

A Short Piece for Michael Kolster's *Take Me To the River* - 2016

This morning, light snow falling and freshly brewed coffee in hand, I opened a digital file of Michael's elegant book, *Take Me To the River*, and began to review my late night scribbles of impressions musing on the concept of the river. I was looking for a path to excavate, one that would do justice to Michael's passion for the river, his efforts, and the monograph he had asked me to write a few words for. I heard David Byrne's version of Al Green's *Take Me To the River* in my head and then downloaded it from iTunes. I considered the symbiotic and metaphorical relationship between the river and collodion and how it was the perfect marriage of process and intention and how the collodion medium itself, with its evidence of artifact and liquid flow, played a delicate role in determining meaning. I thought about the silence within the images and how the absence of the "look at me" urgency, of so much contemporary art, spoke so eloquently to both subjective and objective interpretations.

The morning continued and I turned again to the images. The first I encountered was the one of the children playing in the river and then it came together for me. My thoughts had been about the innocent times depicted in the mid-1800's river-scape paintings of Thomas Eakins, Albert Bierstadt, and George Caleb Bingham that I had loved since I was a child and whose 7 x 9 inch reproductions hung on my bedroom wall... courtesy of the fine art bins in the Harvard Coop bookstore in Harvard Square.

In my boyhood I lived next to the Charles River in Cambridge, which flowed literally at the end of Shaler Lane where I lived with my mother in Harvard housing, in an apartment marked #23A. My entertainment consisted of friends and the internal fantasies generated by radio dramas and books such as *Treasure Island*... and my favorite, *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*, where the Charles replaced the Mississippi in my imagination and where the currents offered a universe of possibilities. My mother told me, "Christopher, if you are ever hopelessly lost, find a river and follow its current downstream and you will be saved." Then she added, "... except in Africa where the rivers often flow inland instead of to the ocean... there, you will perish."

Michael's book is one of beautifully realized images and great writing by Michael, Matthew Klinge and my good friend Alison Nordstrom. It is a collection of downstream images, memories and aspirations where the river will always be saved.

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