

JEANNETTE KLUTE
PHOTOGRAPHER

JEANNETTE
Klute
COLLECTION

*It has been said that Jeannette Klute
is a woman ahead of her time.*

The Early 1950s

Educated and trained to excel in a man's field of technology, Jeannette Klute rejected woman's traditional role in society. She entered the world of color photography at a time when it's reputation was strictly utilitarian, a form of documentation. Jeannette Klute then helped to elevate the whole package of color photography - vision, skill, product, process - to an art form.

Consider that she wasn't ahead of her time at all. Jeannette Klute was clearly the right woman in the right place at the right time. Born in Rochester, NY on March 13, 1918, she graduated from high school in 1936 and immediately entered the adult education system put in place by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. The program was designed to delay graduates from entering the workforce in order to relieve the demand for scarce jobs.

Jeannette took advantage of this opportunity to round out her art education with physics and mechanical drawing. In 1938, Jeannette, entered a co-op program at Mechanics Institute (later to become Rochester Institute of Technology), alternating college education with active employment.

Jeannette noticed that her classmates were being sent out to jobs while she continued her studies. When she asked, "How come?" she was told, "Oh, we don't give jobs to women."

Jeannette characteristically took matters into her own hands. Having no classes on Fridays, she walked from her home on the west side of Rochester to Kodak Office to apply on her own. Every week. And every week, she was refused. After months of rejection, Jeannette again showed up at Kodak's personnel office, suit, hat and gloves dripping wet from an October rain. Seeing that she was not to be deterred, the personnel director gave in saying, "Well, go on up to the sixth floor. Maybe they've got a job for you up there."



*"The word was that
Kodak was the place to
work, so I thought . . . why
don't I take photography
and get a job at Kodak?
Nothing to it."*

*"And it was a terrible job dipping paper in hypo -
but it was a job!"*

1938-1949

Once in the door, Jeannette's ascent was rapid. Moving quickly through the ranks, she was head of the Visual Research Studio by 1945. Dye Transfer had been introduced into the market that year with much work left to be done in refining it.

At that time, Jeannette's job description was two-fold. In addition to working the bugs out of the Dye Transfer process and materials, she became physicist Ralph M. Evans' photographic illustrator. Her work for Evans was to demonstrate his revolutionary insight into the human perception of color and how that was to effect color photography. Evans was accepted world-wide as the authority on the subject and Jeannette became the quintessential research photographer.



Jeannette and her crew diligently studied the capabilities and limits of Dye Transfer. Each aspect of the process was exhaustively tested and refined, from creating a registering system to align the matrices to truly and consistently reproducing the color green.

The great outdoors became Jeannette's laboratory. She found green of every hue and shade. Jeannette and her assistant, Bonnie Kindig, haunted the swamps of Bergen and the hills of Bristol, NY. They tirelessly searched for the perfect subject. Jeannette added the restrictions that they were not to leave any lasting effect on the environment and that they would use only natural light.



Armed with sawed off tripods, many pounds of gear and only the basics for survival, Jeannette and Bonnie spent days outdoors. Carrying on their backs the latest and greatest in photographic technology, they proceeded to test it all in a natural environment completely devoid of the most rudimentary amenities. It was there that Jeannette perfected her style and technique. She learned to tie bunches of flowers together to create the background color she needed; using a white card or her ever-present white hat, she bounced the natural light to just the right place; she dug ditches and placed shortened tripods into them to capture the smallest of subjects without uprooting them. This effort resulted in the finest examples of Dye Transfer and its capabilities, all the while marrying cutting edge technology with genuine environmental consciousness.

The period from 1938 to 1949 was a sort of incubation period for Jeannette in which she truly perfected her craft. She studied wash-off relief every Saturday at Rochester Institute of Technology, building her technical skills and enabling her to make her way from lab assistant to head of the Color Technology Studio. In simultaneously refining the Dye Transfer process and experimenting with techniques to illustrate Ralph Evans' color research, Jeannette developed her much acclaimed and controversial "Derivations" with her lab supervisor, Dorothea Peterson.

Until 1950, Jeannette Klute was a well kept secret. It was Ralph Evans who dominated the color photography limelight in his role of world renowned research physicist and his state-of-the-art work with the human perception of color.

In 1942, as Jeannette was beginning to expose the depths of the medium, Beaumont Newhall, in the *Complete Photographer*, defined the current state of the art.

"An esthetic rationale of color photography has yet to be worked out. But as more and more workers are attracted to the various processes, definite progress is being made in the recognition of photographic color as an independent medium."

The Early 1950s

In 1950, Jeannette Klute hit the scene full force. She had established the superior quality of Dye Transfer in her lab. It was her work that was shown to the world's most prominent photographers when they toured the Visual Research Division with Ralph Evans.

Such greats as Ansel Adams, Edward Steichen, Margaret Bourke-White, Life's Elliott Elisofon, and Germany's L. Fritz Gruber all came to study the new standard. Beaumont Newhall was a frequent visitor, introducing many photographers, including Minor White, to the exciting developments in the photographic world. MGM sent Arthur Crabtree and Charles Rocher, who returned many times, to keep up on artistic trends and technology. All of this activity also caught the eye of advertising mogul, J. Walter Thompson.

Jeannette's fresh eye for color and form dominated the technological landscape of color photography. Her use of soft focus melted natural surroundings into sophisticated backdrops to each carefully chosen subject.

This approach was a radical departure from the current trend in nature photography as represented by Eliot Porter. All of the elements of his photos, subject and background, were in crystal focus, clearly identifiable amid his delicate visual balance of color, tone and texture. Jeannette's work boldly introduced a new formula. She obscured the identities of those secondary elements, molding them into perfectly balanced elements of design.

In 1950, Edward Steichen was busy organizing his first ever *All Color Photography* show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Keenly aware of the possibilities of color photography, he introduced it to the public as an art form to be taken seriously. Along with Jeannette, he invited Harry Callahan, Eliot Porter, Edward Weston and Wayne Miller to show in this and future exhibitions.

Pushing the limits of everything related to Dye Transfer – her lab technicians, the materials, the equipment – Jeannette and her lab supervisor, Dorothea Peterson, developed a process they dubbed "Derivations." Simply put, a print was made in which the brightness contrasts were reduced essentially to zero, resulting in hue and saturation being the only variables. A line image was then transferred on top of the zero contrast image. Using a variety of ink colors on the matrices during the Dye Transfer process, the end product was an accurate line drawing married with an endless variety of painterly color variations.



Indian Pipes B



Nasturtium, Derivation



Portrait – Olive, Derivation

Lucerne, Switzerland and Paris, France.

“Derivations” started a world wide dialogue within the photography field. Picture Post asked of the United Kingdom, “Is This Photograph a Work of Art?” Photo-France and Australia’s Sidney Herald touted “Derivations” as a profound new way of interpreting color photographs. Bruce Downes in Popular Photography had an interesting take on Jeannette Klute, Dye Transfer, “Derivations,” and color photography in general.

“I was struck with a series of six Dye Transfer prints by Jeannette Klute, who appears to be endowed with esthetic vision as well as the technical mastery of the medium from point of exposure to final matrix and print. Suffice it to say that with [“Derivations,”] photographers now have an exceptionally wide range of creative control with Dye Transfer. As usual, the technicians are far ahead of the creative workers . . .

“Color photography will come into its own as a creative art as more photographers face up to the facts of life and realize that sooner or later they are going to have to master the tricky job of printmaking.”

While Jeannette’s nature photography was showing in Steichen’s pioneering color exhibit, curator, Beaumont Newhall and the directors of Kodak were simultaneously debuting her “Derivations” at the George Eastman House in Rochester. The show circulated to twenty-five venues in the United States and then on to London, England, then

In Penrose Annual’s international review of the graphic arts, the editor adds the following footnote to Ralph Evans’ article, “‘Derivations’ from colour photographs.”

“The[se] prints provide evidence that a new medium of expression has arrived . . . it would appear that in the hands of artists with vision and technicians with the ability to control the possibilities of the method, the applications are almost infinite both in aesthetics and in commerce.”



Olive on Beach – Gray and Orange, Derivation

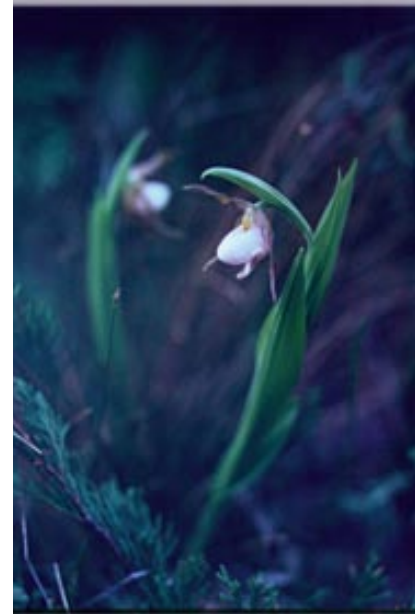
The Mid-1950s



Swamp Pink, Woodland Portraits Plate #22

While the photographic industry was digesting the latest possibilities of Dye Transfer, color and “Derivations,” Jeannette was already working on her next undertaking. Having developed a highly advanced working relationship with her accomplished and skilled lab team, she set out to stretch the limits of the materials and the Dye Transfer process.

Using film the speed of 8, Jeannette entered her world of nature and came out with its beauty in cartridges. In the hands of her lab crew, the images grew to prodigious size, all the while maintaining the essence of Jeannette’s vision and the feeling of her enchanted woodlands.



Small White Lady's-slipper
Woodland Portraits Plate #16

“Her work represents the opposite extreme from the needle-sharp, brilliantly lighted textural studies of Edward Weston or the far horizons and immense ‘eye-reach’ of Ansel Adams. Her lighting is subdued . . . Most of her pictures are made with open lens and shallow depth of focus, blurring the backgrounds into formless splashes of color that . . . take on something of the interest and excitement of impressionistic art.”

-Edwin Way Teale
New York Times, 1954



Trillium, Woodland Portraits Plate #4

During this time, Art Director Arthur Williams of Boston's Little, Brown and Co., came to the studio to see what the new "Derivations" had to offer the printing industry. The Fannie Farmer Cook Book, 9th Edition was due to come out and the illustrations were of great concern to editor, Wilma Lord Perkins. She didn't care for color photography and was not convinced it was the way to go with the project. When shown Jeannette's Dye Transfers and "Derivations," she agreed to use both in the household classic.

Although Williams' purpose in the visit was to evaluate "Derivations," his eye was caught by the Dye Transfers on the swingboard in the studio. His stated, "We'll make a book of that."

"Appealing equally to artists and naturalists, like the works of Audubon, it is not surprising that Jeannette Klute's pictures are exhibited widely in both art and natural history museums ranging from the Museum of Modern Art . . . to the Smithsonian Institution Artist, technician, poet, she is able to express a personal feeling in such concrete terms and with such clarity, warmth and truth that we can all share in her experience."

-Edwin Seaver
Little, Brown & Co.

True to Williams' word, in 1954 Little, Brown and Co. produced Jeannette's work in Woodland Portraits. Edward Steichen considered the book,

“one of the most distinguished, carefully considered and produced books in the field of photography. The reproductions do justice to the highly sensitive and understanding perception of this very fine photographer.”

This endeavor elicited many personal letters of praise from her contemporaries and colleagues including Bruce Downes of Photography Magazine, Arthur Israel, Jr. of Paramount Pictures and C.K. Eaton of the Art Center School in Los Angeles. Ansel Adams, who had requested that Jeannette produce some of his color photographs as “Derivations,” wrote to her,

“I really can't tell you how beautiful it is!! Please swell with pride!! It is entirely justifiable!!!”

In a letter to the publisher, Adams said, “There is very little I can say about this magnificent work, other than just that – it is magnificent! I think Miss Klute has made a major contribution to creative photography – a new and fresh approach, and avoidance of the sterile color and moods of the greater part of contemporary color photography.”

Woodland Portraits was enthusiastically received beyond the boundaries of the photography world. George Taloumis wrote in Horticulture Magazine, “With the skill of a portrait painter, and relying solely on natural light, this talented photographer has produced pictures incredible for their luminous quality . . . Thus the pictures have the power of transporting one immediately into the woods, spiritually and emotionally, to where all appears to be sheer magic.”

The reviews put Jeannette Klute at the top of her profession. Jeannette had seamlessly married her visual art with proper scientific documentation, meaningful literary quotes with current reproduction technology.



Pogonia, Woodland Portraits Plate #31

“Many times when I first walk into the woods it seems like an impenetrable mass of greenness, but gradually as I become attuned to the spirit of the woods this greenness gives way to a miracle of individual colors and sensations . . . In each of the pictures I have tried to show a single aspect of the way I see and experience nature.”

-Jeannette Klute
Woodland Portraits

The Late 1950s - 1970



Jacob Deshin had this to say about Jeannette's success in furthering color photography as an expressive form:

"The achievements of Jeannette Klute in this direction . . . have placed her firmly at the top among a small handful of creative color print workers . . . Her stature in the field was further advanced last week with the opening of her all-color-print show, 'The Shore at Ebb Tide,' at the American Museum of Natural History."

- New York Times, 1955

While *Woodland Portraits* was being circulated in the book market, Kodak International circulated a corresponding one-woman show in thirty-eight museums and art galleries. And amid all this publicity and acclaim, Jeannette was off to her next project.

Called by the ocean, Jeannette turned her keen eye to ocean tide pools at ebb tide. This work resulted in her next one-woman show, "The Shore [Beach] at Ebb Tide." The show was exhibited in ten locations, including the American Museum of Natural History and Kodak-Pathé, Paris.

“The Beach at Ebb Tide’ has to do with the excitement of discovering the wonders to be found on the shore when the tide is out. The life and objects on the shore fascinate me and I feel closely akin to the shell collector, but my collection is quite a different one. My interest is in the shape and color of the sea life and its relation to the water and sand. Color is often more important to me than form, and a picture as a medium for conveying feeling is always more important than either.”

Jeannette Klute
The Beach at Ebb Tide

Even while traipsing beaches and studying tide pools, Jeannette always had a list of things Ralph Evans needed for his research. Her role of research photographer and artist were inextricably linked. Jeannette described her work as “the production of the highest quality prints possible using Kodak materials and procedures.” So where did the research photographer end and the artist begin? It was eventually decided that separating pictures made specifically for each assignment and those made for personal reasons was essentially impossible.



Plants and Shells, Pink and Orange

By the mid-1950s, Jeannette was well known to curators and photographers who were well positioned to further her exposure. Both Steichen and Newhall followed her work closely and often exhibited her work in their venues. They were critically instrumental in keeping the art world apprised of the latest developments in color photography and were eager to proffer artists of substance.

Leading the way in the international market were the Smithsonian Institution and Kodak International. These organizations circulated large one-woman shows of Jeannette’s work all over the world. The Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain strongly promoted Jeannette’s work within the United Kingdom. While Kodak-Pathé in Paris, France was exhibiting “Woodland Portraits,” officials from the US Embassy were so taken with it that they arranged for its inclusion as a highlight at the Brussels World’s Fair in 1958.



Mussels under Water, "Color of Water"

"Here are no glaring colors, but the hues and tints of nature seen through an artist's eye . . . The smell of the iodine, the salt breeze, the sound of the unseen gull and the distant pounding surf are all there unmistakably."

-Virginia Jeffrey Smith
Rochester Times-Union



Luna Moth, "IX Photographic Essays"

Jeannette's one-woman shows include:

- "Pictorial Photographs, an exhibition of Miss Jeannette Klute," a one-woman show circulated by the Smithsonian Institution
- "An Exhibition of Dye Transfer Prints by Jeannette Klute," hosted by the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain
- "Color of Water" circulated by the Smithsonian Institution to over 30 US galleries and museums including: the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Schenley Park; the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University; the Chicago Art Institute; and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History



Jewel Weed, "This Verdant World"

- "Focus on Color" circulated by Kodak International in 38 countries including: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Columbia, East Africa, Egypt, Ghana, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay and Venezuela

- "This Verdant World" circulated by Kodak International in 38 countries including: the Bahamas, Bangkok, Bermuda, Denmark, Jamaica, Malaya, Mexico, Nairobi, Nigeria, Okinawa, Panama, Puerto Rico, Rhodesia, South Africa, Trinidad and Zambia

- "Discovering Color in Nature, IX Photographic Essays" circulated by the Smithsonian Institution to over twenty US galleries and museums including: the Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, Canada; the Utah Museum of Natural History; the Abilene Museum of Fine Arts, TX; and the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences, Yarmouth and the Hague, Norfolk, VA

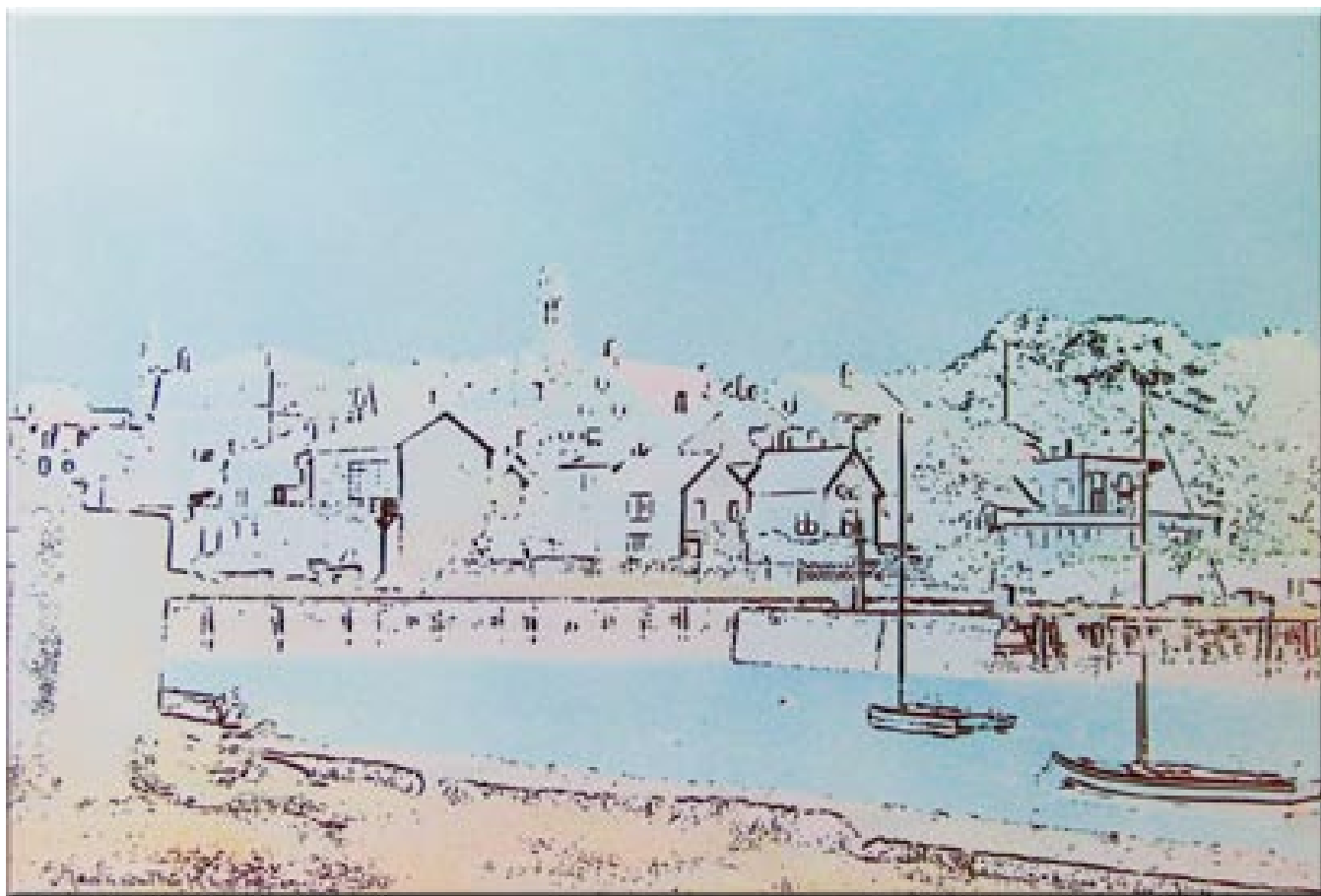
"Over a number of years the name of Jeannette Klute has been heard again and again in the photographic world . . . Here is someone who has achieved a breakthrough, someone who knows what to do with color photography and who is capable of handling it freely and consciously as a medium of expression."

-Peggy Delius
British Journal of Photography



"Her Majesty Queen Ingrid of Denmark was quite taken with the 'Focus on Color' photo exhibit in Copenhagen by Kodak Park's Jeannette Klute. The show was opened by the queen . . . The pictures were displayed in the Bella Centret, the newest and largest exhibition hall in the country."

-Kodak International 1967



New England Fishing Village, "Special Invitation Show of Color Prints"

Jeannette's career was marked by many desirable invitations to participate in such prestigious exhibitions as:

- "Photography – Mid-Century, Invitational" at Los Angeles County Museum
- "Abstract Exhibition" at MOMA, curated by Steichen
- "Centenary Exhibition of Colour Photography" at the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain
- "Special Invitation Show of Color Prints" at the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain
- "Invitational Annual Professional Photographers Association Convention Exhibit" at the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston
- "Woodland Portraits" at the renowned Expo 58, the Brussels World's Fair, Belgium

"A revolutionary process with color makes photographs look like paintings . . . What has changed them into something resembling fugitive canvases from a gallery of modern art is a bit of darkroom magic brewed by Jeannette Klute . . . She calls her specially treated pictures "Derivations," and although they've been called a new art form, it must be said that they were developed purely in the name of science."

-Adie Suesdorf
Picture Post 1956



Two Yellow/Rust Ferns, "Brussels World's Fair"

"One sees here a nature lover, an artist and a photographer who has mastered techniques you do not understand to gain effects that delight you."

-Emily Haswell
Los Angeles Times



*Sea Shells,
"Photography in the Fine Arts-II"*

- "Photography at Mid-Century" at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY
- "Photography in the Fine Arts-II" a juried invitational circulated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art
- "Photography as a Fine Art" at the Royal Festival Hall in London
- The Photographic Society of America International Convention in Montreal, Canada
- "Women of Photography: An Historical Survey," circulated by the San Francisco Museum of Art

1970-1981

In 1970, Jeannette was assigned to work on special projects. These included, among other things, exploring the photographic capabilities of the first Kodak Pocket Camera. Her work appeared regularly in Kodak advertising. Still circulating were "This Verdant World" and "Discovering Color in Nature," both running through the early 1970s.



Orange Hawkweed

"While it is true today that there are many amateur photographers who have never taken pictures except in color, the same is not true among professional photographers."

"Miss Klute is one of the select few among the well known professionals who has never displayed a black-and-white print. Her work in color photography, in fact, dates from the earliest professional color sheet film marketed . . . which she was one of the first to use."

-Kingsport News 1972

As often happens when one reaches the top of their chosen field within the corporate structure, management loomed. By 1974, Jeannette was made supervisor of the Photographic Technology Studio and was responsible for coordinating the picture making efforts of all the photographers in the division while continuing to pursue her personal photographic contributions.

Jeannette refers to this time in her career as working in “consumer mode.” Beside testing the professional photography products, her studio was also responsible for testing the pocket camera products to aid in evaluating amateur product improvement. An old hat at field testing a product in development, Jeannette gamely took on the pocket camera, leaving the higher end professional products to her staff.

1975 brought an invitation to submit work for the San Francisco Museum of Art’s landmark exhibit, “Women of Photography: An Historical Survey.” Of 1,000 artists considered for the show, only fifty artists were chosen to participate. Jeannette Klute was joined by Margaret Bourke-White, Julia Margaret Cameron, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, and Louise Dahl Wolfe. The show toured the US for over a year, stopping at: the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe; Sidney Janis Gallery, NY; the Art History Galleries, Milwaukee, WI; the Wellesley College Museum, MA; and the Institute for the Arts at Rice University in Houston, TX.

Having come up through the ranks, from the ground floor to the very top of her profession, Jeannette found herself ready to pursue her visual studies in a new medium. She retired from Kodak in 1981 to begin painting. The following twenty-five years has seen Jeannette pushing the limits of her materials on the canvas just as she had in the laboratory, a lifelong obsession with exploring the limits of what the eye can perceive.



Wild Iris

1981-Today



Royal Fern in Soft Light

Jeannette's Dye Transfers continue to evoke wonder and delight. Even after fifty plus years her vintage prints are clear and vibrant, still revealing the mysteries of nature. More recently, viewings of Jeannette's Dye Transfers have been offered at the Alinder Gallery in Gualala, CA at the 1996 exhibition, "Jeannette Klute BOTANICALS; Ansel Adams INSPIRATION; Gallery Artists EXHIBITION IX."

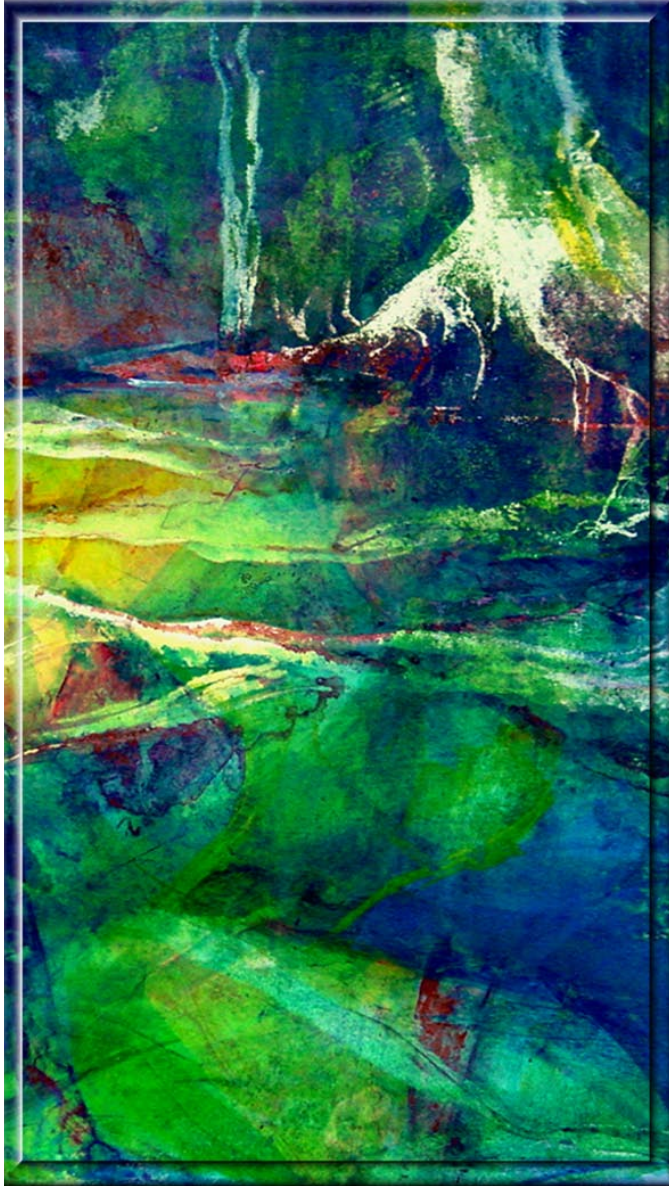
In 1997, the Kathleen Ewing Gallery in Washington, DC exhibited "Exploring Color: Photographs by Christopher Burkett, Color Landscapes;



Single Jack

"Klute's control over the Dye Transfer process easily matches that of her towering contemporary, Eliot Porter . . . While Porter prided himself on maintaining sharp focus throughout his images, Klute used a very shallow depth of field, [achieving] a painterly effect."

-John Rohrbach
Amon Carter Museum Program 2003



Tree Roots and Rocks, Watercolor

Jeannette Klute's, whether the medium is photography or painting. Jeannette's vision is true and real. It is her life's breath.

Jeannette continues to show her work in her beloved New York Finger Lakes region. Her goal today is just as it was when she wrote this passage for Woodland Portraits:

“My purpose has been to somehow express the feeling one experiences being out of doors. I am concerned with the delight to the senses as much as with the intellectual. The woods are mystical and enchanting to me as well as spiritual.”

Jeannette Klute, Woodland Portraits.” And the Amon Carter Museum of Ft. Worth, TX presented “Woodland Portraits: Photographs by Eliot Porter and Jeannette Klute” in 2002.

Today, Jeannette still probes the wilderness around her home – coaxing nature into sharing still more of her secrets. These days she creates on canvas and paper, always exploring her hallmarks, color and form. In her paintings, one recognizes the vision that is uniquely Jean-

“What makes the color photographs of Christopher Burkett and Jeannette Klute such a pleasure to see at Kathleen Ewing Gallery is that both artists have managed to corral the spiritual essence of America's landscape, albeit in very different ways.

“Klute was one of the pioneers of color photography . . . In [her] hands the colors are so subtly and precisely blended that the photographs just sing.”

-Ferdinand Protzman
Washington Post 1997