

METAL

Melanie Schiff: Exploring Emotions

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[Melanie Schiff](#) explores mystery and secrets. Through her documentation and juxtaposition of stillness and movement she reveals emotions through her analogue photographs. Based in Los Angeles, she confesses that she's still so in awe with California that she's not sure she'll ever leave this place. But one thing is for sure: inspired by light, structure and layers, the intention behind her pictures is to convey different moods and feelings instead of sticking to the confines of any specific photographic genre.

Do you think in order to create your moody and mysterious images it is important that you shoot analogue?

There's a texture to film that's important to the photographs I make, almost as if it has become illustrative of another world. I feel invested in the whole process: touching the film, loading the camera, looking through the viewfinder. Lately I've even been shooting with my 35mm camera and an old plastic point-and-shoot. There's a ritual to taking pictures on film that I love; I don't think I'll ever be able to completely let go of that.

Some of the photographs are taken in black and white and some in colour. How do you decide which film to use?

It's an intuitive choice, but light probably plays the most important role. I will usually test both ways, although more than often I already have an idea of what it will look best in before I photograph. Black and white is a great way to simplify an image and it opens a conversation with a history I really like to engage with. When I photograph in colour, I like to think of a palette to work in, it helps me to contextualize my subject matter.



UNTITLED SPIT 2006

It feels like every photograph of your series is a moment that has a poetic meaning behind it, rather than wanting to teach the viewer about the subject matter. What do you desire to bring across in your images?

More than anything else, I'm trying to evoke a feeling or mood. Within photography, genres such as landscape, portraiture, and still life can be limiting because they often overdetermine subject matter. Instead of sticking to these confines, I'm more interested in exploring an aura that acts as a connective force between subjects.

Is the fact that you live in Los Angeles important for the inspiration and outcome of your work?

I've lived in Los Angeles for nine years now, and I would say only the past few years has it really felt like home, which has made it easier to work from a personal perspective. I always think of the mood of where I am, the history, the light before I start a new project. I'm still so in awe of California, I'm not sure if that will ever go away.

In your latest work you almost documented how light works by capturing flames, reflections of light and patterns of sunlight and shadow. Do you think it is an important part of your series?

That's a very nice way to think about it.



NATIVES V 2015

Most of your photographs work a lot with structure, patterns, light and layers. Where do you take your inspiration from to photograph the particular subject matter in movement, with multiple exposure or texture?

I look at a lot of photographs of dancers. I don't photograph dancers as often as I would like to, but I find the way they show movement and stillness inspiring. I love Imogen Cunningham's photographs of Merce Cunningham.

Although some of your images have multiple exposures and a lot of structure, they have a very calm feeling to it. Do you think that contrast helps you to engage the viewer and bring across the intention of your work?

I think what can be interesting in using multiple exposures is that it can be illustrative of movement while the object of the photograph is always still. I like it when the subject matter somehow amplifies that dichotomy.

You have had solo exhibitions and group shows in the last few years. How do you decide on the size, paper and frame on each photograph?

Often there are images that could go a few different ways, so I do a lot of tests and make a decision based on the body of work.



DOUBLE FLASH 2016

You can find a lot of artwork by artists that are untitled. However, all of your photographs have a title. How do you decide to title your photographs? What is your process?

Titles are difficult. I usually end up using my working title. I like plays on words and sometimes a fragment from a poem or song.

What plans do you have for the future? Any secret you can reveal to us?

I've been thinking about the body and figure more than I used to. I'm still not sure how that will manifest, but for one reason or another it's been on my mind.



FALLS 2014



DOUBLE DOUBLE 2016



TWO CANDLES 2016



BIRTHDAY FLOWERS 2016



SELF PORTRAIT AFTER JOHNS 2008



GHOST FLOWERS 2015



NATALIE | 2008