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Wet Plate Collodion Photography

About me:

I am a Czech freelance photographer with my own studio in my home town Trebic, located partly in the south-eastern part of the historical region of Bohemia, Czech Republic.

My main focus of interests is wet plate collodion photography. I started in the year 2011. At that time I attended a privat workshop in Prague and started my own journey. Beside my main job in IT branch I intensively worked on my life project: to take pictures of my daughter and to build up my own studio in the attic.

After many days and night spent in our attic we have it - finally! I have build up in our studio also a modern darkroom adapted for wet plate and also film photography. In the studio I can now take pictures and produce also wet plate photographs.

We faced the financial limit but in the end we managed to have also 3 bigger roof windows to have possibility to take pictures in natural light - my most favourite environment.

During the summer time I like to take wet plate pictures in our backyard where I have my "summer photo workshop".

Note: In the year 2011 I bought an old house (built in the year 1903) and started a partial re-construction.

Wet plate collodion photography is a truly outstanding medium. It is possible to create positive photography instantly using a process originated in the 19th century.

I mix all the chemicals by myself - it saves money but most important is that you have all the part of your process under your control. All about wet plate is manual work and all your failures will display the result. But people like to look at those wet plate imperfections which can look very pleasant for the eyes - those typical developer issues, unexpected effects of chemistry or scratched plate - when it happens unfortunately during work with the plate.

A particular strength of the wet plate collodion process is the ability to create negatives on glass which in turn can be used to create contact prints. A few examples of contact prints using this process are salt prints, albumen prints, Bromoil prints and Rawlins prints etc.

But there are many other possibilities.

In last years I deal mostly with ambrotype photography (pictures on glass). Tintype I use for tests or some work it I need a faster result. Tintype is much easier due to plate preparation - you do not need to clean it. The work with glass is much more demanding - the glass plate it must be perfectly clean. Here are some examples of my work.



Pic. 1
Ambrotype 13x16 cm
Date: 08/2013
Place: Outdoor (natural light)
Camera: Eastman Kodak 2D
Exp. time: ~ 1 sec.
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova



Pic. 2
Ambrotype 13x16 cm
Date: 08/2013
Place: Outdoor (natural light)
Camera: Eastman Kodak 2D
Exp. time: ~ 1 sec.
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova

Description:

I can remember hot weather and the strong rays of the sun in our backyard which is not ideal condition for wet plate. I has been a challenge. I prepared an old working tarpaulin as a back-drop to separate my model from the old not renovated wall and took those 2 plates.



Pic. 3
Tintype 13x18 cm
Date: 04/2020
Place: Studio Jan Kratochvil (natural light)
Camera: Eastman Kodak 2D
Exp. time: ~ 20 sec.
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova



Pic. 4
Tintype 13x18 cm
Date: 04/2020
Place: Studio Jan Kratochvil (natural light)
Camera: Eastman Kodak 2D
Exp. time: ~ 25 sec.
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova

Description:
During “corona time” we spent several weeks in our house in quarantine. I made countless tests with natural light in our studio in the attic. And here is a possible result if all our windows are open and the weather conditions are good.



Pic. 5
Ambrotype 24x30 cm
Date: 01/2021
Place: Studio Jan Kratochvil (artificial light)
Camera: Unknown producer
Exp. time: ~ 3 sec.
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova



Pic. 6
Digital picture
Date: 01/2021
Place: Studio Jan Kratochvil (artificial light)
Camera: Fujifilm X-T3
Exp. time: Shorter than 1 sec. ☺
Author: Jan Kratochvil
Model: Olivie Kratochvilova

Description:

In this year 2021 we can finally start to make wet plate pictures - also in our studio. The last tests have been made and the future customers can come ♥

The last digital picture is showing my daughter holding the glass plate, her portrait in her hands.