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Simon Harsent

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Issue #5

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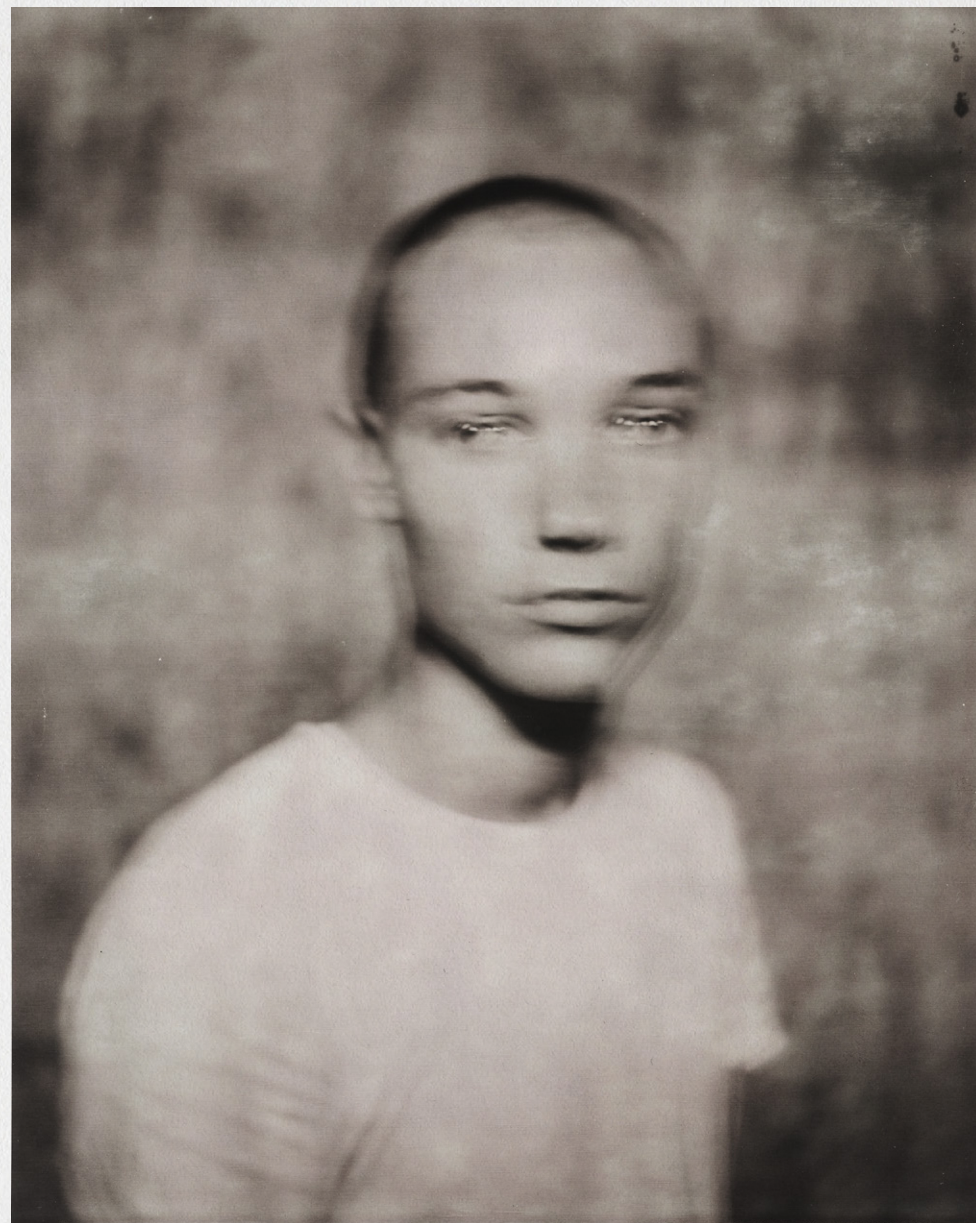
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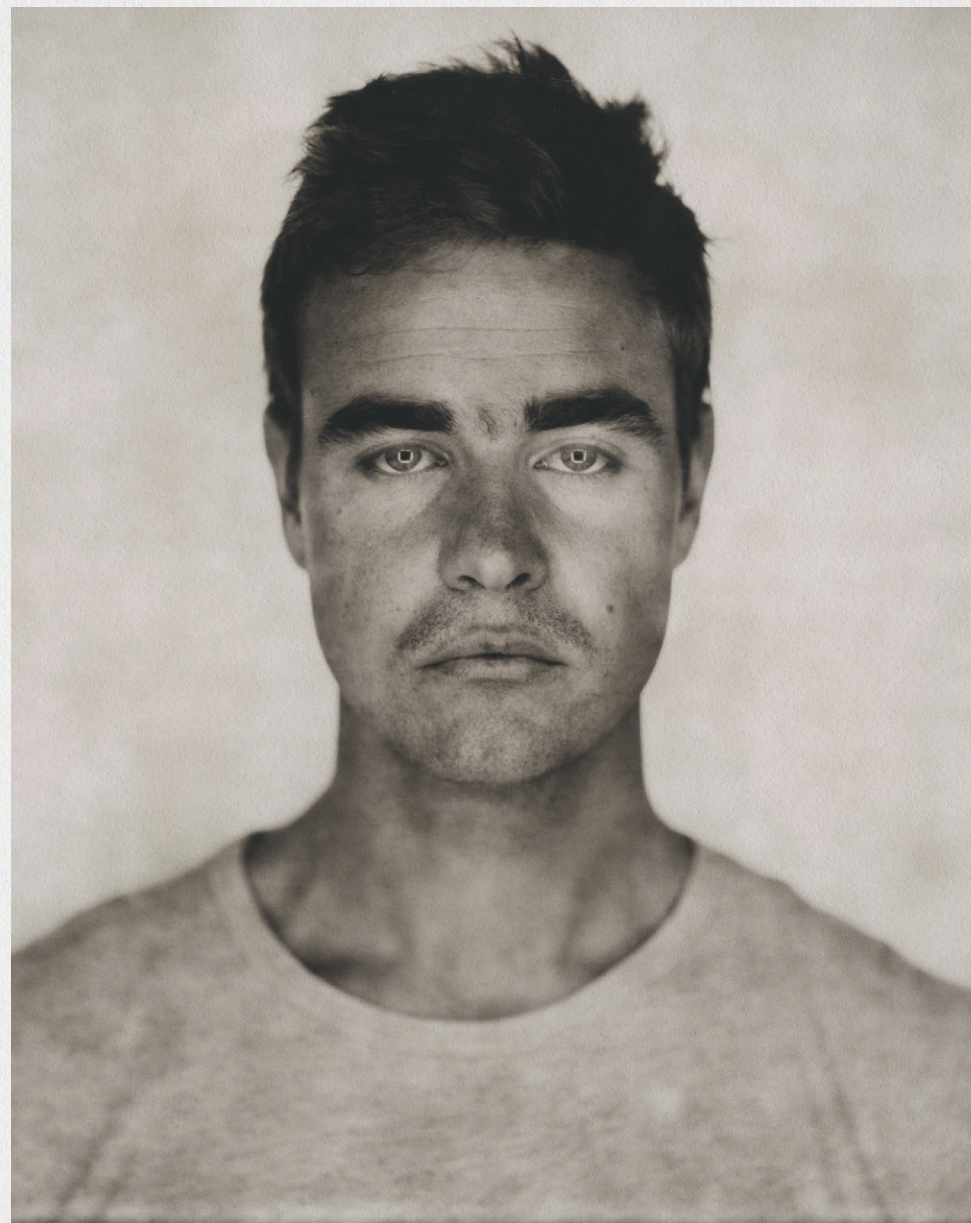
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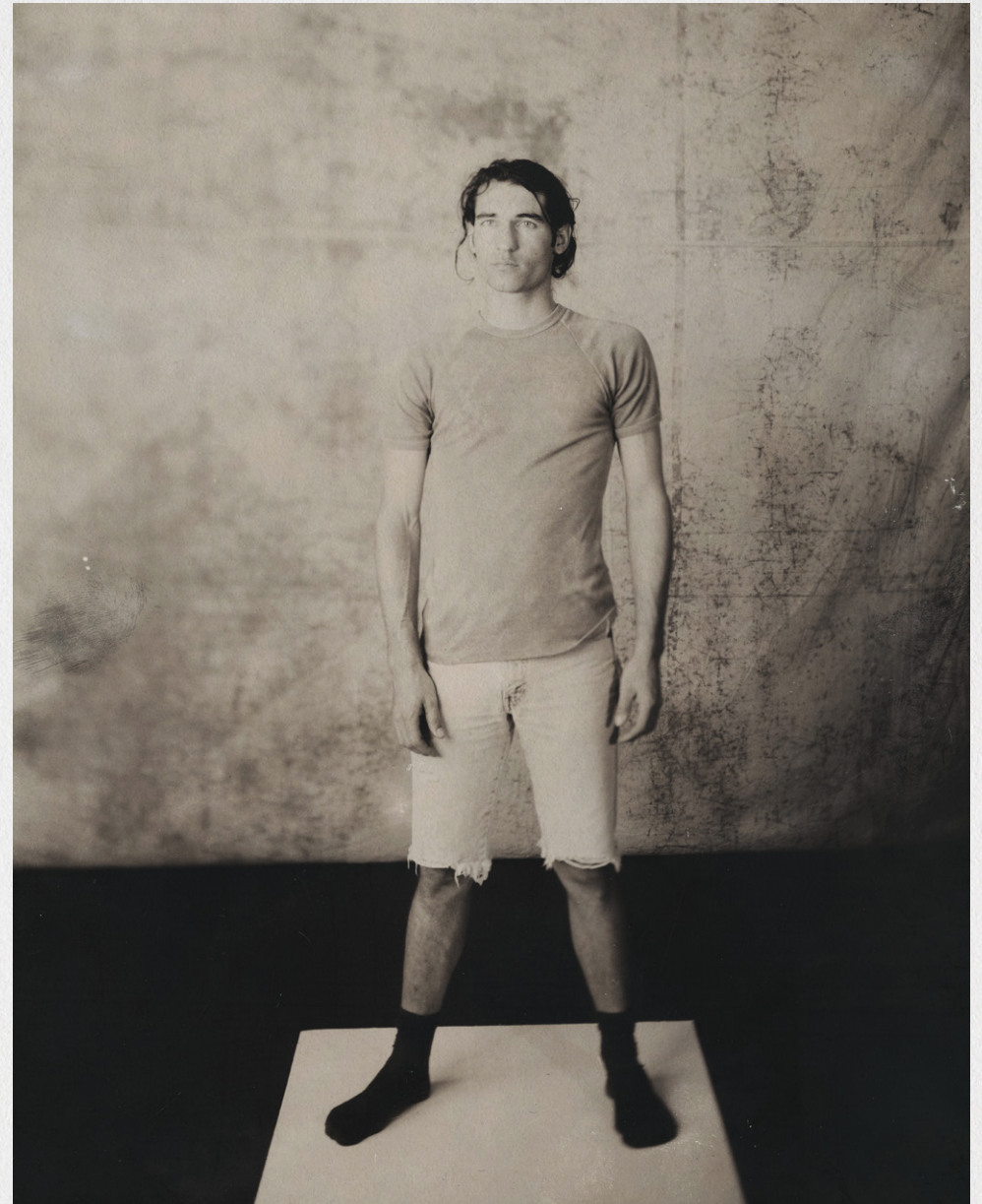
Discontinued Polaroids

Issue #5

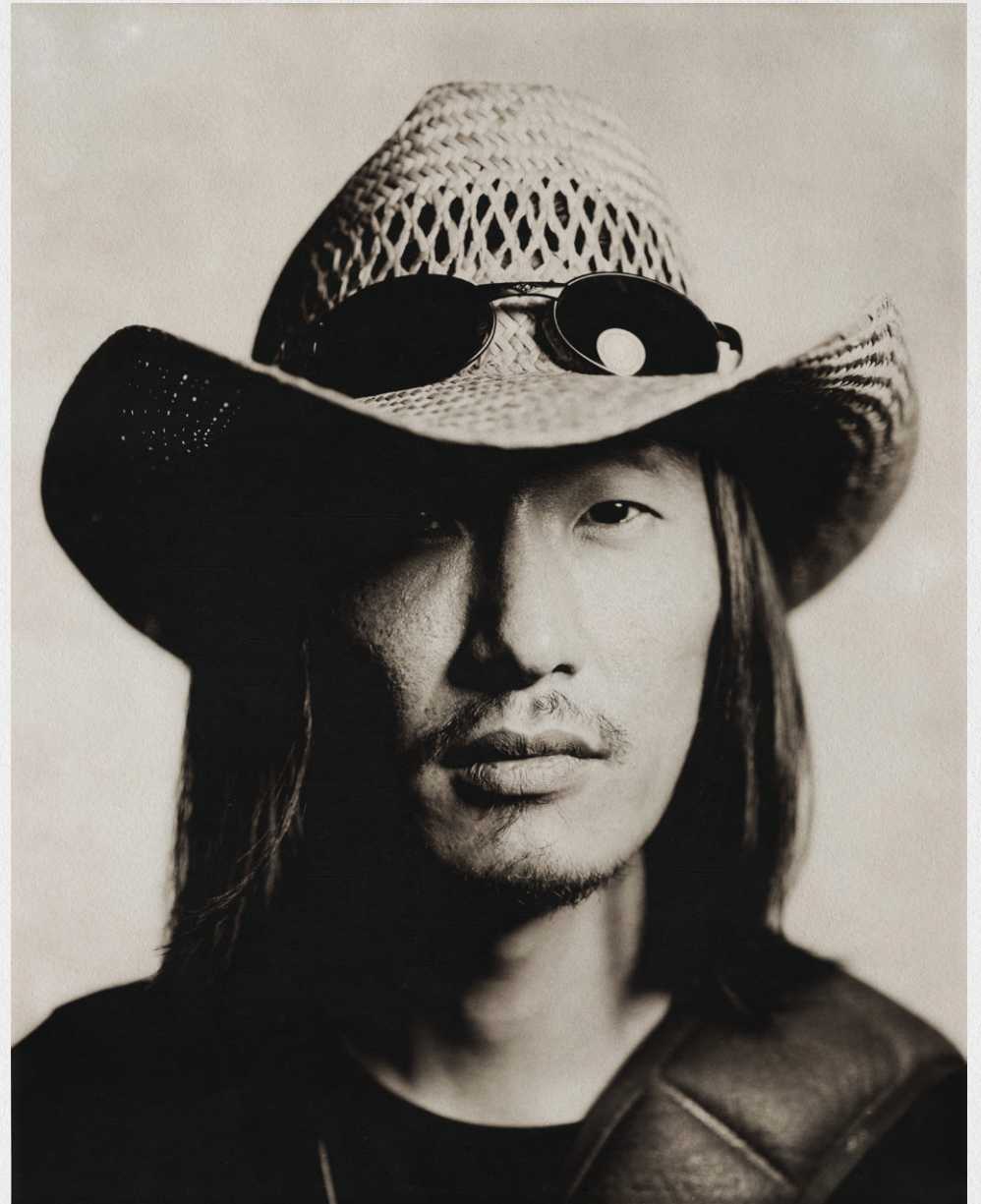














by Simon Harsent —
Discontinued Polaroids

Polaroid 809 and Polaroid 804 – instant film, 8x10. 809 was colour, 804 black and white. To shoot it you put the negative half in a Polaroid film holder, exposing it as you would a normal large format film, then slid the positive receiving sheet into the holder. (This was a time of clunkier processes and more strenuous application -the earlier type of holder served as both film holder and loading tray for the designated processor). The positive side held the developing chemicals in pods, just like smaller format Polaroid. When you ran it through the Polaroid 8x10 processor, it broke the pod and spread the chemicals, just like when you pull a sheet of Polaroid out of a 4x5 holder.

The Images in BLAST #5 were created using a mix of Polaroid 809 and Polaroid 804. The process was discovered by experimentation with Polaroid 8x10 film. It soon became a favourite technique for many photographers, most notably the legendary fashion photographer Paolo Roversi. Images were shot on colour negatives 809, and then processed using black-and-white positive development pods 804. Combining the two types of Polaroid produced a wonderful, sepia tone, one you can see across the prints I've collected here.

In 2007 Polaroid announced they would be discontinuing most of their instant film production. Photographers panicked and quickly bought up the remaining supplies. A year later it was almost impossible to get your hands on.

The images in BLAST #5 were taken between 1993 and 2002, when I was using large format cameras almost exclusively for both personal and commercial work.

When working with the different Polaroid types, I would always use a continuous light source, often just a single 2k Fresnel Tungsten light. Sometimes, I'd use it directly through scrims, cutters, and gobos; other times, I'd bounce the light off a large calico sheet. Due to the type of light I chose and the use of the large format camera, my exposure times varied wildly, anywhere from half a second to ten. This longer exposure meant the subject being photographed must remain as still as possible while taking the picture.

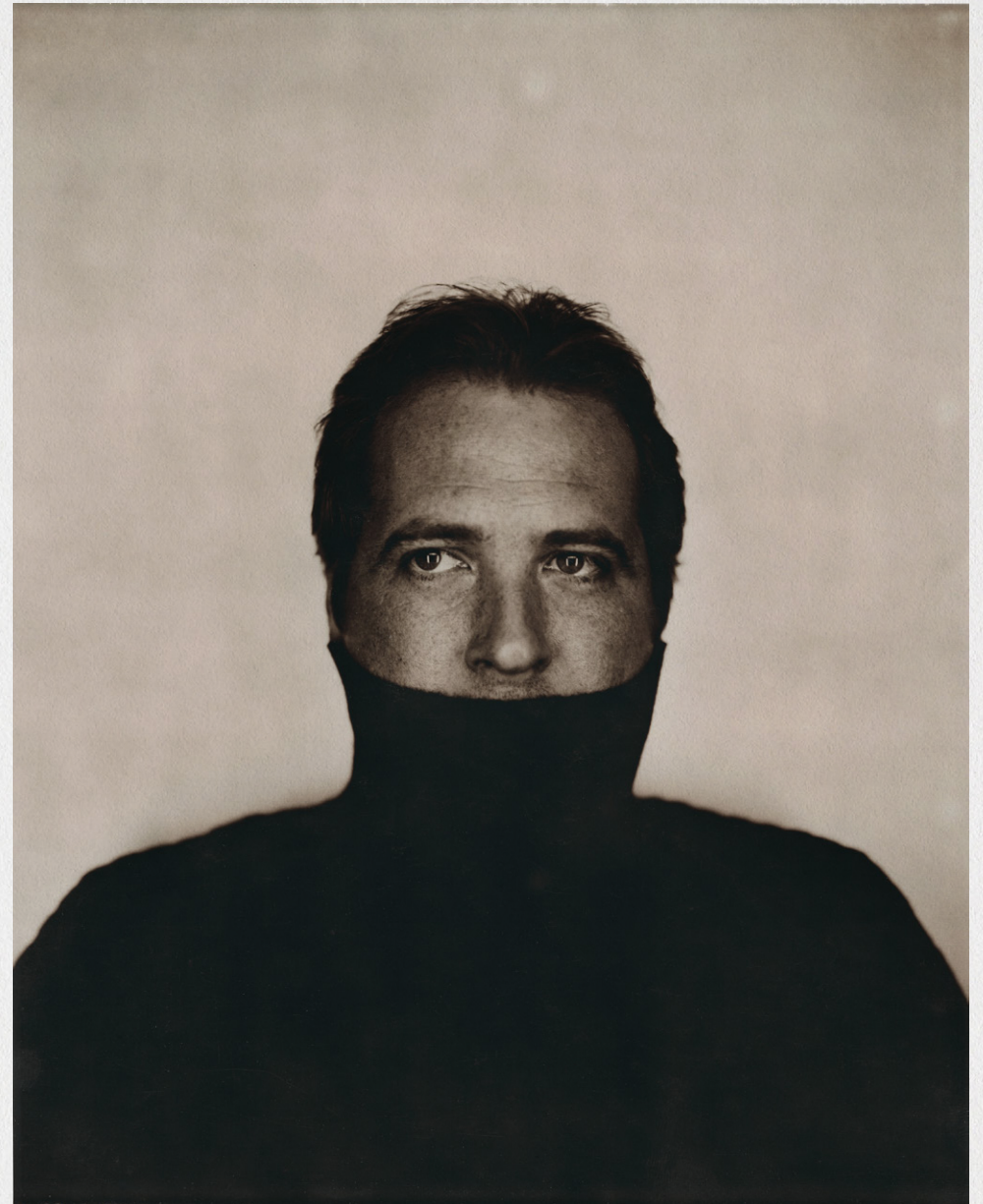
Working with a large format camera and slow exposures brings an interesting dynamic to the shoot. A large format camera requires a very purposeful and measured way of working. You move with care: composing and focusing on the ground glass back, closing the lens, selecting the aperture, cocking the shutter, inserting the film holder, removing the dark slide, then looking at your subject from next to the lens, waiting for the moment when you feel the shot, and finally pressing the cable release to take the picture.

It's a considered process for both photographer and subject. You're not capturing a snapshot; instead, you're creating an image with thought and purpose. One of the things I love about working this way is that the prolonged exposure blurs any movement; with it, it brings a deliberate and subtle nuance, an ethereal feeling, like a gentle breeze across the image.















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Typography Times New Roman
Cover Keaycolour Cobblestone 270gsm
Text Keaycolour Pristine White 170gsm
Insert Keaycolour Biscuit 90gsm

Available at simonharsent.com

