Solarized Dancers

This project explores the beauty of the human form through bellydance. It is a series of four images meant to be displayed in a square formation (numbered sequentially going clockwise from the upper left). They portray different concepts of line through the bodies of the dancers in the horizontal images and motion through the skirts of the dancers in the vertical images. Image number two contains two shallow crescents, one from the arm and torso of the dancer, the other through her shadow; while image number four draws the eye upward and to the right with one strong line. Images numbers one and three give the feeling of motion because the dancers’ hips, while not directly visible, are moving in opposition to their shoulders.

The images were lit strongly from one side, and weakly from the other to form strong shadows, and costumes were chosen to be simple, with the only detail being two satin skirts to reflect light and add texture. The pictures were taken against a flat gray background while the dancers were in motion, using Ilford HP5+ (ISO 400) and Kodak Professional (ISO 150) black-and-white negative film. The exposures were 1/60th of a second with a fairly large aperture to optimize clarity and the amount of the image that was in focus. All of the images were shot by the author of this series except for image number four depicting the author, which was taken by one of the dancers.

The film for this series was developed normally, and the prints were solarized. The developer used was a 1:1 solution of Solarol, and the first exposure time (around 24 seconds with an F-stop of 11) was nearly enough to get the full range of values when developed normally. Then the prints were developed for 35 seconds, followed by a very brief second exposure (anywhere from 0.7 seconds to 1.5 seconds with an F-stop of 11). The prints were then developed normally to completion. This was just enough solarization to force some of the flesh tones to flip to a negative image while preserving the dark parts of the image. It raised contrast in the shadows and on the satin skirts, while highlighting the edges of the skin of the dancers.