Separated realities

Andrew Dean Powell

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
SEPARATED REALITIES

By
Andrew Dean Powell

MFA Photography Program
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

September, 1984

Richard D. Zakia
Richard Zakia, Chairperson
Director, MFA Program
School of Photographic Arts
and Sciences, RIT

Kathleen Collins
Kathleen Collins
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts
and Sciences, RIT

Charles Swedlund
Charles Swedlund
Professor
Southern Illinois University
I, Andrew Dean Powell, hereby grant permission to the R.I.T. Wallace Memorial Library to reproduce my thesis, "Separated Realities," in whole or in part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.

October 10, 198[1]

Signature

Andrew Dean Powell
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Proposal</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Appendix</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Bibliography</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show Catalogue</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEPARATED REALITIES

Purpose

I am interested in the juxtaposition between subtle changes in the sky, reflections in the water, in moving foliage—in things that have no stationary form, and found objects in the landscape. It is the purpose of this thesis to explore rural environments with in-camera color separation, to work with these changes within the scene and discover how the image is transformed by varying the amount of time between each separation.

Background

I find myself continually fascinated with old decaying structures and their surrounding environment—buildings, boats, cars and trees, for example. Most of my work comes from rural areas that have been, or are in the process of being, abandoned. I especially enjoy taking a few days off to explore old farms and buildings. I visually enjoy the textures, shapes, overgrowth of plants, the juxtaposition between solid shapes and the surrounding movement of plants, water and shadows.
Discovery plays an important role in my exploration of the rural landscape. There is a passage in Ernst Schachtel's book *Metamorphosis* that clearly illustrates this aspect: "The usual perceptual experience is one of recognition of something already familiar or quickly labelled and filed away in some familiar category. It does not enrich the perceiver, but it may reassure him—usually without his awareness—that everything is all right." In-camera color separation gives me this sense of discovery. It offers an alternate post-visualization of the scene—something that is not directly perceivable with the eye, something that transcends factual reality. By varying the amount of time between each separation leaves, shadows, waves change their register. One area I wish to pursue in this thesis will be to work with the effects of these movements, and how the image is transformed.

Scope and Procedure

My desire to work with color separation for this thesis developed from two sources: my work with pinhole color separation while I was an undergraduate in photography, and Dr. Richard Zakia's Zone System Principles Workshop I attended during the spring quarter, 1978. Because I was at that time working with White/Zakia/Lorenze zone system I was curious to see what would be the effects of adapting color separation to an extensive exposure/development
system. In my pinhole work I discovered that even crude color separation allowed for some very exciting chromatic expressions within the scene. For this thesis I propose to work with a roll film camera, making three separate exposures through blue, green and red filters. The final thesis body, to be exhibited in the MFA Gallery in the fall of 1979, will consist of 25 to 30 color prints. The emphasis will be on learning from the subjects through photography, instead of using photography to present something recognized.

Bibliography
Introduction

As an undergraduate student at Southern Illinois University, I constructed and worked with a number of pinhole cameras; the last camera was designed to shoot color separations on black and white film. With this camera I discovered that even the crude color separations a pinhole produced allowed for some exciting chromatic expressions. Because of the lack of resolution inherent in the pinhole camera, color became the primary subject of these images. With the pinhole camera I saw color as an excess, as an outflow. In these images, color no longer held the descriptive function it served in my earlier work. They gave color a purely expressive role. The 19th century scientist, Eugene Chevreul, once wrote: "The eye takes an indisputable pleasure in seeing color regardless of any drawing and of all the other qualities of the object in which they are present."¹ As a result of working with the pinhole camera, I attained a great love for purely expressive color. The pinhole camera let me use color in new ways; intensely, radically. A strong color-for-color's-sake developed in my work, and was to play an important role in the formation of my thesis idea.
The other foundation block for my thesis was a combination of two things--existing black and white work, and a zone system workshop I took in the spring of 1978. My black and white work at that time revolved around the idea of finding objects in the landscape. I was searching for objects, such as rusty farm implements and wood constructions, that I could isolate in the landscape. To me the objects were sculptural in connotation. At the time I was interested in work by Rouschenberg, Schwitters and some of the early Surrealists who dealt with the idea of finding objects, then constructing collage or sculptural pieces. I look at this body of black and white work as simple records of my "found" sculptural forms--forms that have through the years become lost in the landscape, never to hold a useful function again.

I believe sculpture has an immensely suggestive power. It is a medium to which the idea of metamorphosis is central. In combining a child's broken scooter and a feather from a duster, Picasso transformed junk into a wading Heron. Rauschenberg, in an exploration of materials as expressive surface, allowed for the viewer to transform what was before him. It is this suggestive nature of sculpture that I was trying to obtain in my black and white work. However, from the very start it was not the intention of this thesis to obtain sculptural results by the non-sculptural means of photography. Rather, I have tried to go beyond the
documentary nature of my black and white work. For this thesis I have tried to use the "found" shapes and surfaces as a stage for magic and metamorphosis. I will explore this idea later in the report.

Concerning the last influence on the thesis idea, the zone system workshop formed several questions in my mind. Perhaps the most basic question was, what would be the results of adapting the creative controls of an extensive explore/development system to color photography via in-camera color separation? Because of the several minute exposures of pinhole color, I made no effort to manipulate subject tonalities. Therefore, another question was, in what ways would this approach to color photography differ from the conventional color negative approach? These questions, in combination with my pinhole work, and more recent black and white work, manifested themselves in the formation of my thesis idea:

I am interested in the juxtaposition between subtle changes in the sky, reflections in the water, in moving foliage—in things that have no stationary form, and "found" objects in the landscape. It is the purpose of this thesis to explore rural environments with in-camera color separation, to work with these changes within the scene and discover how the image is transformed by varying the amount of time between each separation.
Background

As a body of work, the final thesis prints reflect two or three ideas to which I often returned. Before discussing these ideas, I will say that they are closely related to the types of environments in which I found myself working. I do not like shapeless open space. I am more intrigued with the areas that contain closed and interlocking forms: the rural landscape with its familiar and frequent run-down farm buildings; the stream beds of Stonybrook and Letchworth; or the Chesapeake Bay area where the skipjack fleets from the turn of the century lie, rotting. For the past two years I frequented not only these general areas, but also a few particular areas. They seemed to be endlessly productive. If I found nothing new, then perhaps a change of day or climate would reveal something unseen.

One idea that recurred throughout the duration of my thesis was the idea of the found object in the landscape, or the "object trouve." Boats, snowplows, fallen down signs and old vegetable stands all exemplify this idea. The term "object trouve" was first introduced into art in connection with Kurt Schwitters who "'accidently" found objects or arrangements in constructing this collages. In photography, the term has become understood within the context of a chance meeting in which a sensitive eye discovers a dream-like poetry. It need not be a collection of several objects, since a partial view of the surface of
only one object can allow for an unusual interpretation.

Atget showed an extraordinary sense of this trend. I believe Atget's greatest gift was the marvelous belief that anything to attract his mind visually was worth an image. Whether it was a particular arrangement or combination he observed, Atget naively approached what he photographed. In the early stage of my thesis experience I had a similar naive approach.

I believe it was the oddity of the found object that initially attracted me. How did a snowplow with a painted white cross end up in the woods, or a boat in a sea of grass? These objects are out of place, removed from any traditional context. In these images, objects and environment interpenetrate through the decay of the
"object trouve" and the growth around it. I do not have a fascination with decay and decrepitude based on any "ever present sense of death." Rather, it is a fascination with the formal characteristics of tonality and color that rusting or peeling objects possess. The neutrality of a rusting object seemed to be the best stage for my color separation process. I loved finding an object that was peeking out from under its living cloak, a last look before it was completely covered. Partially obscured, the object's original function becomes unclear.

Later in the thesis experience, I found myself singling out an object and taking greater note of its shape, its color and texture. Every object or situation has its own characteristics. Perhaps it was becoming more important to not offend the magic/metamorphosis, or to not wildly contrast a strong shape with a garish color. What the object was, from where it came, and what its relationship was to its surroundings, became increasingly unclear. This is where the dream-like feeling of several images originates. The reality of the subject provides a point of contact, the "familiar categorization" that Ernest Schachtel discusses in his book Metamorphosis. There are two passages from this book that had a great influence on my thesis experience. They are:

The usual perceptual experience is one of recognition of something already familiar or quickly labeled and filed away in some familiar category. It does not enrich the perceiver, but it may reassure
him— that everything is alright. Compare with this the fullest perception of the object, characterized by an inexhaustible and ineffable quality, by the profoundest interest in the object, and by the enriching, refreshing, vitalizing effect the act or perception has upon the perceiver.7

(The) perception (especially of nature, people and great works of art), always breaks through and transcends the confines of the labeled, the familiar, and establishes a relation in which a direct encounter with the object takes place, instead of with one or more of its labeled and familiar aspects.8

When the reality of the object becomes vague, the eye is opened to new and exciting ideas. When I find objects out of place or in unusual arrangements, their reality is clouded. Color separation intensifies this feeling. Some of the images exist in my mind as strange fantasy worlds of shape and freely expressive color. Color separation removes me from the confines of the labeled, the familiar, and reveals these eidetic worlds.

This feeling of fantasy, of the magical, is perhaps more evident in another these of the thesis: the rock and water edges of the Chesapeake Bay and Finger Lakes regions. These images continue the strong shape fascinations of the found objects, with the extra dimension of a flowing, sometimes shimmering background; and this combination produced some of the more spectacular images of my thesis experience. I believe they are the more successful part of my thesis. They fully embody this sense of the magical, the fantastical. They gave to me more of the refreshing, vitalizing effect than any other group of images in my thesis.
It is difficult to say exactly why this group of images has this dream-like sensibility. I have always had a great love for things such as books, films and paintings, that seem to have at their core a causal and continuing conflict between the real and the imagined, or between the imagined and the possible (in my case, photographic possibility). The specifics of these rock and water's edge images emphasize this feeling. The contrasts between the rock and water surfaces set up visual delights: the contrast of tonality, materiality and motion. Water questions outline. Water's surface reflections hold myriads of dancing spots. Color separation translates these phenomena into incredible color ideas. As a result, I feel there is, to some extent,
this real/imagined tug-of-war in these images. They do not ask academic questions, but those questions that try to ascertain the boundaries between what is real and what is imagined, between photographic possibility and fantasy. This is perhaps why these images are to me the most exhilarating thesis images. I find their vitalizing effect a delightfully gentle tug on the senses.

There are several images in my thesis show that do not precisely fit these descriptions. However, they do relate to those descriptions. For example:

Though not a found object in the landscape, or rock and water's edge, in both of these images the idea of metamorphosis is very evident. In one, the process of color separation has superimposed a sea's wave on a rusting screen door. In the truck trailer, I found a drooping piece of metal, water flowing into a cup of light. These
two images, and others like them in the show, were selected because their sentience supports the main themes of the show, while providing visual variety. This is an idea I will explore when I talk later about the thesis show, what went into it and why.

Throughout the course of my thesis experience, I developed different approaches to the subject matter. Often, while driving around rural areas searching for material to photograph, I discovered an object or space that was visually powerful. Something about the scene strongly caught my attention. Something made me slam on the brakes, jump out of the car and quickly photograph what was in front of me. The first instance this happened was on my trip to Maryland.
I came across this wall in the Westover, Maryland area. At the time, I was looking at Kurt Schwitters' work; in particular, his Merz collages. Something about the arrangement of the two wood pieces and the color and tonality of the wall reminded me of Schwitters' work. It was a very primitive, almost imitative response, so I quickly made all three separations, not wanting any color play to happen. At this early stage of my thesis, I intuitively made the decision not to allow anything to happen. The initial impression of this wall was what I wanted. Nothing was to detract from my excitement. Later in the thesis, after I began to understand the color separation process I was working with, this decision was elevated to a more conscious level. For example:

I was returning from a shooting session in and around the Letchworth State Park area. Out of the corner of my
eye, I glimpsed a decaying white sign. Here again the initial impression was very strong, and I wanted to retain the sensation of decay and isolation I received from this sign. I felt that any color play would detract from the stark and somber monochromatic color of the scene. Therefore I made all three separations as fast as I could. As a result, this image is isolated. This desire to retain the initial impression which I received from a strong visual idea formed one of my basic approaches to subject matter. These images are records of my response to a certain unique sensibility of an object or space.

Another approach was to use what I came across, be it a found object in the landscape, a rock and water's edge, or a deeply shadowed space as a stage on which a color dance takes place.

During the early stage of my thesis, because I was
still learning the effects that wind, wave or time had on the scene, I found myself at the mercy of these elements within the scene. With the in-camera color separation process I have the option to either wait a certain time interval between each separation, or to make the three separations as quickly as possible. During a long interval there is much change within the scene; shadows move, waves pass or leaves are blown around. Consequently, the final image can be very colorful. At first, I gave no thought to which time interval to work with, or the duration of that interval. After returning from my first trip to Maryland, I was able to sit down with prints and field notes and analyze what I did and how it affected the image. One thing became evident right away: I was more enamored with the subtler color plays; those that exist almost on the verge of the subconscious. I found that this subtleness was a result of manipulating only one time interval. For instance, I would make the blue separation, wait, then make the green and red separations.

As this greater knowledge of in-camera separation grew within me, I began to predict and consciously manipulate the color play. Returning to the rural landscape, I was better equipped to select subjects, to analyze what was happening and then to produce the amazing and original images I wanted.

I have just talked about developing an increasing
awareness of what I was photographing, and the process with which I was photographing. However, to the very last day of shooting for my thesis, I consistently came up with images that were accidents, or more appropriately, surprises. Often I found myself standing in front of some scene and not knowing what the final print would look like, nor how color separation would interpret what was happening in the scene.

I vividly remember the amazement I experienced upon seeing both of these prints for the first time. Facing the rock formation, I was vaguely aware of the water highlights to the left. At the time, I did not realize the role these highlights would play within the final image. They have given the rock formation a charged, almost electrical sensation. The factory window had an overall dingy green cast; color separation has transformed it into a stained glass window. So it was with great surprise and delight that I saw these two prints for the first time.
These surprises nourished me, they gave me the energy to continue when something extra was needed. These images tickle my mind on an unconscious level. Perhaps Jean Lescure said it best when talking of the painter Charles Lapique:

"(He) demands of the creative act that it should offer him as much surprise as life itself."¹⁰ These surprises became essential to my thesis process; they were a major reason for continuing. In a sense, they kept me from becoming somnolent in approach. Several times, after rejecting a particular subject, I still found myself photographing it. I felt that the color separation process and my intuition would produce something marvelous.

Reviewing my thesis notebooks in preparation for writing this report, I have seen the thesis grow from a beginning stage of naive shooting and acceptance of the results, to a greater awareness of what I was doing, technically and aesthetically. Through the day-by-day process of shooting and printing, I became more conscious of the rhythms of the subject married to the rhythms of the surrounding environment, and how color separation translates these rhythms. Later in my thesis experience, I was able to freely alternate between faithful renderings, to seeing the magic and responding on that level. I strongly feel that the more important successes of my thesis took place independently of any skill I acquired; there were always those underlying fascinations with the shapes and surfaces I chose to photograph. These successes
are the two or three images that formed the foundation for new visual experiences. The components of a "surprise" became recognizable, repeatable, and pointed me in new directions.
Conclusion

The images I chose to represent two years of exploration of in-camera color separation are those where the combination of subject matter and process produced the new and exciting images I wanted. The thesis show contains the subject themes I feel are the strongest, most cohesive of all the subjects I approached. To represent these themes, I chose images where the color effects are subdued, or equally supported by subject. I have many images where the color separation process has produced hallucinogenic-type prints. To me the color play in these images detracts from subject/object. I wanted the thesis show to contain images where subject, sensation and pictorial object support each other, and have the same weight.

Those images not of found objects, or rock and water edges were selected because there are shapes or patterns or sensations in them, found in images of the two main themes. They support those themes, but also provide diversity for the show.

The main themes consistently produced the most exciting images throughout my thesis experience. And to me, the most exciting images are those where subject, sensation and pictorial object are fused into a single visual statement.
Technical Appendix

This section of the report will deal with the technical aspects of my thesis. I encountered numerous problems as a result of difficulties in making images express what I wanted. In fact, during the first eight months of shooting, it seemed that every time I went into the field or the darkroom new problems arose. Here then is a discussion of the nuts and bolts of my thesis, a review of the special problems in-camera color separation created and my solutions to those problems.

The first film/camera combination I used for my thesis was Verichrome Pan film in a Mimiya 645 roll film camera. I used this combination for my black and white work, and had established zone system calibrations for it during the zone system workshop. Verichrome Pan film's characteristics were pleasing to me. It has a slightly flatter curve than most professional films, and I believe a bit more separation in the shadows. Since I was familiar with these characteristics I decided to use this film for my thesis.

The set of separation filters I used throughout the thesis are Kodak's 3x3 inch gelatins, numbers 47-B blue, 59 green and 29 red. I have used this series of filters since my early pinhole work and decided to stick with them. I did not feel the narrower color bend filters Kodak recommends were necessary. I have always been more than satisfied with this series.
To determine how to expose the film in the field, I needed a set of exposures that produced a graph where the three curves are as close together as possible, without any crossovers. To accomplish this, I made a series of bracketed exposures of a grey scale through the three filters. The first exposure was made according to a meter reading of the zone v patch on the scale. The second exposure was one stop over this reading, the third two stops over, and so on. The test film was processed according to development times I arrived at during the zone system workshop. Each test negative was read on a densitometer, and after all the densities were plotted on graph paper, I sandwiched the sheets together over a light table and picked the best curves. With Verichrome Pan film I determined that the blue filter exposure should be made one stop over the meter reading, the green filter exposure two stops over, and the red filter exposure three stops over the meter reading. To simplify this, I adjusted the ASA on the meter so that the blue filter exposure was made at the meter reading, and the green and the red filter exposures were made one and two stops over the meter reading, respectively. At first I opened the aperture to make the green and red filter exposures. However, this created depth of field shifts that made it difficult to print the negatives, so I switched to adjusting the shutter speed.

While testing Verichrome Pan film, I discovered I could get away without any increased blue separation negative
development. Usually one has to give a little extra development to the blue separation negative because its filter produces a flatter film curve than the green or red filters. But this does not seem to be the case with Verichrome Pan film.

After completing these preliminary tests, I went to Maryland in the spring of 1978 and photographed everything that even vaguely stimulated my visual interest. After processing this body of work I realized that because of Verichrome's low sensitivity (125 ASA) I was somewhat limited. My exposures were in seconds if I wanted any depth of field. I wanted the flexibility of either completely stopping motion within the scene, or allowing things to blur. Therefore, I switched to Illford's HP4, with its ASA of 400.

After making the initial tests for HP4, I found I had to increase development for the blue filter negative. Because I was using roll film, somehow I had to remove the blue separation from the roll and give it this extra development. My solution to this problem was to design and build a cutting board that enabled me to slice off the blue separations from the roll.

Assuming that I made the exposures in the same sequence--I chose blue, green then red--and assuming I load each roll in the camera in the same manner, it should be possible to lay a partially developed roll of film on the board and make cuts in roughly the same place. The spacing between each frame is
approximately 1/2 inch, so there is plenty of room to error.

The base of the cutting board is 3/4 inch particle board with a 1/4 inch piece of plate glass on top. The hinged template is 1/4 inch masonite. To get the cutting guide spacings, I exposed a roll of film in my camera and used this processed film to determine where to place the guides on the template. The procedure for using the board is as follows: the roll is given normal development (or any expansions/contractions necessary), as determined by system calibrations. Then the film is stopped in a weak acetic acid solution, and washed for several minutes. The film is then removed from the reel and gently laid down on the glass bed of the cutting board. The front end of the roll is butted up against a cardboard guide; this guide ensures that the cuts will be made in the right places.
The template is lowered, a weak safelight turned on and the cuts are made with a razor knife. The first piece of film on the roll is a blue filter separation, so it is placed on a special rack for further development. On the next piece of film are the companion green and red filter separations, and they are placed in a tray of fixer. This procedure is continued on down the board until all five sets of separations per roll are taken care of. The rack holding the five blue separations is put back in the developer for the added development required to bring their curves up to the curves of the green and red separations.
After working with HP4 for several months, I became dissatisfied with its speed. Even though my basic exposures were no longer in seconds, I was still limited. So I switched to Royal-X Pan Film with its ASA of 1250. This film gave me the option to manipulate motion, but because I was working with roll film, its resolution was less than desired. At this point in my thesis I was forced into using a 4x5 speedgraphic, so Royal-X Pan's resolution was not bothersome anymore.

In June of 1979 I spent several days shooting around Ithaca and Watkins Glen, New York. Returning from this trip, I processed all the film and discovered that due to a mechanical problem in my roll film camera, most of the separations were out of focus. I decided to switch to the speedgraphic and was instantly amazed at the freedom this camera gave me. Because of my camera's increasing mechanical problems (it had been acting up even before this trip), it seemed to be absorbing me. I was forced into paying more attention to my camera and less to what was in front of me. The 4x5 freed me from this camera concentration. Furthermore, because of the speedgraphic's limited swings and tilts, these controls were not a concern. At last I was fully immersed in the aesthetic concerns of the thesis; the final technical barrier was overcome.

There is another aspect of the 4x5 that opened new areas of my thesis experience--the fact that I was using
single sheets of film enabled me to shoot the separations in any sequence. Roll film and the cutting board limited me to a certain sequence in order that the negatives did not get mixed up during the processing stage. Working with sheet film, I discovered the color plays are different for every sequence. Keeping in mind that I strove for the more subtle color effects, I found I could virtually construct the color plays by analyzing the wind, wave or time changes in the scene. In some respects, this gave me an almost painterly approach to the subjects I photographed. If I decided to work with an object or space, and utilize the magical effects of the color separation process, I could custom tailor the color play to the scene.

The following examples illustrate what happens when I work with a time change:

If I make the red filter exposure first (1), wait several minutes then make the blue and green filter exposures (2), the resulting print will look like:
The area where the shadow was for the red filter exposure, but not for the green and blue filter exposures, will reproduce dark cyan on the print. This shadow area has a zone III level of density in the negative, and produces the darkest record. If I had made the blue filter exposure first, this area would reproduce as deep yellow; and a green filter first exposure would make a deep magenta shadow.

I believe that to successfully work with the in-camera color separation process, to create new and unusual imagery, one has to fully understand the color photography system. Switching to the 4x5 gave me this knowledge. I had become increasingly aware of the roll film camera's limited color manipulation, so it was with great joy that I began to understand what was possible with the 4x5.

In the fall of 1979, after deciding that it would be unproductive to continue shooting, I began the task of printing for the thesis show. Immediately I became frustrated at the lack of printing controls with the color separation process. Up until this point, I was making proofs
on all the work. With these proofs I realized changes in color; cropping and local tonal manipulation were necessary for many images. In my black and white work I heavily manipulated print tonalities through dodging and burning. But it is virtually impossible to hand dodge or burn color separation negatives. Because there are three separate exposures made during the printing stage, with different times, the dodge or burn must be made exactly the same for each negative, or the color will shift. My solution to this problem was to suspend a piece of glass about six inches about the easel. On this glass, black paint is applied to block out an area.
I constructed a wooden frame, 14x18 inches in dimension. On the left side of my enlarger baseboard I clamped down a piece of wood that has several sets of holes drilled through it. This allows me to raise or lower the glass as required by each individual image. On the left side of the frame are two wooden pegs that make it possible to register the glass above the easel. One image where this dodging/burning platform was used to its fullest extent is the white boat in the grass:

![Image of the white boat in the grass]

My first attempt at printing this image was disappointing. Even though I expanded scene tonalities through extra development, the initial print did not have the same feeling I experienced when I came across this boat in the landscape. I remember the boat as intensely white against a dark, grassy background; so intense it glowed. This glowing sensation was
what I wanted in the final print. On the piece of glass, I blocked out the boat shape and gave the grass area one stop additional exposure with each separation negative. As a result, in the final print, the boat does have an intense white, glowing sensation.

In printing color separation negatives, one must have some way to register the exposures on the color paper. My registration system is visual, on the easel. Through several years of working with in-camera color separation negatives, I have developed this simple technique: a piece of white paper is taped down on the easel, the blue filter negative is placed on the enlarger, and the easel is properly positioned under the lens. With the enlarger turned on, I circle or outline three reference points in opposite areas on the image. Preferably, these areas should be of high contrast—a black stick against sand, for example. After the blue negative exposure is made, and with the next negative in the enlarger, I use the reference points to reposition the easel. Sometimes a negative will never line up exactly. This is because this negative was not in the exact same place as the other two negatives during the exposure. In this case, I discovered a slight up or down adjustment of the enlarger head will correct this problem.
Summation

I look back at the opening reception for my thesis show with feelings of pride and accomplishment. Throughout the two years of shooting in-camera color separations, there were many periods of up and down emotions. Often I felt I would never be able to complete this project.

During the first summer of shooting, before I began to prepare the first thesis proposal, the technical and aesthetic ends of my thesis existed very much apart. I was, admittedly, seduced by the color effects. The rejection by the MFA faculty committee of my first thesis proposal ended this seduction; and I might add, almost ended my work with in-camera color separation. The two week period after this rejection was one of acute depression and confusion—was this project overly technical in nature? I spent those two weeks looking at my separation work in an effort to answer this question. I took my separation negatives and printed them as black and white images. I looked at their subject matter, stripped of color to color plays. This reappraisal helped enormously. It solidified in my mind what I wanted to photograph, and helped prepare me for my next thesis proposal attempt.

At the time of the proposal rejection, what felt like an undeserved condemnation by the faculty committee, later became a blessing in disguise. I now believe that if my first proposal had been accepted, my thesis would not be as
strong or have as much integrity as it does.

This thesis has changed my attitude towards photography. The two years I worked on my thesis was a period of slow and gradual change. I am now more patient, more observant of the subjects I choose to photograph. I also believe that where in the past color was the only reason for my work, now subject matter has been brought up to, and acts on the same level as, the color.

The differences between the first separation negatives and latter ones are immense. There is a visible progression in seeing, working, responding and feeling. I can only imagine where I will be in the future. Hopefully, I will continue to mature as an image maker, for this thesis has shown me how.

Color possesses me. I don't have to pursue it. It will possess me always, I know it.

- Paul Klee
Footnotes

1 Impressionism, p. 146.

2 Two New York State Parks just south of Rochester.

3 "The Object Trouve," Camera, p. 42.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 43.


7 Ibid., p. 177.

8 Ibid.


10 Lapique, quoted in Nochlin, Realism, p. 286.
Selected Bibliography


Show Catalogue

All photographs are in-camera color separations, printed on Ektacolor RC materials.

1 Two signs in Chesapeake Bay.
2 The land for the sea; Westover, MA.
3 Chesapeake Bay.
4 Stone wall; Letchworth State Park.
5 Rock and Water's Edge #1; Letchworth State Park.
6 Rock and log formation #6; Dansville, NY.
7 Vegetable stand; Henrietta, NY.
8 Stick formation; Ithaca, NY.
9 Chesapeake boat.
10 Factory window; Dansville, NY.
11 Sign; Letchworth State Park, NY.
12 Rock formation #3; Dansville, NY.
13 Rock formation #4; Dansville, NY.
14 "Star Craft"; Dansville, NY.
15 Truck trailer interior; Sodus, NY.
16 Tree and hay field; Victor, NY.
17 Rock formation #1; Ithaca, NY.
18 Old hotel sign; Flint, NY.
19 Snowplow; Hemlock, NY.

20 Snowplow with white cross; Dansville, NY.

21 Stick formation #2; Ithaca, NY.

22 Stoney Brook park benches; Dansville, NY.

23 Stick formation; Henrietta, NY.

24 Factory window; Sodus, NY.

25 Rock formation #5; Dansville, NY.

26 Red oil drum; Maryland.

27 Diner window; Lima, NY.

28 Schwitters wall; Westover, MD.