

PHMD 560 – Special Topics: View Camera, Fall 2012
Writing Prompt No. 6

After using a view camera for a semester, what is the single most significant thing you will take with you when you leave this class? Has using this tool had a lasting impact on you as a photographer and how?

“The one thing i really took from this class is, before, i was in the market for a 5dmk2...but now...all i want is a large format camera.

but really...

There are a number of factors between my hard-drive crashing and losing all my digital files and never trusting digital again, and the fact that now when i shoot with a digital camera, it doesn't feel like that extension of myself as it once did, it feels lifeless. When shooting with the view camera it really is an experience, an adventure, a story; it sucks to carry for a mile but once you did the picture is more than worth the shoulder pain. I find it very peaceful and alienating (in a good way) when I'm under the dark cloth. Since i cant see anything or anyone its just the subject and I on a personal kind of basis, face to face, almost pulling me in. I believe it has changed me for the better as a photographer ultimately just fine tuning certain skills. Best class i have taken thus far, hands down.”

“Using a view camera has shown me how much work it took to make a photograph back when the cameras were the latest technology. I now have a much deeper appreciation for photography and its progression throughout the centuries. In the future, as photography continues to develop, I will not forget the history that lead to the cameras we use and will use. Not only does the inner peace photography gives me attract me to the art form, but the history and technological aspects do as well.”

“After using a view camera throughout this semester I believe the single most significant thing that I will take from it will be patience. Patience in the sense that I cannot rush something to happen/or make an image, but rather let it happen. Through being limited, by my own budget, on how many images I can make I've had to be patient and wait for the right moment for shooting subjects/landscapes. Using the view camera has definitely had an impact on how I make photographs. It has slowed me down when composing, and really focus on every little detail in every corner of the composition. I absolutely love the view camera, and wish that I would've been able to use it earlier as a photographer.”

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The most lasting thing I've gained from this course organization. Organization in the respect that everything from the location to the framing needs to be thought about even more so than what I've been producing digitally. The view camera plus the use of strobes has made for lengthy shoots for me so every forethought helps when planning a photograph.”

“I think that the most significant thing that I will take away from this semester using a view camera is the importance of slowing down a little when making a photograph. The view camera really taught me the value of thinking out a photograph before taking it. I think that the overall slower process has made me better understand the technical side of the camera and making an image. I also will definitely have a

hard time switching back to shooting with a DSLR. I have really valued the work that I produced over this semester with the view camera and I hope to continue to use the medium in the future.”

“Besides the change in work-flow, I think the most important thing I'll take with me is hopefully continuing to use the View Camera. Whether it be the monorail or a field camera, I really don't want to stop using that medium. A lot of work I've done in this class has been my most valued work I've done at KU, or ever. I really feel comfortable using the view camera and love the process of photographing, processing, editing, etc. I feel like I'm a more rounded photographer after taking this class and I want to continue to use the view camera for a long time.”

“After using the view camera I have a much stronger appreciation for people who really take their time when taking pictures. I have learned how much time it really can take to wait around for that good shot, or to make sure that the image really is in as much focus as you would think it should be. I think that the most significant thing I have learned is to really take your time. Taking your time during the entire process is super important. During the setting up, during the focusing, while waiting around for a long exposure, to get just the right amount of temperature on the chemicals when developing, to wait for it to naturally dry so that you don't get dust from turning the drying machine on, scanning, and finally editing. The entire process is something that takes a lot more effort than if you were to just whip out your digital camera and shoot a subject and I think that process is what makes it interesting and beautiful. This has a lasting impact on me as a photographer because now I realize that good work really comes out of the time that you put into it. There will be many pictures that you put effort into that no one will ever see and that's just the way that it is. In the end, it will be worth it as long as you get that one good comment during critique. :)”

“I have been struggling to explain the changes I have seen in myself and my photography over the last semester. It is not any one aspect that has changed, but I have seen a lot of improvement. I have become much more successful in creating the images I imagine while still embracing happy accidents. My work has become more purposeful this semester as well. The main thing that I want to take away from this class is the actual view camera. I never thought that I would wind up loving this style of shooting so much. I will definitely continue to work with view cameras and am looking into purchasing my own.”

“The quality of photograph as object and the dedicated process are the most significant things I will take from this class. Though I've taken film before, something about the slow methodical action of composing, exposing, developing, editing, and printing an image as we have in this class makes digital photography almost seem vulgar and too easy. The quality of the grain and the command of light black and white view camera exposures have remains riveting, and I want to continue improving my work in this direction. The ability to print BIG, as large or larger than life with tremendous detail, has opened up how much I can fit into compositions. After this class, I don't want to only go back to the restrictions of standard format cameras. I'm saving up for a field camera of my own, and the view camera processes will become a permanent part of my workflow.”

“Using a view camera has absolutely made a major impact on me and the way I shoot. I know I still have a lot of work to do to improve my skills but I already have a lot more confidence knowing that I can use this tool. I appreciate it on an entirely new level. I have a new level of gratitude for the DSLR. The amount of effort that goes into a view camera is outstanding compared to what I'm used to. At first, I thought I would never use a view camera again. However, now that it's over, I'm really sad to see it go. I really appreciate the amount of detail that I can achieve and the control that I have over perspective. I

think now I'm going to get frustrated with my DSLR that it can't do what my view camera could. At the start of the semester, it was the complete opposite."

"I have never really used larger film until recently. All of my experience with film has been in the 35mm format. Understanding the larger formats has changed the way that I think about film. Knowing what can be done with film and the correction of a view camera will change how I go about shooting. Getting to know the view camera helped me with learning the potential of my tilt/shift lens. I will definitely be using the view camera in the future and I will not let it end after the class is over."

"The thing that this class and using the view camera has taught me is to slow down. I will think about my photographs more before taking them, and try to make everything intentional as opposed to by chance. This class was definitely a struggle for me and I probably won't ever use a view camera again, but working on my final project has made me a lot better at using the view camera. I can appreciate other photographers works a lot more when I find out these amazing images were made by a view camera."

"The one thing I'll take with me from this class is getting back to enjoying photography as a craft and not just capturing an image. Using view camera this semester has had a major impact on me as a photographer that will last. Coming into this fall semester I was feeling very discouraged being a photographer and even questioned continuing with photography because I wasn't happy with it like I used to be. What sparked my passion for photography initially was the technicality and craft behind it. I love creating things with my hands, and I think the more I got into digital photography, the more I lost that sense of craft. There's such an immediacy with digital photography that I think started making photography lack luster for me. This semester taking view camera, and also Shaffer's darkroom class really revived my passion and made me realize why I got into photography in the first place. As weird as this sounds I almost feel like I turned a new chapter in my life or had a new breakthrough as an artist this semester because of the view camera class and changed how I want to approach photography in the years to come."

"It's hard for me to say that there's any one particular thing I'll take away from using the view camera. I have really learned to appreciate the time it takes to set up and use the camera, as well as the importance of a good, understanding model. I have also learned that it is very important to take my time when shooting, which is applicable for all formats too, but I have also noticed that when I don't make myself go slowly, I make mistakes. I have also learned that I love shooting with the view camera, not only for the level of detail possible, but because I can use a loupe and make sure the image is in focus, which is a problem I have sometimes with digital."

"Using view camera slows you down so much. I would hate to do an entire senior shoot or a wedding with view camera! That would take too much time. You would end up with only 10-20 pictures that come out! Digital is much easier. If you were shooting something that is stationary, or that will be around for a while, then view camera could be a good choice. Things that are willing to be still, like flowers, or perhaps your children, if only for a few seconds, would be great things to photograph with view camera.

I do know though that I wish I had used color film! Gosh black and white makes things so flat! Perhaps that is what my final assignment needs, but wouldn't it have been much for aesthetically pleasing to see others in color. Thanks for the opportunity to use view camera and to take the class. I think that you could offer the class again in the future, but not as a requirement because there are those of us who really won't use it again. I think though it should be recommended to take the class during the sophomore year, like you were thinking so that using film is still fresh in their minds."

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The respect for the medium and the amount of work it takes to create good work. The process you go through starting from the purchasing of film, and finishing with a final print, is so much more work than you could ever explain to one person. It is a process that can only be experienced. I have received a fair amount of ridicule from my friends in the majors of business, econ and journalism (etc.) for being a photo major and doing what I'm sure they would sum up as "taking pictures" to others. However I find myself spending at LEAST twice the amount of time on campus working compared to them and in general I am more happy with what I am doing with my life. I appreciate and love the intensive process of using the view camera and making a photograph. It is truly your photograph. You bought a piece of film and gave it life and created something absolutely unique that no one else could show the world. In a weird metaphor, it is a child you gave birth to and brought into the world yourself. There is no greater connection to your work in photography than that of using medium of film.”

“I agree with some of the other students; I'm not sure how enthusiastically I will return to shooting with my digital SLR. The view camera is really nice to use in many ways. It can be somewhat of a pain, but that only makes the reward that much more satisfying.”

“I almost don't want to return to a digital format. I've really enjoyed taking my time in setting up a shot, making a scene as opposed to stumbling across one. Though it is harder to be spontaneous with a view camera, it has made me a better critical thinker.”