



Past is Present: the Wet-Plate Revival

Wednesday May 21, 6-7 p.m.

Local artist Jenn Libby will give a talk on the resurgence of interest in the wet-plate collodion photographic process. Invented in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer, the process usurped daguerreotypes and calotypes, and along with albumen prints, dominated the field of photography for several decades. The name of the process references the fact that each photographic plate must remain wet during exposure and be developed immediately afterward, which necessitates a darkroom in the studio and on location.

Unlike modern black-and-white film which is sensitive to all colors, this photographic process is only sensitive to blue light. This characteristic contributes greatly to the unusual and ethereal quality of collodion imagery. The collodion process produces a starkly detailed image that simultaneously possesses an impressionistic quality.

Despite all the technical complexity, there has been a resurgence of interest in the process. With the proliferation of digital images, individual photographs are seldom given appreciation and value. In response, creating a unique, physical object of lasting quality has once again come into fashion.

Libby will give an overview of how the process works and discuss its place in the history of photography. She will show historic and contemporary examples of wet-plate collodion work, and discuss why she has opted to work with the process for the past ten years despite the challenges it has presented.

BIO

Jenn Libby has a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the Visual Studies Workshop where she is currently in charge of the Research Center archives. Libby has over ten years experience working with the collodion process and uses it for both portraiture and other artistic endeavors. She recently opened Genesee Libby, a photography studio that specializes in the 19th-century wet-plate collodion process. Genesee Libby offers wet-plate collodion portrait sessions in the studio and on-location, commercial commissions and fine art sales, and offers workshops for those interested in learning the process.

For more about Jenn visit:
www.jennlibby.com
www.geneseelibby.com