Wolfgang Moersch

Lith printing technique – lesson 2: fibre base or RC

Where is the difference?

First, I should give an answer to the question which emulsions are suitable for lith printing.

Suitable are almost all emulsions that contain no accelerators for development. Those incorporated accelerators react as super-additives in combination with hydroquinone. The slow lith developer becomes a high-speed developer with no lith reaction whatsoever. This evil can be washed out in some cases before developing the print, but success is uncertain. Small remaining amounts of the substance in the emulsion can become islands of rapid development, which are simply a nuisance.

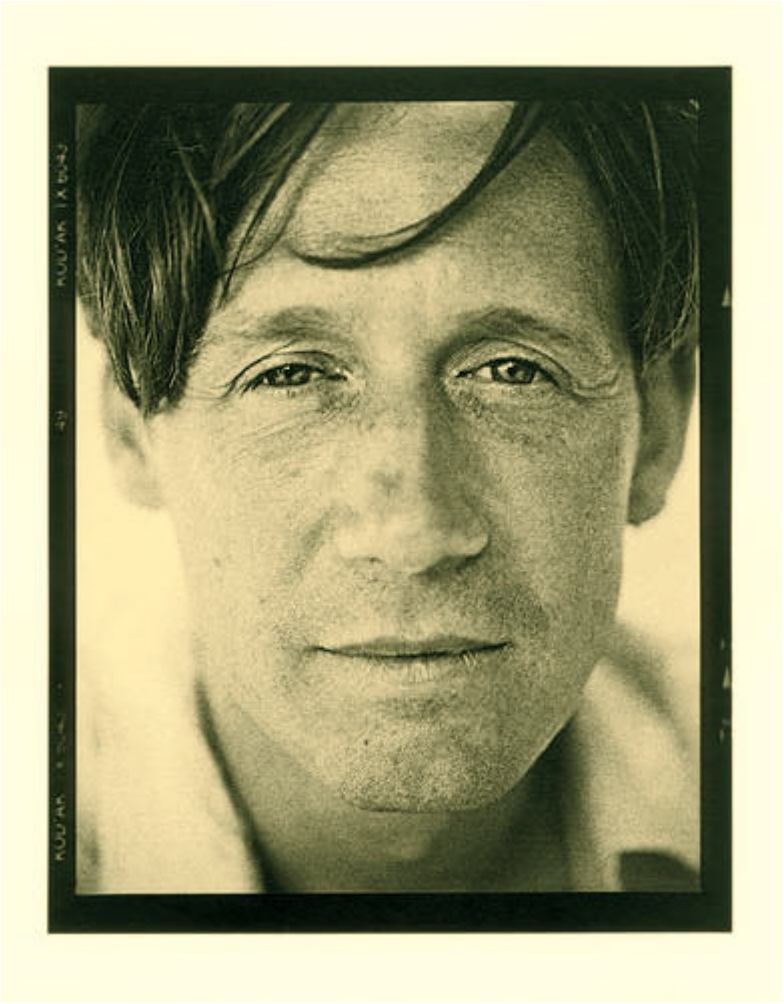
You should not believe that once tested emulsions remain unchanged for all times. Agfa MCC for instance worked well during the first years after its market launch. It was my first alternative to Sterling Lith. At some point in time it stopped working – for years! Just about two years ago it started working again. The image tone was slightly changed, but it did the lith reaction without any trouble. This paper also has a big advantage for novices. It is really easy to see in darkroom light when the “infectious development” starts. There is no insecurity about the “snatch point”. What you see is what you get.

A.S.C.
Agfa MCC 1+30 – the RC alternative reacts exactly in the same way.

You need a lot of experience to get such a result on some warmtone emulsions. It often happens that you stay in the developer for too long, because of insecurity. A lith print only appears in its full strength when it is in the fixer. It is just as if a fog is taken off the image.

A.S.C.
Fortezo Museum 1+35

Fortunately, every now and then – although infrequently – new lithable papers appear on the market. Just a short while ago it was Kentmere Warmtone, with its own unique characteristics. Only few people seem to have noticed it. Here an example:



A.S.C.
Kentmere Fineprint VC Warmtone 1+40

The surface of this paper is slightly structured and the carrier has a creamy tone. The lith colour is very subtle. Not even diluting the developer to 1+60 with 4 to 5 stops overexposure can change anything about that.

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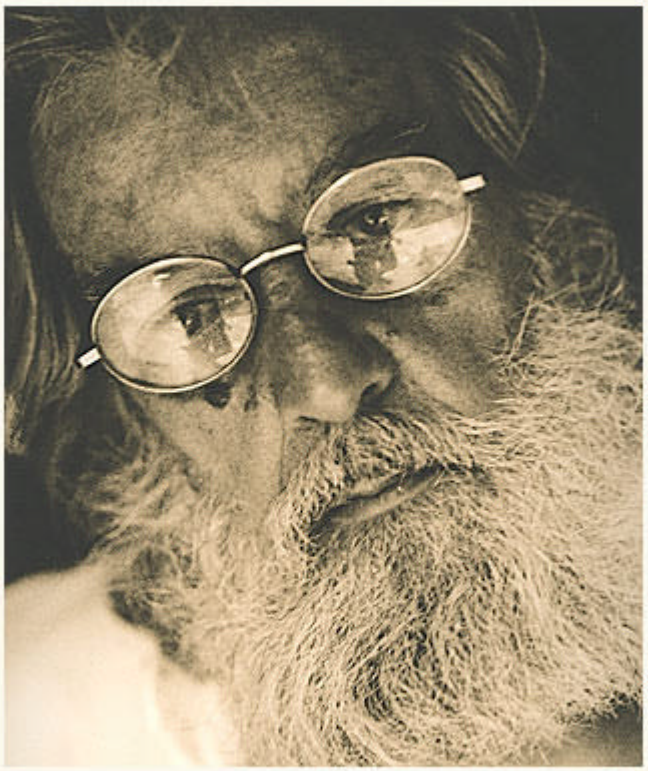
The surface of Kentmere Art paper is similar to that of coarse grained watercolour paper. In here this can only be suggestively shown. You would have to take such papers into your hands to see it.

Some years ago Foma introduced Fomatone in a variety of surfaces and on different carriers. As astonishing as it was for Foma to risk such a venture, as incomprehensible for the user was the decision to stop production of this paper only short after. Thanks to Mirko Böddecker's efforts the supply of at least the glossy surface version is secured.

The analogue community should not expect too much of the "big three" in future. The market is getting smaller, so that an investment into research and development is not paying out. I am still in mourning for one paper. One of the most beautiful papers that there ever was, was Kodak Ektalure. May the person that used the red ink on this paper rot in hell.

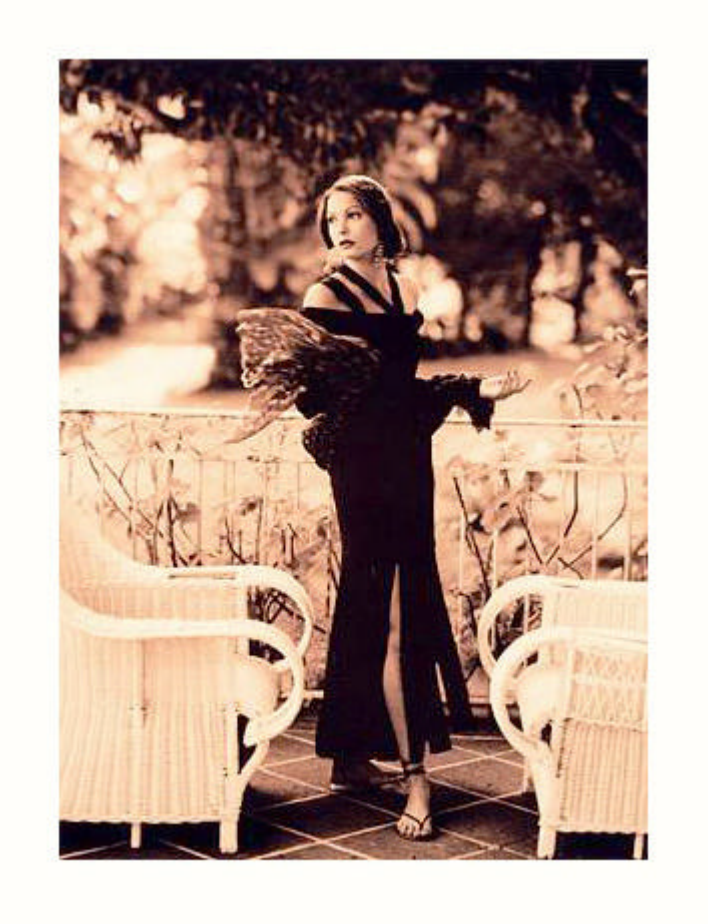


A.S.C.
Kodak Ektalure

Sterling Lith, unfortunately, is out of production. A crying shame! Annoyingly, grand papers like this one often disappear without a sound. May the reader forgive my little obituary here.

M.Stalter
Sterling Lith

Some “lith papers” owe their outstanding characteristics to a cadmium containing emulsion. Those times are gone for good (to the relief of our environment) and no moaning will make them return. Kentmere Kentona is still a good paper, but the incomparable reddish tone it could reach in former times cannot be achieved with the new cadmium-free emulsion.



A.S.C.
Kentmere Kentona – old emulsion

Back to the papers that are available today. Some brands offer identical or very similar emulsions that are manufactured on fibre base paper as well as RC paper. The differences for the user are minimal, so that there is no need to go into detail. Regardless of which brand you take, the RC version seems to be more colourful when it is dried down. The most likely reason for this is as follows. In lith development the silver filament within the gelatine has a longish form. In a sealed surface like that of RC paper it is compressed more while drying than in the open surface of fibre base paper.

If you want to switch from RC to the fibre base version or vice versa, you can simply do so by taking over dilution, exposure time and developing time. Of course, the results will not be exactly the same in one go, already because there are minor differences from one lot to another.

Götz Pilarczyk
Select VC fibre base

Apart from Select Sepia VC there are several papers available on both carriers: Forte and Classic Polywarmtone, Agfa MCC/MCP, Maco Expo R and Lith RC, Fomatone MG, Imago Photographic Lith

For colourful results with reddish yellow highlights and green black shadows, Fomatone is the first choice. This paper is easy to handle and develops colourfully already with short developing times.

Fomatone MG 131
SE5 LITH 1+30 15ml A + 15ml B + 900ml of water
exposure +2½ stops
developed for 8½ minutes

If you dilute the developer further and (accordingly) give it more exposure, you can again expect more colour. Since we already know this from the example on Select, I want to show a different option. This is again about additives. I want to use two differently configured developers. Two bath development has the advantage, that you can print negatives of different ranges of contrast without having to change the dilution. One developer is either highly diluted or its characteristics changed with additives, and the other is stronger to allow a quick formation of the blacks.

Fomatone MG 131
exposure: +3 stops
first developer: 1+30 – 15ml A + 15ml B + 900ml of water + 5ml C + 5ml D
developed for 7 minutes
second developer: 1+15 – 20ml A + 20ml B + 600ml of water
developed for 1 minute

For more Information visit www.moersch-photochemie.com