

Creative Intent:

I come to photography through music. Composers like Barber, Bartok and Brahms have a particularly strong influence on me with their rich musical textures and complex layering. I am also a composer and have discovered that music can feel as beautiful to my fingers as it sounds to my ear. Certain chord progressions and harmonics reveal moments of timelessness and endless creativity. These are moments of presence that change my life.

Do these moments happen only in music or can light, texture and color create “photographic songs” that can inspire similar experiences?

Like great music, I believe great photographs tell powerful stories that transport the viewer to an experience, an opportunity to connect with the past, present and future, and the chance to better know oneself.

My work begins with questions. What is the essential reality of our being and our relationship with nature? Is it sacred? How is it evident and can I capture it in a photograph?

Is it possible to create sensual and divine “clothing” by layering textures from the natural world on the human form? Can I celebrate the sensuality of the human form without depicting it as merely naked?

For example, layering textures on the human body masks individuality, revealing essences and subtleties unseen in single images. This process detaches a figure from the contemporary context and carries it towards a more timeless and contemplative plane. Ironically, intricate textures and layering can uncover the simple and pure.

Sometimes while composing images on my light table, a spiritual connection greater than the natural connection is evident and suddenly the natural textures become alive...present, and my existence with them takes on new meaning.

I am looking for a photographic language that goes beyond the sentimentality of "oneness with all things" to opening an actual dialogue and learning experience between nature and us. For example, what does the 400-year-old tree bark have to say about my skin? What is my emotional response to decay, age or the lines on my face? Is it a thing of beauty as in the tree?

I think of myself more as a photographic explorer, discovering as much as I create. I am curious about unseen realities. When I dream of flying it seems completely natural, so what happens to that "nature" when I awake? How real are things I imagine, how real can they be? These questions inspire me to photograph the human form in motion and in flight.

Presence can appear direct and immediate as in the images of flying nudes, or it can be subdued and mysterious as in the textured nudes and textured landscapes. Even when our sense of self and presence are overcome by nature, I believe we are present in every element... our story, as yet untold.

I am grateful and honored by the trust given to me by those I photograph because I approach photography as a hallowed act. My work represents these shared moments of "truth telling" and the unearthing of the visible world, for the mystery of the sacred within it.

Technical Considerations:

My photographs are taken with the large format, 4" x 5" Wisner Technical Field Camera. This film size delivers superior image quality and clarity and permits my work to be enlarged to wall-sized prints without a blurred or grainy appearance. Some photographs are single black and white or color images, while others are combinations. With these, I create layered perspectives of the human form and textured landscapes.

These photographs are unaltered by any digital process or printing technique. What you see is what I assembled by hand on my light table.

Prints are made using an Océ Lightjet 430 on Fuji Flex archival material and limited to editions of 15. Within each edition I offer a range of sizes from 16" x 20" to as large as desired.

I have worked as a professional fine art photographer for over 12 years. My work has been shown internationally in museums, galleries and churches and in private collections worldwide. You can view more of my photography at <http://www.paulmahder.com>

For purchases or private commissions, please contact me at paul@blueroomgallery.org or call (415) 515-1210 (San Francisco)