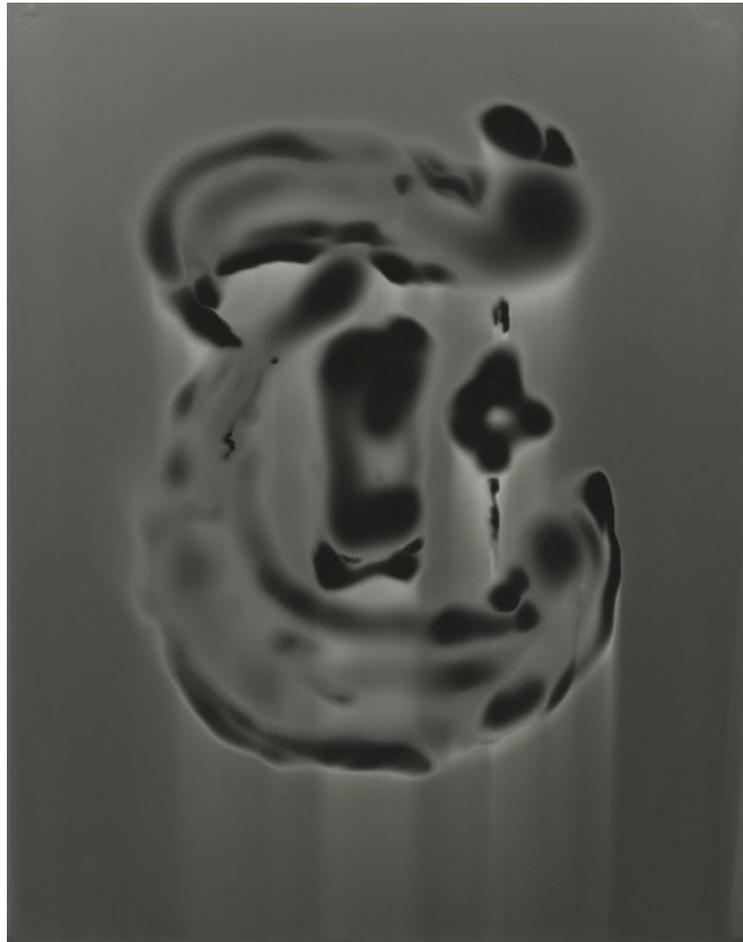


Original Model T's – Alison Rossiter

By Naomi Fry

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<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/08/original-model-ts-alison-rossiter/#more-172535>



No. 3 in a series of commissioned works

It may sound counterintuitive, but the photographer Alison Rossiter rarely uses a camera in her work. Instead, she both begins and ends her photographic process in the darkroom, where she experiments with the interaction between direct light sources and silver gelatin paper. Often from expired stock, the

paper, once developed, reveals the marks of the physical damage and atmospheric changes that have affected it over the years. The resulting work is a strangely gorgeous, softened take on the more brawny bravado of mid-20th-century abstraction.

According to Rossiter, who has darkrooms in New York and New Jersey, “no other process provides the same possibility of chance,” and her reworking of the T logo, shown in the collection of images above, is a case in point. Drawing freehand in the darkroom, using a penlight on Ilford paper that she found discarded at a New Jersey community college, Rossiter had to work quickly, since there’s a window of only about 15 minutes before the paper ceases to react strongly to light. After she re-exposed the sheet to white light and immersed it in developer (which dripped down the paper’s length before the image was set in a stop bath and fixer), a texture of blacks and grays emerged in strokes, smudges and washes, depending on where and for how long the light happened to hit the photograph’s surface.

Rossiter’s willingness to give up a considerable level of control is a far cry from what many of us associate with contemporary photography, especially in the arena of the digital, where sharpness, efficiency and practicality often rule the day. This is, naturally, something the artist is aware of: “Digital photography is an amazing technical advancement, and it counts especially in a field like photojournalism,” she said. “But for me, it’s a personal imperative to know more about the history, materials and processes of my medium.” As with other photographers who have explored the realm beyond the camera, like Wolfgang Tillmans or Walead Beshty, Rossiter is interested in setting obstacles in the way of her own intentions, and seeing what beauty might emerge not in spite of but rather because of them.