Mechanisms of controlling colour and aesthetic appearance of the photographic salt print

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**Abstract**

The salt print is an important part of photography, both in its historic value and in the tonal range it can provide. This tonal range is greater than any other photographic printing process available to date attributed to the inherent masking ability of the metallic silver. However the intrinsic production problems have made it a ‘forgotten’ process. There are five key problems. 1. The difficulties in achieving the potential extensive tonal range. 2. The varying colour of the print. 3. Staining that appears in the print, during and after processing. 4. Instability and longevity of the salt print. 5. Contradictory and inaccurate information in material published on the salt print. Although the emphasis of the research is on exploring and controlling the colour and tonal range, the staining problems and stability of the print are also addressed. The materials used for contact negatives today vary in both capture and output, from analogue film processed in the traditional wet darkroom to a variety of transparent film printed from digital files. Inadequate density and tonal range can affect all types of negatives. To provide sufficient exposure time for the salt prints extended tonal range adjustments to the negative were necessary. These long exposures then converted sufficient silver salts to the image making metallic silver, utilising the intrinsic self-masking process. Ultimately this research has uncovered ways to control colour and tonal range and certain aesthetic qualities of the salt print, while simultaneously resolving some of the conflicts in published information. Accurate and consistent methods of processing eliminate staining, providing some stability to the print. The activities and steps carried out to make a salt print are manual; precise duplication is therefore almost unattainable. Nevertheless, although tests on a densitometer may display numeric differences, visual differences are barely noticeable.

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Photographic processing
a photographic style in which photographers attempted to replicate the aesthetic of paintings in their photos; done in an effort to bring photography up to the standard of painting as a high art; it emerged out of the work of Peter Henry Emerson where art came out as a science. Robert Howlett, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the Launching Chains of the Great Eastern, 1857; Albumen print from wet collodion glass plate neg. Controlling the intensity and color of the exposing light is one convenient way to control contrast, and this is discussed more fully in Chapter 7. The chloride content of the "salting" solution also has an effect on contrast. Large increases of contrast are possible only with the use of chromates, and this technique does allow otherwise unprintable negatives to produce good prints. Nevertheless, the judgment of years of experience by many different writers on silver printing is that the best salted paper prints are always made in sunlight with optimum negatives, and without re... Arrowroot prints can be made on almost any sort of paper surface, but a fairly smooth surfaced paper is generally preferred. The salt print was superseded by the albumen print which looked more realistic in regard to overall appearance. By the end of the 19'th century, a resurgence of more art based photography in the Pictorialist movement. Ignacio Gavino Rocha was a Mexican photographer who made incredibly detailed portraits which were reproduced as salted silver prints. We discuss the prints which are of everyday life with their own soft aesthetic. Wilson mentions their rich velvety look and tonal range which has been lost. Luxurious!