

# THE CANVAS

Collecting Time  
Britta Konau  
Maine Home + Design - 2012

## CLAIRE SEIDL

Tillman Crane | Lisa Tyson Ennis | Claire Seidl

The word "photography" derives from Greek and means "drawing with light." Light, though, is not the only element essential to the medium, whether it's traditional or digital photography. The time it takes to gather light has become a major artistic focus for photographers Tillman Crane, Lisa Tyson Ennis, and Claire Seidl. For them, time becomes enmeshed with the representational subject matter—and, in some works, it becomes the subject itself.

Claire Seidl grew up in Riverside, Connecticut, and started going to New York as a young teenager to look at art. She received her BFA from the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University, and her MFA from Hunter College at the City University of New York. Both degrees were in painting, but Seidl also took classes at the International Center of Photography in New York. She taught for years at Hunter College and at Hofstra University on Long Island. Seidl now lives in New York and Rangeley, and she regularly shows her work at ICON Contemporary Art in Brunswick, the June Fitzpatrick Gallery in Portland, and the Lesley Heller Workspace in New York.

Seidl has found artistic expression in two mediums: painterly abstraction and experimental photography. She started out as a painter but picked up a camera in 1985 when her family bought a camp in Rangeley. Seidl was looking for a more immediate way to capture her experience of the landscape during the day and at night. While she initially approached her photography like a painter looking for line, contrast, and values, now the current of influence is reversed and her subjects are people, time, and memory.



Seidl's black-and-white photographs are tantalizingly mysterious. The artist makes ample use of reflection,



**SWIMMER, NIGHT - 2011**

movement, and darkness to create images with physical subjects that are sometimes difficult to decipher. Seidl often shoots at night with little available light, and her long exposures reveal the passage of time. Stars have moved, leaves have stirred in the wind, people have changed position or left. For some images, Seidl directs a light into the night, a technique that registers as an incandescent drawing. Time's metaphorical connotations are deeply meaningful to the artist. She will often set up her camera during a dinner with friends and relatives, exposing the film for 30 minutes or even an hour. Figures thus turn into ghost-like apparitions, foregrounding our impermanence. Time as a narrative and memorial force gives these images great poignancy.

For *Swimmer, Night*, Seidl used a flashlight to illuminate her subject and exposed the film for almost a minute. While our eyes can only see incremental instants of time and can only focus at specific distances, Seidl's camera takes in a record of movement across the entire observed space. The resulting image recreates a continuum of space and time not visible to the human eye.

[claireseidl.com](http://claireseidl.com)