

Michael Flomen

Higher Ground

In past, many people who made cameraless photographs made them inside the controlled atmosphere of the darkroom. For the last 20 years, my cameraless pictures have been made directly in the natural landscape, at night.

I consciously choose to work in collaboration with nature. For example, in the “Higher Ground” series, I partner with fireflies that mark the film with their bioluminescent light. I facilitate their direct participation so the bugs become equal actors in making the picture.

Furthermore, central to my process is my preparation for the creative act. My goal is to be receptive, with my senses heightened, so that I can be more attuned to my natural surroundings. My working experience involves listening, meditating, lying under the starry sky, breathing, and letting go of myself to become a part of the landscape. All of this activity manifests visually in the final photograms.

My photograms measure a certain pulse in the natural landscape that is physical and spiritual. Our forefathers and mothers were well aware of our need to protect the land, living creatures and the spirit worlds. Most of us have lost those standards of living because we have lost contact with nature.

We need to be aware that the health of our environment is vital to our survival. Protecting water, air, and other life-sustaining elements is fundamental to our continued existence. I am concerned about the effects of climate change and global warming on the planet. As long as I am making art, beauty and destruction will share the same picture plane.

Bio

Michael Flomen was born in Montreal in 1952. He began taking photographs in the late '60s, and has been showing his work on several continents since 1972. He has been a darkroom printer and collaborator for many artists including for Jacques Henri Lartigue's traveling exhibition in Canada and the United States in the mid '70s. Flomen's first book of “street photographs,” which followed the Cartier-Bresson formalism of photographic picture making, was published in 1980, followed by *Still Life Draped Stone* in 1985. Flomen switched camera formats in the early '90s, photographing snow and producing works under the title *RISING*. For the last fifteen years, this self-taught artist has used cameraless techniques to collaborate with nature. Various forms of water, firefly light, wind, and other natural phenomena are the inspiration for his picture making. Michael Flomen's work is in the collections of George Eastman House, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Musee national des beaux-arts du Quebec, the Norton Museum of Fine Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others.