

# Sign Café

Wendi Schneider is an American living in Denver, Colorado. We decided to introduce her to our readers, because she is an extraordinary, artistic, feminine and very talented (really blessed) designer, photographer and artist. Very erudite, with a sense for details, she is a brilliant example for visual culture context of today. She is a photographer and designer. She paints photographs, makes Polaroid transfers and works with fonts. She did this page for us. Wendi, welcome to our Museum of Arts!



**THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS**



**Wendi, introduce yourself please – education, hobbies, curious facts or something that nobody knows about you.**

I think I speak more eloquently through my work than through my words. I am a Southern girl, born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. My mother, her mother and my paternal great-grandmother were painters and I adore the smell of oil paint and turpentine. My mother was also a talented interior designer who took me antiquing from the time I could walk. She certainly influenced my design sense and my love of old things. From my father, I inherited a love of soft, luxurious fabrics, determination and humor. In addition, the lush, green environment of my youth affected me profoundly. The heavy air is full of romance and intrigue and carries the intoxicating scents of magnolia and jasmine. My love of botanicals, antiques, history and old buildings was heightened by visits to New Orleans as a child and I eventually lived there for many years. It was there that I pursued my love of painting. I studied with several gifted art professors at Newcomb College of Tulane University. They were major influences on my work, work ethic and in developing my painting techniques. I also studied Art History at Stephens College and Newcomb and was able to take a few architecture history classes at Tulane as well. I am probably quite ADHD but when I am painting, photographing or designing, my focus is incredibly intense and the creative "flow" is one of my life's greatest joys, along with my adorable skateboarding son and sweet husband! But the latter two came much later into my life. My art was the main focus through my twenties and thirties and I didn't much care for distractions or interruptions, and truthfully I still don't!



**Tell us some curious facts, please...**

I did the art for Love's Music, Love's to Dance a few times. The author (or her daughter - I'm not sure) didn't like the original shoe I chose, so I photographed it again and then painted it. Then the AD told me that piece was stolen from the Art Department and they paid me full fee to paint another version. Someone with a shoe fetish I suppose!

**How did you decide to become a photographer?  
You used to paint...**

After college I worked in the hotel and restaurant business in the historic French Quarter of New Orleans. I then got a job as a designer, copywriter and creative professional in the marketing department of The Times-Picayune newspaper. I continued to paint in my spare time and eventually bought a Nikon FE camera to make reference photos for the large, figurative oil paintings I was doing.

My friend Colleen allowed me to use her darkroom at the newspaper and taught me to print. I fell in love with photography but missed painting and eventually began painting on the photographs, when given a set of photo oils by my friend and co-worker Trish. My friends and family were quite essential to the paths I have followed. New Orleans is a hotbed of creativity and a wonderfully inspirational place for artists. I was lucky to live near one of the world's finest photography galleries and was enamoured with the turn-of-the-century photographs, in particular the Pictorialists and the exquisite photogravures of Stieglitz's Camera Notes and Camera Work magazines, which I began collecting later when I moved to NYC to pursue my career in photography.



Orchid 17, image dates to the 1990s



### What are painted photos? What are Polaroid transfers?

The painted photographs were photographed on film and then printed on fiber-based paper. Some of them were then sepia-toned and then painted with photo oils, oil sticks and sometimes regular oil paints. I used several sizes and kinds of brushes and my fingers. I applied the paint in very thin layers or glazes to build the depth and subtlety of color. It is a tedious and time-consuming process. It is quite easy to ruin the photograph if the paint beneath is not dry enough or if the brush is too wet or too dry. My technique is, like everything else I do, a result of trial and error, though I am not sure I always learn from my mistakes! I tend to learn everything

Calla Lilies, New Orleans, 1987, painted photograph  
Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, 16x20

the hard way! I am not painting now, though I hope to get back to it. The remover that I was using was quite toxic and I didn't realize it until after I had used it for many years. When I was pregnant with our son 13 years ago, I was working on my largest pieces – two 40"x60" versions of a nude odalisque in the style of Ingres and Manet - while wearing a mask and gloves.

It really took the fun out of it and I have only painted by commission since then. But I fervently miss the smell and buttery texture of oil paint. The painted photographs are limited to editions of 10 but most images have just a few in the edition and the colors vary as well. As they are hand-painted, each photograph is unique.

The Polaroid Transfers were originally photographed on slide film and then converted to Polaroid film. Before the film completed processing, the Polaroid was separated and pressed to damp watercolor paper. Some of these were painted with watercolors or enhanced with colored pencils. There are many techniques to make Polaroid Transfers – this is just the method that I used. Now Polaroid has decided to stop the production of Polaroid film and there is much ado about it on the web.

I am now making signed and editioned archival pigment prints on watercolor paper of some of the hand-painted images and Polaroid transfers, as well as several of my color images. I am quite pleased with the beauty and richness of the prints. You can see some of them at [www.ALusciousLens.com](http://www.ALusciousLens.com).





Dahlia with Bee, Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, image date 2006, print date 2007 18x24

**What did you do for Young and Rubicam when you shot for them?**

I photographed and painted some cups with coffee for a General Foods Café Vienna ad. It was the Art Director who came up with the idea of sepia toning the image to get the coffee the right color – you would have thought it would have been obvious to us all!

Though blessed with many unique and special friends and mentors, I spent a great deal of time alone in my 20s and 30s and was able to nurture my art. One of the drawbacks was that I never worked as an apprentice or assistant so I had little professional photography experience when I moved to New York.

**What is the most successful work you proud of? Share with us, please.**

That is a really hard question and I am torn between so many choices. I would have to say for a body of work, it would be the many photographs I made for editor and creator Nancy Lindemeyer and Hearst's Victoria magazine between 1991 and 2000.

**Who is your favorite client and why? What did you do for him?**

Oh I have so many favorite clients! I learn something new from every job. One of my favorite projects - for Linda Denney of The Times-Picayune - was to recreate a 1901 Creole Cook Book for 150th anniversary of the newspaper. I had the marvelous task of redesigning, photographing, art directing, editing and producing The Picayune's Creole Cook Book, which was published in 1987. I worked with a marvelous team, including Linda and Creole Chef Marcelle Bienvenu, who tested all the recipes. The book had been published with changes over the years – we went back to the original copy and placed Marcelle's updates for modern cooks in the sidebar so we wouldn't lose the charm of the original text. We added period photographs, which I found in the newspaper archives and at the New Orleans Museum of Art. I scoured the antique shops for props for the chapter heading photographs. I was assisted by my dear friend and frequent model and muse, Beverly Morris, whose editorial contributions were complimented by her beautiful drawings of Newcomb Pottery, which dated from the early 1900s in New Orleans. I think that the web design that I am doing now is the closest thing to that assignment, as I get to design, art direct and sometimes incorporate my own photography, edit and produce and also use my marketing skills, though I am much better in marketing other people's work or products than I am my own!

# MARY HIGGINS CLARK LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE

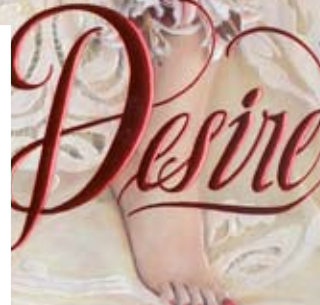
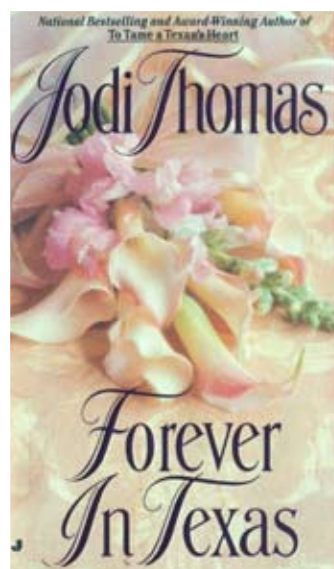
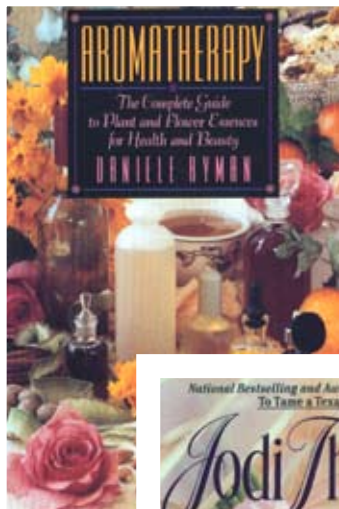
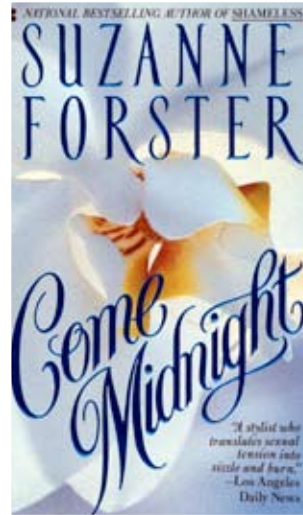
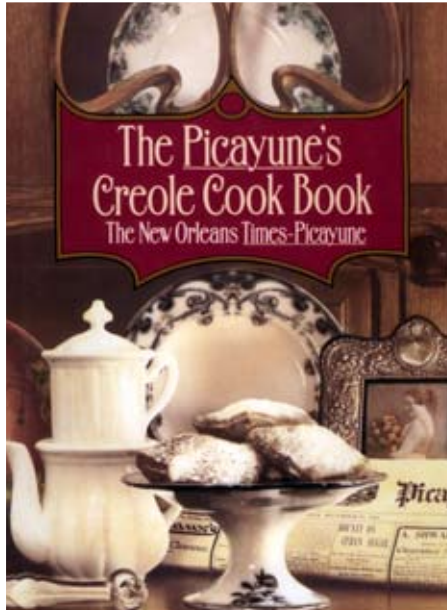
A NOVEL

**It seems as well that you are keen on book covers. What is the philosophy? Why do you do this?**

I have always been a lover of books new and old and have been known to spend hours trolling the bookshops. I most assuredly 'judge a book by its cover' and have purchased many for just that reason. I like photographing book covers as I sometimes have an opportunity to interpret the writer's thoughts in a way that may touch others visually and viscerally. Often the publishers have very specific ideas of what they want - I love finding all the elements and putting them together in a visually pleasing way. The internet has enabled me to work anywhere and find props from all over the world. If you can dream it, you can find it. When I lived in NY, I had the opportunity to work with some incredible editors, stylists and art directors in the book and magazine industry and I loved working with them all. But I also love doing the propping and styling myself. Its so much fun to receive a box of items to shoot and then have the opportunity to pull together the elements - flowers and other props - which will make the subject shine, without eclipsing it. There is always a question of balance.







The Picayune's Creole Cook Book - Random House, AD Robert Aulicino, 1989, NY  
Aromatherapy - Bantam Books, AD James Plumeri, 1992, NY  
Forever in Texas - Berkley, AD Joni Friedman, 1994, Denver  
Lightning, Doubleday, AD Laura Fox, 1992, NY  
Come Midnight - Berkley, Art Director Joni Friedman, 1994, NY  
Desire - Berkley, AD Joni Friedman, 1989, NY - model Trish Webster







**Could you share with us the most unforgettable (stupid or funny) story that has happened during your work?**

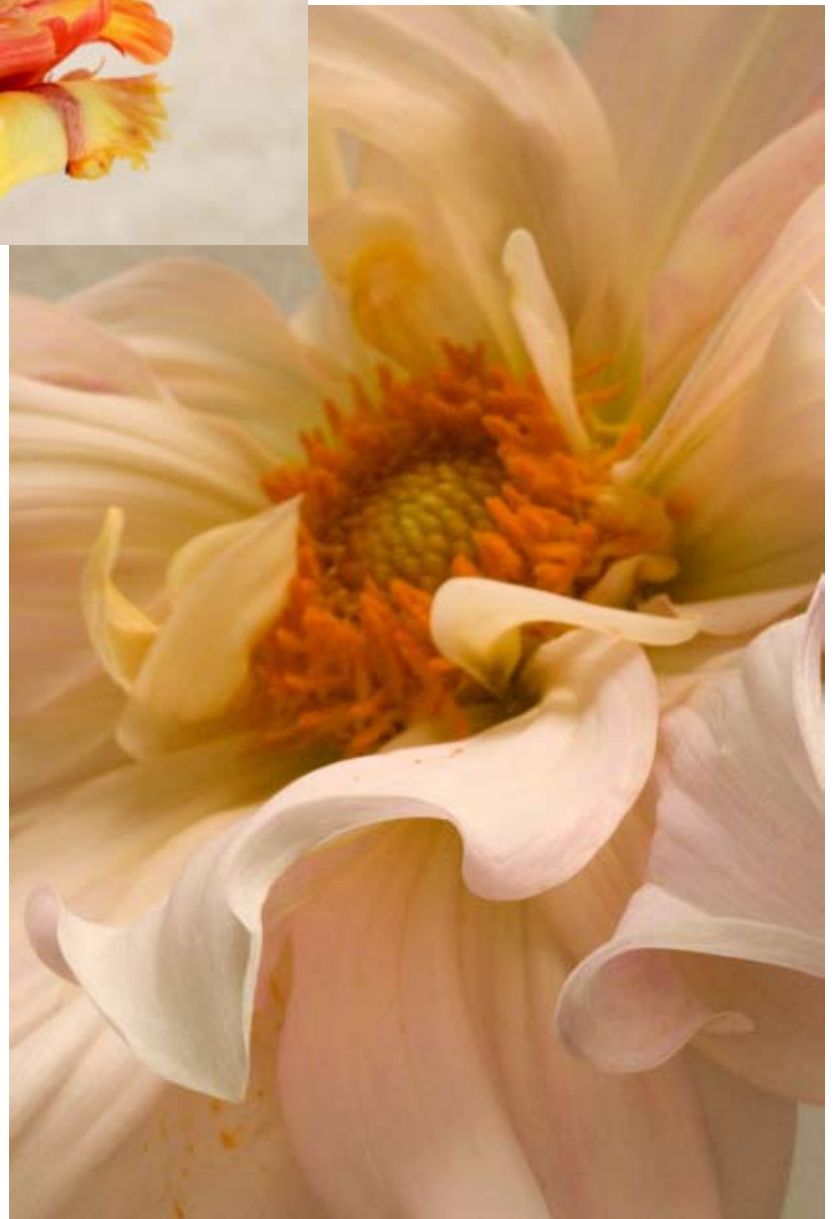
Alas, I'm blank on this one.

**What client would you like to work for? What would you do for him?**

I would love to do an advertising campaign for a perfume, some large prints for a corporate space or hotel, and to photograph on a movie set.

**It seems you are an expert in details. Is the photography an art or just work?**

Photography and design are passions and are my mediums of expression. It is my art. I am so lucky to have found my bliss. I am quite preoccupied with details - whether in my photographs or my design work. I can actually drive myself quite mad sometimes as I am rarely satisfied and usually see something I can do differently. Some say "the devil is in the details," but I think that grace, beauty, eloquence, and perhaps heaven is in the details. I think LeCorbusier said "God is in the details." I think the original expression means that if a detail is missed, it will come back to haunt you. To me, the art is in the details, the composition and, like all things, the balance.



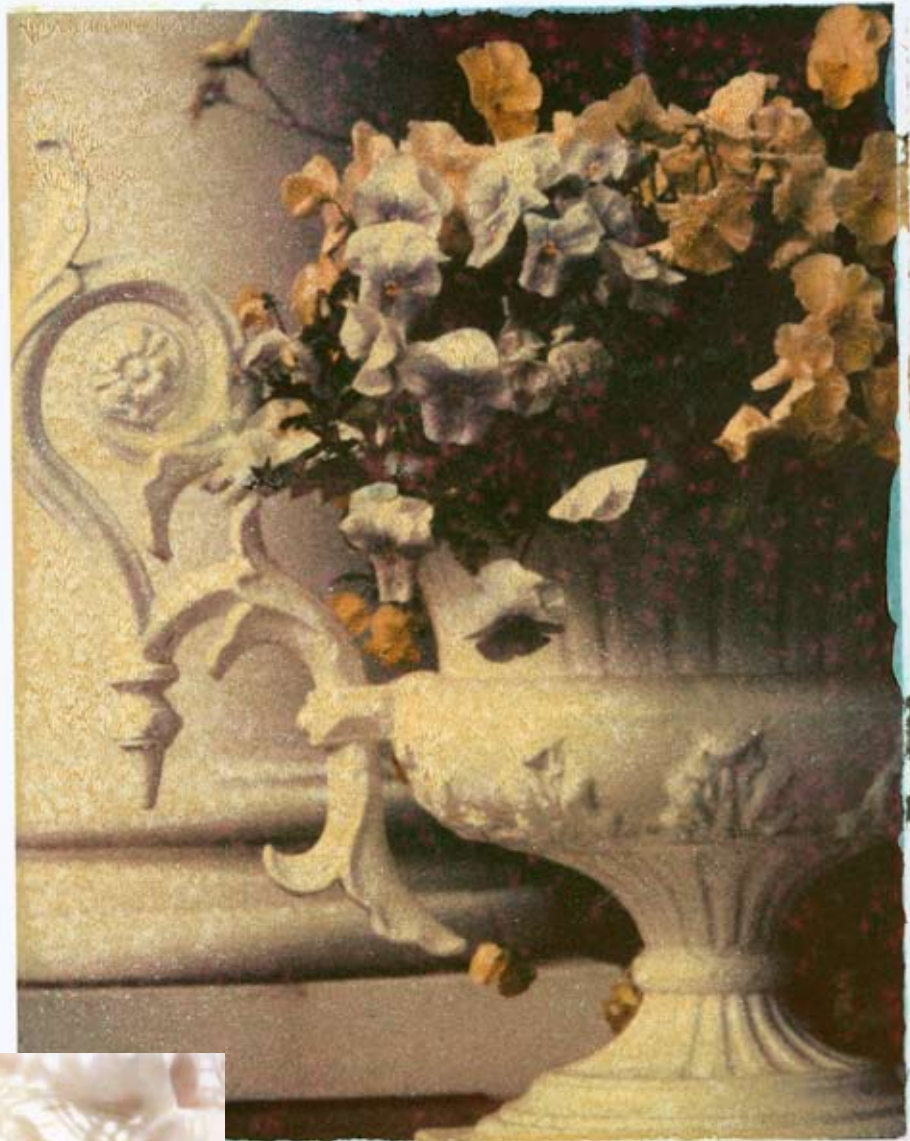


**What is your current project you are working now on?**

I am working on several design projects including logo and web design and some personal photography work, mostly flowers. I have a file cabinet filled with slides of flowers from over the years from A - Z. I have been concentrated on growing and photographing dahlias and orchids. I recently photographed the interior of a new store for a national client and have done some portrait work.

**What is your technical equipment you work with?**

I am currently shooting with a Nikon D80 but plan to get a D300 in the near future unless they come out with a new one before then that I can afford.



Urn, Dixon Gardens, Memphis - Polaroid Transfer.  
Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, 3x3 3/4" and 8x10"

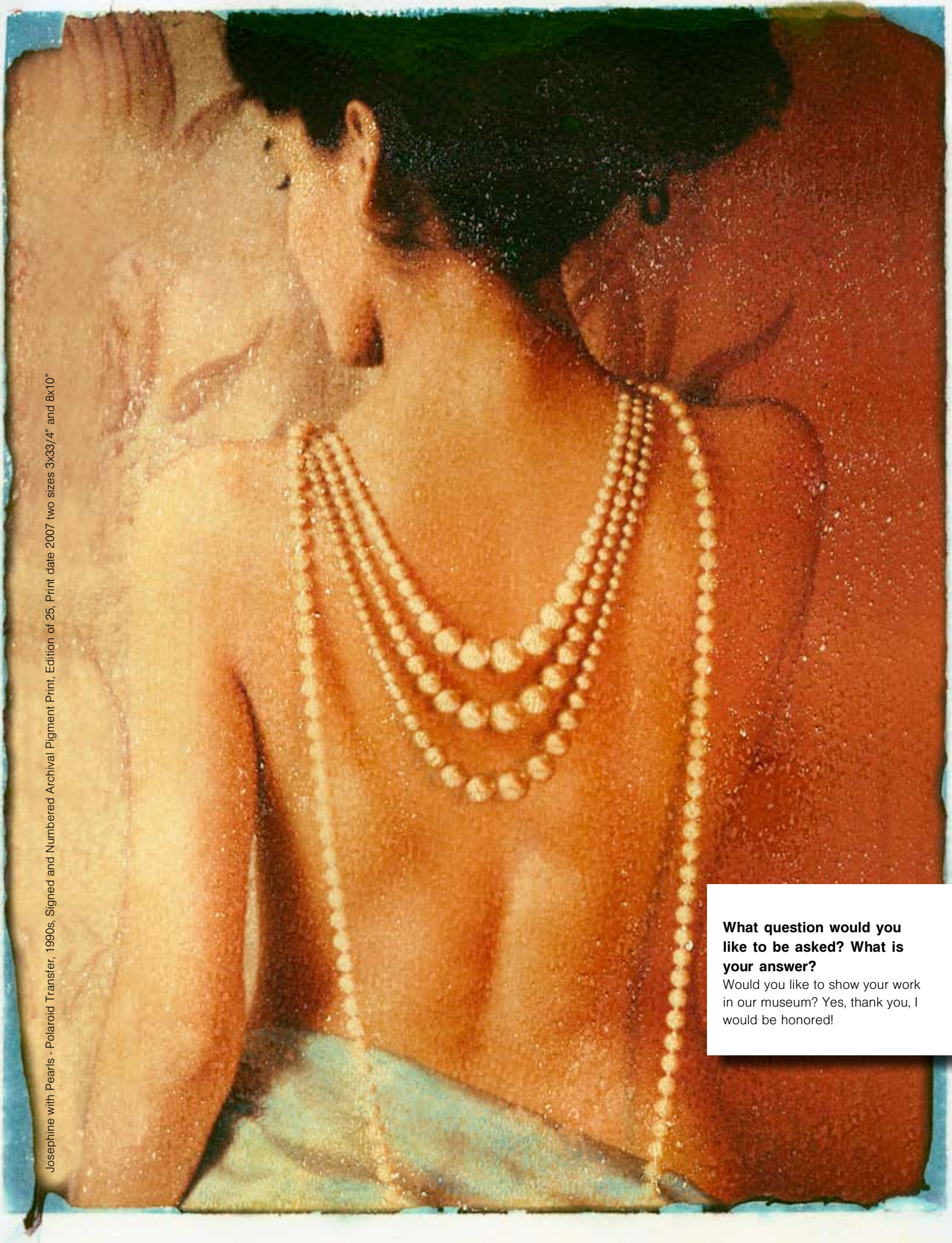
**What kind of techniques you mostly use?**

I've been shooting digital for quite a while now. I love the ink on paper technologies that have developed - the intimacy of small prints and the abstraction and attraction of the large prints. I shoot mainly RAW and work in Photoshop and Fireworks and use RapidWeaver and Sandvox for web design.

Dappled Roses 1 - New York, 1989 - painted photograph  
Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, 16x20

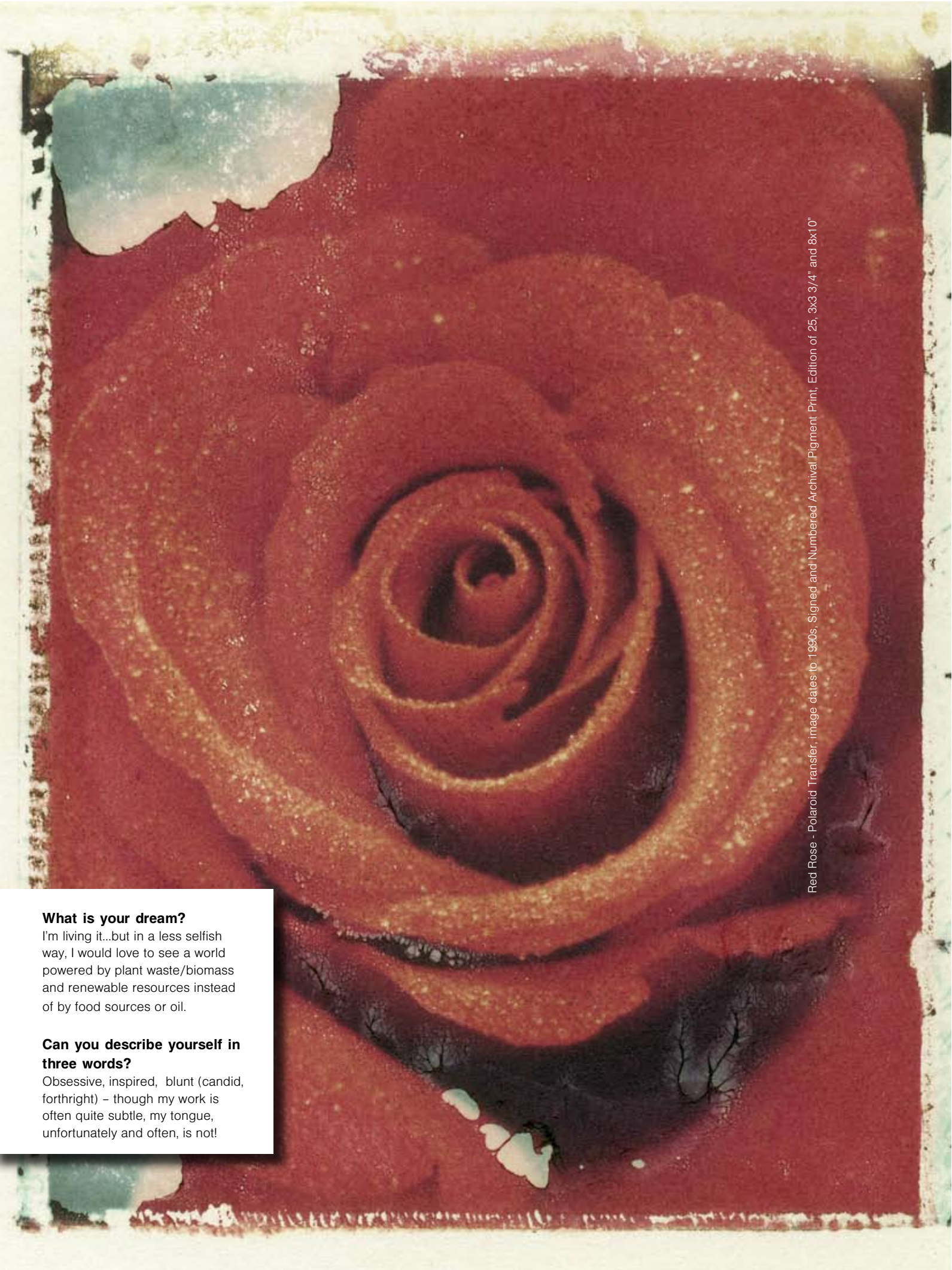


Josephine with Pearls - Polaroid Transfer, 1990s, Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, Print date 2007, two sizes 3x33/4" and 8x10"



**What question would you like to be asked? What is your answer?**  
Would you like to show your work in our museum? Yes, thank you, I would be honored!





Red Rose - Polaroid Transfer, image dates to 1990s, Signed and Numbered Archival Pigment Print, Edition of 25, 3x3 3/4" and 8x10"

**What is your dream?**

I'm living it...but in a less selfish way, I would love to see a world powered by plant waste/biomass and renewable resources instead of by food sources or oil.

**Can you describe yourself in three words?**

Obsessive, inspired, blunt (candid, forthright) - though my work is often quite subtle, my tongue, unfortunately and often, is not!