

## Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts Scholars Exhibit

Exhibit Artist Statement: Beverly Buys (398 words)

These images are from *Delta in Blue*, a photographic essay of the south central Arkansas Delta spanning the years 2011-2016. For the last five years I have taken 3 or 4 extended road trips each year to Helena–West Helena and the surrounding area searching for my subject. I find it in the remnants of homes, businesses, churches and cemeteries as well as the agricultural landscape which is a barometer for the rhythm of life as it wears the change of each season like an outer garment. The Delta's legacy of cuisine, art, literature, and music which is inextricably attached to its complicated racial past, is an energy that pulses deep for those who slow down and learn the history. From the depression era to the great migration and through WWII, what remains of the past can be found on flat deserted highways, down dirt farm roads and in much reduced towns. The scenes that grab my attention remind me of the hard scrabble life of my parents and grandparents, subsistence farmers of the Arkansas Ouachita Mountains.

Though a different landscape, family stories and memories meld with the Delta scenes I photograph so that the resulting images are, for me, a composite of actuality, memory and imagination. Since I have been photographing the Delta region, buildings have continued to sag and some have fallen in. There has also been renewal. There is a sprucing up, that while encouraging to see, removes the patina of energy and handiwork left by previous generations. Time stops for no man or landscape. This tiny window of time and place is a particular piece of the southern Arkansas puzzle. The *Delta in Blue* images are a portal through which I have attached memory to place in order to understand where I come from and where I am situated in the world today.

The blue prints are in the cyanotype technique of photography. All the work is derived from film and darkroom processes and relies on the very earliest practices of exposing light sensitive paper to the ultraviolet rays of the sun for exposure. The work is seasonal and I am connected to the sun's cycles, just as the Delta farmers and farmlands are. When the light grows weak in the winter I can no longer expose prints outdoors, but instead use that time to travel and photograph new images for the next summer's work.