

# the Photographers' Formulary

Volume 9

Number 8

## AUGUST 2012 NEWSLETTER

### DAGUERREOTYPE: A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH



"Formulary from the Air"  
File Photo

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©2012 George Hemingway

Walking through a wooded area near Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada, George Hemingway of Nehalem, Oregon crossed paths with this Rocky Mountain Elk bull in "*full velvet*." The Big Guy kept coming, and George kept backing up to stay out of the way. The elk was about 8' away, close enough to smell his breath, when George clicked his shutter.

### DAGUERREOTYPE: A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH WITH JERRY SPAGNOLI

#### Daguerreotype: A Contemporary Approach: with Jerry Spagnoli

This summer's workshop schedule included Jerry Spagnoli's "*Daguerreotype: A Contemporary Approach*." Describing his workshop, Spagnoli says,

*"The daguerreotype is as much an object to hold in your hand as an image to look into. This class presents a method for producing high quality daguerreotypes without the use of the dangerous chemicals usually associated with the process. This method was dis-*

*covered by Edward Becquerel in the 1840's and has existed as a scientific curiosity until now. It is a process, simple in its parts but full of subtle techniques."*

The workshop covered everything from how to manufacture daguerreotype plates to finishing

and encasing the final image, and included how to build and maintain the unique equipment necessary for you to continue on your own.

Because some might wish to use the contact printing method of exposing the plate, Spagnoli demonstrated how to produce a digital film positive. He demonstrated



*Tacking Plate to Board for Polishing*  
Formulary Staff

how to modify a conventional film holder to expose plates in a camera, and as a finishing touch demonstrated how to make a case to hold the finished image.

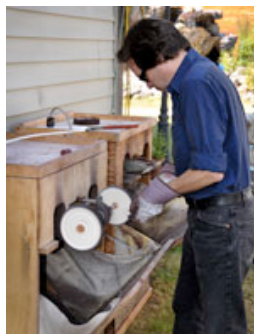
Spagnoli's well prepared lectures quickly taught workshop participants how to bring a commercially available silver coated copper plate from a production finish to a highly polished mirror surface capable of capturing an image with the exquisite detail found



*Heating Plate Before Polishing*  
Formulary Staff

only in a daguerreotype.

In a demo on one of two metal polishers outside the Formulary classroom, Spagnoli showed how to mount the plate on a wooden block and heat it with a torch to remove residual moisture. Moving



*Polishing the Plate*  
Formulary Staff

quickly to the polishing wheels, he added jeweler's rouge to a stitched cotton wheel and in seconds began the polishing process.

It took less than a minute to bring the silver coated surface to a mirror polish. Then, even though to the naked eye the surface was "shiny enough," Spagnoli brought it to an even brighter sheen by hand polishing it with at least 100 strokes across a surface of velvet dusted



*Burnishing Plate on Velvet Covered Board*  
Formulary Staff

with powdered jeweler's rouge.

In one of the Formulary's three darkrooms Spagnoli exposed the plate to fumes of silver iodide. With repeated exposures to the fumes inside a simple wooden box, the plate changed colors progressively from yellow to orange, to pink and finally to a delicate purple. Up till now the exposures had been in normal room light.

The final exposure to silver iodide fumes, however, would make the plate photosensitive and required at least subdued safelight conditions. After sensitizing the final time, the plate went into a large format film

holder adapted to receive it. This method of preparing the plate using fumes of silver iodide stems from discoveries made by *Edward Becquerel*, a French scientist and a contemporary of *Daguerre*. Less hazardous than the original process which required mercury to sensitize the plate, the Becquerel process somehow lay dormant and unused



*"Fuming" the Plate*  
Formulary Staff

until the late 20th century.

Spagnoli carried the plate holder (no longer used for film) to his 1960's *Deardorff* folding field camera and set it aside while he composed his shot of a modern day BMW touring motorcycle against a barn door. He explained because the Becquerel process requires longer exposure times than Daguerre's, the best results



*Exposing the Image*  
Formulary Staff

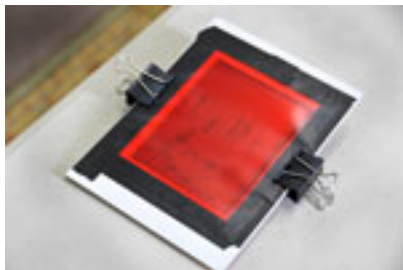
come from exposures in open shade. Exposures can range from as little as two minutes to all day, but far longer than most human subjects can sit motionless or keep their eyes open!





*Covering Image for Development*  
Formulary Staff

After exposure for what Spagnoli felt was an appropriate time, he took the plate into the dark room and taped it onto a frame of stiff mount board. The exposed surface was covered with '*rubylith*,' a red masking film used in the camera and plate making operations for



*Rubylith taped over Image for Development*  
Formulary Staff

offset lithography, flexography, gravure, and screen processes.

Here's where it gets even stranger. He took the plate into the direct sun and placed it image side up. He explained the ultraviolet rays would bypass the red rubylith and would "develop" the latent image on the plate. It would take at least an hour, he said, and perhaps more if the sun was not strong enough.

The hour passed and Spagnoli checked on his plate. While an image



*Fixing the Image*  
Formulary Staff

had emerged only minutes after he put the plate into the sun, Spagnoli explained the longer time was needed for complete "development." Declaring his plate adequately "cooked," Spagnoli took it back into the darkroom and removed it from the rubylith covered frame.

In normal room light he carefully dropped the plate into a tray



*Gilding the Image*  
Formulary Staff

of "hypo" or sodium thiosulfate, agitating it for about thirty seconds. Now it was "fixed," and ready for gilding with a solution of gold chloride.

If you have the impression by now that Daguerreotypes are time consuming, you are correct!

The gilding process requires heat applied to the underside of the



*Gilding the Image*  
Formulary Staff

developed plate for about three minutes. The flame cannot be too hot or it will evaporate the solution of gold chloride covering the plate. This will cause a stain. (*Ask me, I did it!*) You can see a short demo of the gilding process [here](#) as workshop participant Sandra Petrillo moves the propane torch back and forth beneath a perfectly level metal rack on which her



*Rinsing the Image*  
Formulary Staff

exposed and developed plate rests. When Sandra finishes the gilding by heating the plate and gold chloride, she douses the plate with clean water to cool it, then rinses it in distilled water.

The final step is drying the plate - as rapidly as possible - this time



*Air Drying the Gilded Image*  
Formulary Staff

with a heat gun. Shaking the plate to drive water off, Sandra keeps heat on it to quickly evaporate the remaining liquid. *Watch a short movie [here](#) . . .* Removing the water as quickly as possible reduces the chances of "tidal marks" or water stains on the polished image.

Now the image is finished, and all that remains is to encase it in a



*The Finished Daguerreotype*  
Formulary Staff

cover of clear glass. But that's another story for another day.

# AlternativePhotography.com

Galleries • Processes • Articles • Suppliers directories

## Call for entries!

For the fourth year running the AlternativePhotography.com calendar competition is now open for entries – alt proc only. **Deadline Friday 14th of September 2012.** As well as having the chance to be included in the calendar, there are also prizes for all of the 12 who make it into the 2013 AlternativePhotography.com calendar.

## When to enter

Start now. Entries will be accepted until the deadline.

## What to enter

Eligibility: All photographs entered should use an alternative photographic process, such as albumen, anthotype, argyrotype, carbon, chrysotype, cyanotype, bromoil, gum bichromate, gumoil, infrared, kallitype, vandyke, platinum/palladium, photogravure, polaroid lift, transfer and sx-70, salt print, temperaprint, vandyke, wet plate collodion, ziatype and other alternative photographic processes. It is nice if the work has been completed within the last 2 years, but not a must.

## What not to enter

No digital, c-prints, or gelatin silver prints, pinholes, unless of course they are combined with an alternative process, lumen are fine. All subject matters apart from nudes acceptable.

## How to enter

It is a worldwide event. Anyone can enter. Only ONE image per artist.

## Entry fee

None. Totally free.

## How the selection is made

All images will be added to a gallery. 6 of the images will be selected by a jury. This part is ONLY open to all artist who are Supporting Members of AlternativePhotography.com. 6 images will be chosen by visitors to the website will act as a jury voting for the winner. This part is open to EVERYONE. There will be a week of voting. The 12 selected images will be added to the calendar. All winners will receive a prize. Winners will be notified at the latest by the 15th of November.

## Copyright

You will of course retain copyright to your work. But, by entering the competition you will agree that your name and image can be displayed on the website or to promote future competitions at AlternativePhotography.com. The top twelve entries may also be used in the AlternativePhotography.com 2013 calendar. By entering the competition you have confirmed you have authorised this.

Good luck!

**For more info on how to enter and prizes [Click Here](#)**

<http://www.alternativephotography.com/wp/events/competitions/>

[2013-alternativephotography-com-calendar-competition-deadline-14th-september-2012](http://www.alternativephotography.com/wp/events/competitions/2013-alternativephotography-com-calendar-competition-deadline-14th-september-2012)



**Historical photographic methods in use today - the art, process and techniques of alternative photographic processes.**

**Visit [www.AlternativePhotography.com](http://www.AlternativePhotography.com)**

# the Photographers' Formulary

## AUGUST 2012 BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIALS

**NOTE: These Specials are Limited to Stock on hand**



### DAHLE 14" ROTARY CUTTER

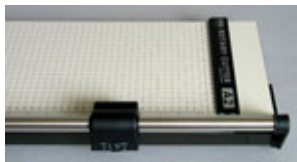
**Cat. No.:** 75-0962 **Promo Code:** D30

Regular Price: \$225.95

**Back to School 30% off = \$157.50**

Dahle 14" Rotary Trimmer is designed for professional use and is indispensable in advertising agencies, graphic design and photographic studios, as it gives a burr-free cut on thick medium materials. Its features include ground upper and lower steel blades along with an automatic paper clamp. The rugged base helps maintain its stability while the clearly marked surface grid gives you precise registration points. Safety is ensured by totally enclosing the blade in a plastic housing. The cutting table pre-printed with reference grid lines and the adjustable backstop fits either side. The scale bar calibrated in both inches and centimeters and the entire unit can be wall mounted.

<http://stores.photoformulary.com/-strse-790/Dahle-14%26%2334-scln--Rotary-Trimmer/Detail.bok>



### MEYERS 13" ROTARY CUTTER

**CAT. NO.:** 75-0960 **PROMO CODE:** M130

Regular Price: \$124.00

**Back to School-30% off = \$86.80**

### MEYERS 15" ROTARY CUTTER

**Cat. No.:** 75-0961 **Promo Code:** M230

Regular Price: \$155.95

**Back to School-30% off = \$109.17**

The Myers rotary action trimmer has the cutting capacity of a traditional knife guillotine cutter. It boasts a white-coated hard-wearing steel baseboard with clear guide rules for A series and B series paper sizes. The self-sharpening steel rotary blade is housed in an easy to hold cutter head for comfort and total safety.

<http://stores.photoformulary.com/-strse-788/Myers-Rotary-Trimmers/Detail.bok>



### PREMIER 18" ROTARY TRIMMER

**CAT. NO.:** 14-0911 **PROMO CODE:** P30

Regular Price: \$99.95

**Back to School-30% off = \$69.97**

The Premier 18" Rotary Trimmer is designed to cut single sheets of paper or film cleanly and precisely. It is completely safe and simple to use. Its compact portable design makes it perfect for use where space is limited.

<http://stores.photoformulary.com/-strse-916/Premier-18%26%2334-scln--Rotary-Trimmer/Detail.bok>



## PREMIER HANGING BAG DRYER

CAT. NO.: 14-0908 PROMO CODE: H30

Regular Price: \$249.95

Back to School-30% off = \$174.97

The Premier Hanging Dryer is flexible and mobile. It features a transparent polypropylene hanging bag with a full-length zipper closure. It sports an ABS wall-mounting support frame  
<http://stores.photoformulary.com/-strse-912/Premier-Hanging-Bag-Dryer/Detail.bok>



## AMBER PLASTIC 1000ML BOTTLES

CAT. NO.: 50-1410 PROMO CODE: A20

Regular Price: \$.95

Back to School-20% off = \$.76

Need some storage bottles? We've got 'em and we want to move them out. These are 1st quality heavy duty amber plastic to light protect your chemistry, and to keep them safe on your storage shelf. Twist caps assure firm closure.

<http://stores.photoformulary.com/-strse-959/Bottles-Black-%26-Amber/Detail.bok>

(The bottles come without the Formulary label)



### 2012 Northwest Symposium for Alternative Process Photography Coming Soon

Geared to the beginner or advanced photographer interested in learning and using alternative printing processes, this symposium ranges from cyanotype to salt prints, VanDyke, platinum-palladium and processes dating to the beginning of photography. Two lectures and four demos will be offered. A print exchange will complete the day of networking and sharing among the participants.

This is a great event for anyone interested in the historical photo-graphic processes and in being part of an enthusiastic community of people coming together to share ideas and knowledge about their passions.

Sponsored by the *Pacifica Chapter of the Center for Photographic History & Technology*

*September 22, 2012*

*8:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.*

*Spring Hall (Education Building) Eastshore Unitarian Church, 12700 SE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Bellevue, WA*

Cost: Registration \$50 for early birds, \$55 after September 7th

Visit [www.altphotopacifica.org](http://www.altphotopacifica.org) for details and registration.

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