



HEILAND SPLITGRADE – Easier darkroom works?

A first practical report

Although I'm normally sceptic against automatism I was interested in the HEILAND SPLITGRADE-System – irrespective of that I design the website for the HEILAND ELECTRONIC company. After connecting it to my enlarger I wanted to see what happens when one entrusts his or her negatives to a (creativity-incapable) machine without reflecting it in mind. As a friend of classic fine art I was accustomed to do e v e r y little step on my own.

So I was fascinated by the first results. The prints on cheap RC paper made by the “just push the button”-method showed a very impressive tonal range. The tonal quality of these “just 5 minutes”-prints is similar to that of the classic fine art prints realized in hours or months. This all showed the following results (And I'm sure that other HEILAND-Beginners feel the same):

After the darkroom session at the following day:
Astonishment and fascination about the quality realized so simply.

The second day:
Increasing irritation up to speechlessness and anger about the past wasted time, materials and its costs. Growing injudiciousness that with great efforts this quality is hard to realize by the classical way. The beginning fascination cools down a bit. Doubtless the HEILAND SPLITGRADE-System seems to be the best and user-friendliest controller. For my opinion the print on graded fiber base (e.g. the old Record Rapid) still shows the best tonal range. Further that computer cannot find out the result wanted by the artist, it can't “calculate” his or her creativity.

After cooling down I understood as follows: I saw that the times of “Princess Fine Art Photography” are over now. It's the right time to break with the old technical fetish – but that doesn't mean to join in the nowadays technical obedience and lack of imagination. The one who understands the limits and chances of old and new technology and knows how to use them best will receive appropriate results.

Now I'm interested to find out the possibilities and limits of this machine. It really is a great challenge to print my whole archive – both sides, the fine and the bad negatives.

But that's not all: When one can forget that “fight in the darkroom” one now can concentrate on the artistic works. There's no more reason for hesitation anymore.

The HEILAND SPLITGRADE-System really is a helping hand in the darkroom, especially when there's not much time. And – for me that's the most interesting application – to find out the real quality of the negative. Further it's fascinating for the artist to see how that machine interprets his or her negatives. Sometimes the results are unforeseeable, which could be fascinating and stimulating.