

About the Process

Every single image, while it starts as a photograph, is one of a kind.

Each has a slightly different result depending on the film, time, temperature, humidity, pressure on the rollers, exposure, etc. Of course, those that are hand colored each go on a completely different kind of unique journey.

35mm slide or negative: Old school. Of course, these are old images that I have shot. The slide or negative is inserted into a special projector made by specifically by Daylab for the Polaroid art process.

Digital Prints: More recent original images come from digital prints that are made simply by copying the print, again through a Daylab projector.

The image is exposed onto a sheet of #669 Polaroid film. The film is pulled through the rollers of the Daylab projector, where the pressure of the rollers squeezes developing chemicals onto the image. The image develops for 40 seconds, and then the two layers of the film are pulled apart to halt development. Both layers of this film can be used, with different results for each. One layer appears much like a normal “positive” print. That is left to dry for a minimum of 24 hours, and then used in the Polaroid emulsion process (see below).

Polaroid Transfer

The other layer looks like a dark, smeary mass, but actually serves as a “negative” to make a print. This negative, while still wet, can be placed face down on a sheet of damp watercolor paper (or similar smooth, thick paper. (For paper transfers, I always use acid-free, 100% cotton rag watercolor paper). Silk and other fabrics can be used successfully as well. The negative is rolled onto the paper and left to transfer, under pressure, in a warm environment until the image from the Polaroid film has sufficiently adhered to the paper.

The somewhat toothy surface of the paper is very receptive to materials such as watercolor, pastel, and professional-quality colored pencil. I often use these materials to enhance the color, value, and texture of the image.

Polaroid Emulsion

After the surface of the Polaroid positive has dried and cured for at least 24 hours, it can be soaked off the film’s backing and transferred to virtually any surface imaginable. The positive is placed in hot water (160 degrees F) and soaked until tiny bubbles appear all over the surface of the print. At that point, the emulsion will easily separate from its backing. It is very delicate and translucent (it is the real “film” part of the Polaroid film) and appears much like a jellyfish floating in the water. This film is carefully transferred to the desired backing-- in most cases I use rag paper like in the Polaroid transfers. I have experimented with other supports, though, like glass and plastic film.

The very smooth surface of the emulsion will not take dry materials well, so generally I use transparent watercolor to enhance prints where needed.

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