

# Branches, Witches, and Stiches

By Ryan Dewayne Melton

My photographic work was derived from my fascination with nature, mysticism, and occult practices. My inspiration has come from my years living in the marsh lands of Florida as a young child. I incorporated that imagery I encountered down there, from the voodoo botanica shops, endless swamps and wild bayous. This subject of the occult and magic interested me because of the secretive and natural state that surrounds it.

I learned how to express myself through this beautiful artistic medium, and once I started I couldn't stop. I wanted to explore and create depictions of subject matter that interested me and that deserved to be captured and put on paper. I enjoyed the variety of different darkroom techniques that I wanted to experiment with and was amazed by their wonderful outcomes. With darkroom photography's unpredictability of how a photo was going to come out, whether good or bad, was very exciting to me.

I believe that these subjects of mysticism and occult practices work extremely well with darkroom photography because both require time, patience, manipulation that must be done in order to get the desired results. The classic art of darkroom photography seems mysterious and obscure, which I believe work well with subjects I chose to focus on. From my curiosity of the power that these ancient and misunderstood practices, I was given the inspiration to create my alluring images.