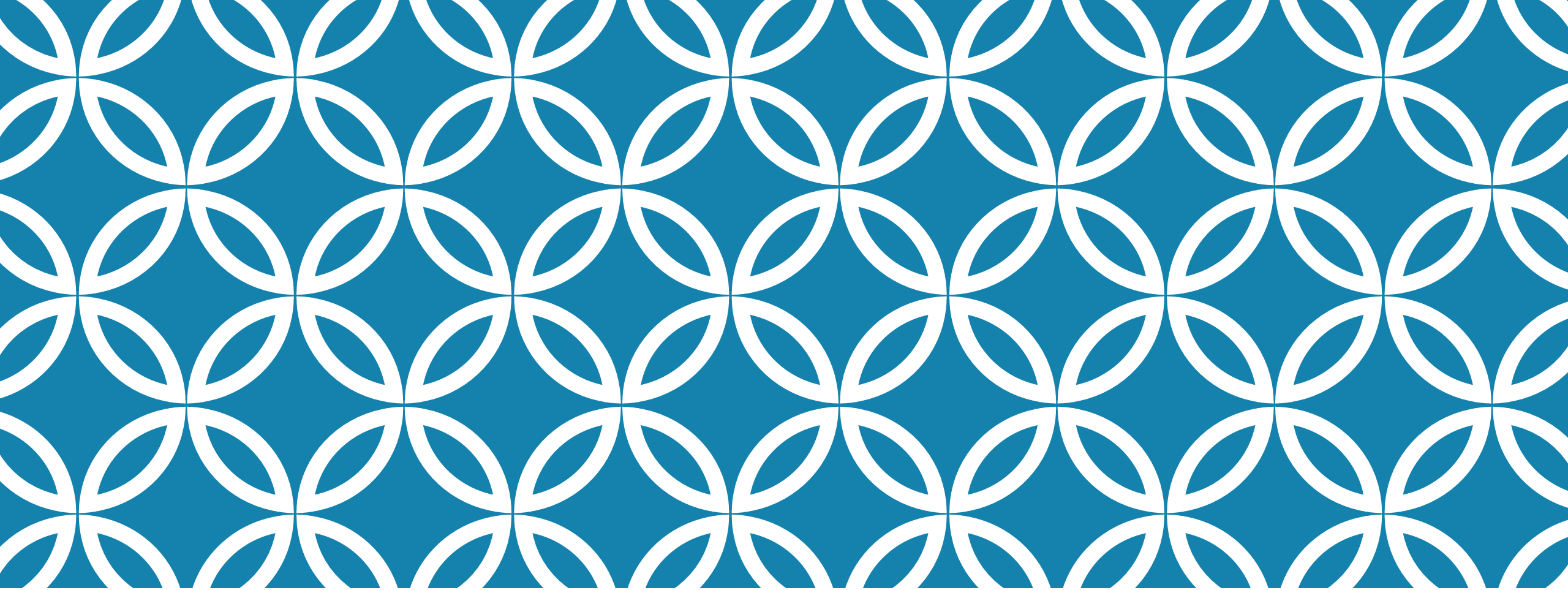


CYANOTYPES

WHAT IS A CYANOTYPE?

Photographic process that produces a distinctive cyan-blue and white image

Ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide are mixed to create a solution

Photosensitve solution is applied to a medium like watercolor paper or cloth in dark place and allowed to dry

When the paper is exposed to UV light a chemical reaction occurs producing an insoluable blue dye (ferric ferrocyanide)

HISTORY

Originally developed by English scientist and astronomer Sir John Hershel in 1842

Used to reproduce notes, diagrams and architectural designs (blueprints)

Anna Atkins used cyanotypes to document ferns, seaweed and other plant life—for this reason some consider her to be the first female photographer

Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions published in 1843

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY (1955)

Marclay created this monumental work by unspooling magnetic tapes from music cassettes (by the bands and musicians named in the work's title) and draping them across light-sensitive paper.

The dramatic, swirling forms recall Abstract Expressionist paintings of the 1950s.

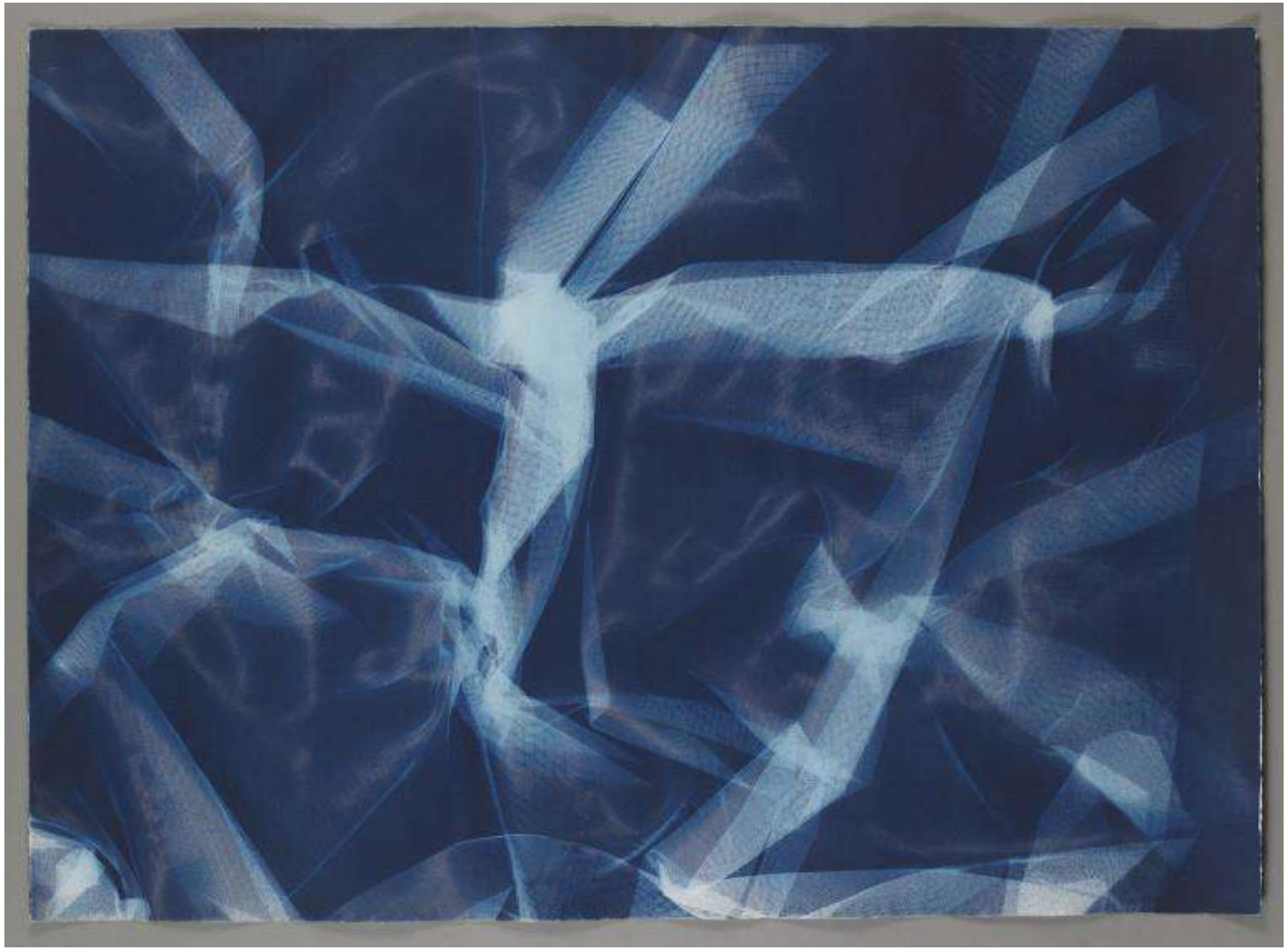
Printmaking is one of the tools Marclay uses in his ongoing exploration of the intersection between sound, performance, and the visual arts, incorporating unconventional approaches, such as printing from inked vinyl LPs.

Allover (Genesis, Travis Tritt, and others)
2008

BARBARA KASTEN (1936)

Kasten began making photograms by painting with the liquid chemical combination of cyanotype and experimented with paint both in the emulsion and on top of the finished product.

The photogram, free from technical restraints and training, offered a direct way to merge a painterly technique with light-sensitive emulsions. The fibreglass window screening used for the cyanotype Photogenic Painting series 1974–5 was an industrial textile that was first stretched then painted on, before exposing it to sunlight. The result was ephemeral and surreal, even though the material itself was bland and meant for practical purposes.



Photogenic Painting (Untitled 74/31), 1975

MARCO BREUER (1966)

Breuer works in and outside of the darkroom, exposing photographic material to heat, light, and physical abrasion. Drawing implements have included 12-gauge shotguns, the guts of electric frying pans, modified turntables, razor blades, and power sanders.

Breuer's photographic techniques include recent works on chromogenic paper to early black-and-white photograms, gum bichromate prints, silkscreens, artist books, and unlimited newsprint editions.

Untitled, 2005

KATE CORDSEN (1964)

Known for large format landscapes, Cordsen produces ethereal and ambiguous images that evoke ideas of fragmented memories and temporality.

She often combines 19th century chemical methods with traditional film and digital technologies.

From 2014, Cordsen has worked exclusively in cyanotype and gum bichromate, two of the earliest forms of photography. She creates monumental abstract photograms using primarily found objects that invoke the works of early modernists Harry Holtzman, Piet Mondrian and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

Indigo XII, 2014

JOHN DUGDALE (1960)

Using 19th-century photographic processes, John Dugdale renders intimate portraits and still-lifes that forgo the specificity of an era or region.

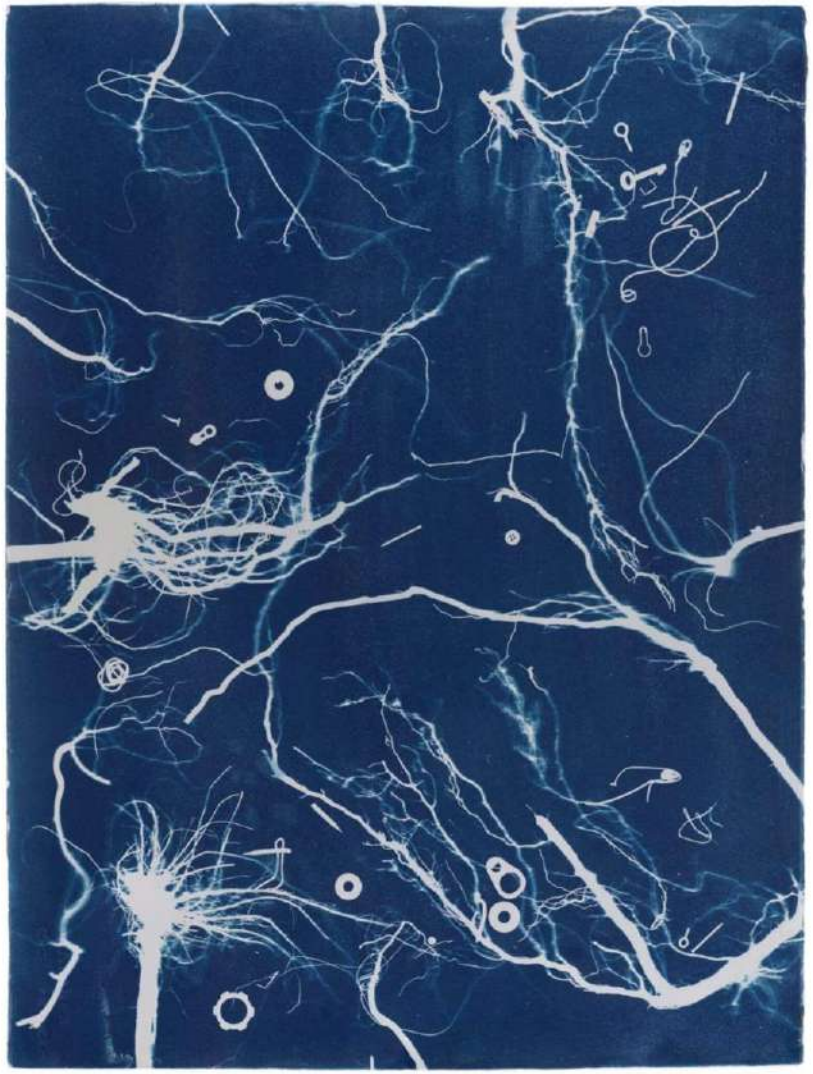
The timeless images, made with large-format cameras and cyanotype and platinum printing methods, capture contemplative nudes and tender arrangements of picture frames and fruit bowls that refer to the close connections we develop with people and objects.

The sense of history and immortality in the photographs is enhanced by Dugdale's approach to building his compositions from memory. After an illness left him nearly blind at the age of 33, Dugdale continued to photograph with an assistant's help, creating images inspired by vivid recollections of friends, lovers, and spaces.

Lone Tulip, 2000

ROY ARDEN (1957)

For his cyanotypes on paper, Arden has used different techniques of emulsion coating, developing, bleaching and toning. This body of photogram prints focuses on plant roots and small objects seen as if underground by an archaeologist's or metal detectorist's mind's eye. Roots collected along West Coast beaches leave their silhouettes of lightning-like growth patterns: we see the will of the tendrils pushing downward and then changing direction in reaction to resistance. Some of these works show tiny metal objects entangled in the root forms making these depictions not of nature but of the Anthropocene.



Field, 2018