

Mark Osterman “CONFIDENCE”



February 6 – March 13 2004

New York - The Howard Greenberg Gallery presents an exhibition of images by Mark Osterman. Drawing on twenty years experience in a traveling medicine show, Osterman created a series of ambrotypes that celebrate his stage performances as whimsical records on glass. The public is invited to a reception for the artist at the gallery on Thursday, February 5, from 6 to 8 pm.

Ghost-like figures step out from the edges of darkness as a personal memory, witnessed from the performer's point of view. The images in this body of work relate to a 1920-style medicine show Osterman created and performed for twenty years in Eastern Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. As the fast-talking pitchman, "Dr. Bumstead," he sang and played the banjo, caught bullets with his teeth and sold snake oil from a folding stage he built onto the back of a 1919 Model T Ford.

Osterman has used the process of ambrotypy to create these magical images not because of any historical thread, but for its ethereal presence. Invented in the 1850s, each plate is hand-coated

with liquid collodion and made in the camera without a negative. Unlike a paper photograph, each glass plate is a singular measure of time, an edition of one, unique.

Unlike historical examples, these plates present the feeling of space as a direct result of Osterman's obsession with the study of natural lighting in his 19th century-style skylight studio, while at the same time expressing a new voice for the medium. Their sense of presence is palpable and make the images more about painting than photography.

Osterman and his wife, France Scully Osterman, are respected historians and considered modern masters of wet-plate collodion photography. The recent artistic revival of the process is a direct result of their imagery, workshops and extensive writings on the subject. The couple published twenty-four issues of *The Collodion Journal*, a quarterly devoted to the history, technology and new aesthetics of the wet-plate process.

Mark Osterman currently serves as Photographic Process Historian for the Advanced Residency Program for Photograph Conservation at George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, NY. His work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions and is represented in public and private collections.

For further information, or to request visuals for press,

please contact Margit Erb at 212 334 0010,

margit@howardgreenberg.com.

Starting February, the exhibition can be viewed at www.howardgreenberg.com