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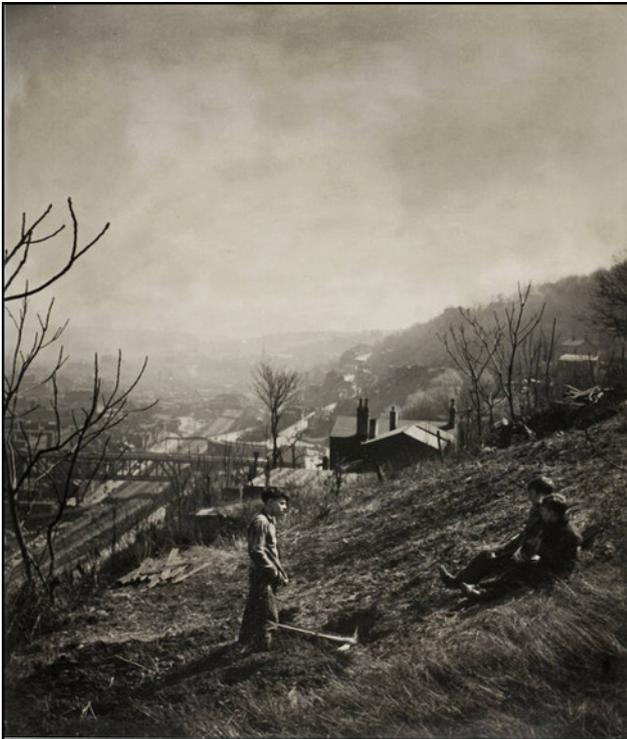
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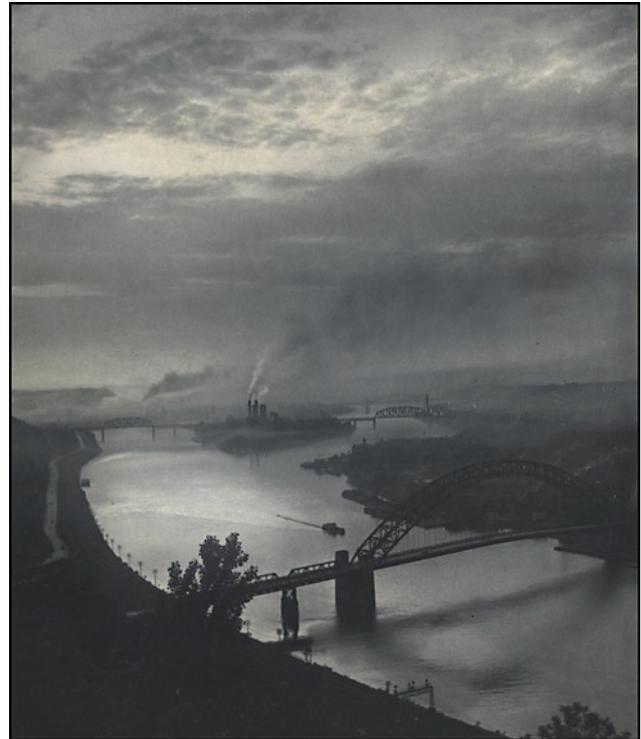
Mediobrome : new experiments

During this quite unusual year, when people were more concerned about confinement, teleworking, and social distancing than about meetings, I continued my research, trying to penetrate the secrets of Leonard Misonne's technique: the Mediobrome. While I'm not hoping to reverse engineer his technique in detail, I would at least like to develop a procedure that comes as close as possible to it.

During my research on the internet, a name caught my attention: O.E. Romig. Orlando E. Romig (1898-1964) was an American pictorialist photographer living in Pittsburgh, contemporary of Leonard Misonne, who developed his own version of the Mediobrome. He described his method in a book: "The Mediobrome Process: Any Pictorialist Can Use It" (1954). His work is in several museum collections, including the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh and the Brooklyn Museum in New York. He was a member of the photographic section of the Pittsburgh Academy of Arts and Sciences. Romig is considered part of the Golden Age of Pittsburgh photography.



Orlando E. Romig - Untitled (Pittsburgh hillside), c. 1950s
collection Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh



Orlando E. Romig - Out of the Mist, 1945

His book is unfortunately almost impossible to find these days. All I could find on the internet about his "formula" is this mention:

"The whole print is covered with a dope of equal parts mastic varnish and linseed oil thinned with an equal amount of turpentine, to which pigment has been added. The pigment should match the color of the print. [The dope] is wiped off locally with a clean cloth or a tuft of cotton to give various effects."

Enough for me to start experimenting...



Orlando E. Romig – Steel city canyon, 1940s

So I decided to use this description as a guide.

Preparing the "mastic varnish" from dammar resin and turpentine:

- crush 200gr of dammar resin
- enclose it in a not too tight fabric, such as cheese-cloth, tied to prevent the resin from escaping.
- Hang this bag in 500ml of turpentine, like a tea bag
- Let the whole thing infuse for a week, then remove the bag.

Preparation of the dope:

1 part mastic varnish + 1 part linseed oil + 1 part turpentine with pigment added.

The linseed oil and turpentine were bought at an ordinary DIY shop

Application :

On the entire surface of the print with cotton wool.

Local correction: breadcrumbs, cotton swabs, swabs soaked in rubbing alcohol.

As the layer dries slowly, over several days, corrections can be made over time.

Benefits of this method: The pigments can easily be dosed to obtain the desired tone, and the overall effect is less "rough" than with the use of oil paint on paper rubbed with linseed oil. Below are some tests on old Kentmere paper. These first tests encourage me to continue. They get nearer to Misonne's prints "look", I think – for the clouds below and the two cows for example. I can find incompletely dissolved pigment particles, as in the original mediobrome that I once showed. This could therefore be an interesting lead, having a link with the painting that Misonne also practiced.





Hubert Desgain – March 2021
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