

Still Life Photography

U3AC Photo Forum

Jitka Brynjolffssen 11th May 2018

Still Life Photography

Still life photography can be a powerful art form and, as centuries of still-life painting have shown, the simple truth of everyday objects is far more fascinating than fantasy

Similar to Still-Life painting it is used for the depiction of inanimate subject matter, typically a small group of objects (food, flowers, dead animals, plants, rocks, or shells) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewellery, coins, pipes, and so on).

Lighting and framing are important aspects of still life photography composition. It is also good if the image presents a story.

A Bit of History

A Still Life is a work of art, a drawing or painting and now photography of a group of objects. Objects do not move, hence the word 'still'. In the past these objects tended to be flowers, fruit, and other kinds of food or dead animals - hence 'life'



People have been painting collections of objects for thousands of years.

The Ancient Egyptians

Painted stacks of offerings for the gods, in temples or tombs. Egyptians were not interested in perspective, or in shading. They didn't care about making things look realistic. They just wanted to clearly show what each of these objects was

http://www.timetrips.co.uk/still_life_history.htm

Greek and Roman Still life

Mosaics on the floor and painting on the walls especially at Pompeii (the Roman town covered by ash in the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in AD79). There is much more effort in accurate shading and colouring here than the Egyptians managed



Still Life in Painting



- [Jan Brueghel the Elder](#) (1568–1625), *Bouquet* (1599). Some of the earliest examples of still life were paintings of flowers by Netherlandish Renaissance painters. Still-life painting (including [vanitas](#) (1599)). Some of the earliest examples of still life were paintings of flowers by Netherlandish Renaissance painters. Still-life painting (including vanitas), as a particular genre, achieved its greatest importance in the Golden Age of [Netherlandish art](#) (ca. 1500s–1600s).

Not Everything Need to be Perfect

- The 16th century witnessed an explosion of interest in the natural world. Natural objects began to be appreciated as individual objects of study . But they can also represent mortality and passing of time or an allegory to time present –such as corrupt, decaying church



Basket of Fruit

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, (~1599),

Light and Composition

- The horticultural explosion was of widespread interest in Europe and artist capitalized on that to produce thousands of still-life paintings
- The composition and lighting set the tradition
- Modern photo version eg [here](#)



Still life with Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber,
Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560–1627),



Still Life with Game Fowl, Vegetables and Fruits (1602)

Juan Sánchez Cotán Museo del Prado Madrid

Vanitas



Symbolic work of art showing the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death

Pieter Claesz – *(Dutch)* 1628

19th Century Onwards



Impressionists and post-..' Still Lives become respected and important genre of Art – as photography takes off and is used for realistic imagery of object

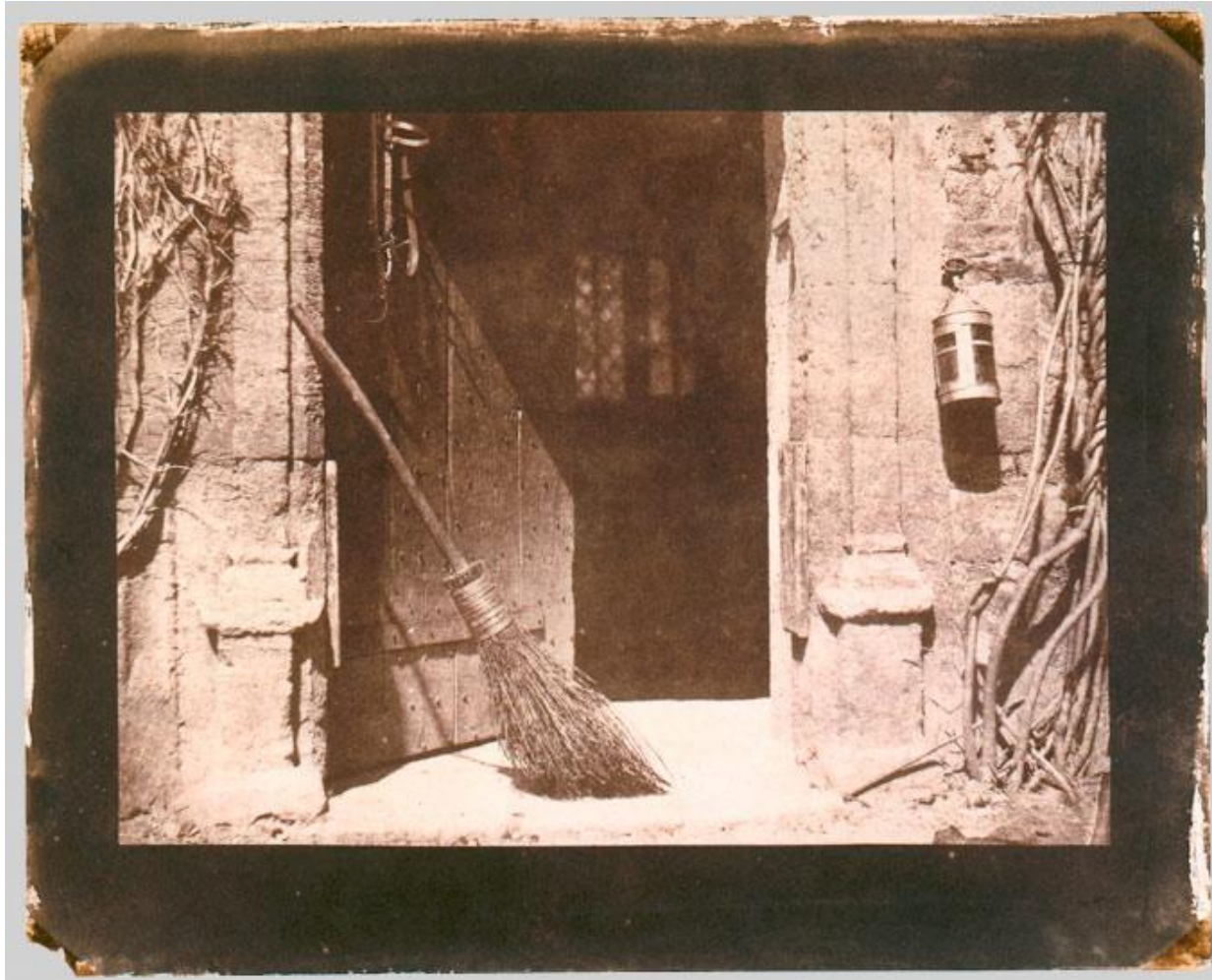
Still Life Photography

- Popular since the early 19th Century –
- Practical choice as well as creative with the control over setting and light with objects such as fruits, glassware, vases and flowers .
- Often used for archiving and cataloguing and advertising.
- In early 20th Century photographers used soft focus lenses and played with light and shadows – to create art
- Contemporary Still Life recalls past styles but the range has expanded to include objects in motion

Artists Known For Still Life Photography

- **Henry Fox Talbot** published a book of his photographic experiments in “The Pencil of Nature” (1844). His still life “The Open Door” (1844) plays with light and shadow. **Roger Fenton** – founder of Photographic Society
- **André Kertész** known for his groundbreaking contributions to photographic composition,
- **Paul Outerbridge** is famed for playing with dark shadows to create Surrealist still lifes like “Ide Collar” (1922). And the early use of colour
- More contemporary examples of still life photographs include Bill Owens’ documentation of the homes of post-war working class Americans and **Robert Mapplethorpe’s** monochrome photographs of flowers.
- **Irving Penn** – commenting on modern society consumerism through his simple photographs of object found in the street
- Other masters of still life photography include **Josef Sudek**, Adolphe Braun, Edward Weston, Man Ray, **Ori Gersht** is known for freezing flowers and photographing their explosions in works like “Blow Up: Untitled 15” (2007). **Sharon Core**, Jonathan Lovekin, and Wolfgang Tillmans, **Martin Parr**

William Henry Fox Talbot 1800–1877



The Open Door before 1844 -@ The Metropolitan Museum of Art US

Roger Fenton 1819-1869

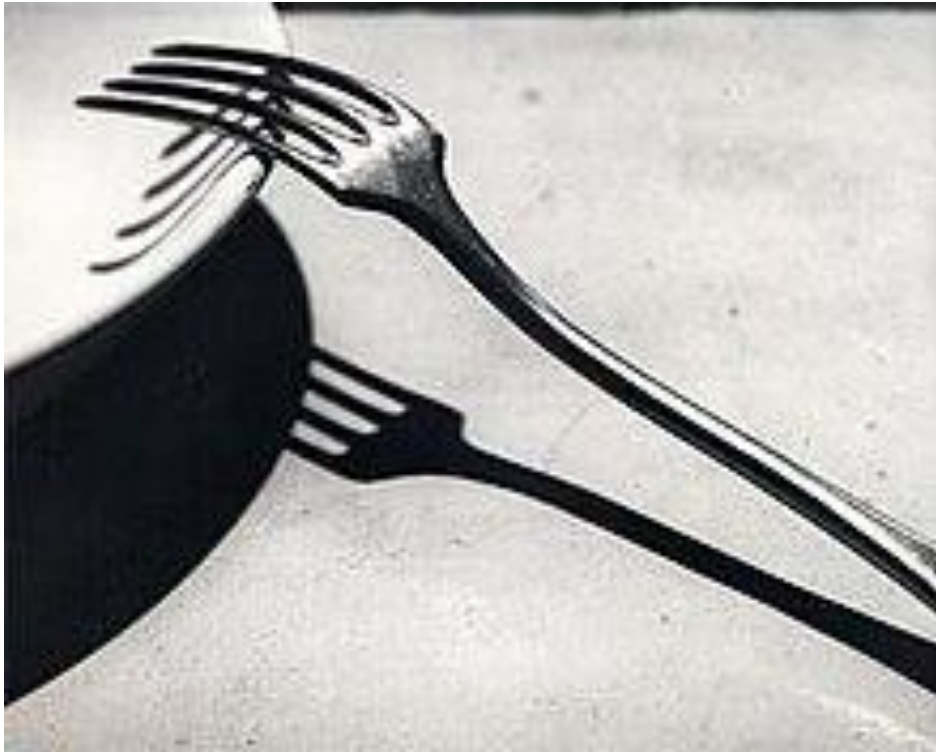


Roger Fenton returned to the tradition of still life, but sought to capture its decaying, temporary beauty

The still life tradition was reclaimed in this era as an art that invites thoughts of change and entropy..

Still life with Ivory Tankard and Fruit, ~1860..
The Royal Photographic Society Collection at
the National Media Museum

André Kertész 1894-1985



The Fork, or La Fourchette, 1928
and is one of Kertész's most famous
works



Bowl with Sugar Cubes, André
Kertész, 1928

*1927 Kertész was the first photographer to have a
one-man exhibition with 30 photographs;*

Paul Outerbridge - 1896-1958



The Idle Collar

Taken in 1922 and published in Vanity Fair as an ad, and a page torn out of this magazine hang on a wall of Marcel Duchamp

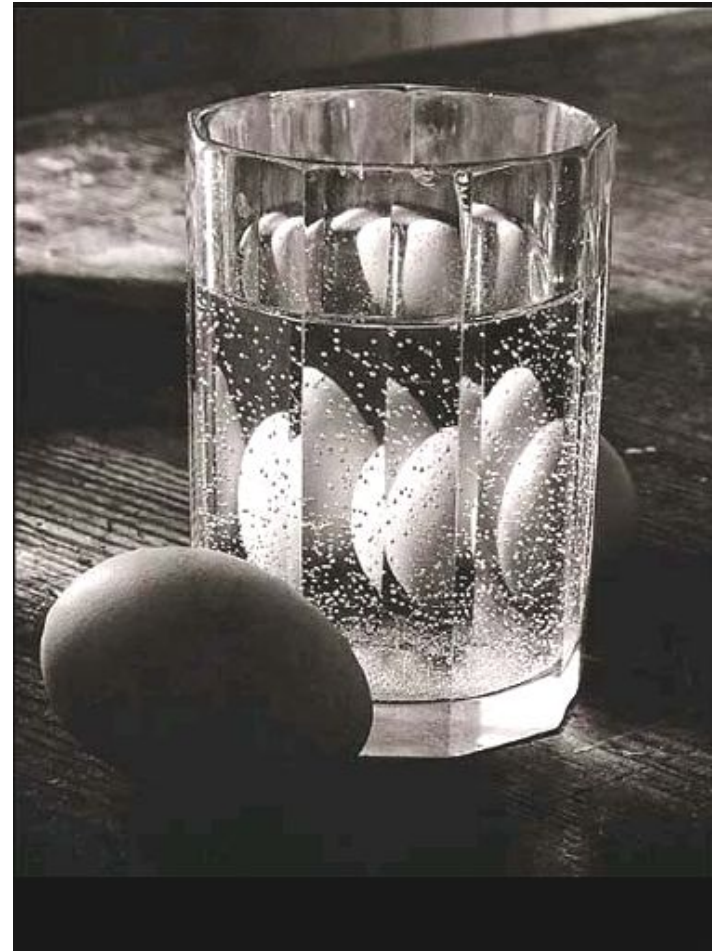


Images de Deauville, c. 1936

Early use of colour

Josef Sudek (1896 – 1976) Czech,

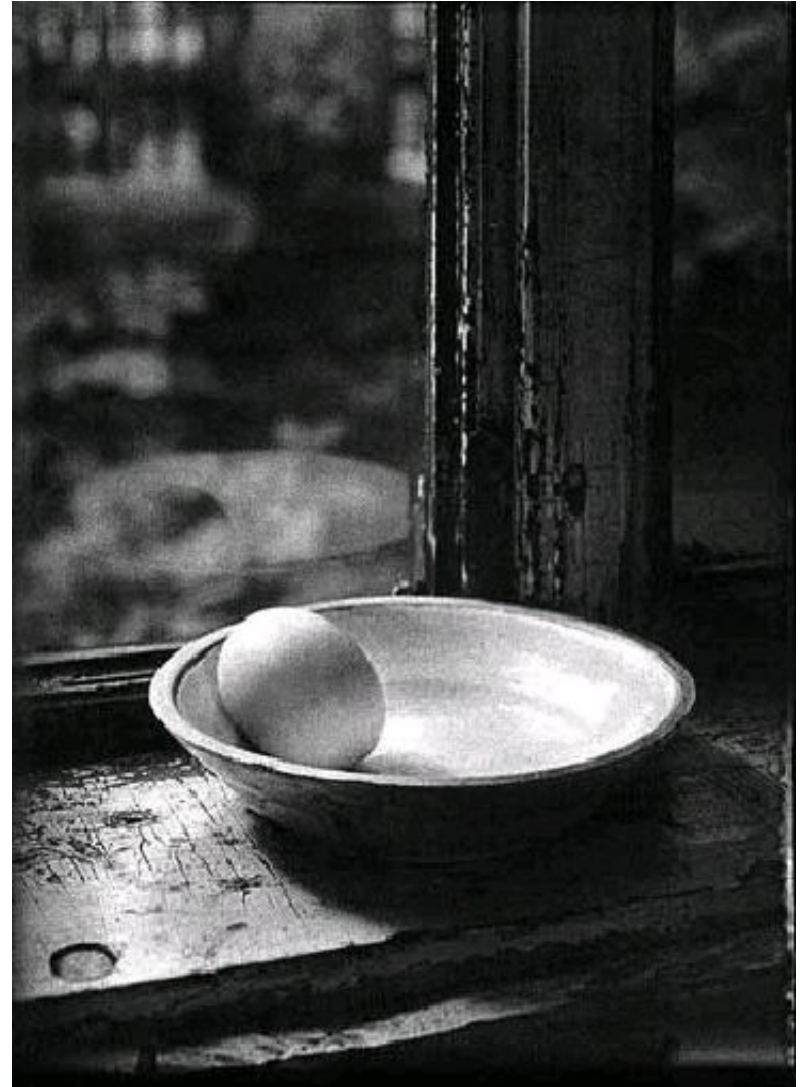
His still lifes are the best known aspects of his work, indeed his graceful depiction of drinking glasses and eggs are familiar to those who don't necessarily even know his name



Josef Sudek



Bowl and an Egg in Window



Robert Mapplethorpe 1946-1989



"White Vase"



"Calla"

Irwing Penn 1917-2009

Cigarettes - literally found his subjects on the street. By bringing them into his studio and creating these minimalist compositions, he transformed one of the most widely consumed and discarded products of consumer society from that of pure detritus into a symbolic representation of contemporary culture. This transformative act resulted in one of the most elegant yet direct expressions of post-modern artistic practice.



Irving Penn

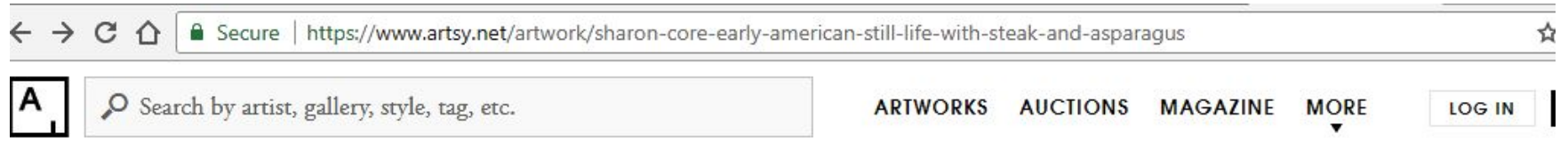


Games



• Salad

Sharon Core 1965-



Sharon Core

[+](#) Follow

Early American, Still Life with Steak and Asparagus, 2008

Chromogenic Print

17 1/4 x 23 1/4 in

43.8 x 59.1 cm

Edition of 7 + 2AP

This is part of a limited edition set.

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\$10,000 - 15,000

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1627 - Sharon Core

[More on Sharon Core](#)



Confections – from her
Thiebauds series (2003–05)

Ori Gersht (1967-)



Blow Up No. 5 -2007

The art of simple observation

*His Blow Up: Untitled 5, for instance, casts a keen eye on the colours and textures of flowers by freezing them with liquid nitrogen - so that even as he explodes the arrangement and photographs its destruction, shards of red, blue and white petals reveal their natural beauty (left). Simple observation leads to a rich and dark art of fragility and violence.

*[The Guardian](#)

Jonathan Jones - Fri 16 Nov 2012

More Ori Gersht



Exploding the Genre of Still Life - Pomegranate

[More Ori Gersht](#)

Martin Parr (British, born 1952)



Atlanta, USA, 2010

Pride Slices by me



Stanley Market - Vancouver 2017 -Jitka Bryn

Still Life for Modern Advertising



<https://edwardfury.com/> Images Copyright © of Edward Fury, 2017



<https://jknowles.com/advertising/>

Lets Look at our Images

- Black and White
- After the Old Masters
- Fleeting Beauty – Decay
- Food and Drink
- Outdoor Opportunities
- Art Objects
- Flower
- Others
- Just for Fun
- Dark Field

Images which inspired me

- [Black and white geometry](#) by Veniamin Skorodumov

My Images after Skorodumov





After the Old Masters



Jitka Bryn - 2017



Jitka Bryn -2017

Fleeting Beauty - Decaying



Magpie, Cambridge 2011



Toad, Orford 2010

Food and Drink



Jitka Bryn 2013- 2014



*Little Hot Peppers – Jitka Bryn
2017*



Spring Crop



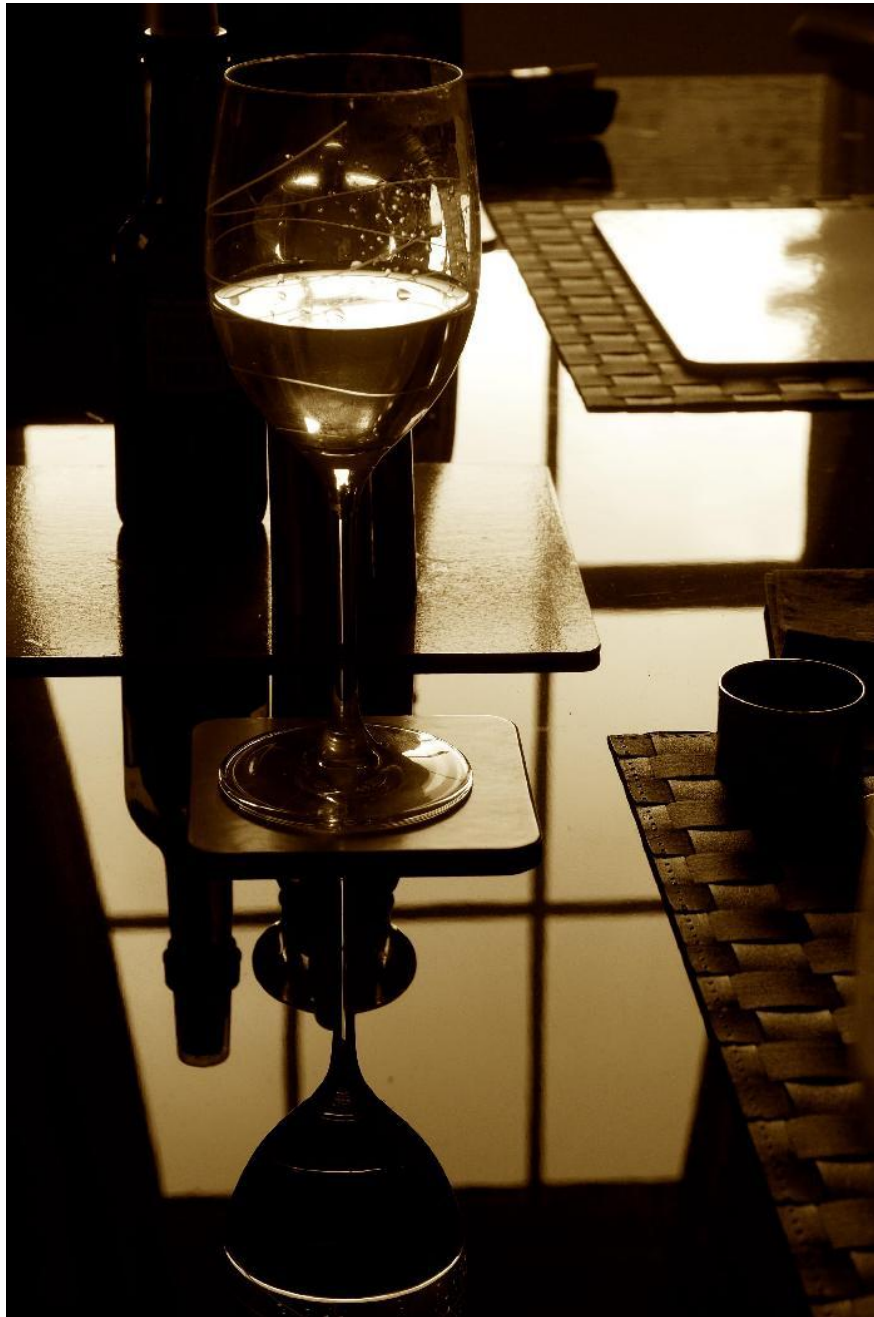
Delicious Pitaya Fruit from Mexico



Veg de Provence



Just Desserts



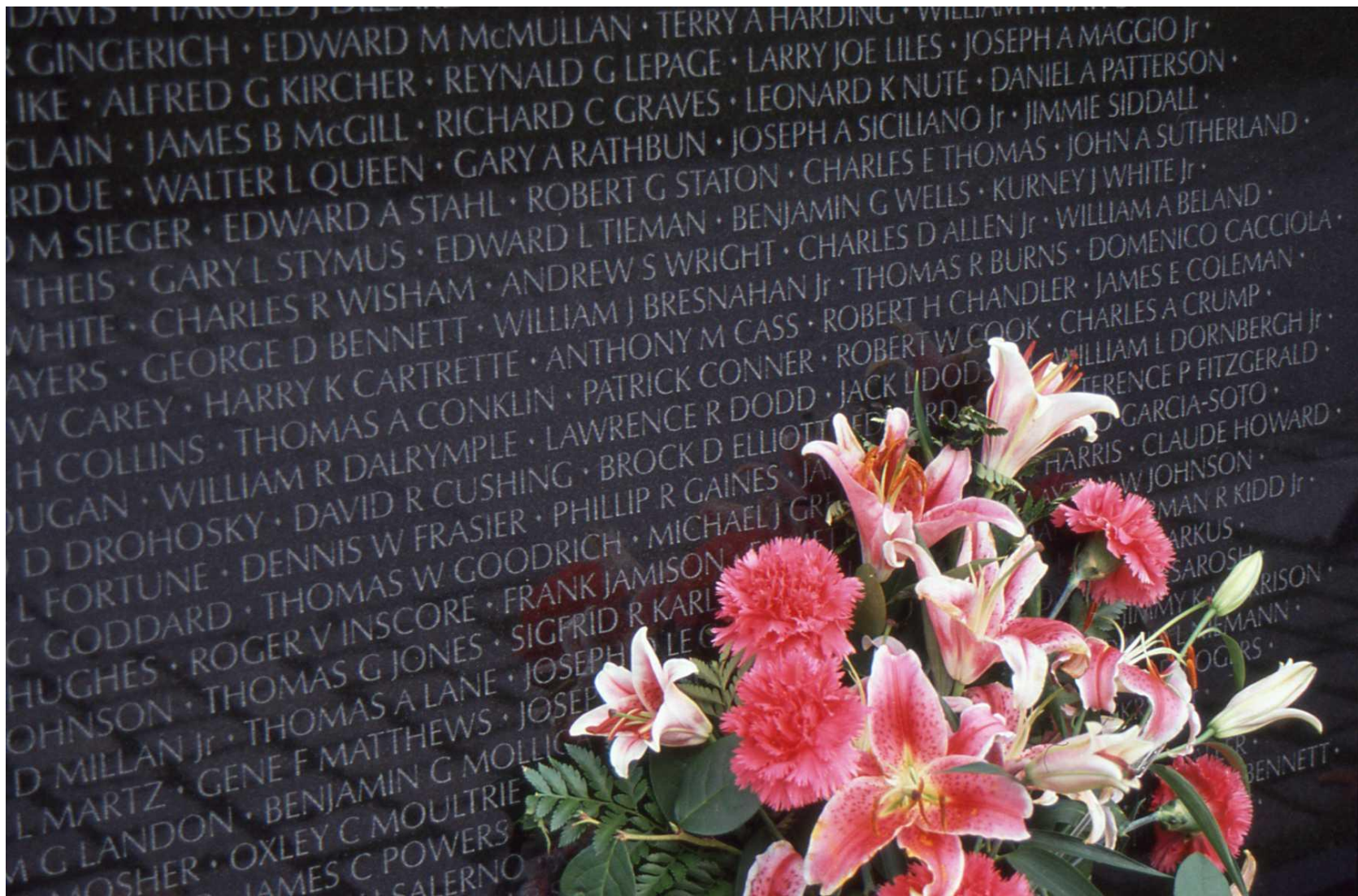
Outdoors



Old Castle Window with red Vine – Jitka Bryn 2016







Memorial Wall



Roaring Dragon



Gloves are Off



Treasure at Oakington Market

Art Objects



Is it a Sign? – Jitka Bryn 2017, wooden figures and hand by [Jan Zalud](#)

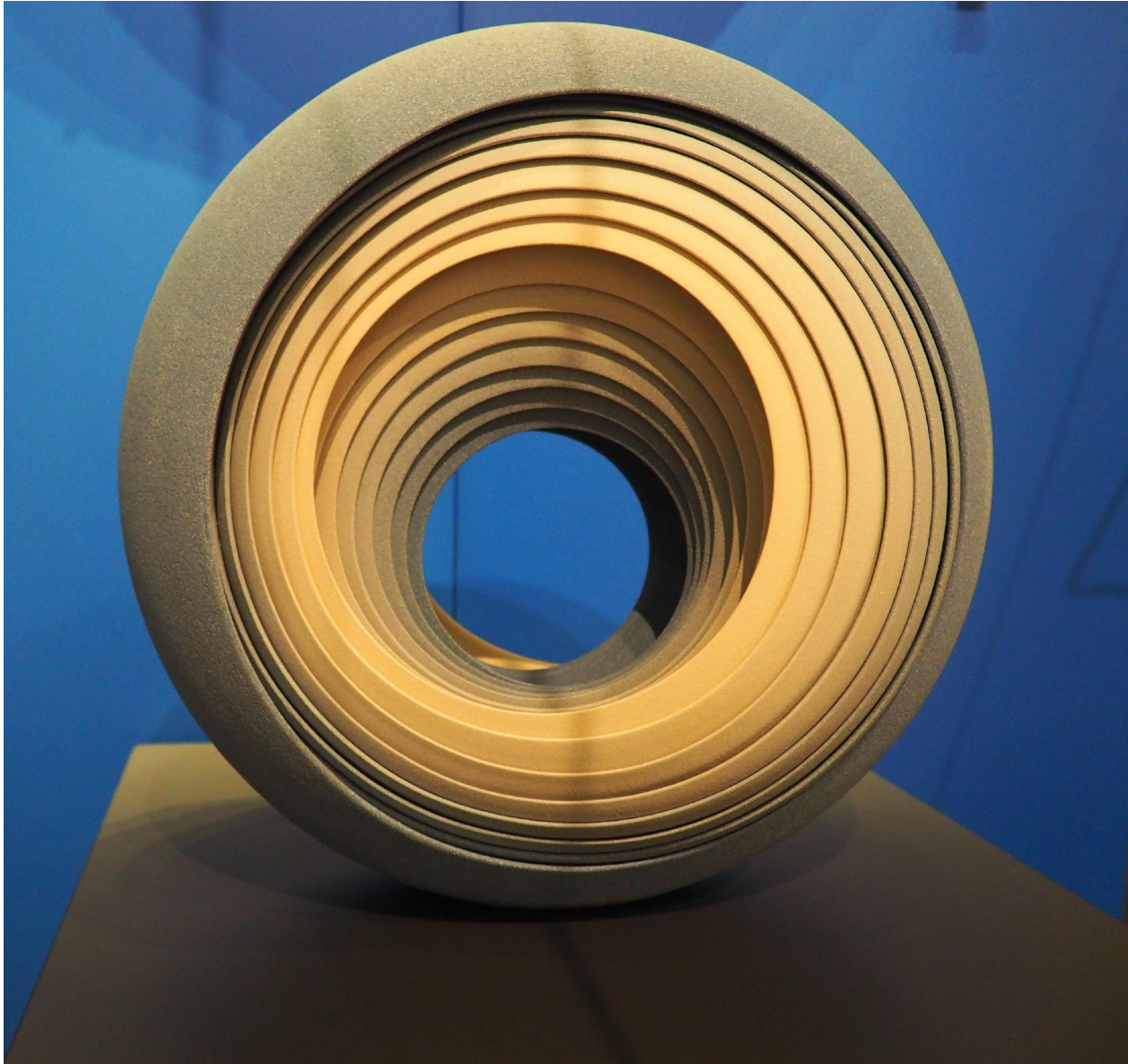


Time for Bargain Hunt



***Execution by an Iris –
Jitka B***

Wooden figure Jan Zalud



Ceramic -1

Flowers



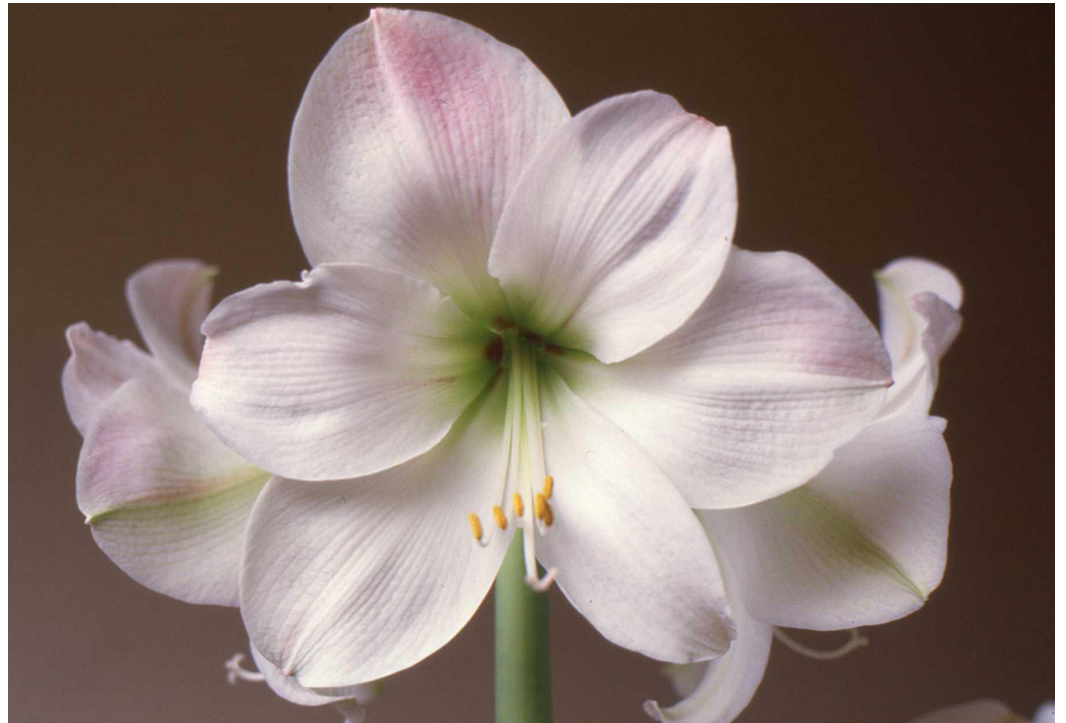
White roses



Sweet Pink Orchids of Sumemr



Morning Tulips



In full Bloom



Vine Leaves

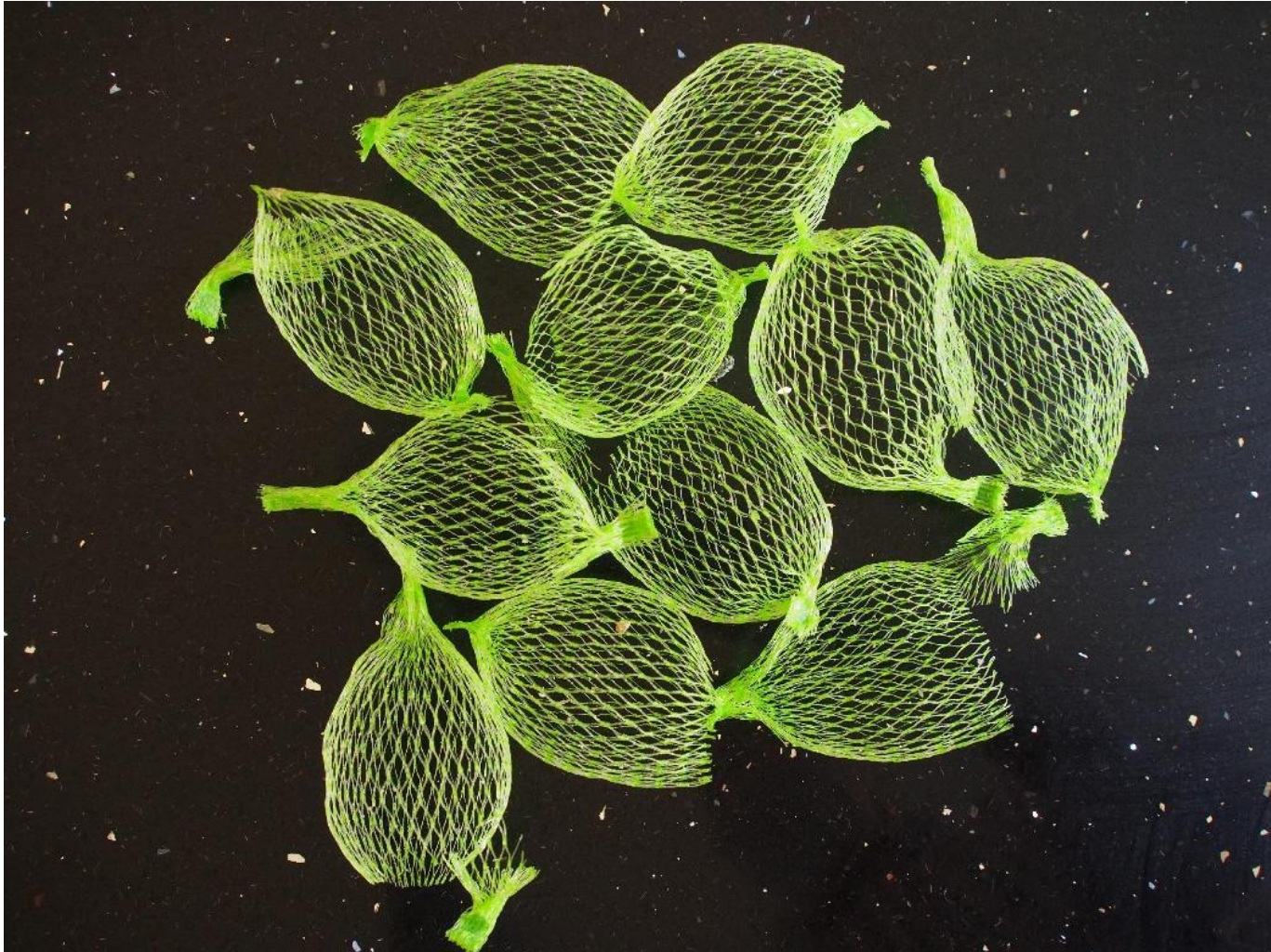
Others



The Reader – Jitka Bryn 2017



Picasso is Upset



And Just Fun

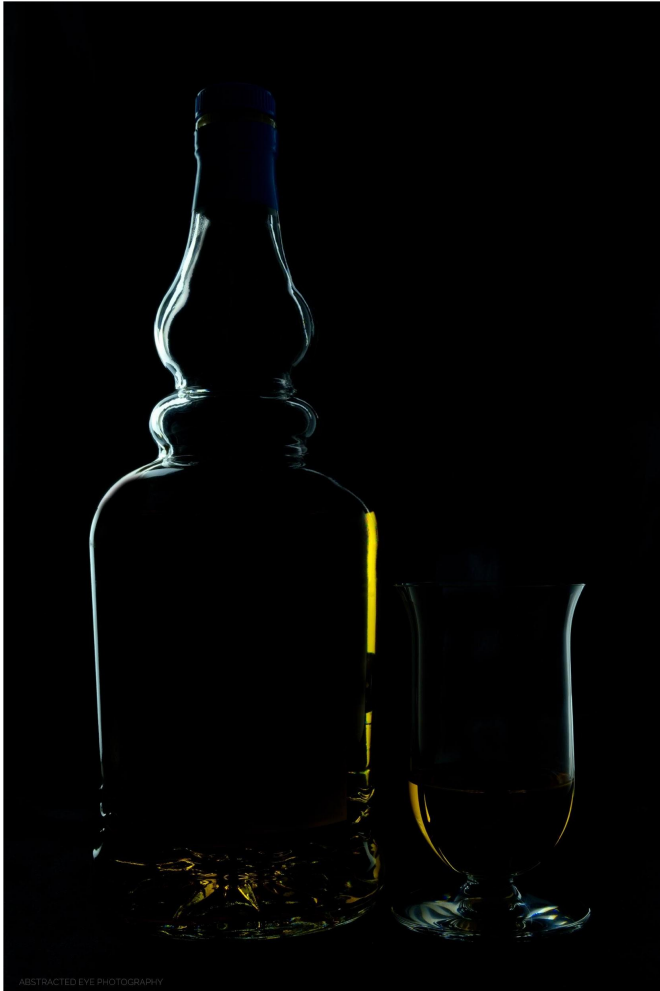


Orange Spray Jitka Bryn 2016



Coming Out! Jitka bryn 2016

Dark Field Technique



Andrew Colgan RPS 2017 ©



Jitka B. 2017

A short video 3 min)–
to outline the technique [here](#)

Links

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Still_life
- <https://www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/what-was-on/art-arrangement-photography-and-still-life-tradition>
- [History of Still life Photography](#)
- [A little bit more looking back on still life photography](#)
- [7 how-to tips for shooting still life photography \(youtube\)](#)
- [Still Life Photography – 50 stunning examples](#)
- [Ted Forbes – Art of Photography : Still Life](#)
- [How to photograph glass](#)