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Phototerragrams: Organic and Photochemical Collaborations with the Earth

by Stephen Godfrey

Contribution Form:

Images

Artist's Statement

Phototerragrams move beyond the traditional styles of landscape photography. I want to take advantage of the alchemy of the photo-mechanical process through direct collaboration with the earth. My works are images of the land, and from the land itself.

I explore the complexities of the ground, relinquishing partial control of the image production, giving it back to the earth. Rather than objectifying and pictorializing the landscape, my photo-chemical process seeks direct collaboration and engagement with the soil, the turf, the ground.

By capturing a given piece of natural terrain, I expose the film negative, bury it in the very topsoil it has come from. This means the land takes an active role, rather than the traditional, passive one that is known and recognised in legacy landscape photography.

During the negative's burial, it undergoes organic decomposition, entombed for up to approximately twenty-eight hours and whilst it is interred, the negative interacts with myriad microorganisms. The unearthing process starts to show traces of the image present before it

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was sent to the grave that becomes joined with soil and debris, embedded on the surfaces, revealed as coloured blotches on the black and white film.

These colours—greens, browns, yellows, and blues—are arguably classed as earthy colours, foregrounding the importance of the construction of the ground's own colour palette, the agency of the land itself, the fusion of the organic and photochemical collaboration between my photography and the earth.

Keywords

Alchemy, landscape, organic, photochemical, phototerragrams

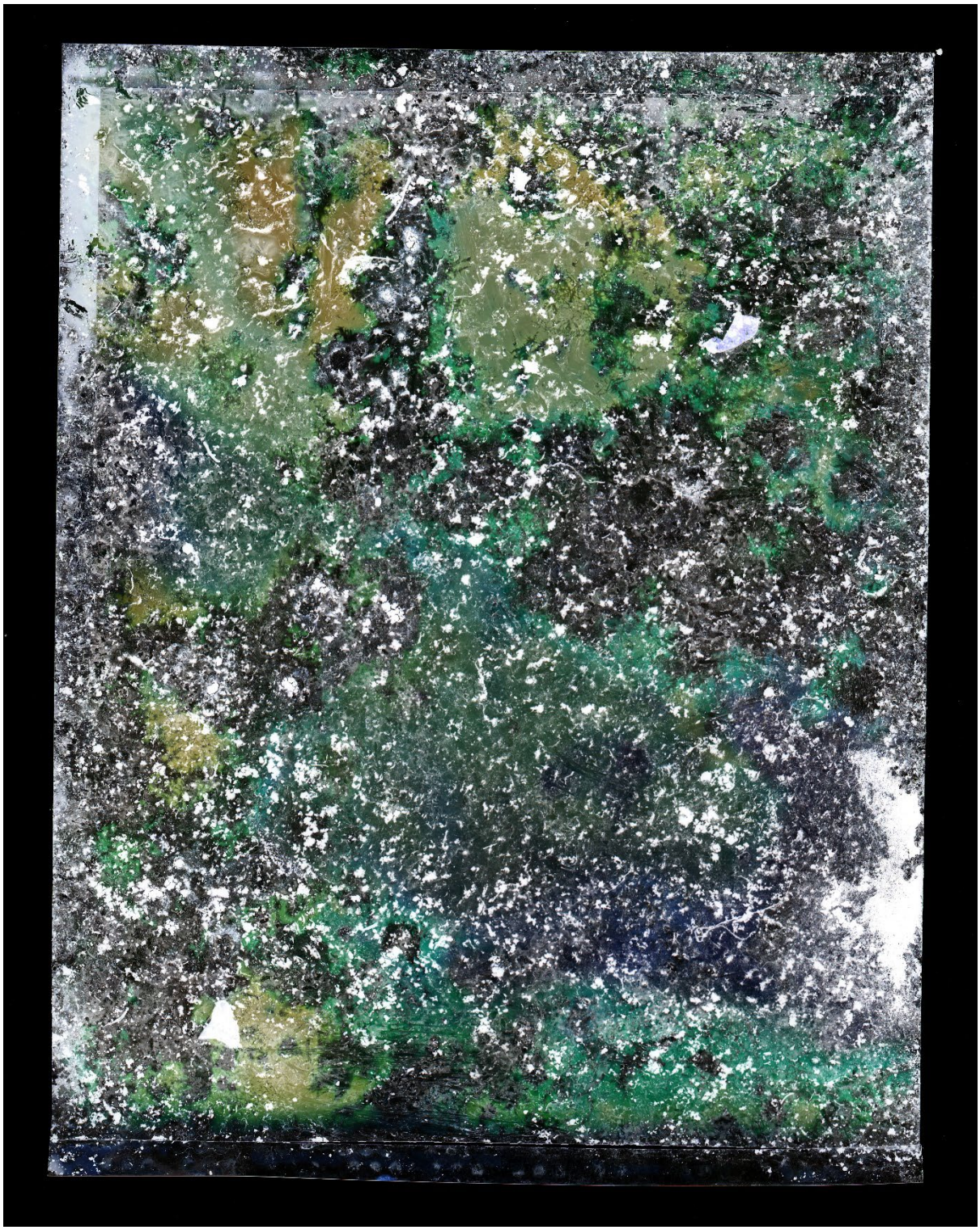


Figure 1 – Stephen Godfrey, *Brinklow Castle Hill*, 2013.



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Stephen Godfrey has been a professional photographer since 1989 working predominantly within the alternative gothic music industry and a practicing photographic artist since 2000, he has developed a dedicated skill set through his extensive work at the University of Northampton. Stephen's love of the landscape has enabled him to explore the diversity it offers and through the photographic medium he has explored the boundaries of the photographed environment.

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