### Background

In the 19th Century, what we now know as photography was invented by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce and Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre. After years of research, Daguerre concluded that a copper plate coated in silver would yield a chemical reaction when placed in a camera obscura and exposed to light. The image wouldn’t appear until it was treated with mercury vapor, and then it was rendered light-safe after being washed with salt water. This type of photographic print is known as a Daguerreotype.

Throughout the years, many different chemicals and processes were used to create photographs, and with my project, I have explored some of these processes and created a set of images using:

- the Vandyke Brownprint process
- the Albumen process
- a derivative of the Platinum/Palladium process (the Ziatype process)

Nowadays, these processes are generally known as “Alternative Process Photography” or “Alt Process Photography.”

### Approach

1. Research various alternative processes.
2. Create an idea for a cohesive set of images that would work well for each process.
3. Shoot photos that will be used for alt processing.
4. Create digital negatives (by scanning prints or using digital files, then printed onto digital transparency film).
5. Use the negatives to create prints using the alt processes.
   a. Prepare the chemicals.
   b. Coat the chemicals onto paper (this will become the photograph).
   c. Expose the paper under the negative in UV light.
   d. Process the print in more chemicals. Dry the print.

### Conclusion

Learning a alt process photography is not as easy as it may sound. Although these processes have been practiced for decades, there is not one definite method for each process; there is variation and variables. Finding the “right” method is a matter of personal and artistic preference as well as trial and error.

Alt processing is a wonderful medium for anyone who has a passion for photography as an art form. In the 21st Century, it forms a bridge between digital and darkroom, but is also its own unique process.

I chose to do alternative photographic processing because I was intrigued by the history of photography and because I had very little knowledge of chemistry and how photography actually worked. After working with various chemicals and processes, I have a greater understanding of photography as a science. Since alt processing is more labor-intensive than either digital or darkroom, I have a closer relationship with photography as an art.

In addition to learning and executing these processes, I created a how-to guide to alt processing, which I hope will help other aspiring photographers learn how to create photographs using alternative photographic methods.

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