

# OVERDUE

AUTUMN/WINTER 2020



#003 ARTISTRY

# True Blue

*Fine artist Chloe McCarrick talks to OVERDUE about art and her creative process.*

**What is your earliest memory of art?**

I can't pinpoint my earliest memory of art as I feel I have been immersed in it my whole life. Having an extensive library of books, I'd spend hours poring over their pages. I adored studying pictures from DaVinci's flying machines, surrealist painters, the photographs in National Geographic and the illustrative details in anatomy books. Nothing was off limits, everything was explored and noted in my sketchbooks and imagination.

Our family home was filled with a mix of scientific knowledge and creative thinking. Original artworks adorned the walls, alongside sketches my mother had done of us, and our colourful and magical drawings documenting our imaginations.

**How did you develop your style?**

Initially I studied traditional fine art and art history, then I went on to focus more on lens and film-based image making, studying and eventually lecturing in photography and interactive media.

I was interested in utilising my fine art training alongside my photographic expertise. I researched innovative ways of combining the two together and experimented with photographic portraiture and image making as a process built up of multiple layers, artistic techniques and materials rather than just standard film photography and printing.

Freedom and experimentation for

me were key factors in developing my personal style, through rule breaking and blending art forms and techniques together, taking inspiration from traditional approaches to image making with a contemporary technological twist; a fusion of art, photography and science.

I focused on using cyanotypes after revisiting my research on British botanist and photographer Anna Atkins. Atkins used cyanotypes to document algae specimens for her scientific reference books and in the process established photography as an accurate medium for scientific illustration.

It seemed a fitting tribute to use a light sensitive process pioneered by a female scientist and fellow photographer in creating my series of inspirational women. To convey the complexities of time, light, space and reveal experience, it was perfect to use a combination of traditional image making techniques with the added use of modern technology.

My unique portraits have a distinctive painterly characteristic made by embracing technological advances in large-scale negative printing whilst staying true to the purest and earliest forms of photographic techniques. I examine complex interactions between human experience, environment, materials used, light and time combined with deconstructing and reconstructing images to create intriguing surrealistic stories.

*interview* MIRANDA WILKINSON



### What is your creative process from start to finish?

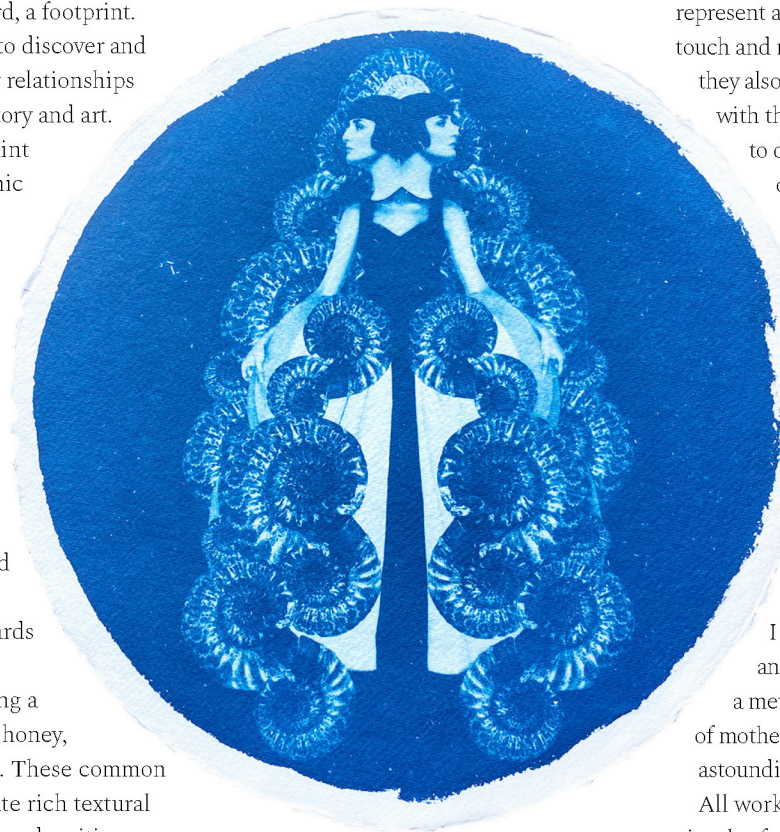
I use a variety of traditional photographic and alternative processes and camera-less techniques combined with painting, illustration and collage within my current practice including photograms, chemigrams and gum printing. My process is devoted to exploring my relationships to subject matter, materials, and the environment to create a narrative, a record, a footprint. I've always been curious to discover and to greater understand my relationships with science, natural history and art.

With chemigrams I paint directly onto photographic paper and film with darkroom chemicals and resists (particularly focusing on more feminine products). Resists can be anything found in my house or studio, ranging from beauty products, household cleaning solutions, paints, wax and varnish to consumables from the kitchen cupboards and fridge. A few of my favourites include making a paste of flour and water, honey, candle wax and Vaseline. These common household products create rich textural results due to their varying densities, structural qualities during this physics-chemical printing process there is no end to experimentation.

Once the resists have been applied to the paper and film they are left to cure, some I leave in daylight, others I keep under red light conditions. Then I expose to different light sources whilst washing in chemical baths and water.

The process can take a number of hours, washing away the layers, coaxing and manipulating the surface to allow the chemicals to penetrate beneath the dissolving painted substances.

The overall results are abstract swirling, dreamlike worlds painted using only my fingers, the mark making from the feminine touch becomes more of a figurative self-portrait – the capture of human senses over time.



### Circular forms feature heavily in your works, can you explain why?

The history of the Natural World, anatomy and science art has always fascinated me, everything is related, connected, part of a chain, hence the idea of using circles arose.

These ideas are reflected throughout my working methodology from the creation of the paper (handmade from

recycled cotton rags and circular moulds), within the construction of the images themselves, (featuring circular motifs and objects from petri dishes to the moon), the process of exposing using natural light and washing in moonlight, in all weather conditions throughout the seasons, and the circular theme carries through to framing the finished pieces in handmade round frames.

The circular paper shapes not only represent a life cycle, borne from human touch and made of recycled materials, they also take on a new life once coated with the light sensitive solutions, left to dry and exposed to the elements of sun, rain, snow and water over time. The process of capturing and recording mother nature in all her glory, and creating art works using her power seemed to fit perfectly with the feminine message and motifs within my work.

It is a marriage of natural phenomena and artist intent, a harmonisation of the natural and human worlds. I became more aware of how I wished to use these experiments and research within my pieces as a metaphor and a commemoration of mother nature and science's astounding power.

All works are housed in hand-crafted circular frames, each one float-mounted to showcase the circular organic form of the handmade paper, the unique texture, the surface undulations and rough deckled edges. Each piece casts a silhouette, an ever changing landscape dependent on the angle of the sun or light source.

The circular frames give flexibility when hanging art works of differing

sizes grouped together, creating an impactful cascading constellation, weaving intriguing stories throughout the home. Each one is like a portal into another dimension, drawing you closer to discover what's inside, inviting you to explore the lives of these ladies and learn about the process used in creating them.

### Where is your studio or do you work from home?

I split my time between my studio in East London, my home studio in Islington and researching at The British Library and Wellcome Collection Library. My art studio is in the eaves of an old building housing screen printing rooms below and a series of photographic darkrooms for colour, black and white and alternative process printing.

I work in each of the spaces at different times during my creative process, photographing models in the studio, hand printing their portraits and photograms in the black and white darkroom, hand making the paper in the washout rooms, coating the papers with cyanotype solution in the alternative process darkroom, using my giant lightbox to hand cut the collages and large scale negatives and use the large courtyard to expose my cyanotypes to natural light and wash and hang the finished pieces to dry.

My darkroom and photography space offers more of a meditative vibe, a place where I can contemplate, experiment and focus more on developing artistic concepts and perfecting working methodologies. It is here where I hand

finish all of my pieces, mount, wrap, and get them ready to frame.

I work on my website, photographing the framed pieces and packaging orders from my home studio. Since lockdown I haven't been back to my art studio or research spaces so I adapted to working on smaller scale pieces from my home and focused more on researching new subjects to add to the collection.



### What is your favourite piece you've created to date?

The States Between Study (Mary's Monster) XL

Type | Original Zinc Leaf Cyanotype

Inspiration | Mary Shelley

Year | 2020

Materials | Cyanotype, handmade paper, chemical and heat treated zinc leaf

*The States Between Study (Mary's Monster) XL* artwork was inspired by English novelist Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.

A skilled editor and critic, an influential travel writer, a literary historian, a poet and a political radical, Shelley is best known for her gothic horror classic *Frankenstein*. Considered an early example of science fiction, this wildly inventive and strikingly original tale was influenced by Mary's passion for science, experimentation and a thirst for knowledge.

I created this piece by constructing a hand-cut collage using female photographic portraiture, photograms made from homegrown petri dish cultures, cell structures from antique microscopic slides, and an illustration of a fox's skull. After coating the handmade paper with light-sensitive chemistry, it is left to dry in a dark room. The large scale negative is then contact printed onto the paper by exposing it to daylight. The print is then processed by thoroughly washing it in water to remove any unexposed solution. It can then be hung to dry, developing to full density Prussian blue after 24 hours. Once the image is fixed it is hand finished with chemically painted and heat-treated zinc leaf, producing a varied linear patina of rich turquoise, purple and gold tones.

For more information, visit [chloemccarrick.com](http://chloemccarrick.com)

Title page: Hypatia's Celestial Studies At Nigh - Cyanotype  
This page (left): Princess of Palaeontology - Cyanotype

This page: Lunar Etiquette Under The Harvest Moon (No7) - Circular Gold Leaf Cyanotype

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DIGITAL



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PALOMA FAITH