**TOM BARIL**

(1952 Connecticut)

Baril’s work has a distinctive quality of its own, even if his subjects are classic floral studies. Baril was influenced and inspired by the modernist still lifes of Edward Weston and Edward Steichen, by Alfred Stieglitz’s New York series and by Karl Blossfeldt’s close-up botanical studies. While Baril is open to the history of photography, he has no intention of duplicating what has already been done. He says “I want to comment on history and create something new out of the past”.

Baril was known as a master printer for about twenty years, working for Robert Mapplethorpe for many years and then for other artists and galleries. He started taking his own photographs while working as a printer. At first he concentrated on urban landscapes and architecture and did not take studio photographs; later he began to photograph flowers, plants and other objects in his studio, using the simplest of cameras; a box camera obscura or stenoscope. He later began to use a standard camera in the 4x5 format with polaroid film.

To obtain his unique quality, Baril chose Kodak Ektalure “portrait” photographic paper, which creates a rich, warm black. But Ektalure is only part of his secret. The colours in all his prints are altered using a procedure in which the images are submerged in tea – the kind we drink. This procedure gives his prints a warm colour and depth similar to those of platinum prints.