

STUDIO 280

Visual Art | Baking | Jessica Kalmar | Knitting | Sewing



Side Bar

This summer we continued to explore our new locality. The inspiration gained was abundant and purifying. It always fascinates me how the land connects with body and soul. Some places I've lived I forced that connection, but here it's so easy. | My summer reading was all over the place with lightheaded fiction, baking, gardening, and philosophy. | The Inkle loom produced lovely pick-up pattern bookmarks while the knitting needles worked on socks. | Baked goods seem to be a good trade off for fresh garden vegetables from our neighbors. They *really* like English muffins. | Please enjoy the newsletter!

Summertime Blues Happiness

Do you remember the writing assignment in grade school that started, 'What I Did on My Summer Vacation...'? I loved that assignment. More so on the thought provoking side than the actual writing it out on wide ruled notebook paper with perfect spelling and grammar to boot. I enjoyed remembering all the activities I did during the entire summer break. That reflection would make me happy to know I did a lot of really fun things and then had a chance to sort of brag about it all.



Silver gelatin print; Brownie Flash Six-20

Panhandle Trail, PA

I never had "summertime blues" necessarily. Just ordinary boredom that comes with being a kid. As an adult however, boredom seems to have redefined itself as nap-time or just-resting-my-eyes. The never ending list of to-dos is always there, always keeping adults away from boredom.

Books

Backyard Homesteading by David Toht

Island by Aldous Huxley

The Red Tent by Anita Diamant

White Saddle by Ethel Hull Miller

Knitting / Weaving

Knitting socks is fun... really!



And wearing them is especially nice. Currently there is hand painted Baah La Jolla yarn on the needles making a pair of basic but cozy socks.



With the Inkle loom I've made bookmarks while learning the "pick-up" method. These patterns make the weaving go fast!

What I Did on My Summer Vacation...

...was all pretty awesome. Grand ideas of making cyanotypes on cotton, salt prints on water color paper, photographing the garden, making beet and black walnut stain for prints, etc. Ambitious plans of day trips and road trips, camping and swimming, canoeing and biking, etc. But what really happened, what took most of my time, was remaining still and just being. Admittedly, I did carry-out a few of the above mentioned endeavors, but mostly I listened and looked a lot. It was our first summer at our new house, new environment and I wanted to study it.



Silver gelatin print; Brownie Flash Six-20 Panhandle Trail, PA

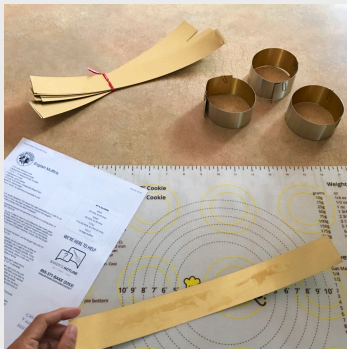
I made an impulse purchase early in summer of a rather inexpensive yet very sturdy and comfortable hammock. From inside I witnessed hummingbirds so close I thought they'd crawl in, felt the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the

Baking

English Muffins - fork split

1 3/4C lukewarm milk
 3T softened butter
 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 tsp salt
 2T sugar
 1 large egg, lightly beaten
 4 1/2C all purpose flour
 2tsp instant yeast

Combine all ingredients mixing about 5 minutes. Scrape dough into a rough ball and cover the bowl. Let rise 1 to 2 hours until puffy. Prepare non-stick griddle or oiled / seasoned pan with generous sprinkle of corn meal, semolina, or farina. Deflated the dough and divide into 16 pieces. Shape into a ball then flatten to 3" in diameter (or use rings that will hold shape).



Cover with a towel and let rest about 20 minutes. Then uncover and cook using low heat 7 to 15 minutes each side.



Recipe from *King Arthur Flour*

breeze filtered by leafy branches of walnut and has trees, read a variety of books learning all about life, love, gardening, and philosophy, and did a little of just-resting-my-eyes.

The garden was demanding. A lot of work while waiting for the results. All that work was tough but good, and it was quiet. Aside from learning the different between a spake and a shovel, suckering tomato plants, and the proper way to compost, the garden also taught me patience while giving me a sense of accomplishment and bravery.

What I learned on my summer vacation was equanimity and independence. I'm living my life my way and there's nothing wrong with that.



Silver gelatin print; Diana

Laska Auction, backyard

Guest Speaker

The Pittsburgh Digital Imagers invited me to speak about my work during their September monthly meeting. Artist talks are so helpful for the listener and the speaker. While preparing the talk I noticed it was inevitable that I would learn, once again, more about my work.

Tangible Methods

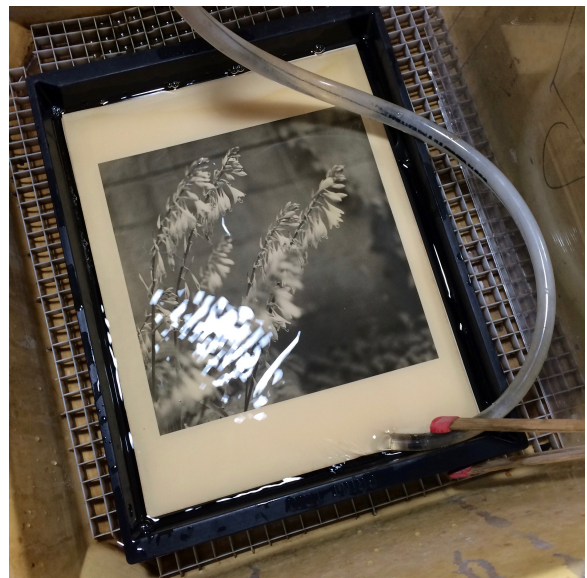
The theme was about how photography can be enjoyed in other ways besides viewed from a specific height hung on the wall behind glass and perfectly matted. The teaser on the invitations was written as follows:

"Analog photography is a craft. The process slows me down and demands my attention when using the camera, developing the film, and printing each negative. Whether rules are followed or not, fine cameras used or plastic toys, rich chemicals mixed or organic materials found in the yard, every step requires precision. Handiwork is also a craft. Another process that slows me down and allows me to think about each stitch, weave, and cut. With a heavy nod to the invention of photography and homesteading ways for the mid to late 19th century, I'm understanding how analog photography can collaborate with handiwork. These elements help navigate the mystery of the image and pull what was once past into the present bringing forth a curiosity about the photograph."

The talk began with my approach on the materials used while showing images of how the darkroom is set up. I explained my choices and uses of chemistry, film, photographic paper, and cameras. Most of the materials are challenging, and I enjoy that. But the primary reason I choose to work with analog is how much time it takes. To be with the photographs for long periods of time helps to build a stronger relationship with them.



Black walnut stain



Silver gelatin print, stained in black walnut water.

From there I discussed staining photographs in natural elements, creating chapbooks, and then on to how embroidery started to make an appearance. All these tangible elements are so inviting to touch. By incorporating them into my photographic images they help navigate the mystery in the composition like tracing a finger along a route on a map. I brought in examples of my work to pass around allowing the audience to physically interact with the chapbooks and prints.



A Coffee Table Book About Cars, 2017



Silver gelatin prints, craft paper, cotton thread

During the talk I listened to myself; learning more about my process and how it is important to the resulting project, and understanding the evolution of my work. Much of what I said came back to inspiration and where it develops. What I noticed is that I am inspired to create after times I spend quietly observing life around me, as if I'm soaking in all sorts of ideas subconsciously. Having relocated to a much more peaceful area seems to be ideal in my process. It reminds me of Rockport, Maine and Athens, Ohio, two locations where inspiration was overflowing. Sometimes it is hard to get back to that type of peacefulness. The to-do list sneaks into the mind while laying in the hammock just resting the eyes. But when conscious of that it is then easier to dismiss it and get back to just *being*. That mindfulness was something I thought a lot about all summer, and when I listened to myself during the talk I noticed it was there. I noticed how important it is to my process.

As with this newsletter, the artist talk was a platform from which to pause, think, and articulate what it is my artwork is about with the intent to share and inspire the listener. A few people took notes and many others asked questions. The most insightful moments were when discussions started to happen as a few people shared their artistic practices and experience. A wonderful way to openly talk about art... and more specifically art photography.

Archive

Lift Point, 2005

4 x 5" silver gelatin prints
stained in black walnut water
Holga camera

During my first summer break during graduate school I road tripped with my parents on a route we travelled numerous times in my childhood. Our loop started in Northeastern Ohio and included Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, Illinois, Indiana and western Ohio. The goal back then was to meet family in Wisconsin and to enjoy different locations along the way. However, this particular time was a more melancholy trip. We reached the specific destination in Wisconsin with the purpose this time to spread the ashes of our family who we visited so frequently in the past. These images are childhood memories trying to be recreated through adult eyes.







The Frick, Pittsburgh, PA

photo by Kamila Sych

Being Still

Active boredom - those times you are momentarily resting with a slight nag of the to-do list amongst more spacious thoughts. Sometimes we lack interest in what we are doing and we just need a little nudge to change things up. A little conversation and some sharing. A couple of laughs and even more smiles. This inspiration can be applied when accompanied by others and when not. Just relaxing, thinking, and being.

Whatever kind of art you engage with it's definitely a form of therapy. But what if you don't "do art" and wish for boredom or nap-times? That is the challenge. Luckily the definition of art is fairly open. How you define *creative activity* is what art is. And boredom? Well, let's redefine it as *being still*.

jessicakalmar@mac.com

Thank You

Your comments are appreciated! It is so inspirational to get feedback from you. The variety of crafts (and now gardening) I am interested in has created such an array of responses. Thank you for that. Keep them coming!

Summer 2017 | Have a fun Fall! | jessicakalmar.com
