

create!

MAGAZINE





UNITED KINGDOM

INTERVIEW WITH CHLOE MCCARRICK

BY CHRISTINA NAFZIGER

WHERE DID YOU LEARN YOUR CRAFT? DO YOU HAVE A BACKGROUND STUDYING ART, OR WAS YOUR SKILL LEARNED INDEPENDENTLY THROUGH PERSONAL EXPERIMENTATION?

I received my first 'build it yourself' camera kit at age six. I was fascinated with how technology operated and wanted to deconstruct and reconstruct things to gain a better understanding of their inner workings. My love of photography sort of developed from there, strengthened by frequent trips to the library to study science and art books. This enabled me to learn more about art, history, and creative techniques.

I was always allowed to express myself creatively—given the freedom to experiment and explore different mediums and crafts at home and at school. This facilitated the honing of expertise and development of my own personal style before going on to study art at a higher level. At college I obtained qualifications in Fine Art (specialising in Lens and Time Based Media), Art History, Life Drawing and Film Studies. This led me on to complete a BA honours degree in photography at Manchester School of Art. Alongside this, I also studied the art of printmaking, bookbinding, and letterpress. The university program focused on self-directed study as a means to grow personal style. It encouraged experimentation in the form of conceptualization and also the physical process of creating cohesive bodies of work.

WWW.CHLOEMCCARRICK.COM

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF CHLOE MCCARRICK

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO CREATING ART THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND PRINTMAKING? WHAT ABOUT THESE TWO MEDIUMS DO YOU FIND THE MOST CONDUCTIVE TO YOUR VISION AS AN ARTIST?

To me, photography and printmaking go hand-in-hand on every level. I approach image making as a process built up of multiple layers and techniques. Freedom and experimentation for me was key for in developing my personal style. I did this through rule breaking and blending art forms and techniques together. I take inspiration from traditional approaches to make images with a contemporary technological twist—a fusion of art, photography, and science.

I like to be as hands on as possible when creating my pieces, celebrating every stroke, every mark made, every layer added, every material used, and every texture uncovered. It all becomes a part of the human visual narrative built over time from conscious thought and personalized by touch. I take a rather scientific, deconstructive approach to realizing a piece of work, stripping down each process and technical element to the bare bones. One needs to be fully aware and appreciative of the way things work, evolve, and interact in order to capture what the naked eye cannot see. To convey the complexities of time, light, space and reveal experience, it is much more fitting for me to use a combination of traditional image making techniques with the added use of modern technology.

YOUR CYANOTYPE AND GOLD LEAF WORK IS ABSOLUTELY STUNNING! CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THESE UNCOMMON MATERIALS?

I love to celebrate the naturally occurring materials I use: the way they were so exquisitely made, letting their organic textures emanate, the undulations of the paper sheets and the hand deckled edges be seen. Each piece of paper is a work of art in itself, the 100% cotton base structure upon which to let my pieces develop. I love watching the way the tones of the cyanotype chemicals develop on the porous surfaces, the way they evolve during exposure to natural sunlight and intensify when washed in water. The addition of pure gold, copper, and zinc leaf by hand adds intensity to the tonal and textural qualities of the piece and honours the materials used. **(CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE)**



Allowing each separate element to support the others—not one overpowering the other—adds depth and underlying beauty that emerge to the viewer over time. Using naturally occurring chemicals, cotton, and precious metal materials with the sun's rays and water is such a pure form of photosensitive image making that has stood the testament of time from its discovery in 1842.

I specialized in alternative processes of photographic production whilst at university. I felt a great desire to explore the base elements of historical image making and wanted to push the boundaries of how we view the photographic process in this digital age.

Going back to before the invention of cameras and film seemed to be the perfect place to start. I wanted to embrace technological advances in digital reproduction whilst staying true to the purest forms of photographic printmaking. Through my work, I explore complex interactions involving our environment, materials used, light, time, and space combined with the latest advances in large-scale reproduction and printing.

BIRD IMAGERY AND FEATHERS SEEM TO BE A REOCCURRING THEME IN YOUR WORK, SUCH AS YOUR CYANOTYPE PRINT “AMELIA THE AVIATRESS.” DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION IN FEATHERED CREATURES?

Being a huge fan of Charles Darwin and James Audubon's work for as long as I can remember, I have to say studying birds and their evolution, their representation in art, the role they play in our environment, their interactions with humans, their biology, and their preservation through the ages has influenced the use of the creatures within my work. Birds have been an artistic focus dating back to the Palaeolithic period. The oldest bird image found to date is from 30,000 years ago. I'm fascinated by the depictions of birds and their symbolism in history, mythology, cultures, and religions, and their significance in ancient art and in the modern day.

A few years ago, I undertook a course in bird taxidermy to strengthen my knowledge and understanding of Ornithology. For me, taxidermy is an inherently fascinating process of exploration, preservation, construction and reflection: an amalgamation of science, craft, and art. Taxidermy is both a metaphorical and material unrestrained process; it preserves beauty, celebrates life, symbolizes new beginnings and offers a platform for reflection, adoration and scientific study. **(CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE)**



It is a marriage of natural phenomena and artist intent, harmonising the natural and human worlds. Having completed this course, I became more aware of how I wished to use this subject matter within my pieces as a metaphor and a commemoration of its astounding natural beauty. Nature has so many wonderful elements to document and discover, I take great enjoyment in capturing and portraying its fragility alongside its power within my work.

WHAT NATURAL FORMS INSPIRE YOU?

The history of the natural world, anatomy, and science art has always fascinated me; their intertwining/interplay has always been a major focus in my work and exploration of methodology. I want my work to enhance appreciation for the world around us, uncover its vulnerabilities, celebrate its often overlooked aesthetic value, and in turn communicate our responsibility to preserve and conserve it for future generations to enjoy. The natural world is full of important connections amongst people, plants, animals, and our environment. Everything is related, connected, part of a chain, a cycle. Art is devoted to exploring our relationships to subject matter, materials, and environment, creating a narrative, a record, and a footprint. I've always been curious to discover and to greater understand my relationships with science, nature, and art.

So, in answer to your question, everything in the natural world inspires me! The intricate patterns, its age, evolution, the sheer size, the delicate composition, the unseen, the undiscovered, the vibrant colour palettes, the smells, and the way every sense is touched. Those fugacious moments in time that human consciousness often forgets to acknowledge are the things I hold dearest. Noticing the unnoticed, revealing of discarded beauty, exposing layers and exploring space and time beyond the boundaries of 'normal' or 'everyday' sight plays a centralized role in my artistic practice.

ON YOUR WEBSITE, YOU HAVE WORK THAT YOU REFER TO AS "CHEMIGRAMS," CREATED THROUGH AN ALTERNATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC METHOD. CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW YOU CREATE THESE ABSTRACT IMAGES?

I paint directly onto photographic paper and film with darkroom chemicals and resists. Resists can be anything found in my house or studio, ranging from beauty products, household cleaning solutions, paints, waxes and varnishes, 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 and 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, and others I keep under red light conditions. I then expose them to different light sources whilst washing them in chemical baths and water. The process can take a number of hours, as I wash away the layers, coax and manipulate 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 touch becomes more of a figurative self-portrait, the capture of human senses over time.

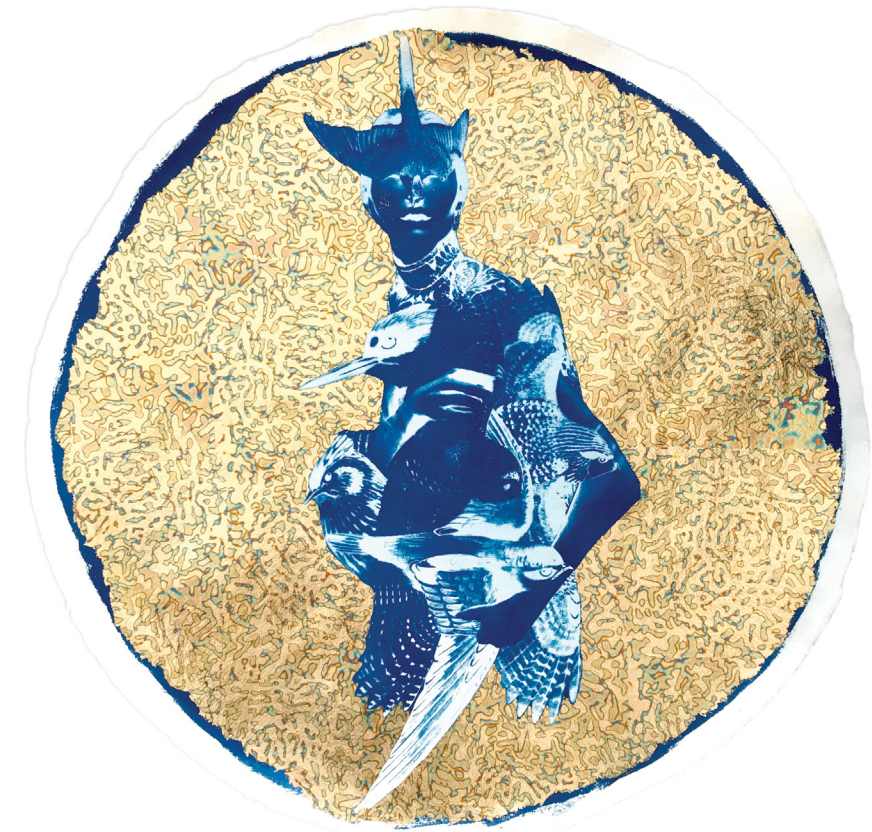
**TELL US ABOUT YOUR STUDIO ENVIRONMENT.
WHERE ARE YOU DOING ALL OF THESE
INTERESTING, CREATIVE PROCESSES?**

I split my time between a members print studio in East London where I do all of my screen-printing and preparation for my large-scale cyanotype work, and my photography studio and darkroom in North West London where I reside. The print studio is a hive of activity. I work alongside other artists, designers and freelancers—it's like an adopted, creative family, with everyone offering advice and feedback, critiquing work, and sharing contacts and information on upcoming events and exhibition opportunities.

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 package them getting ready for shipping, or to be taken to my incredibly talented frame makers for Bespoke mounting and framing.

**YOU MARKET YOUR WORK VERY
PROFESSIONALLY ONLINE, ALLOWING YOUR
WORK TO BE ACCESSIBLE WHILE AT THE SAME
TIME MAINTAINING YOUR ARTISTIC CREDIBILITY.
DO YOU HAVE A BACKGROUND IN BUSINESS?
DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR ARTISTS TO BETTER
MARKET THEIR ARTWORK?**

I've always been interested in how brands market themselves and have tried to follow suit in showcasing my work in a professional manner whilst still maintaining my artistic sensibilities. I try to keep up to date with the latest advances in technology, researching how brands organically grow whilst remaining true to their roots. I have had the pleasure in working for galleries, helping to curate and install exhibitions and in turn gaining vast amounts of industry work experience whilst at university. Liaising directly with other working artists, like minded professionals and galleries really has helped me to gain confidence in self promotion and understand what the right choices are for me to showcase my work online and in the public realm.



I don't have a background in business, but have been fortunate enough to be surrounded by knowledgeable friends in the industry who are always willing to share advice and tips. I also research online, study books on brands, marketing and art promotion to gain a better understanding of the best approach to take to showcase my work effectively. Sometimes it is only through trial and error that I can see what is the most successful way of promoting my work. I'm still learning so it's exciting to see how it will develop.

**WHEN YOU GET THE ITCH FOR SOME INSPIRATION,
WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO SPOT IN LONDON?**

I'm spoilt for choice living in London. There are so many wonderful galleries, museums, libraries, and landmarks to visit. If I have to choose, it would have to be the Natural History Museum. The Natural History Museum is home to around 80 million specimens, housed in collections of botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology, and zoology. Many of the collections have great historical and scientific value, including a vast amount of Charles Darwin's work. Not only is the interior and exterior architecture of this building breath-taking, the exhibitions and specimens inside are awe inspiring and a joy to study and photograph as the basis for creating new work. Science and the natural world are amazing and a visit there is a feast for the senses and gets my imagination and creative juices flowing.