

# NIGHT & LOW- LIGHT PHOTO GRAPHY

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Foreword by MICHAEL KENNA

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! Saunders plans her transit system shoots on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday nights and during colder weather when there tends to be less activity on the platform. She scouts subway locations in advance and works with an assistant on shoots so she's never alone at night for extended periods in unfamiliar locations.

## Daryl-Ann Saunders

### Process

The atmosphere of subway platforms at night becomes a stage set for images that benefit from the low-light capability of high-speed film in the creation of a futuristic aesthetic. After a shoot, Daryl-Ann Saunders tries to have her film developed as soon as possible, to check results from a location in progress as well as to avoid traveling through airport security with exposed film. For uniformity in processing and presentation, she uses the automated system of a semi-pro photography chain found in most of the cities she visits. She orders two sets of 4x6 prints and works with these by viewing both sides of the image over a lightbox to transform an initial assembly of components into picture ideas. She sometimes also uses an extra CD with images saved as low-resolution files in her decision-making process.

Once Saunders identifies the negatives she wants to work with, she scans them at maximum resolution on a 4000 dpi film scanner to yield 80-megabyte RGB files. Several scans of an image may be needed to get one file that captures the best range of contrast from shadows and highlights. Next, she creates "assemblages" by bringing together the photos on the computer and works with multiple variations to identify the one best suited to her creative and printing intent. Once she hones in on a final version, she cleans the files and creates multiple Photoshop layers for exposure, contrast, and retouching. Because these layers can expand the size of a file to 1 gigabyte or more, this part of the process can easily take one week of 8-hour sessions. In the end, the finished file is flattened and burned to CD for output.

Saunders prints her work at a professional lab and consults with the printer during all steps of printing, from an initial test through several proofs to the final output. Her current paper choice is Fujifilm's Fujiflex Crystal Archive, which complements the metallic look of her subject matter. Super glossy and saturated, it is an archival photographic paper that can also be used for digital output. Saunders's digital C-prints are prepared in limited editions at several sizes. The largest sizes (up to 7 feet wide) are mounted on Plexiglas to ensure flatness before they are framed. All are fronted with Plexiglas rather than glass to keep the final frame weight to a minimum. ■



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Camera Olympus 15-3 SLR  
Lens Integrated 35-180mm, 1:5.6 zoom

Aperture f/22  
Exposure Between 4 seconds and 1 minute  
Film Fujicolor NPZ 800

Daryl-Ann Saunders photographs nocturnal subway trains in busy urban settings. Given the speed of her subjects and the limitations of her environments, she has to plan a lot in advance. She shoots digitally for commercial work, but she selected a modest analog SLR with an integrated lens for her subway project to avoid the hazards of working with interchangeable parts and carrying expensive equipment in locations that are potentially unsafe.



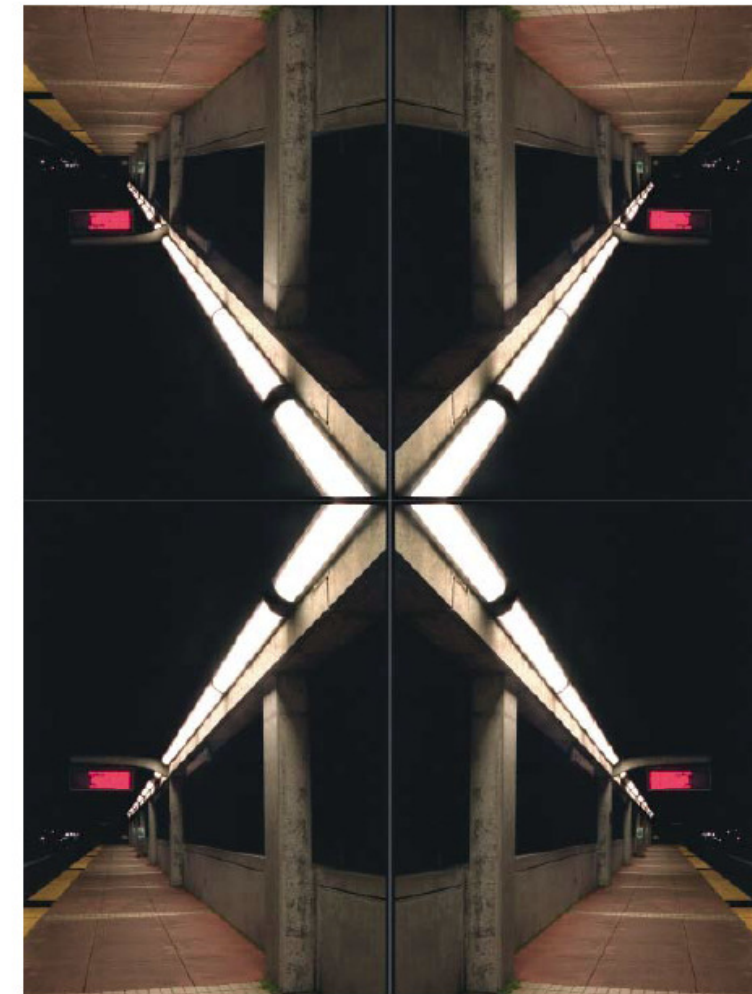
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**OPPOSITE TOP**  
 Camera Olympus IS-3 SLR  
 Lens Integrated 35-180mm 1.5.6 zoom  
 Aperture f/22  
 Exposure between 4 seconds and 10 minutes  
 Film Fujicolor NPZ 800

**OPPOSITE CENTER**  
 Camera Olympus IS-3 SLR  
 Lens Integrated 35-180mm 1.5.6 zoom  
 Aperture f/22  
 Exposure between 4 seconds and 10 minutes  
 Film Fujicolor NPZ 800

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM**  
 Camera Olympus IS-3 SLR  
 Lens Integrated 35-180mm 1.5.6 zoom  
 Aperture f/22  
 Exposure between 4 seconds and 10 minutes  
 Film Fujicolor NPZ 800

**RIGHT**  
 Camera Olympus IS-3 SLR  
 Lens Integrated 35-180mm 1.5.6 zoom  
 Aperture f/22  
 Exposure between 4 seconds and 10 minutes  
 Film Fujicolor NPZ 800



### Personal Vision

A host of technical issues can arise with this work, and sometimes you have to rethink and change your expectations once you get on-site. Stand there and see if there is something better to derive from the subject.

-Daryl-Ann Saunders

**OPPOSITE TOP:** Saunders plays the role of architect by reconstructing the transit system from the nighttime images she makes on the subway platform. Here, one vertical image is stretched across four frames by scanning the negatives, flopping the files, and combining them edge-to-edge to result in an image that becomes panoramic in appearance. **OPPOSITE CENTER:** In this four-section composite, massive structures are abstracted to become space-age surfaces through Saunders's clever use of the edges of the frame and the recombining of identical parts. Her final pieces can measure up to 7 feet wide and are printed on Fujiflex Crystal Archive's metallic paper to lend to her images a sense of the materials used in the trains themselves. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** On a weeklong shooting trip to the San Francisco Bay area, Saunders spent entire days riding the length of the transit system to scout shooting locations. At some stations, the best lighting conditions are in the short window of twilight, when the fading daylight coexists with artificial lights. In an added twist on transit, this view combines different frames shot from the same vantage point to show sequential moments in one image.

**TOP:** The fluorescent lighting and LED readout of a deserted platform is transformed into a bold graphic design element in Saunders's latest work. In order to achieve maximum sharpness with her 35mm format, she keeps the camera aperture set at f/22. Because lighting conditions on the platform are subject to rapid change as a train enters the station she brackets the shutter speed and works on the fly with light levels in flux.



© DARYL-ANN SAUNDERS

Camera Olympus 1S-3 SLR  
Lens Integrated 35-180mm, 1:5.6 zoom  
Aperture *f/22*  
Exposure between 4 seconds and 1 minute  
Film Fujicolor NPZ 800

The metallic surfaces of a New York subway platform become a rich canvas for extreme color casts from multiple light sources. Rather than trying to neutralize the color shifts, Daryl-Ann Saunders works with a high-speed negative film that heightens the color palette and adds to the surreal look of these environments.

### Heightening the Effect of Mixed Lighting

Mixed lighting can be impossible to correct. Instead of neutralizing color casts, it may be advantageous to consider the other extreme: exaggerating color casts and adding contrast to lights. In these conditions a high-speed film will intensify colors and boost contrast to balance garish lighting with added grain and rich blacks.



The reciprocity failure inherent in film often requires using much longer exposures in low light with film-based cameras than exposures made with digital cameras under the same conditions.