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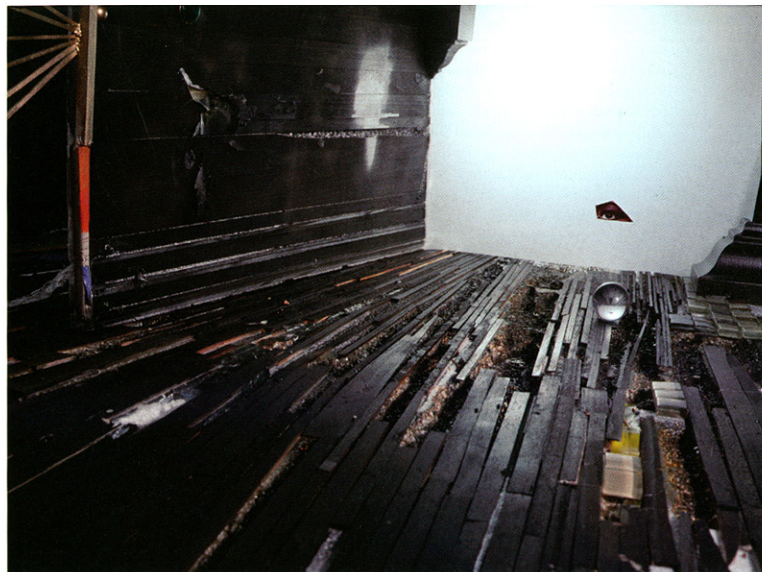
# OUT OF THE DARKROOM

VINCE ALETTI is a photography curator and critic based in New York City who writes frequently for the New Yorker and a variety of magazines. Last year he curated 'Avedon Fashion 1944-2000' at the International Center of Photography. Here we invited him to choose six photographers who reflect NOW.

AT ANY ONE time, probably a good four fifths of the world's working photographers are 'emerging': getting started (or restarted), getting noticed, desperately treading water. It's not easy: only the strong (and independently wealthy) survive. But if the economy isn't encouraging and many galleries are on their last nerves, there's an anything-goes openness when it comes to new photography and there are plenty of us hungry for regular doses of style and substance.

The six photographers gathered here have plenty of both. They're thriving at a moment when there is no dominant strategy, no cool school, and options abound. Not every photograph has to be the size of a picture window, black-and-white is not just for traditionalists, frames are dispensable, the darkroom remains a site of wild-style experimentation, and galleries are not the only outlet. A lot of the strongest work I've seen recently has been in books, including a number of increasingly sophisticated ones coming out of independent publishers. Joshua Deaner's *I sell fish*, which I first saw as a judge on the Photography. Book. Now competition for self-published photo books run by the creative publishing service Blurb, is one of 2009's savviest, most idiosyncratic titles and it won the top prize in the competition's fine art division. Between Mariah Robertson's energetic abstractions and Dietmar Busse's soulful portraits, there's a wide-open world of possibilities. Begin your exploration here.

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Cleo, 2009



**YAMINI NAYAR, 34, grew up in Detroit, lives in Brooklyn.** Like a number of contemporary photographers (Thomas Demand, Anne Hardy and Laurie Simmons, for instance), Yamini works in imaginary spaces – places that exist only to be photographed. But the rooms she constructs on table tops in her Brooklyn studio are like interiors in dreams, strangely familiar, even inviting at first, but look around and you'll see that nothing's quite right. Half the floorboards are missing and so is the back wall, where an eye is peering through a chink in the void. Metallic curtains billow in a wallpapered room where a twist of oily black stuff rises like smoke. Yamini's most recent photographs abstract architecture even further, sketching in a space that's more cerebral than physical – one idea taking shape while another dissolves. These spaces may be imaginary, but you don't want to leave. ■