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Developer Trays

DEVELOPER TRAYS

Photographs by JOHN CYR   Introduction by LYLE REXER

Synopsis

Developer Trays is master photography printer John Cyr's tribute to the craft and art he has spent his career perfecting. As sure as the age of silver has come to an end, there remain few but extraordinary and dedicated darkroom practitioners such as Cyr who continue to work with chemistry and processes more or less unchanged since the early days of the medium. With an unrivaled passion for the darkroom and all its accouterments Cyr set out to document the actual developer trays of many of the world's most renowned photographers. Cyr celebrates in stunning large-format color photographs the intimate materiality of the developer tray itself and the ephemeral presence of the artist within it. This revelatory work showcases the ubiquitous developer tray as an essential vehicle of analog photography that defies modern digital photographic advances: its material nature and functionality will not become obsolete. Developer Trays presents its viewer with a rare glimpse into the darkroom experiences of many of the world's leading photographers. Each tray's physical appearance is a direct reflection of its treatment: the years of usage, the maintenance of it, the chemicals in the developer, and the level of print agitation. Every accumulated tong mark, silver deposit, and chemical stain seen in these photographs is the result of the artist's handling and a signature bearing the imprint of its artist. Trays from many of the giants of photography, including: Ansel Adams, Eddie Adams, Tom Baril, Lillian Bassman, Edna Bullock, Wynn Bullock, Bill Burke, Ellen Carey, Mark Cohen, Lois Conner, Linda Connor, John Coplans, Valdir Cruz, John Cyr, Bruce Davidson, John Draper, Elliott Erwitt, Dan Estabrook, Andreas Feininger, Larry Fink, Abe Frajndlich, Leonard Freed, Adam Fuss, The George Eastman House, Ralph Gibson, John Goodman, Emmet Gowin, David Graham, Ed Grazda, Stanley Greenberg, Ted Hendrickson, Lizzie Himmel, Paul Himmel, Henry Horenstein, Sid Kaplan, Chuck Kelton, Michael Kenna, John George Kingsley, Builder Levy, O. Winston Link, Vera Lutter, Alen MacWeeney, Sally Mann, Edward Mapplethorpe, Chris McCaw, Amanda Means, Jim Megargee, Barbara Mensch, Richard Misrach, Andrea Modica, Abelardo Morell, The National Press Photographers Association, Arnold Newman, Olivia Parker, Philip Perkis, The Photo Studio of the American Museum of Natural History, The Photo Studio of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Photographic History Collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Sylvia Plachy, Eugene Richards, Stuart Rome, Ken Rosenthal, Alison Rossiter, Gary Schneider, Mark Seliger, Neil Selkirk, John Sexton, Mark Sink, Aaron Siskind, Joni Sternbach, Helen M. Stummer, George Tice, Eileen Travell, Jerry Uelsmann, Catherine Wagner, Harvey Wang, Hiroshi Watanabe, Kim Weston, Minor White, and Joel-Peter Witkin.

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Customer Reviews

"Like the pens of the great writers, the developer trays of the world's best photographers provide a unique, and weirdly intimate look, into the lives of people who used them."-Wired.com"[Cyr] spent three years snapping pictures of famous photographers' trays, and now he is bringing his album out of the darkroom..."-Brooklyn Daily"When John Cyr set out to photograph the tolls of the darkroom he discovered in himself something unexpected - a passion to capture the fingerprints of some of the world's greatest photographers."-BBC News online"An essential tool in that process is the developer tray Ã¢â ¬â œ the vehicle that holds the various liquids that develop, stop, and fix your exposed image and create a print. It has been a very private place for the image-maker, which is why master photography printer John CyrÃ¢â ¬Ëœs new book, Developer Trays, is such a treat."-PDN"In an age where digital photographic methods are dominating over the hand craftsmanship of darkroom created silver gelatin prints, CyrÃ¢â ¬â„¢s photographs stand as a documentation"-Juxtapoz

John Cyr is a Brooklyn based photographer, printer, and educator. HeÃ Â earned his MFA from the School of Visual Arts and teaches at the International CenterÃ Â of Photography in New York City. Cyr's photography is represented in many notableÃ Â public and private collections including: George Eastman House InternationalÃ Â Museum of Photography, Rochester, New York; The Photographic History CollectionÃ Â at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.; and TheÃ Â New York Public Library, New York, New York. John Cyr is

represented by CatherineÃ Â Edelman Gallery in Chicago. Lyle Rexer is the author of several books, including TheÃ Â Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography (Aperture, 2009) and Photography'sÃ Â Antiquarian Avant Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes (Abrams, 2002). In addition, LyleÃ Â Rexer has published many catalogue essays and articles on art, architecture, andÃ Â photography and contributed to such publications as The New York Times, Art inÃ Â America, Aperture, BOMB, and DAMn. As a curator, he has organized exhibitions inÃ Â the United States and internationally, most recently "The Edge of Vision," a selectionÃ Â of contemporary abstract photography. He teaches at the School of Visual Arts in NewÃ Â York and is a columnist for Photograph magazine.

Cyr's work stands out in achieving at least two always difficult tasks: firstly, engaging in a work of cultural memory that is not an exercise in mourning or nostalgia and secondly, bringing to the fore and celebrating the the accretion of the material itself in each object. Each of the trays that Cyr captures with such clarity and precision attests both to the 'stamp' or 'fingerprint' of a particular photographer - and Cyr wisely chooses to include anonymous trays as well which highlights this - and also to the recognition and reflection of the material history that has left such seemingly geologic images. The images are fascinating in and of themselves but should be recognized additionally as a kind of transitional archive of the analog to the digital but that escapes the disciplinary exclusivity of archival logic. Highly recommended for those interested in photography, the history of photography, the reproduction of art, and non-binary relations between the digital and the analog. Would make an excellent classroom tool for courses in art history, visual studies, and aesthetic thought as well.

To have viewed these master photographers' works in galleries and museums, and now to see their developer trays in one beautiful monograph, I can certainly imagine these renowned photographers having an aha moment when an image first emerged in their darkroom.The book is breathtaking...not only for historically documenting these trays but because of the way Cyr has so artistically presented these utilitarian tools of black and white photography.

The concept is great but the execution is disappointing. I feel if the author had included a work by each featured photographer next to his/her tray, it would have created a much more meaningful book. For sure the trays have their own merits but they exhibit no distinct personalities. They are interchangeable and not everyone is familiar with all the photographers' works. After flipping several

pages, they all became a blur. Add the fact that missing a few of the leading photographers of the 20th century's trays doesn't help. The reason I bought the book was I had assisted one of the photographers featured. Looking back at the tray didn't bring back the fond memories of having worked in his darkroom. The trays were only accessories to the photographers' work. What magical images came out of those trays defined their contribution to the art of photography. Nevertheless, it is a beautifully printed book and is well served as a conversation starter.

I've been a huge fan of John Cyr's work since the late 90's. The the photos in this book are all so beautiful and unique! They are rich in texture and color, and really pop off the page. It is a pleasure to flip through and to get a small glimpse into the history of all these amazing photographers and their process.

Fantastic almost anthropological study of developer trays. A little lesson in photo history. Stunningly beautiful images.

Wonderful documentation from an artistic perspective

Let me start by saying that I have little knowledge of or experience in the photography world. I do have a digital camera that I enjoy shooting with, and can definitely appreciate a well-composed, artful photo. But that is about the extent of my knowledge. As a result, I came to "Developer Trays" with a very open mind.What I most appreciate about this book:(1) how it makes me think about transitions-- how all art forms are always changing and evolving, and how having an appreciation of what has come before gives me an even greater appreciation for where we are now and where we are headed (wherever that is);(2) how blown away I am by how unique each tray is -- I'd always assumed that developer trays all looked the same even after being exposed to chemical processes -- but seeing the individuality of each tray, and then thinking of the photos that were born from them, captures my imagination and inspires me to think that each tray is like a little fingerprint from this collection of immensely talented artists.Thanks for giving me the opportunity to pause and reflect on the constantly "developing" nature of art and photography!

This book is a real gem on so many levels. As a piece of art, the book is choc full of beautiful images of developer trays by a contemporary photographer/printer from NYC. More than that however, this book really got me thinking on the projection of photography. Cyr is documenting the

end of an era of an artform that has the fastest, most evolving identity that I can think of. While I don't presume to know the artists' intent, a reader does not get the overwhelming feeling that this is a remorseful, swansong look at a dying art. It more serves as a chronicle of famous (and some not-so-famous) developer trays and views them as individual art pieces which are beautifully photographed. It opens up the opportunity for dialogue which I find most important in any book.

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