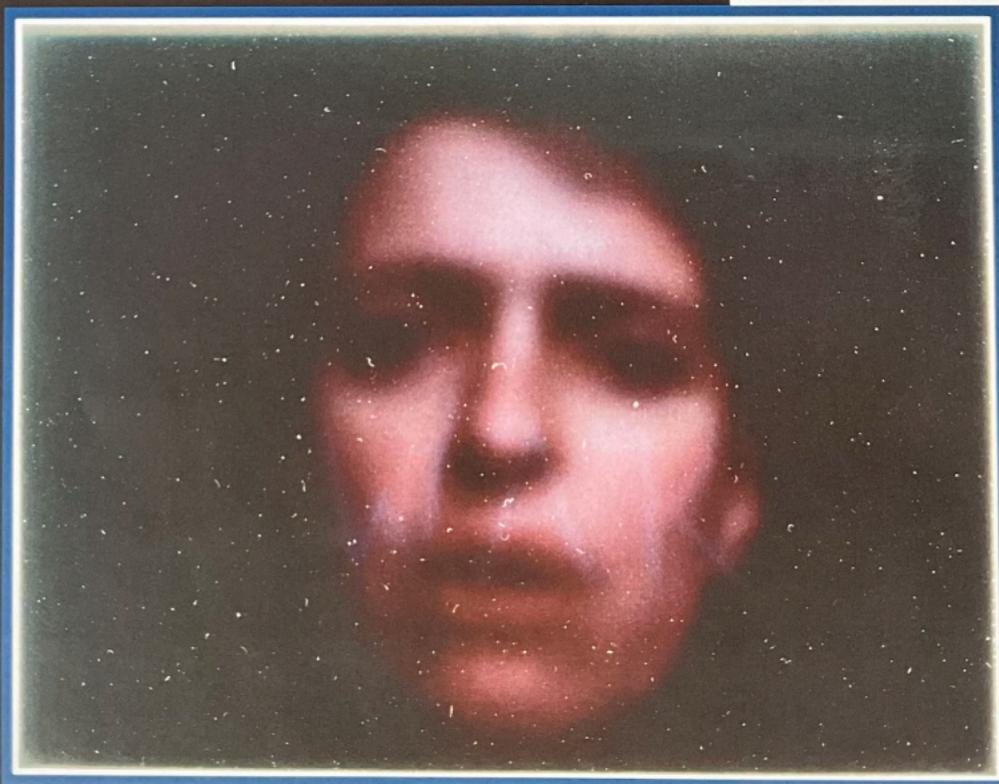
I have often been last. As a shy girl, mute for several months at various times of my childhood. One could take the sausage from my plate, while I was immersed in my own world.— And they did!

In a world of hyper-information I want my intimate images to whisper in a world that often shouts. In truth I am not

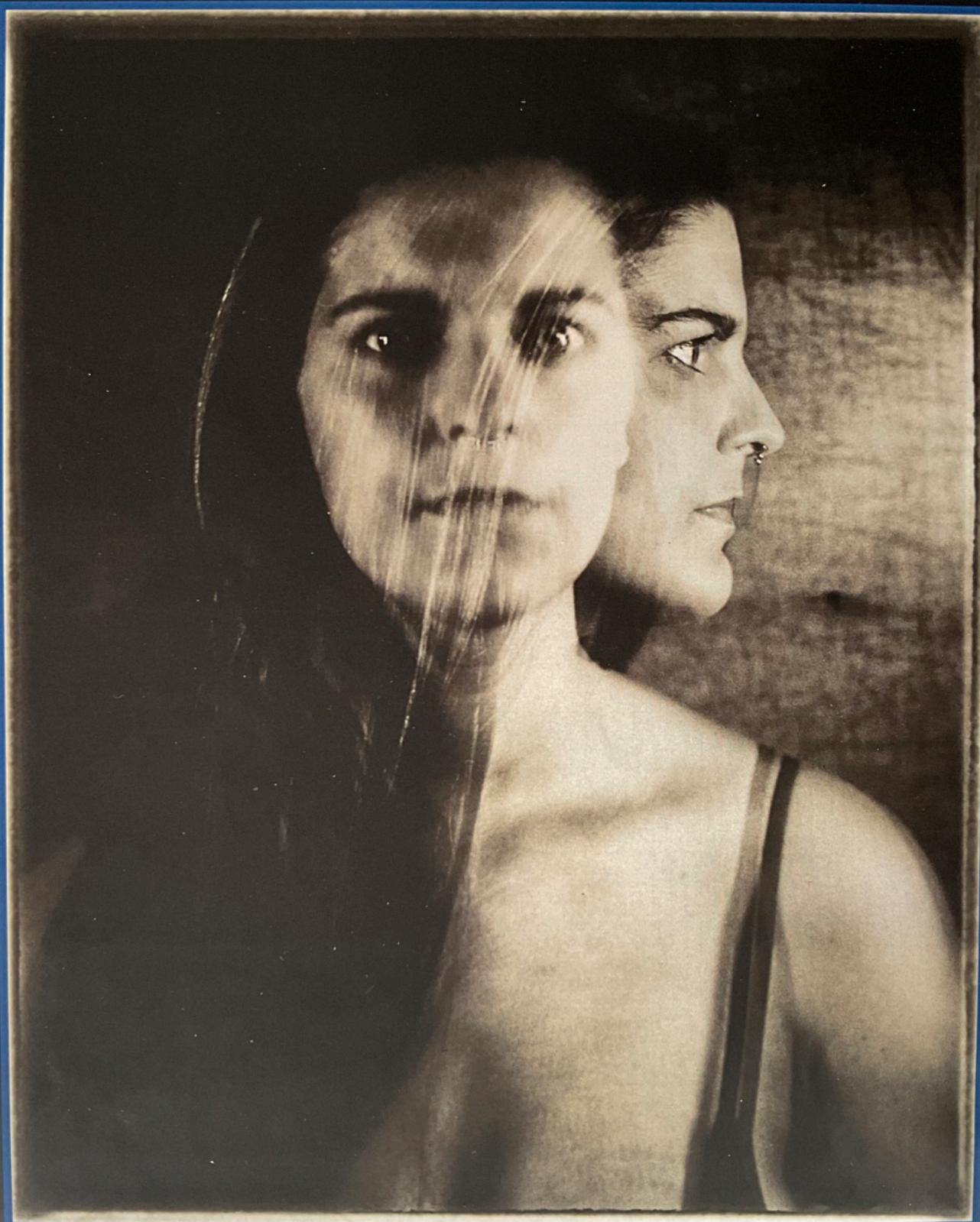
a photographer. I don't take, shoot or capture images. I MAKE them. Different approach that involves time. The slowness. The waiting.— I am the Camera Obscura.

Your work ranges from pinhole cameras and salted paper prints to videos and books. Do you tend to go through phases of working in one process, or do you go back and forth frequently? I imagine that is related very much to your subject matter?

Within all my work, I immerse myself and deepen into subject matter and process. I rarely work parallel on projects. I would get lost. I would lose center. Multitasking to me is distraction.



Pinhole Portrait of War (2003)
Pinhole photograph, Polaroid (Exposure time: 10 minutes)



Hayden Leith (2013)
(ongoing series: "What Does Home Mean To You?")
Large format wooden camera. Long exposure within one movement

Thank you for your response. Next time when I come to your area I would like to make a portrait of you for my series "What Does Home Mean To You". Or you come to visit Berlin.

How long did you stay in the US? I'm just curious. Were you working? Going to school?

I have stayed for almost 7 years at the East Coast in New Hampshire, lived and worked in the middle of the forests of the White Mountains in my studio, and taught students "The Art of Photography" and "Historic Photo Processes" (a course I created and pushed through administration) at "Plymouth State University". Beside that I taught them about plastic pollution and our precious RESSOURCE of WATER. Before they started to make images with their analog cameras, their first assignments were written essays on water and slowness. I have published two books on my students' work here: Pemigewasset - Rapidly Moving Volume I, and Pemigewasset - Rapidly Moving Volume II.

What kinds of answers are you getting? What have you learned from making these images?

I have learned to embrace slowness. The waiting and dwelling within a place have taught me.

Waiting is an essential part of my life. Waiting is not passive. The experience of waiting, with awareness and no expectation of an outcome, becomes its own process. Yet, like in unrequited love, it is never divorced from the object for whom we are waiting. Even if the subject does not appear, we still have that waiting. — Learning is an ongoing process. I love to learn.

*With best wishes,
Henriete I. Strecker
Berlin, August 14, 2016*

henrikestrecker.com



Portocolom Mallorca, Salted paper print



San Salvador Mallorca, Salted paper print



Homage to Francis Goya (2009)
Photogravure on Hahnemühle copplerplate etching paper

Do you have rituals or necessities while working? Music, food, clothing, etc?

Sometimes I listen to J. S. Bach or to Indian Raga while working. However most of the time I work in silence. One of my rituals is to organize my space anew like preparing a new canvas for painting.

What does your studio look like? Can you describe it?

I don't depend on a studio. I work wherever I am. I only need a quiet and beautiful place to work. If necessary, I transform any place into beauty. I am gifted about that and am very grateful for it. I have worked in big studios, cabins, tiny stone houses and even a caravan. If you are passionate about creating, you can arrange within any space.

What other hobbies or interests do you have besides visual arts?

Beside working as an artist I do volunteer work in a children

hospice in Berlin. This volunteer work is putting things into perspective.

Do you ever bring that into your work? You mentioned that protest and social ideas have informed your work. Have you done any artwork about your work with children?

Recently I am working on a book dedicated to the 2 year old boy who suffers of a life threatening heart disease and whom I accompany through rough times. It will be published this year.

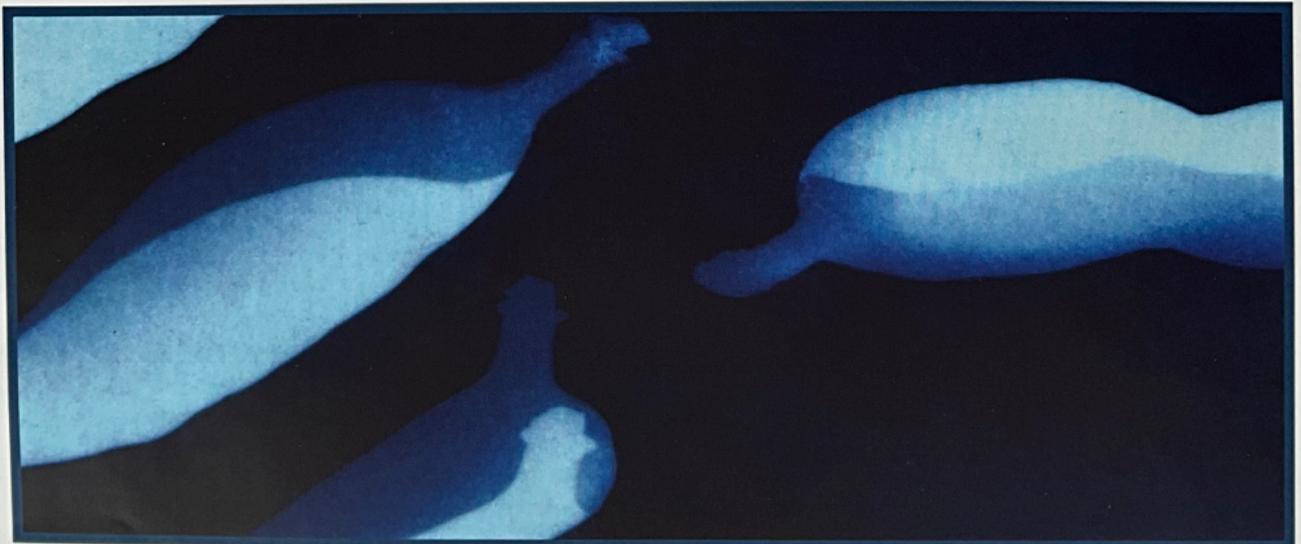
Your newest work (according to your website) is called, What Does Home Mean To You? Can you answer that question?

For everyone home means something different. For some people it is a place or even several places where they can be as they are.

Home to me is being connected with my "inner home". I feel at home when I am with myself thus I carry my "home" with me wherever I am. Almost like a snail. Beside that we have something in common: I also embrace slowness.

The series "What Does Home Mean To You?" is an ongoing project. I started this project when I still lived in the USA. I was a foreigner in your country. My first experience, when I arrived with my visa at Boston Logan Airport, I was asked by an officer: "How long will you stay"? Isn't that an odd question? — How long will you stay, Adam?

I suppose I'll stay as long as I can. It is a somewhat impossible question when phrased that way. For me- to answer the question- home is where I feel most comfortable. Where my muscle memory knows where my body needs to go to get something to eat, to go to sleep, to brush my teeth. I can get up in the middle of the night and I know the sounds and where things are. And home is where my family is.



The Alphabet of Algarroba (2014)
Cyanotype