

PHMD 201 - Photography I: View Camera, Fall 2013  
Writing Prompt No. 4

We have all faced challenges over the course of this semester – many of which have required a project or portion of a project to be reworked or, in some cases, completely re-done. Think of a hurdle / problem / challenge you have had to faced in the class with regards to the following questions:

1. What was the problem / challenge (technical and otherwise) you faced?
2. How did you overcome it?
3. How did getting it right enable or change the way you moved forward?

“1. What was the problem/challenge you faced?

I struggled with the "Constructed Narrative" project. I am a "hunter" type of photographer and it was difficult for me to create a scene from nothing. The details were hard to consider, what to include vs. what to leave out. I found that to start setting a scene with the intention already in mind was more difficult than to interpret an existing scene.

2. How did you overcome it?

I focused more on the unanswered aspect of the project rather than the details. When I considered including more questions than answers, I was able to supply details in after I had set up the scene. I also began with a location and a subject already in mind and built the narrative around that.

3. How did getting it right enable or change the way you moved forward?

Focusing on the included elements rather than the story behind the photo enabled me to find the narrative through the details. It also made me think about the details in future pictures that I could include or leave out.”

“I had several hurdles with this camera that have taught me a lot. My first hurdle was the fact that my DSLR won't meter below 200 ISO. So I have to overexpose each shot by one stop. It has proven to be a semester long battle. I checked out a meter for one assignment and felt much more confident in my photos, but a rental is only two days right now. I need the meter for the weekend, which for me is a five day check out. If I could correctly meter my photos at the time that I take them, I would feel much better overall about working with the view camera. I've also run into my ground glass breaking, contact sheets being wrong, and problems with my focusing. We were lucky enough to have an extra ground glass and I finally found someone to show me how to do a contact sheet the right way. I have to constantly remind myself to slow down and focus until it's right. I think those are the big hurdles I've overcome this semester and I'm sure there's more to come in the last few weeks.”

“My biggest problem I have faced when it comes to this class is fully understanding all of the movements and adjustments that the view camera has. The first few projects were the hardest for me because we had to practice swing, tilt, etc. and I just wasn't understanding what the final product should look like. It was obviously messing up my grade because I wasn't successfully completing the assignment.

I overcame it by first, slowing down because it helped me think about what I was supposed to be doing for each specific assignment and second, getting help from someone who understood the assignment. As much as I hated turning in a bad photo, it helped when I saw who had done the assignment correctly at critique so then I understood what I needed to do for the reshoot.

Once I understood the right movements of the view camera, it helped me fully understand what the camera can do and which situations are right for the specific movements. It definitely helped my overall understanding of the camera and I think it will ultimately help me shoot my final project.”

"I'd have to say that the hardest challenge I have faced this semester was the plane of focus assignment it still continues to challenge me and I am still working on getting better at it. Another challenge I faced is development tempter but again I think I just need to keep practicing. At the same time these challenges help me to grow as a photographer."

"Over the course of the semester I had multiple problems with my view camera. The one that stood out the most was the huge light leaks in my first attempt at the parallel lines project. It was very dissapointing that my first round of photos did not turn out because my partner and I went on a little road trip to Topeka (my first time going there!) to take the photos. We were so confused as to why they did not turn out correctly, so we brought the camera to you, Bryon, to take a peek-see. It turned out that we were loading our film holders into the camera backwards, resulting in major light leaks. Getting help from an instructor is the first step to solving any problems, and it did just that. When we found out that that was the case, we were sure to never do it again. In result of having to reshoot the photos, I got to take the camera back to my hometown and photograph the architecture there. It made me realize how much I love shooting downtown St. Joseph, MO. I'm not saying that the incorrectly loaded film cases were my key to finding out what I love to shoot, but I'm also not saying that they didn't take part in the realization either. The incident led to me finding my favorite subject to shoot as well as becoming more careful and attentive with my equipment.

I also had some exposure problems throughout the semester. I blame the light meter I bought. Just kidding, I probably just need to get better at finding the right place to read. With my more recent photos I took your advice and shot each photo for a stop down, if anything over exposing the film a bit. I think I like that method and will keep at it!"

"1. My problem/challenge that I had faced during this course is exposure. My first project I had an exposure problem because my image was under exposure and come out too dark.

2. How I overcome my exposure problem was to make sure I meter the subject right, so the image would not be under or over exposure. Also to bracket my shot by shooting one stop over and one stop under to help have three options to chose from.

3. Getting the exposure right has helped me to look over and double-check everything before capturing an image. The littlest mistake as in metering it wrong can cause an image to be under or over exposure."

"I think the biggest challenge overall is the time that the process for making a photograph takes. With a leap into the digital age, image making has become a less laborious and thoughtless in a way. Using a large format camera forces you to slow down and really think about the image your making. I have had to become a lot more on top of managing time to put out even decent work, which in the long run I can see affecting my other work postively, even when I take snapshots I find myself taking even a few seconds to give thought."

"Throughout this year there have been many challenges that have come along with my photography. A bigger problem I faced was getting the tonal range correct. Often times, I had to scan and open up the shadows a lot to get more information. When I did this, it created a flat look with a lot of midtones but there were still extreme lights and darks. I did not know that this problem was so easy to solve. Working in curves, you can adjust just little parts of the curve. Each curve adjustment has a built in mask so you can fix the other portions that were changed with the adjustment. Doing this many times will add the needed contrast in the certain places that are rather dull. Fixing these problems enabled me to move

forward because not my photos have such a better tonal range. For awhile I felt like I was in a stagnant problem but now I have figured out how to move forward with my photos.”

“The most technical problem I have faced through out the semester would have to be with photoshop. I absolutely love the camera and the film and the processing, however, when it comes to photoshop I had little experience with it before hand. In addition to this, I have learned a lot about photoshop and now I feel confident and comfortable when working with it.

I overcame my difficulties by constantly re-working my images. Playing around with different tools and figuring out key-shortcuts via online help. Most of all I was patient (I usually am not) but I knew for the sake of my major, I was going to bite the bullet and learn it.

It helps in a great way. I understand that I cant live in the dark room forever and I need to "get with the times", experience something new. I will still work in mostly dark room format but knowing I can alter it digitaly with ease and just about the same way as the dark room helps me alot. It is, for the most part, less time-consuming and more affordable. I will continue to dapple in the realm of digital photo manipulation and move forward with more digital photography itself. I have a hunch it will help aid me with my future career and education. I am grateful for that.”

“I think over the course of this semester, the most problems I faced were having to adjust exposure, either due to how much I focused on the subject, environment, etc. or if my light meter was reading correctly. It is difficult for me in the sense that I've never used a view camera before, and everything on it completely manual - which is the point of this course.

I overcame this problem by first using the light meter on my DSLR camera as opposed to a phone app - never again! I've also been taking multiple pictures of the same scene, but changing the shutter speed in order to have variety in the exposure that I want and figure out which one will give me the most detail depending on if it is cloudy versus sunny outside.

By coming up with this solution, I have found that it has been working for me, so I stuck with it. I've been continuing to use this method to get the picture I want as opposed to taking one picture of each scene and hoping the exposure was correct.”

“The assignment I had many problems with was Plane of Focus. I just barely missed the focus and couldn't get it quite right. I overcame this by starting over completely and re-shooting. I was extremely meticulous and took my time to make sure the focus was perfect my second time around. This enabled me to move forward and gave me a better understanding of how the view camera functions. The recreation of this assignment stands to be my favorite of the semester so far.”

“The biggest problem I've faced for this class is time management. It's been difficult to compete the long process of the view camera while sharing the camera with a partner. Then when I'll be ready to shoot, weather will ruin my plans...

The biggest way I've overcome this process is by following the instructions of each assignment, rather than trying to create a masterpiece with each one. I really only make a photograph that qualifies as acceptable for each assignment now.

This gets me moving forward through the class, but limits my creative potential. But hey, at least I get the grade!

My other huge struggle is Photoshop. I know nothing about it.”