

# THE PINE FLATWOODS MURAL

In January 2008 I returned to Volusia County for the final stages of the Florida Understory Project with three helpers from Southern California: Diane Edwards, Damon Nicholson, and Jerry Keane. Along with student volunteers from the college, we concentrated our efforts on working with the **pine flatwoods** environment surrounding the **Bicentennial Youth Park** in DeLand, Florida. My ambitions and the level of production needs had grown tremendously by this stage of the project. On most days we had five to seven people working on the project.

The primary goal at this point was to produce enough images to make a 10 x 30-foot mural that was representative of the main ecosystems in Central Florida. I planned to collage together images of various sizes to make the mural. We sought as many species as possible and produced several hundred lumen prints of tree trunks, whole trees, shrubs, grasses, vines, and small plants. Our production area reminded me of the famous photograph from 1845 of Fox Talbot's printing establishment in Reading, England, showing rows of calotype prints on racks being exposed in the sunlight. Unlike Fox Talbot's, the prints we made varied tremendously in size. Many of them were composites consisting of from two to twenty pieces of paper. We worked from early morning until dusk each day. It was exhausting, but the results were very satisfying.

When I returned to Southern California I fixed all the prints and began to deal with the visual components and logistics of producing the mural. No matter what I came up with, nothing seemed to work, and time was running out. I would have only one more opportunity, in June, to finalize the images for the mural. **On Friday, June 20, 2008**, a crew of ten helpers from the college and the museum and others gathered to collect fresh specimens for the piece. We laid out a grid of eighteen sheets of paper and placed the plants on top of them to create a ghostlike image of a pine flatlands ecosystem. The process was an exhilarating, once-in-a-lifetime event, another example of orchestrated chance at its best.

The mural on display in the gallery is a reproduction/facsimile version produced from digital scans of the original prints that were produced in the field. To facilitate display, and to protect the original works, new digital output photo prints were mounted on board for this installation.