

PHMD 560 – Special Topics: View Camera, Fall 2012  
Writing Prompt No. 2

We all know how a view camera differs from a digital SLR, but how might a view camera relate to contemporary tools? In other words, has your time with a view camera informed or changed the way you use your digital camera?

“Well, the biggest way the view camera has changed my interaction with a DSLR is simply the use of a tripod. I let my stubbornness get the best of me, and prior to this class when i would shoot digitally i wouldn't use a tripod...in situations i should have used a tripod. To me, the freedom of handheld was best, I thought a tripod was more of a hindrance than anything; big, bulky, and constricting. And, of course, i would tend to get some motion blur or sway slightly so that my lines weren't straight. I would end up shooting 3/4 frames just to get my one shot not blurry when if i would have done it right at first, i could have got my shot in half the tries.”

“Whether it be a digital SLR or a camera on a phone, working with a View Camera has encouraged me to slow down and pay more attention to composition and focus. I find myself concentrating on straight lines and exact pin point focusing. I appreciate what goes into making a photograph much more now, especially when thinking back when digital cameras were not even thought of yet.”

“My time with a view camera has significant impact on how I shoot with my other photographic mediums, such as digital and medium format. Using the view camera makes the user slow down, and really focus on everything within the frame. This has a large impact on how I shoot with my digital and medium format cameras. Whenever I shoot using digital and medium format now, I compose contemplating extremely sharp focus, perspective, form, and content throughout the frame before I try and capture an image. This isn't saying I have never done this before I took the view camera course, but when you are using a camera that can take countless images, you shoot a lot more and have the freedom to just shoot. In comparison the view camera, makes you create a single photograph, or how ever many sheets of film you have. This aspect of the view camera slows you down, and makes sure everything within the composition has a “meaning” or purpose within the frame.”

“Using the view camera makes me think more about the photos I'm taking with any camera, digital SLR or otherwise. In addition to focusing on eliminating converging lines, it also reinforces the technical aspects of photography such as thinking of light in stops, coming in very handy when dealing with strobes. It also has made me focus on checking every corner of the frame, making sure I eliminate and include what is needed, just like I do when looking on the ground glass. Being aware of perspective has also become more prevalent. Such as knowing how your view point can affect the image, due to the ability to move the rear standard around the image area. And finally it has made me realize the shortcomings of the SLR format, something that I never noticed in the past, including the special circumstances where the movements of the view camera are required.”

“My time working with the view camera has definitely affected the way I photograph with other cameras like my DSLR. Working with the view camera is a much slower process and really requires me to slow down and think about what I am including in the frame. I have to think about the composition and focus of the photograph before taking the image. This is very different from shooting with a camera that allows you to take multiple shots and see results immediately like a DSLR. I find myself now putting

more thought into images when working with my other camera. It has made me slow down and think about exactly what I want in the photograph before I take a shot, not after.”

“I definitely think more about the photograph itself rather than aimlessly making images. Using the view camera forces me to visualize what the image will look like after taking the photo, and I have to make a thorough decision about composition. Where as using a DSLR gives the photographer more spontaneity because they can quickly see if the photograph turned out. Using the view camera is a lot more time consuming as well, so its sort of odd to switch back and forth and go from a very slow process to something digital and instant. Using the view camera has changed the way I photograph with any type of camera because it is so different and meticulous.”

“When using the view camera you really have to look into the image that you are about to take for a long time before you ever expose the film. By doing this, you line up everything, you check the focus over and over again, and you notice things that you may not want in your image. Now when taking a picture, I stare at the image longer which really changes the way that I see things. Even when using my phone for instagram, I tend to make sure that my lines are straight and that what is in the frame is what I want to be apart of the image. I think that this is a good quality that the view camera gives its photographers because taking a picture is really capturing the moment, but sometimes there are things during that moment that you wouldn't notice, that end up in your picture. Taking time to really focus on things helps your composure and this is an extremely important aspect photographers should keep in mind when thinking about an image.”

“I have not been using my DSLR as much this semester as last year, so I have not noticed a lot of changes in my shooting style. However, I have become more purposeful with my DSLR. Rather than shooting numerous frames in order to get a few good shots, I have done more planning before shoots and have taken more time with each individual image. I have also become more detail oriented and aware of what is in the frame.”

“Using the view camera has forced me to be generally more thoughtful in selecting and creating compositions. Before, I had gotten into a rut with DSLR event photography, moving with intuition, and what I knew about composition and exposure, to quickly take images when I went out to shoot. I would be working without a tripod handy, unless I thought I'd absolutely need it. View camera has influenced my DSLR work by encouraging me to adopt a similar methodical approach to composing images. More and more I find myself wanting to use a tripod. I now use the incident light meter I bought for View Camera class, rather than the on-camera light meter to great effect. I remember to run my eyes around the edge of the viewfinder frame, analyzing what falls inside and outside, and where the space and objects are truncated.

Working with view camera negative in post-processing has also influenced how I handle editing digital images. Learning how to better dodge and burn in Photoshop using layer masks has worked its way into my digital workflow. I also am more careful to check and edit images for sensor dust.”

“I think the main way using a view camera has influenced the way I use a digital camera is in thought and composition. With a digital camera it is very easy to rely on the fact that you can immediately look at what you've shot and correct as you go. With a view camera though you have to have confidence in your images so that you know you won't have to reshoot. There is also a lot of technical components that are required in order to make an image turn out how you would like it to. With a digital camera you can shoot RAW and know that Photoshop will always be there to make any little changes that you might need.”

“Working with the view camera and the process associated with it has forced me to be more deliberate in the way I make photographs. See, just there I said "*make photographs*" - I don't think that is something I would of said before taking this course. I've always felt that thought and skill went into photography but while using the view camera I feel like I am crafting an image more in depth than I have in digital processes. I think this partially comes from all the control the camera has to offer with the various movements.

When I use my digital camera, I feel like I take fewer photos now. Now more often than not I have a preconceived idea of the photo I want to take before I get out my digital camera. Not that I don't experiment but having an idea of the photo I want to take has saved me from lugging around the heavy view camera without a purpose. I also believe that straining my eyes trying to compose an image on the dim ground glass has made me appreciate the brightness of my viewfinder on my DSLR and has caused me to take more time examining the composition of the image.”

“It has changed the what that I shoot with a digital camera. By using the view camera I have become more aware of all the flaws that my 35mm digital camera has. Now that I know this I think more about the way that I want to photograph what I am taking a photo of. I know that with my digital I am not able to correct the way I can with a view camera but the choice I make on how I photograph can make a difference on the amount of the flaw is shown.”

“Using the view camera definitely makes me hyper aware of everything I am doing. It forces me to compose and tweak every little thing for the photograph to turn out the way I want it to. Making sure the exposure is right on, the lines in the frame are straight, but most of all it has made me paranoid about FOCUS. I almost immediately take out the out of focus images from my selection. So now when I use my digital camera, I make sure the focus is right where I want it, and double check it, I am also more aware of what is in the frame, and I give myself more than enough time to get everything done, because so many times using the view camera, something has gone wrong and I have to redo it at the last minute.”

“After completing a few view camera assignments, I noticed that I take more time composing images with my DSLR than I used to. With view camera, I'm always in the mindset of having only a few sheets of film to get the image I want and I can tell I have been shooting less digital images to get to the final product I want.”

“Shooting with the 4x5 has really made me wish that I had a lot of the movements on my digital or even 35mm cameras. I'm always wanting to be able to straighten the lines on buildings or swing the focal plane along the side of a building. Although I really do like that other formats are less cumbersome and faster to shoot with. The 4x5 has also made me consider each shot more, it's slowed down my process so that I am more considerate of the framing and settings before shooting.”

“I am getting more and more used to manual settings on the view camera as well as my digital one. I have shot in auto mode for so long that I am remembering how long it takes to make the photo right using the fstop and shutter speed options that come with my camera. I think it has made me a better digital photographer. I am also able to help my son figure out his digital camera as they are only using manual mode as well. As for contemporary tools, I am EXTREMELY happy that we are not printing in the dark room. I am very happy with the scanning of the negatives and electronically editing the images. I feel that it would be very stressful to print in the darkroom. Perhaps in later classes for view camera, one week's assignment could be to print in the darkroom, but I would give two weeks to complete that

assignment. Most of the students in view camera have had the basic film class within the last few years. For me it's been almost 10."

"One of the biggest ways that it has influenced my way of shooting with a digital camera is that I miss being able to shift the plane of focus to however it is I want. While most of the view camera photos I've taken haven't used it a lot, its the little shifts that make a big difference. It has also helped improve my use all around at using a tripod."

"It makes me consider things differently depending on what I am shooting. For instance now I feel as though I must compose anything outside the studio (with some exceptions) with a tripod and shutter release cable depending (shutter release cable depending on time of day) to properly get the image I am looking for without shooting with my camera in hand. I also feel as though I will take more time when it comes to adjusting exposure to make sure that I have details in the correct places."

"Being able to efficiently operate within the workplace (a commercial studio, for instance) or by yourself in the field should be something we all strive for. Not sure if it's just the novelty of the format, but I have the inclination to use it exclusively, at least in the near future (and while my resources allow)."

"It's hard to tell whether or not my technique with a digital camera will change. The ease of using a digital camera enables and encourages spontaneity. I don't think I'll slow down much when shooting digitally but I may be more conscience when I'm shooting film."