



JOHN ANGELL

When is a photographer not a photographer?

I have been taking photos since I was in preschool. Some better than others.... And like most photographers I would rather be behind the lens than in front of it. When I am behind the camera, I have always paid attention to graphic composition, texture and pattern, although it has taken a while for me to put it in those terms. I am not a photographic equipment geek, my cameras have worked well for my needs, but were not exquisite instruments. I generally work with existing light. I have thousands of photos going back decades that I had no idea what to do with... until now. My photo based encaustic work has given them a new life.

I went to the University of Michigan in the 1970's and transferred to the Art School after a few semesters. There I took a variety of photo classes, but my favorite was an antique processing class from Phil Davis where I learned to make gum prints and cyanotypes. I liked how the images were altered by the process. I ended up with a BA in Art History and a BFA in photography because it was where I had the most credits in art school when it came time to graduate. I preferred drawing, painting and collage to time in the darkroom. When photography went digital, I welcomed it with open arms.

When I show at photographic galleries, I am often asked why my business card says "Artist" and not "Photographer." Despite my formal training, I have never defined myself as a photographer. I simply use photographs as a jumping off point. I am less concerned with lighting, focus, equipment or F-stops than I am in the resulting image, no matter how it got there. In much the same way, when I travel, my lovely wife hangs on every word of the tour guide and takes notes on the historical significance of what we are seeing, while I am primarily focused on the visuals. The rest is just backstory....

Title page image: JOHN ANGELL, *Brain Waves - Joy*, photo encaustic, mixed media on cradled birch panel, 12 x 12 x 1 inches, 2023



JOHN ANGELL, *Chicago Boatripe*, photo encaustic, found objects, mixed media in cigar box, 10.5 x 10.5 x 1.25 inches, 2020

I have never sold a straight photographic print or taken money for a photo shoot. I do not sell multiple prints of the same image. Each of my works is unique. When photographers make a print, that is the end of their process. For me it is just the beginning. A starting point to work from, whether I manipulate it digitally to the point of abstraction, collage with it or augment the color using encaustic paint and mixed media to bring out the mystery.

From an artistic perspective, I have always considered photography the best tool in the toolbox for representational work. I decided early on that while I could hone my skills at drawing what I saw, I was more interested in creating/ assembling images which create a mood or sense of something familiar yet just out of reach. I like using my photographs to that end. I do not like to explain my work. I seek to create pieces which raise questions, poke fun and spawn contemplation. I prefer to work small as I feel that draws the viewer in closer and makes a more personal connection. At its best, I hope my work tells a story which is not always known to me and allows new interpretations with each new viewer. Or sometimes it just is what it is....



JOHN ANGELL, *Intercontinental Construct 4 Portland - Guatemala - Istanbul*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 18 x 8 x 1.5 inches, 2021



JOHN ANGELL, *Mandeville Tip 11*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 18 x 8 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Houghton Lake Bed 1975*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 18 x 8 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Aloft 1*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 12 x 16 x 1.5 inches, 2022

All my work is highly personal whether it is graphic images of my innards, manifestations of my inner thoughts or simply places I have been and things I have seen which evoke feelings and memories. I have used photos I took six decades ago; MRIs and X-Rays of my brain, spine, hips and hands from my medical records; old family photos and Kodachrome slides I scanned and cleaned up; images from Art School in the 70's; and countless photos from our international travels over the past couple decades.

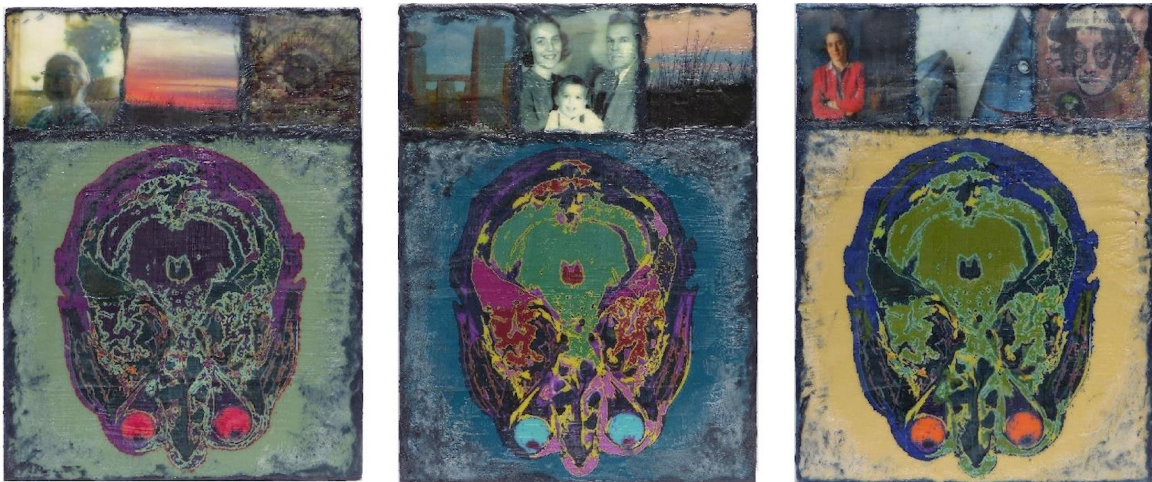


JOHN ANGELL, *Tidepool 1*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 16 x 12 x 1.5 inches, 2022

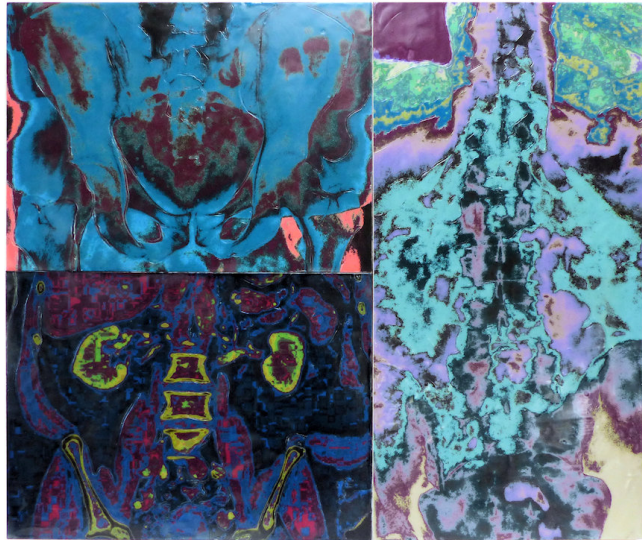
My work has many influences, from centuries-old Chinese and Japanese landscapes to African tribal masks, Color Field painting, Pop Art, Abstract Expressionism, Hunter S. Thompson, Dada, Surrealism and the American Dream. I am captivated by the beauty of abstraction in works of humans and nature, their intersection and the ravages of time on both. I draw on my own adventures in living, foibles and shortcomings.



JOHN ANGELL, *Body Image 8*, photo encaustic on multiple cradled birch panels, 16 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Random Thoughts Triptych 123*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, each 16 x 12 x 2 inches, 2021



JOHN ANGELL, *Body Image 2*, photo encaustic on multiple cradled birch panels, 24 x 28 x 1.5 inches, 2022

A few of my portfolios:

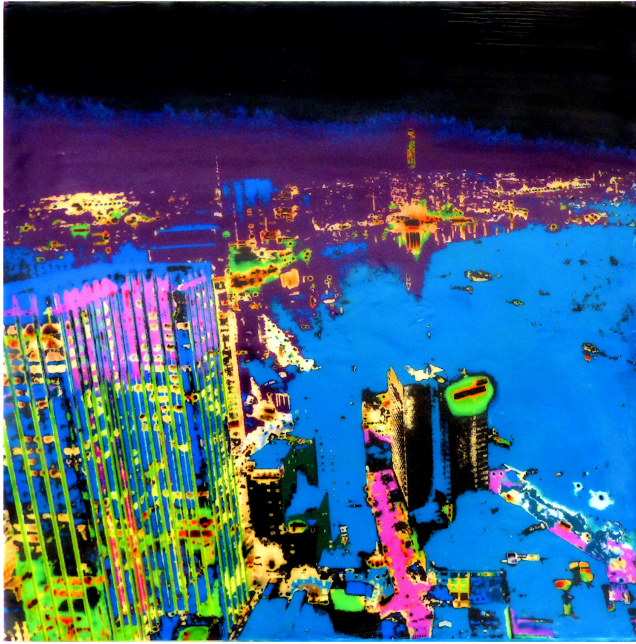
BodyWork: An embrace of the aging process which I am attempting to do with grace and humor in the face of my age driven decline.

Intercontinental Constructs: Studies in visual and cultural harmony emphasizing diverse textural and architectural elements. Each work combines images from divergent sources that come together to form new imagery and meaning.

Montage: A continuation of my earlier collage work using my own photographs and the encaustic process.

Surf and Turf: Land and waterscapes from around the world and across various decades.

Elsewhere/ Scenic Overlook: A collection of observations of places and things that are definitely not from here....



JOHN ANGELL, *Ho Chi Minh City - Over and Above*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 12 x 12 x 1.5 inches, 2022

I am sometimes asked how long it takes me to make a piece. This is hard to answer since sometimes my work starts with images taken before the person asking the question was born.

- Concepts often come to me as I am trying to fall asleep.
- With concept in mind, I start with image selection and prepare the image digitally, whether it is simple balancing or more radical manipulation.
- I then print the image using archival ink on acid free translucent paper.
- I primarily use floating Baltic birch panels which I cut and assemble myself. These are coated with special encaustic gesso and sanded smooth.
- I give the panels a base coat of hot encaustic medium which I heat to form a smooth silky surface.

- Next I fuse the image to the panel using an encaustic iron, heat gun, or torch, infusing the translucent paper with the wax medium. This approach brings out the detail, color and luminosity that lies hidden beneath. I may introduce additional mixed media before or after the image is fused onto the panel.
- Finally, I add and fuse more encaustic medium, clear or colored, heating it to achieve the final surface texture I want.
- I am a big fan of texture in encaustic surfaces. And happy accidents. I always say I do not want to be the master of my medium, but to partner with it. That way I and my medium contribute our best qualities to the finished work.



JOHN ANGELL, *Halong Bay Triptych 1.1, 1.2, 1.3*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, each 18 x 8 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Kuang Si Falls*, photo encaustic on floating Baltic birch panel, 12 x 16 x 1.5 inches, 2023



JOHN ANGELL, *Sanliurfa Village*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 8 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2023



JOHN ANGELL, *Miyajima Buddhas 5*, photo encaustic on floating Baltic birch panel, 12 x 16 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Vietman 4X*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 8 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2022

I love encaustic because it allows me to incorporate my original photographs, found objects (many of which I have had for decades) and other media in ways that reflect my artistic approach and evolution. I can create work that blurs the lines between painting, collage and photography with strong textural elements. Encaustic has a warmth, depth and luster that only the wax can bring. I feel I have found my way home at last.



JOHN ANGELL, *Mekong Long Boats*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 8 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *Yolo Basin 5*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 8 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2022



JOHN ANGELL, *José Martí Stadium*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 8 x 18 x 1.5 inches, 2023



JOHN ANGELL, *Halong Fish Farm*, photo encaustic, mixed media on floating Baltic birch panel, 12 x 16 x 1.5 inches, 2023

BIO

Growing up the son of a Professor of Logic and Philosophy, I learned from an early age to question the meaning of things and not to accept the obvious interpretations. My journey into the study of art might seem the opposite direction of my father's life work but as I once put it to him, our paths were much the same: We each dedicated our studies to something most people would consider unnecessary in going about their daily lives but, in fact, our pursuits captured the very essence of what makes us human.



I graduated from University of Michigan in 1976 with a BFA and a BA in History of Art. A few years after graduating I moved to San Francisco, thinking I would enter the art scene there, but could not reconcile with the starving part of starving artist or going commercial. While doing a variety of work for a living, I continued my creative pursuits for my own enjoyment over the years through photography, designing and building furniture, drawings and other art/design work. After working many years for world class non-profits and Fortune 100 companies (and moving to Sacramento to marry the love of my life), I retired. After admiring it from afar for many years, I eventually took some encaustic workshops from Jaya King, which started me on my current path.

I have been working in encaustic for four years now and it has really opened up a whole new world for me. I love using it in combination with my original photographs to create one-of-a-kind works of art. I feel it brings a depth of color, luster and mystery to my work. Since 2021, I have been accepted into ninety exhibitions including eight solo shows. I have received honors in eleven of my shows, including Fourth Place in the prestigious Crocker Kingsley exhibition. My work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Encaustic Art in Cerillos, NM, and private collections in New York, California, Chicago, Nevada, Michigan, Connecticut, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, North Carolina, Vermont, Hawaii, Tokyo and Strasbourg.

In 2024 I will have four major shows plus a number of group shows. For information on my shows check www.JAngellArt.com for current information. You can also sign up for regular email updates here: <https://www.jangellart.com/contact-me>

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