

Topic 029

Pinhole photography

Pinhole photography is lens less photography. A tiny hole replaces the lens. Light passes through the hole; an image is formed in the camera.

Basically a pinhole camera is a box, with a tiny hole in one end and film or photographic paper in the other.



Tom Baril,
1998

Pinhole cameras are used for fun, for art and for science.

Pinhole images are softer - less sharp - than pictures made with a lens. The images have nearly infinite depth of field. Wide angle images remain absolutely rectilinear. On the other hand, pinhole images suffer from greater chromatic aberration than pictures made with a simple lens, and they tolerate little enlargement.



From the window series, Robert Mann



Paris, Ilan Wolf, 1998

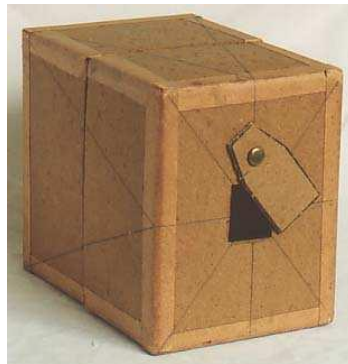
THE HISTORY OF PINHOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

- Sir David Brewster, a Scottish scientist, was one of the first to make pinhole photographs, in the 1850s. He also coined the very word "pinhole".
- By the late 1880s the Impressionist movement in painting was a certain influence on photography. Different schools or tendencies developed in photography.
- The "old school" believed in sharp focus and good lenses; the "new school", the "pictorialists", tried to achieve the atmospheric qualities of paintings. Some of the pictorialists experimented with pinhole photography.



"Expeditions" , Ruth Thorne-Thomsen,
1979

- Pinhole photography became popular in the 1890s.
- Commercial pinhole cameras were sold in Europe, the United States and in Japan. 4000 pinhole cameras ("Photomnibuses") were sold in London alone in 1892.
- The cameras seem to have had the same status as disposable cameras today - none of the "Photomnibuses" have been preserved for posterity in camera Collections
- Mass production of cameras and "new realism" in the 20th century soon left little space for pinhole photography
- By the 1930s the technique was hardly remembered, or only used in teaching



Eastman Kodak Pinhole Camera 1930

The Revival of Pinhole Photography

- In the mid-1960s several artists, unaware of each other, began experimenting with the pinhole technique - Paolo Gioli in Italy, Gottfried Jager in Germany, David Lebe, Franco Salmoiraghi, Wiley Sanderson and Eric Renner in the USA.
- In 1971 The Time-Life Books published The Art of Photography in the well-known Life Library of Photography and included one of Eric Renner's panoramic pinhole images.



Lago Maggiore, North Italy, Peter Olpe, 1978

- The June 1975 issue of Popular Photography published the article "Pinholes for the People", based on Phil Simkin's month-

long project with 15,000 hand-assembled and preloaded pinhole cameras in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. People came into the museum, picked up a camera, made an exposure. The images, developed in a public darkroom in the museum, were continually displayed in the museum.



Brooklyn Bridge, Dona McAdams, 1983

In the 1970s pinhole photography gained increasing popularity. A number of articles and some books were published, but the critics tended to ignore pinhole photography in art.



Beth III, Mimbres Hot Springs Ranch, Nancy Spencer, 1995