



## Interview with Phil Bekker

*September 16, 2016*

### INTERVIEW WITH PHIL BEKKER

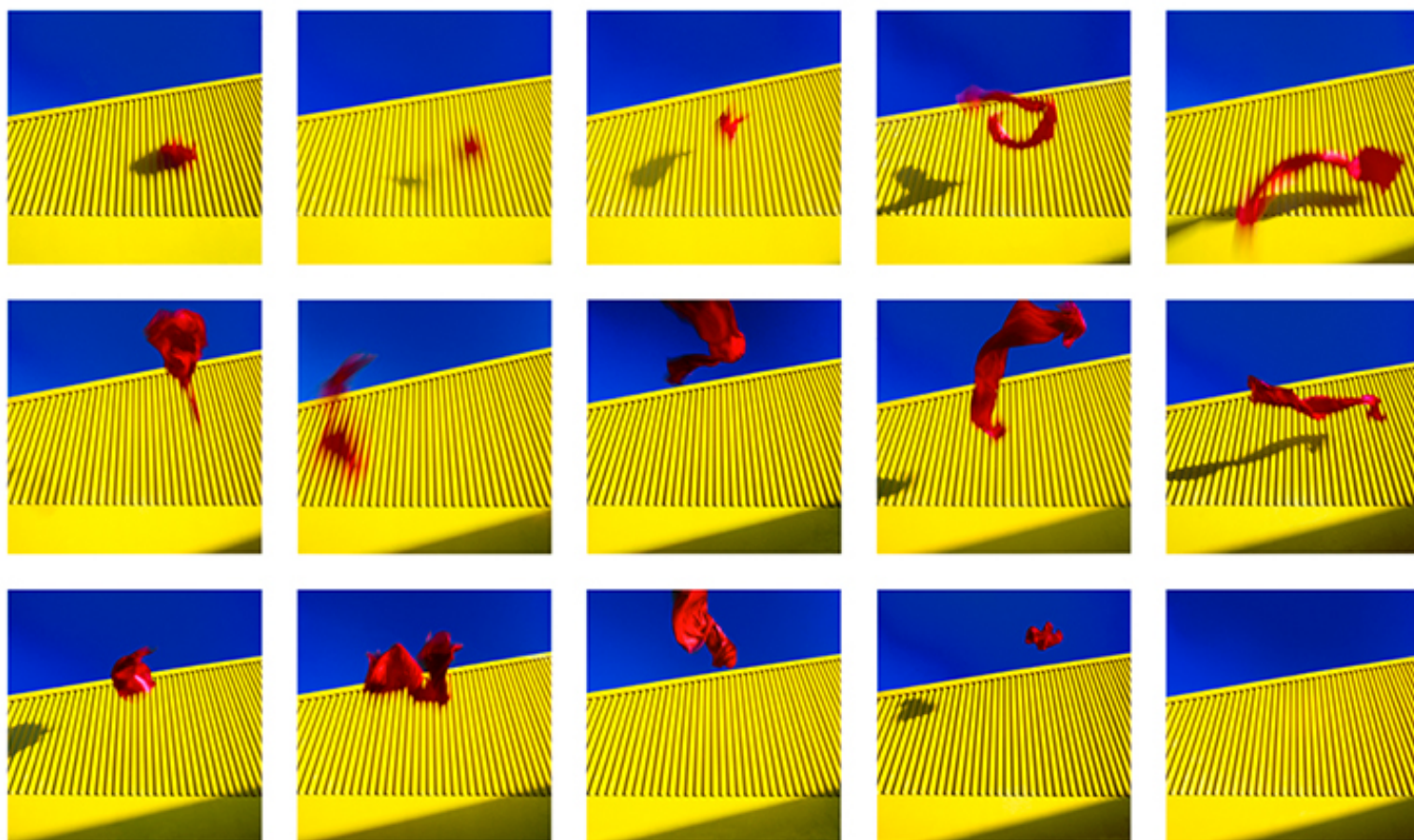


Phil Bekker's photographs bridge the gap between the homogenous qualities of some popular perspectives of photography to a dynamic approach appealing to collectors with a eye toward the wider art market internationally. Bekker's work was a breath of fresh air when it first appeared at the gallery in April 2016. Impeccable design and subtle compositional qualities from this master photographer and printer are best experienced first hand and enjoyed over a period of time of quiet reflection in the gallery or staged in a home or office setting.

The following is an interview Ryan Lytle conducted with Phil Bekker this last June

LMG: What artists and/or concepts influenced your work when you were getting started, and how has that changed (or not changed) with your current work?

PB: As a student, I was influenced by Brett Weston, Guy Bourdin and Art Kane amongst others. In my early teens, a record shop window displaying stacked, Beatles, 'Hard Days Night' album covers with the multi image design of Robert Freeman, was to leave a lasting impression and influence my multi image series, 2 decades later.



- Red Flight - My first multi image piece that I like as much today as when I did it decades ago. The beginning of my abstraction journey and working with multi imagery. There is a narrative and it begs for a subjective interpretation which I like.

The influence and choice of simplicity and design still influences the two different bodies of work that I have been concentrating on, those being the landscapes and the multi image series.

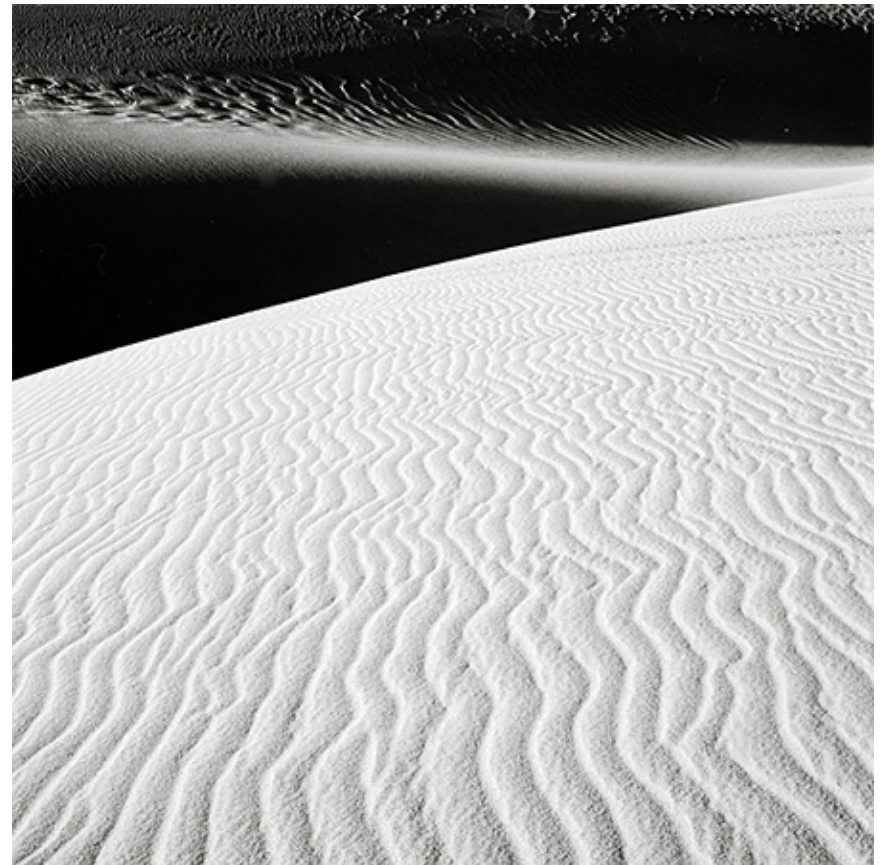
LMG: How have the developments in the ever-changing field of photography affected your process?

PB: The obvious change had been to digital printing and for me, the most important factor is the archival permanence and tonal range that is possible. Piezography was an initial huge first step with amazing results and of course now archival papers and ink systems are readily available. I love gelatin silver prints, but if you see what companies like Nash Editions are doing, there is no need to be stuck in the 20th century with all the options that are now available.

LMG: What drew you to landscapes, in particular the black and white sand dunes?

PB: I had always been drawn to the strong graphic possibilities and monochromatic tones in B&W landscapes, especially sand dunes. Brett Weston's work was a big influence in my flying out to California on a sabbatical and sharing a nature reserve with a mountain lion (just keep coughing, the park ranger told me) to work on my current series of dune-scapes.

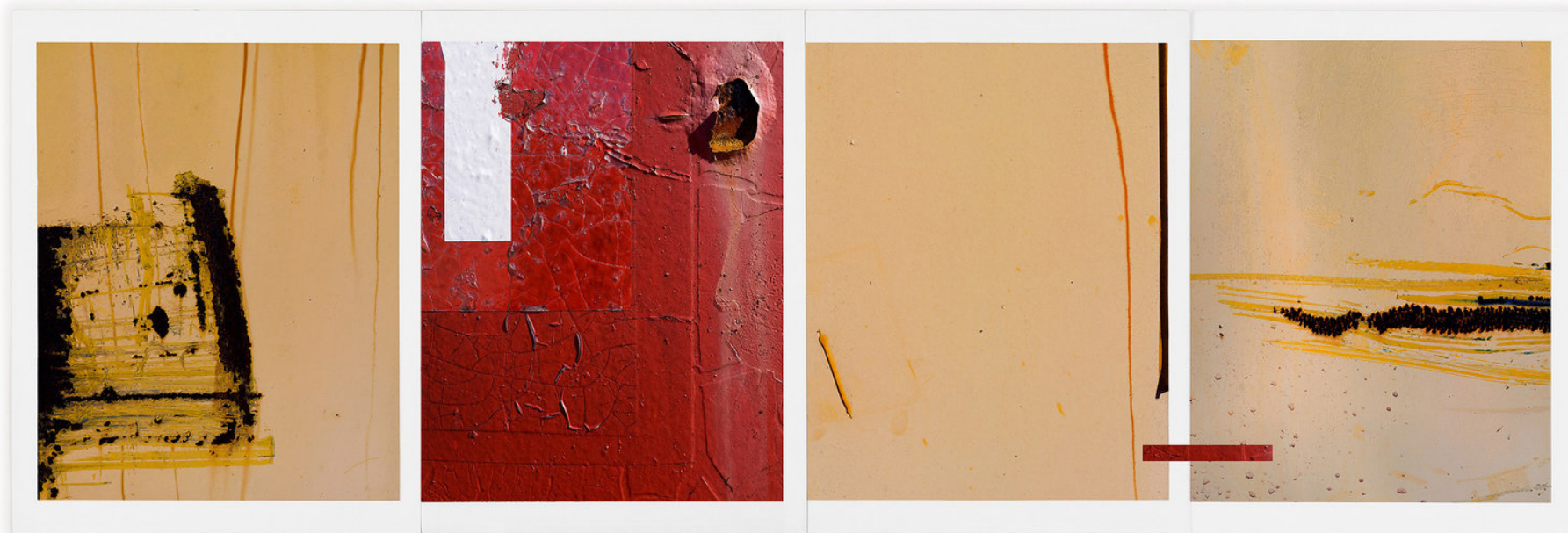




Phil Bekker Oceano install above and two works in the Oceano series

LMG: You seem to take a painterly approach to your abstract works, can you elaborate on them and how they came about?

PB: I have always been interested in painting and especially the work of abstract painters. The majority of my color abstract 'multiple images, are essentially a reconstruction into an abstract entity of a multi image deconstructed original. Its then up to the viewer to have a subjective interpretation of both the single images of the multi image and their combination into the final piece. Occasionally I use mixed media to add an element, that further connects or echoes shapes in the originals.



Tetraptych

LMG: Can you tell me about your work with Polaroid's and instant film?

PB: I began working with Polaroid's SX70 film to do manipulations of single images and progressed to doing unmanipulated multi-image constructions (as describe above). I then worked very intensely with Polaroid Polacolor Transfers, in 4x5" initially and then mostly 8x10" and then with the 20x24" camera in New York. There is a link to a 20x24" shoot in New York on my website, [www.bekker.com](http://www.bekker.com).

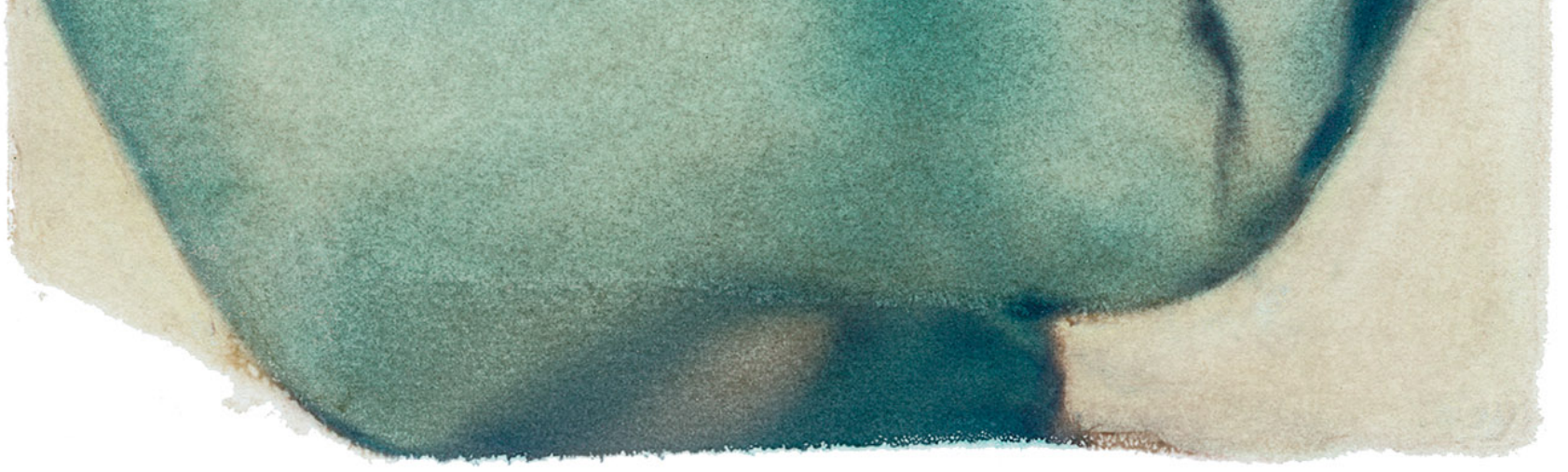


LMG: Can you elaborate on how Polaroid transfers work; how does one take a 20 X 24 Polaroid?

PB: Polaroid transfers are produced, when after you have made the exposure to the Polaroid negative material and send it through a roller system to spread the 'developer' between the negative and the positive receptor, you peel apart the negative from the positive within approximately 20 seconds. Before the dyes can migrate to the positive receptor, carefully place the negative onto a damp archival rag watercolor paper. You roll the negative tightly onto the watercolor paper and after a set amount of time, slowly peel the negative off the paper to reveal the transferred image, now looking more like an illustration than a slick shiny photographic print.







8x10 Polaroid Transfer



Rolled prints/Polaroid Transfers

Each image even from the same photograph becomes a unique image itself by the characteristic edge markings left behind. This is especially evident from the 20x24" Polaroid transfers. Sadly it was announced last week that 20x24" Polaroid material will no longer be produced, increasing



the value of prints done in this format. I have a Youtube video titled 'Polaroid 20x 24 NY Phil Bekker' that shows the use of the 20x24 camera and production of Polaroid Transfers. It may also be accessed from a link on my website under Bio.

LMG: Are there any specific works or accomplishments in your career that you would consider milestones or especially significant?

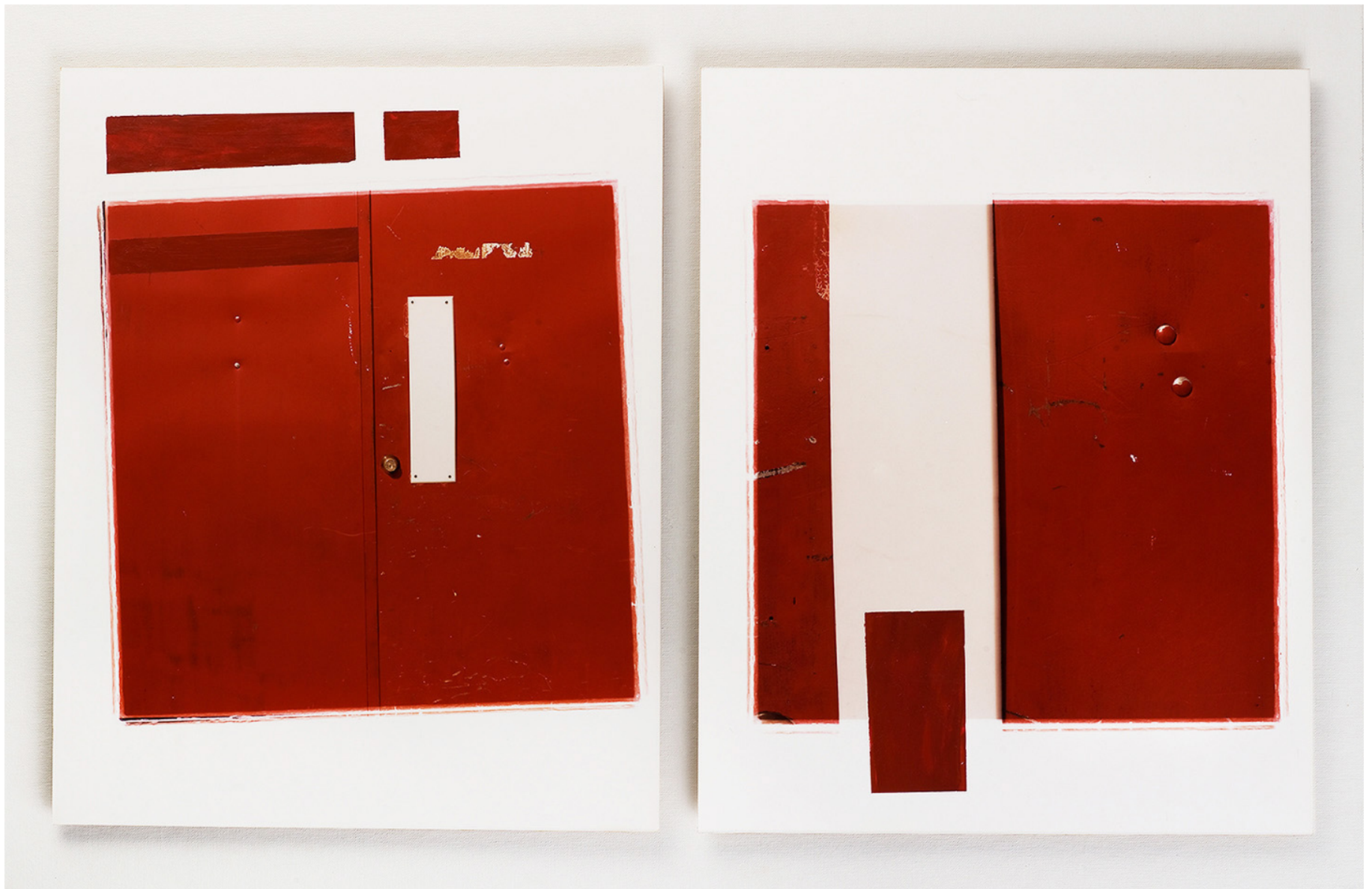


• Morocco Woman & Child. My first 'reworked' ( surface alteration ) to gain a more illustrative feel using 8x10 Polaroid Transfers. The transfer period was a major shift in the approach and technique and also a desire to produce a different result of the popular



process. This period worked very well getting me into major galleries and also large fine-art sales and then commercial commissions.

PB: I think my first multiple, 'Red Flight' (actually shot on film) in South Africa in the 80's was the doorway to the later Polaroid multiples in America in the 90's. Pierre Cardin commissioned me to do a commercial campaign after having seen my fine art work, also in South Africa. The dune series really go me back into monochromatic work with the original prints being Gelatin Silver and then Piezograph prints. Reworked 8x10 Polaroid transfers of a shot in Morocco and another in Grand Tetons resulted in awards that allowed me to shoot in the Polaroid 20x24 studio in New York. It has been a diverse but interesting and rewarding journey. Collectors have included; Polaroid International Collection, Hyatt Group Paris, Saks Fifth Avenue, UPS Consulting and Ann Cox Chambers amongst others.





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• Dyptych #1. Part of my MFA studies which gave me the opportunity to experiment and use mixed media approaches while still pursuing my abstract interests in subject matter. The diptych led to the Tetraptych which is currently in the Lynda Matney gallery.

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