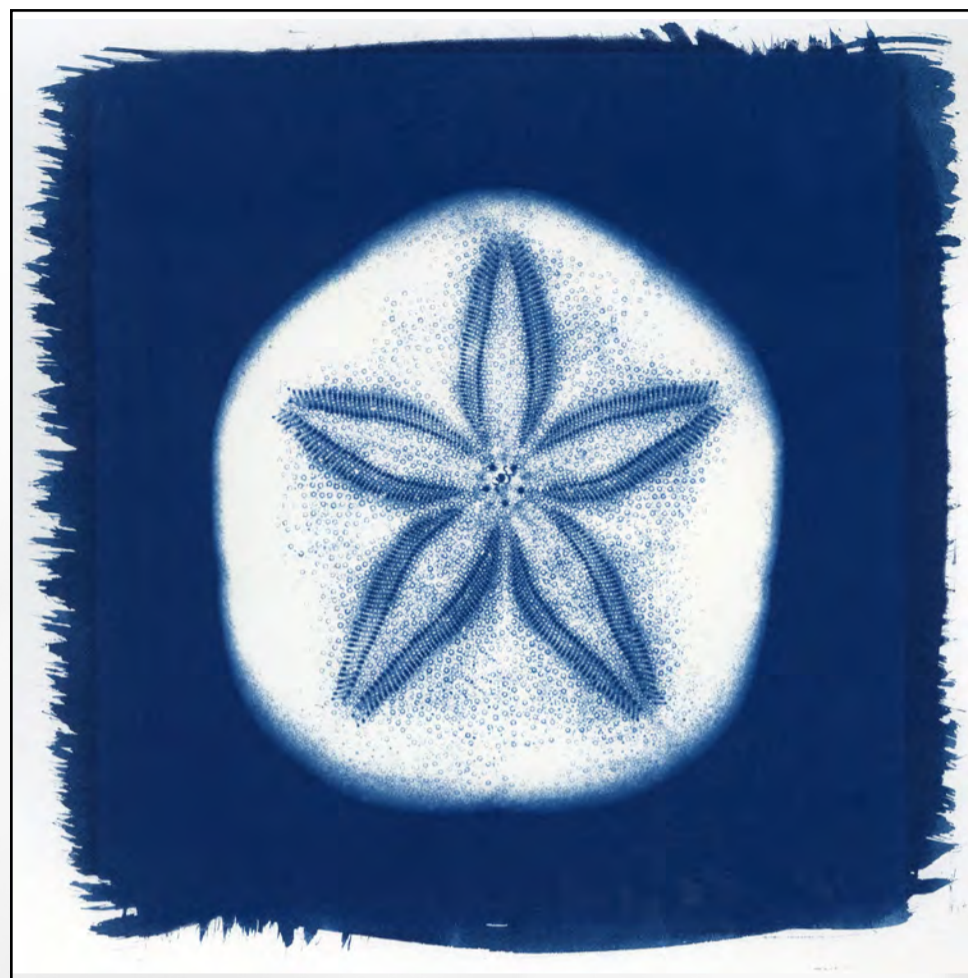
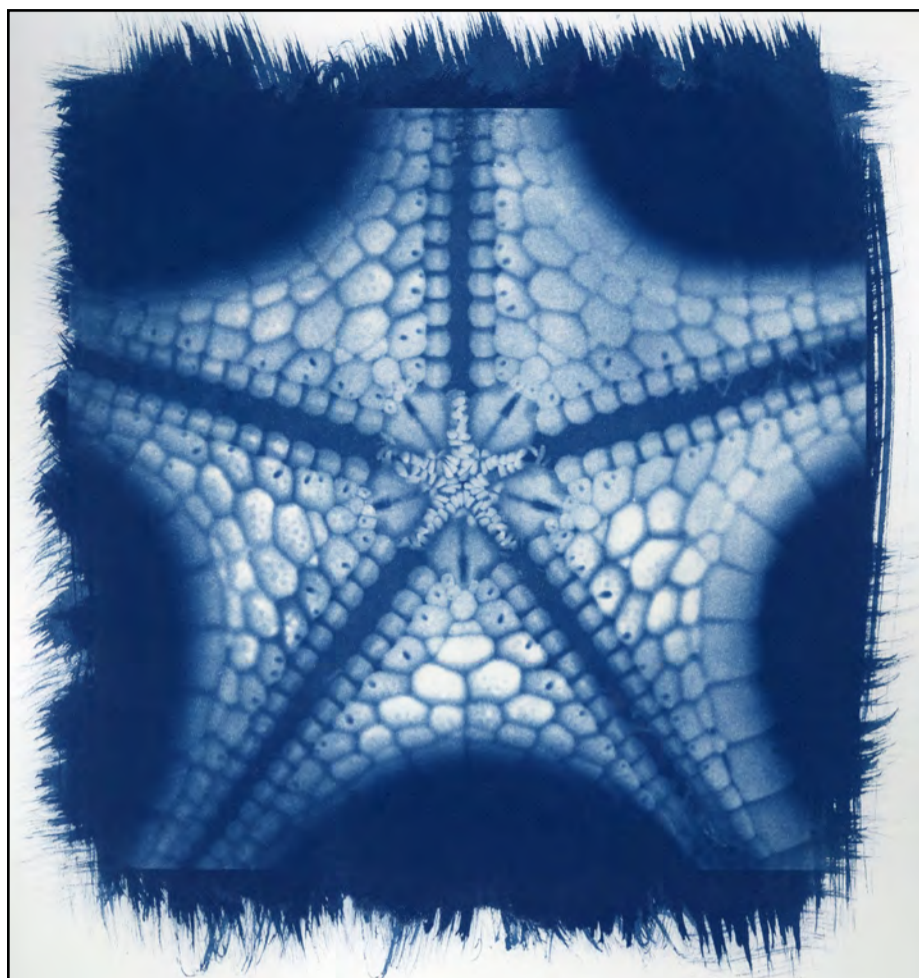


# Cyanotypes Reborn?

**Christine Caldwell**







Christine M. Caldwell was born and raised in St. Louis Missouri. She relocated to California to attend Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Since graduating in 1995 with a BFA in Photography, she has worked continuously as a darkroom technician mastering the intricacies of both Color and B/W darkroom printing. As a successful commercial photographer since 1995, she has combined her photographic talents with her lab expertise to effectively deliver images to a wide range of Publications and Ad Agencies. After a lengthy tenure as lab manager at Translight Photography Center, Christine assumed a position at her alma mater, Art Center College of Design.

Additionally, Christine has a Fine Art endeavor called 'Illuminated Negatives'. She has developed a unique 'spin' on the Photogram process where she creates vibrant and colorful work in the darkroom without the use of camera, film or computer manipulation. Her images have been exhibited at Galleries throughout the United States. Illuminated Negatives has been awarded second place

at the '2010 Juried Show' at Topanga Canyon Gallery and was chosen for the 'Images of the Year 2008' issue by American Photo Magazine. Illuminated Negatives was enthusiastically reviewed by the LA Times in August 2008.

#### ARTIST STATEMENT

My work illuminates the natural world and enables the viewer to become a tourist in a surreal display of natural specimens collected from throughout the Los Angeles area. By affording the viewer an opportunity to experience a symbiotic connection to nature's smaller creations, I am hoping a greater appreciation for their intricate beauty is attained. My lifelong passion for photography and nature, as well as my darkroom expertise, have merged together to create this body of work called Illuminated Negatives which are created without the use of film, camera, or computer. Original Illuminated Negatives are collections of limited edition color photograms consisting of leaves, flowers and insects. The resulting large scale





prints created by my photogram process allows the viewer to experience heretofore unseen hidden wonders of the specimens. Color photograms are unique 'X-ray type' and shadow-like photographs created in the darkroom by placing objects between light-sensitive color paper and a light source [color enlarger]. Most commonly seen photograms are Black & White and are limited to the size of the specimen. With the use of a dichroic enlarger and color photographic paper, I dramatically alter the size and color of the specimen. My original photograms generate limited editions because once the objects are removed or start to deteriorate, that particular arrangement is gone.

Q. Tell us how you got started in photography.

A. I was fortunate to go to a High School that still taught Art to its students and which also had its own darkroom. My teacher, Mr. Grimm, exposed us to a wide variety of art mediums. When he began teaching us photography I was immediately smitten.

Q. What type of commercial work have you done?

A. Like many commercial photographers, I was hired to shoot a wide variety of people, places and things. Personally, I specialized in Youth Lifestyles, Extreme Sports, Health/Fitness and Architecture. My work has been used for clothing & product catalogs, advertising, editorial (mostly music & health/fitness magazines) and newspapers.

Q. How did you grow your Commercial Photography business?

A. I researched, identified and mailed hand-made promos to a select list of Magazines and Ad Agencies for whom I felt my work was a good fit. I created a webpage with a portfolio of my work so those I had contacted could view my work instantly. I teamed up with a Photo Rep who introduced my work to a variety of outlets. I also advertised in The Workbook. Additionally, I followed up on leads from my network of friends and colleagues.





Q. Greatest hurdles you faced in Photography?

A. One hurdle was finding the time and financial resources to continually market myself. It can be a conundrum; "I need work in order to pay for marketing materials, but I need to market in order to find work." The second and most significant hurdle was the appearance and ultimate domination of digital. From having to educate myself about this new emerging technology to finding the funds for new equipment, software and hardware this was, and is, an extremely difficult hurdle.

Q. How did you overcome them?

A. To educate myself I read everything I could find from technical manuals to books. I also took classes when I could find the time and I spoke with my colleagues to learn from their experiences. To shoot; I begged and borrowed wherever I could and purchased used equipment almost exclusively. Given the rapid pace of change in digital, finding excellent used equipment proved to be a very effective strategy.

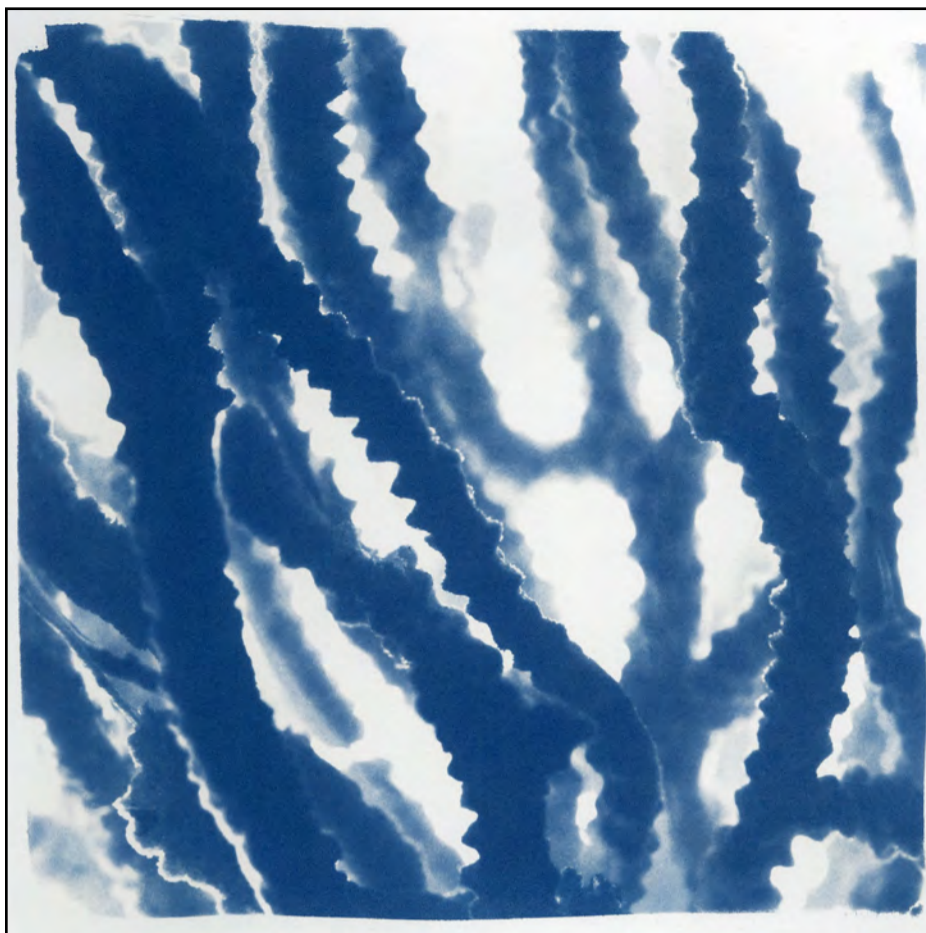
Q. What are you doing now to sustain your success and grow your business?

A. My focus over the past five years has been in Fine Art Photography where I have been enjoying increasing levels of success. I developed a branding approach primarily using my new website which is used to inform my patrons of my new pieces and to advertise to those who lack familiarity with my work. I also have created marketing materials that also generate revenue which are currently in place in a number of gift shops. Additionally, I continue to leverage my existing business relationships while also attending openings, symposiums, art shows and conventions to continually grow my business contacts.

Q. How important is networking?

A. Networking is essential on many levels. It allows me to feel closely connected to my industry while also providing me an avenue to learn about my business through the open exchange of ideas with my network of colleagues. It also is a sort of mutual support network in a way, as we all seem to serve as





a combination of motivator and therapist for each other since we have so many shared experiences. And through effective networking one can make contacts that can positively impact ones business. For example, my licensing business in Canada came about from someone I met and befriended at an Art Fair in San Diego.

Q. How are you positioning yourself as a leader in this field of photography?

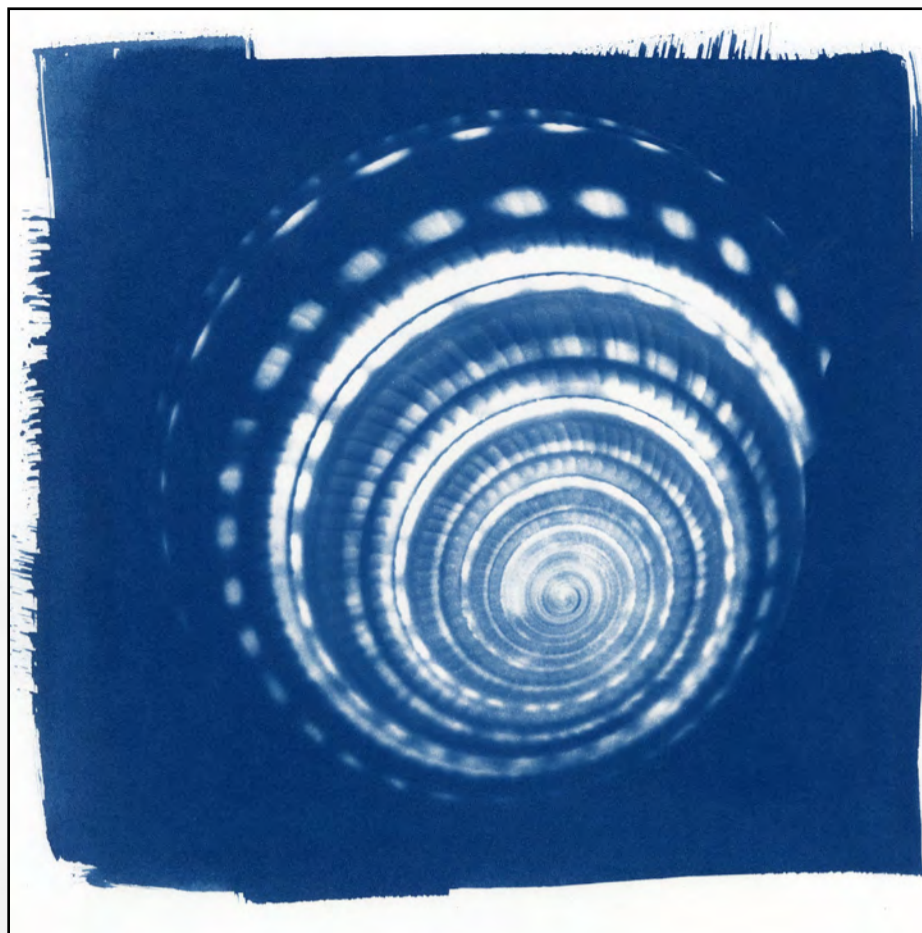
A. I aspire to create work that fulfills my creative desires while at the same time sustaining me financially. I have decided to price my work at various levels in order to appeal to the widest possible demographic which should bring increasing notoriety to me and my work.

Q. Where there people that didn't believe in your vision?

A. The Fine Art world is a very subjective place to put it mildly. There have been art directors, curators and judges who have attempted to discourage me from continuing along the path I have chosen.

Q. How did you deal with it?

A. It was, and remains, difficult to deal with;



no Artist likes rejection of their work since for us the 'Work is Us'. I just keep telling myself that Fine Art is very subjective and just because certain people are not receptive, it does not mean others will feel the same. So the lesson for all is to believe in yourself and do not let the opinions of others negatively impact your vision.

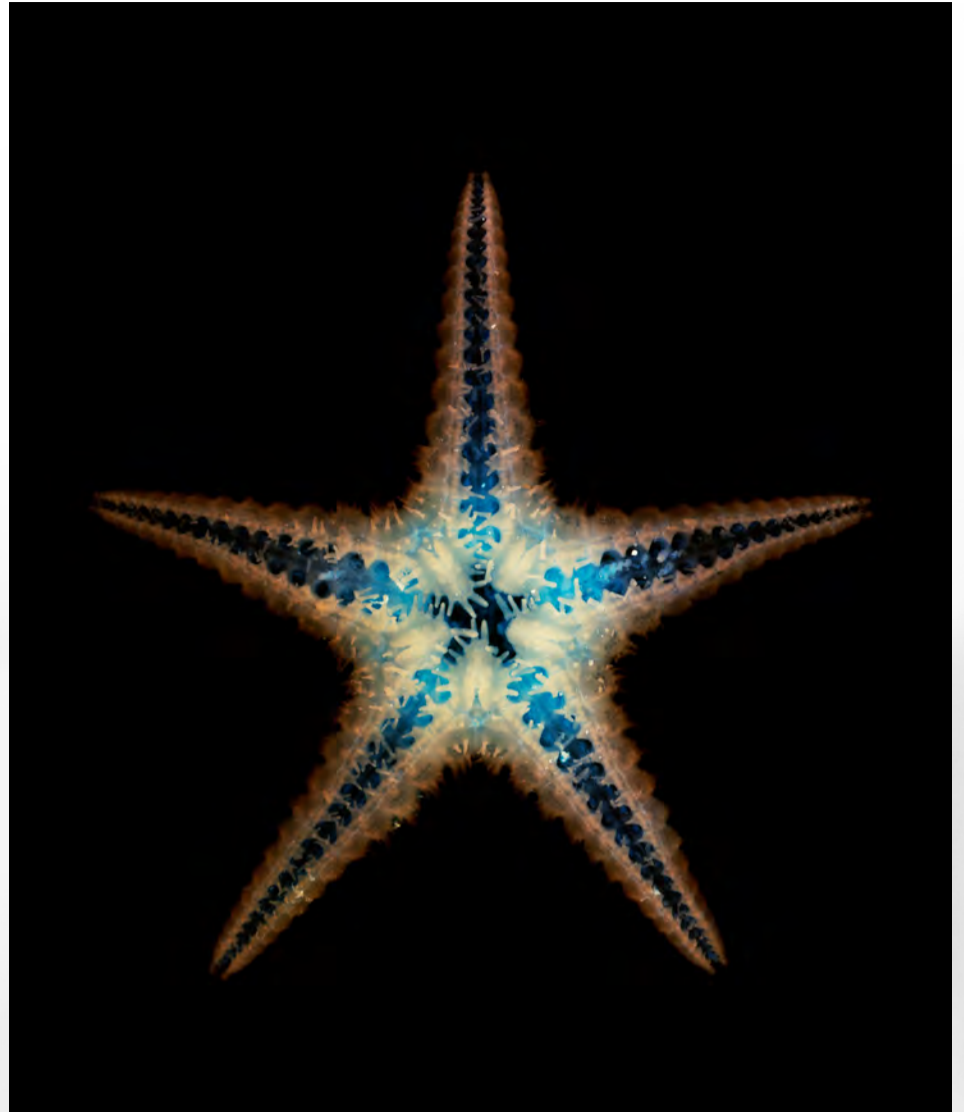
Q. Do you have mentors?

A. I have a select few. Some I have known and worked with for years and a couple I have only known a short time. They are brilliantly creative and knowledgeable people who openly share everything they know.

Q. How important are they to you?

A. They are incredibly important people in my creative life. They challenge me and push me to explore areas that are beyond my comfort level. The Gallery Director at The G2 Gallery has become my most important mentor over the past few years. She is always prodding me to expand and do more....to not become complacent when I have some success. They are all supportive and at the same time wonderfully challenging. I would not have achieved what I have without their involvement.





Q. What are the top 5 things that you attribute to your success?

- A. 1. Being a creative person who is not afraid to push themselves into new areas and to be exposed to new ideas.  
 2. Having been exposed to Art at a young age thereby kindling my interest.  
 3. Living in Southern California with its diverse culture, geography, ideas and a populace full of creative individuals.  
 4. My being able to attend Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.  
 5. Having a supportive group of family, friends and colleagues who are with me no matter what.

Q. Where did you find good people to work with you and for you?

A. I dip into the pool of people I have met during my assisting days as well as using referrals from trusted colleagues.

Q. What do you recommend to someone getting started in the photography business?

A. Do NOT skimp on the business classes. If you are going to make any kind of living

via your Art always keep in mind there is a business aspect. It is not just about creativity and talent. And focus on finding and developing your own vision, something that sets you apart from the others in your field.

Q. What is something you wish someone told you earlier about the photography business?

A. That you should develop a 'thick skin' as early as possible, because there will be criticism no matter how talented one is.

Q. What is your opinion on equipment and all the new digital cameras coming out these days?

A. The technological capabilities and advancements of these devices is incredible. However, I am amazed at how quickly digital cameras become obsolete. The funds needed to stay up-to-date dwarf what was required in the past.

Q. What do you do to keep yourself inspired?

A. My inspiration comes from so many places: books, exhibitions, films, travel, and mini adventures all over Southern California



and the US. By not physically or mentally becoming stagnant I find that my creativity never wanes.

Q. Who do you look up to?

A. My Boyfriend because he is taller than me. In all seriousness, there are many artists that I truly admire such as; Andy Goldsworthy, Anna Atkins, Adam Fuss, John Cyr, Ansel Adams, Stu Levy and Clyde Butcher.

Q. How important is having goals to you?

A. Very Important, it helps me keep focused on what I am trying to accomplish. Without specific goals it is very easy to become distracted and ultimately wasteful with your time and efforts.

Q. What equipment do you use?

A. For my photograms I use a Kreonite RA Print Processor, Durst CLS 501 Enlarger, Fuji RA paper, MAC computer, Photoshop and an Epson 9800 Printer. For my Cyanotypes, which are always created from my photograms, I use Photographers' Formulary chemicals and Arista OHP transparency film.

Q. Tell us about your process.

A. This is how I create my Photograms and ultimately my Cyanotypes.

First, I collect specimens from nature, stores, local aquariums and personal donations. The specimens can be leaves, flowers, insects or oceanic specimens as long as they are semi-translucent. I create limited edition prints using a color enlarger and RA paper. These 'original prints' are drum scanned and a digital file is created. Using Photoshop, this file then undergoes dust removal, resizing, and slight color adjustments needed for inkjet printing.

To create my Cyanotypes I start with the cleaned digital file that was generated from the color photogram. From this file I print out a digital negative onto OHP Transparency film. Concurrently, I mix the sensitized chemicals, coat the watercolor paper and let it dry. This prepared paper is then contact printed and exposed to UV light until an image begins to appear on the paper. In the final step, the print is washed in water to oxidize the iron salts and draw out the cyanotype's brilliant blue color.





Q. What camera do you have just for fun or everyday photos?

A. My HTC EVO 4G Android phone & a Canon Powershot A95.

Q. What is your opinion on video capabilities on DSLRs

A. I am amazed at the technology squeezed into these new DSLR's. I have so far not had a chance to use the ones with video.

Q. Do you feel the industry is moving to all motion?

A. Given the capabilities of these new DSLR's I can certainly see it going in that direction especially in certain fields like photojournalism.

Q. Where do you feel the industry will be in the next 5 years?

A. In all honesty, who knows? What I can say is that 5 years from now it will be different, but still full of creative types trying to express their vision through the new technologies of the day while still incorporating and paying

homage to the technology and vision of those who have gone before.

Q. Anything else you want to add??

A. Hold true to your ideas and your passion. Things may not work out, but that is not an indictment of you or your work. Find a way to continue pursuing your vision alongside a way to pay your bills.

Q. Knowing what you know now about the business, what advice would you give for someone learning photography?

A. Learn all you can about the Art and the Business.

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You can see more of Christine's Art at:  
<http://www.illuminatednegatives.com>