Chris McCaw  
Courtesy of the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery

Chris has been getting his hands wet in the darkroom from the age of 13, and since then he has been unable to separate his personal life from his photographic life. In a constant state of production of photographic work from that early age, he continues to be excited about the medium.

The early years involved self-taught explorations in skateboarding/ zine /punk scenes with a fisheye lens and Tri-X through the mid-late 80’s. After high school he learned everything he could about photography. Finally he fell in love with the simplicity of large format cameras, and in 1992 got his first 4”x5”. The following year he fell in love with the platinum/palladium printing process and even larger cameras. To this day Chris makes his living through the platinum/palladium process. Currently he's working the boundaries of analogue photographic mediums with his project titled Sunburn.

Sunburn

In 2003 an all night exposure of the stars made during a camping trip was lost due to the effects of whiskey. Unable to wake up to close the shutter before sunrise, all the information of the night’s exposure was destroyed. The intense light of the rising sun was so focused and powerful that it physically changed the film, creating a new way for me to think about photography.

In this process the sun burns its path onto the light sensitive negative. After hours of exposure, the sky, as a result of the extremely intense light exposure, reacts in an effect called solarization - a natural reversal of tonality through over exposure. The resulting negative literally has a burnt hole in it with the landscape in complete reversal. The subject of the photograph (the sun) has transcended the idea that a photograph is a simple representation of reality, and has physically come through the lens and put it's hand onto the final piece. This is a process of creation and destruction, all happening within the camera.

In the beginning, after that first experience in 2003, I began experimenting with burning film and printing the resulting burnt negative in the platinum palladium process. The results were very interesting yet very confusing. The film negative has solarized into a positive and I then printed that into a final print with a negative image, and a generation loss of the burn.

After struggling for a few years and thinking about this new way of working with time and exposure, I wanted to see what else could be done with different media. Through much trial and error, in late 2006 I chose to use vintage fiber based gelatin silver black & white photographic paper. By putting the paper in my film holder, in place of film, I create a one of a kind paper
negative. Being the first generation, the evidence of the scorching is right there front and center and the solarized image becomes a positive. The gelatin in the paper gets cooked and leaves wonderful colors of orange and red, with ash that ranges from a glossy black to an iridescent metallic surface. Becoming more of a collaboration between artist and subject, in the resulting image the sun has become an active participant in part of the printmaking.

The historic references to photography's beginnings are also apparent in this work. Talbot's use of paper negatives come to mind. Also the worlds earliest surviving photograph made by Niepce was an 8 hour long exposure, describing the movement of the sun-the buildings being lit by 2 directions showing morning and afternoon light in the same image. Then there is the use of vintage papers which some of the worlds most memorable work was printed on. There is this vague nostalgia for me as I destroy these classic papers that represent some of the highest points in traditional black and white image making. I know for instance, I have burned the same vintage of paper that Misrach used to use in his split toned photographs of the desert at night until Agfa changed the formulation. Also some Dupont papers that were favorites of many photographers back in the 60's and 70's.

With every year I have further advanced this method. Learning about military aerial reconnaissance camera optics and pretty much the entire history of gelatin silver enlarging papers since the late 1960's, I now have bettered the means to execute the ideas I have regarding time and process. Currently I am working out ideas ranging from large 30"x40" paper negatives, mosaics of paper, solar locomotion (similar methodology to Muybridge), wave forms and the cirkut camera, all the way to visual representation of morse code-seriously writing with light. This project has got my mind working overtime and has rejuvenated my faith in analog photography. My favorite part is watching smoke come out of the camera during the exposure and the faint smell of roasted marshmallows as the gelatin cooks!

heliograph095

Heliograph #95
Unique gelatin silver paper negatives
2 – 8 x 10 inches
2015
SUNBURNED GSP#555

Sunburned GSP#555 (San Francisco Bay)
Unique gelatin silver paper negative
8 x 10 inches
2012

SUNBURNED GSP#567

Sunburned GSP#555 (Eclipse)
Unique gelatin silver paper negative
4 x 5 inches
2012
Chris McCaw

Born 1971, Daly City, California, USA
Lives and works in Pacifica, CA

Education

1995 BFA, photography, Academy of Art, San Francisco, CA.
1990 De Anza College, Cupertino, CA. Studies—photographic arts, film production

Selected Exhibitions—both group/solo and national/international

2016 Direct Positive, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, NY
2016 Particle and Wave, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2016 Photography and the Scientific Spirit, Kolher Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI
2015 The Mapmaker’s Dream, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2015 The Memory of Time, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
2015 LIGHT, PAPER, PROCESS, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
2015 Lens Work, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA
2015 One-of-a-kind, Phoenix art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
2015 Modern Alchemy, Hecksher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY
2014 All That Glitters is Not Gold, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
2014 Select Cuts & Alterations, Foley Gallery, New York, NY
2014 Transformational Imagemaking, CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, NY
2014 After Ansel Adams, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA
2014 PROCESS, Photo Center NW, Seattle, WA
2014 Heavenly Bodies, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
2014 Space is The Place, BravinLee Programs, New York, NY
2013 With out a Trace, Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH
2013 Reality Check, Massachusetts College of Art
2013 Suddenness + Certainty, Robert Miller Gallery, New York, NY
2013 The Unphotographable, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2012 Marking Time, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, NY
2012 Ride Into The Sun, Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2012 Heliomancy, Duncan Miller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
2012 Chris McCaw: Sunburn, Candela Books and Gallery, Richmond, VA
2012 Tracing Light, Datz Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
2012 Solar, Photo Eye Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
2012 Brought To Light, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
2012 Emerging, Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR
2012 Sun Works, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
2011 Seeing is Knowing: The Universe, Perlman Teaching Museum, Carleton College, Northfield, MN
2011 Out of the Dark Room Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland
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<th>Exhibition Title</th>
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<td>Pure Photography, Post Production and Mixed Media</td>
<td>Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ</td>
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<td>California Continued</td>
<td>Smith Anderson North, San Anselmo, CA</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>EcoArchive</td>
<td>Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Exposed</td>
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<td>Elemental</td>
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<td>Burning Desire</td>
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<td>State of Mind</td>
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<td>Keeping Time</td>
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<td>Each Sun</td>
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<td>Lucky Day</td>
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<td>Eyewitness II</td>
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<td>Platinum places</td>
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<td>Lost Out West</td>
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<td>Vital Signs</td>
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<td>Watermark Fine Art, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>Travelogue</td>
<td>Fusion Artspace, San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Live Free or Die</td>
<td>Freewheel, San Francisco, CA</td>
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2003  Chris McCaw-American photographs, Image/Imatge Gallery, Orthez, France
2002  Identity, San Francisco Main library, San Francisco, CA
2001  SF Camerawork, Fine Print Collection
2001  Vivid, SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA
2000  Timeless Light, Contemporary Crafts Gallery, Portland, OR
1999  Portraits, Bloom Studio, Oakland, CA
1998  Road Trip Documents, Spindler, San Francisco, CA
1995  Graduate show, Academy of Art, San Francisco, CA
1993  Friends of the South Bay punk scene, the Other Gallery, De Anza College, Cupertino, CA
1991  Infrared views, the Other Gallery, De Anza College, Cupertino, CA

Awards

2008  New Works Grant, Andy Warhol Foundation / SF Camerawork, SF, CA
2007  Alternative Exposure Grant, Andy Warhol Foundation / Southern Exposure, SF, CA
1996  Honorable mention, Photo Metro
1992  John Long Memorial photography scholarship, De Anza College, Cupertino, CA

Publications

2014  American Photo. January/February 2015
2011  Photo District News, June 2011
2010  British Journal of Photography, December 2010
2010  B&W Magazine, October 2010 issue
2010  View Camera Magazine, July/August 2010 issue
2010  PQ, A Journal For Contemporary Photography,Number 99/ Volume 25/ Number 1
2009  B&W magazine, October 2009 issue
2009  Art On Paper, May/June 2009 issue
2009  Artkopel online French publication
2009  SeeSaw online magazine, issue #11 Winter 2009
2007  Daylight magazine, fall issue
2007  View Camera Magazine, July/August 2007 issue
2005  7. International Fototage Mannheim/Ludwigshafen, Das Bild Forum, Germany
2004  Lens Culture.com
2003  Recontres Photographiques Image/Imatge, Annexe H, 2003, France
2002  View Camera, Volume XV, Number 4, July/August
2001  SF Camerawork Journal of Photographic Art, Vol.28, No.2
2000  Raygun Magazine, September/October issue
1998  Photo Metro, issue 151, October
1996  Photo Metro, contest issue, honorable mention
1994  Thrasher magazine, August issue
1992  Maximum Rock & Roll, March issue

Collections
Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive
Center For Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
George Eastman House International Museum of Photography
Harry Ransom Center of Humanities at the University of Texas
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri
The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Princeton University Art Museum
Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
and many private collections