

# snap shots

Volume 16 Number 1

September 2010

## *Getting Started with Cyanotype*

**Americal Center, Wakefield, MA — September 12, 2010**



While digital methods dominate photography today, the past few years have witnessed an extensive revival of interest in older techniques known collectively as salt-processes. These often involve hand coated papers of low sensitivity exposed in a contact printing frame, requiring the negative to be the same size as the

final print. Some, such as platinum printing, use chemicals that cost hundreds of dollars for a 100ml bottle.

Cyanotype, on the other hand, is inexpensive, permanent, holds title as one of the oldest processes, and yields interesting images (provided you like Prussian blue). It is probably the best introduction to this branch of photography as many of the problems and techniques encountered are common to more expensive processes. Information is easily found in books and on the Internet, but getting all the information you need to get up and going isn't always to be found in one place.

There are actually two cyanotype processes available today. The original system developed by the astronomer John Herschel involves two solutions, is easy to prepare and has been the standard for over 150 years. Cyanotype II, or New Cyanotype, was invented by Mike Ware as a one solution chemistry to address some of the sensitivity and density issues of the traditional method. It is more difficult to prepare, but not unduly so. The presentation at the September 12<sup>th</sup> PHSNE meeting will show exactly what's involved in mixing up each one.

Paper is critical to salt processes: newcomers often learn more about the characteristics of the thousands of art papers available than they ever wanted to, mostly through expensive and time consuming failures. The presentation will include information about how to choose a paper that will perform to your expectations. The tools needed to coat and print can be expensive if new, but there are many cheaper routes available, once you learn what to look for in used equipment.

Likewise, while large format negatives can be made with conventional film, lithographic film with special development can be used at far less cost. Being orthochromatic, it can be handled under a red safelight and safely cut to whatever size you need. Litho film enables the use of cameras with obsolete film formats; however there are tricks to developing it, which will be revealed during the program.

The presentation will take the cyanotype process from start to finish, showing the two types of chemistry. It will demonstrate coating by both the hake brush and glass rod methods and exposure with printing frames and UV lamps. Cyanotypes are usually processed in water, and variations beyond that involve safe household chemicals. If you have considered salt-processes, be sure to attend this meeting. *John Wojtowicz is the President of PHSNE and has been working with cyanotype and salt prints for several years.*

*~ Photos by Cate Wojtowicz*



**Save the Dates: September 25 & 26**  
**Photographica 74**  
**Americal Center, Wakefield, MA**  
**Details to follow in next issue of *snap shots***

## **Debating Modern Photography: The Triumph of Group f/64**

**September 30 through December 5, 2010  
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME**

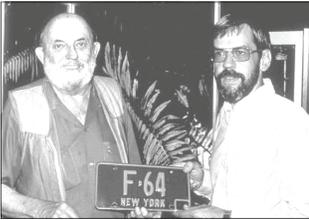


Photo by Gordon Brown

*f/64 member Gordon Brown shows his NY license plate to Ansel Adams (left)*

In the 1930s, a small group of California photographers challenged the painterly, soft-focus Pictorialist style of the day. They argued that photography could only advance as an art form if its practitioners exploited characteristics inherent to the camera's mechanical nature. This small associa-

tion of innovators created Group f/64, named after the camera aperture which produces great depth of field and sharp focus [on large format cameras].

The exhibition revisits this debate and includes images by photographers in Group f/64 such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, and Willard Van Dyke, as well as images by such Pictorialists as Anne Brigman, William Dassonville, William Mortensen, and Karl Struss. With more than 100 works by 16 artists, *Debating Modern Photography* offers a feast for the eyes while illustrating both sides of a high-stakes debate. Outstanding examples of the clean edges and bold forms of Group f/64 stand in sharp contrast to the romantic, hand-crafted Pictorialist work. See [portlandmuseum.org](http://portlandmuseum.org) for additional information.

### **PHSNE Membership**

PHSNE membership is \$15 for students, \$35 for individuals, \$40 for a family, and \$45 for foreign membership. Please send checks in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar-denominated international money orders. An application is available at [phsne.org/membership](http://phsne.org/membership).

Members should check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465 (Call: 617-826-9294; email: [membership@phsne.org](mailto:membership@phsne.org); or use the Web form at [phsne.org/contacts](http://phsne.org/contacts)).

*snap shots*, edited by Beverly Regelman, is published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, Inc., P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465-0189. Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome. Send to [snapshots@phsne.org](mailto:snapshots@phsne.org). Authors retain copyright to their original articles; however upon written application to the *snap shots* editor, PHSNE may grant non-profit societies with similar aims and interests a one-time right to reproduce a *snap shots* article as long as the author and source are credited and a complimentary copy of the publication is sent to the PHSNE mailbox.

## **Treasure Found in Shoebox**

The Peabody Essex Museum in Salem is a venerable institution dating back to 1799. Throughout the years, a wide variety of objects were added to the collection, many ending up in storage somewhere on the premises.

In 2008, the museum hired its first full-time curator of photography, Phillip Prodger, who set about examining the collection of over 850,000 photographs. In a corner of a storage room he came across an old shoebox containing a daguerreotype in a gold frame showing a Paris scene and in remarkably good condition. The date on the back was 1839, the year "photography" began. What is known about the provenance of the image is that it was purchased in Paris in 1842 by John Burley who later donated it to the museum.



Boston Globe photo by Bill Greene

Aided by a conservation expert from Harvard, Prodger is trying to determine if the unsigned image might have been captured by Louis Daguerre, in which case its value would be several million dollars. Another possibility is that it was taken by Vincent Chevalier, the optician who made lenses for Daguerre and whose shop is named on the back of the frame. Its value would be considerably less but still between half a million to a million dollars.

Very few daguerreotypes from 1839 exist. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (MFA) has one dated 1840.

### ***Last Roll of Kodachrome Processed***

The last roll of Kodachrome film manufactured by the Eastman Kodak Co. was given to photojournalist Steve McCurry. It was processed at Dwayne's Photo in Parsons, Kansas. McCurry told Dwayne's Vice-President Grant Steinie that he shot much of the last roll in New York, then went to India to photograph "a tribe on the verge of extinction. It's actually disappearing, the same way as Kodachrome."

*National Geographic* followed the last roll from manufacture to processing. Additional information is available from a variety of sources that can be accessed by an on-line search.

## C SERIES ARGUS: FROM START TO FINISH

Recently I purchased an Argus C at a yard sale. I had one some years ago and sold it when I downsized my camera collection. I also have an Argus Golden Shield acquired several years ago. These two are the only Argus models in my camera collection, representing the original model C ca. 1938 and one of the last models ca. 1960.

I'll begin with the Argus C. It has an uncoupled rangefinder (no gear connecting the footage wheel to the lens). It also lacks bi-pole flash synchronization. The cocking lever appears to be stainless steel, acorn shaped, with a tail that is knurled with a waffle pattern. The shutter is 10 speed, 1/5 sec to 1/300. The lens is threaded and marked f3.5 Argus 50 mm; it shows "bloom" but is otherwise uncoated. The iris is stopped as follows: f3.5, 4.5, 6.3, 11 and 18.

The rangefinder is clear without yellow or blue lower split image delineation filters. The top deck has a narrow shutter release button with concentric grooves and no provision for a cable release. The instant and bulb positions are marked on the bezel with a collar held by two machine screws below the shutter button.



*Argus C-1*

The advance knob has a clockwise arrow and is affixed with a chrome panhead screw. The access plate to the rangefinder assembly is held by two slotted screws. There is no port allowing access to rangefinder adjustment. The frame counter goes from 0 to 35 and is held in place by a heavily chromed countersunk screw as is the film release toggle. The focus helix is crude and shows footage from 3.5 feet to infinity.



*Argus GS 1*

The Golden Shield model, based on the Argus Matchmatic, has a coupled geared rangefinder with lower portion filtered in yellow to make for accurate focusing. The cocking lever is a heavily chromed, tear drop shape, with a smooth surface flat face. The

front and back are decorated with gaudy chrome screen-pattern panels, unlike the fine grain faux leather panels on the C.

The name plate says GOLDEN SHIELD BY ARGUS in gold-rimmed black and red plastic. The shutter is now 5 speed but numbered 4 through 8 which appears to correspond with conventional 1/10, 1/30, 1/60, 1/125, and 1/250. The



*C Argus-1*

lens is deep set, not requiring a lens shade. This is a 50mm f3.5 Coated Cintar with stops at 3.5 through 8+ which seem to correspond to f3.5 through f16 in modern terms. The top deck has a comfortable shutter release button with I and B settings engraved on the button with provision for a tapered cable release. The plate is fastened with flat head cross point screws. The advance knob is grooved and knurled with glued-on dustcap that says "wind" with a clockwise arrow. There is a cold accessory shoe attached with a single chrome screw. The rangefinder wheel has flash finder settings of 1-8 and distance numbers of 3 to infinity. There are two pole flash synchronization sockets on the side for a flash bulb holder (not pictured). This camera dates from ca. 1960, and the Argus C series may have had a total run from 1938 to 1966, according to Phil Sterritt of the Argus Collector Group.

*~Story and photos by Paul Nisula*



*Goldenshield-1*

### Lothrop Collection Sold in Online Auction

One of the world's largest private camera collections has been sold in an online auction. It belonged to PHSNE member Eaton Lothrop (1930-2008) and was acquired over 50 years of collecting. Lothrop also published *The Photographic Collectors Newsletter*, the first periodical dealing with the subject of camera collecting.

A few highlights of the sale are as follows: Edison Tropical Stereoscopic Hand Camera, \$2,812; Kodak No. 1 Camera, \$850; two Mickey Mouse cameras, \$700; Daydark Photo Postcard Machine Camera, \$550. The entire list is available at [tiny-url.com/358Krgd](http://tiny-url.com/358Krgd) accompanied by color photographs of all items.

## Sotheby's Polaroid Auction Brings in \$12.5 Million

As reported in the May issue of *snap shots*, a U.S. Bankruptcy Court ordered the sale of Polaroid's collection of prints, many by noted photographers. Sotheby's conducted a four-session auction over a two-day period in June that brought in \$12.5 million, well over the pre-sales estimate of \$7 million.



Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite National Park

The highest bid was \$722,500 for Ansel Adams' *Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite National Park*. This topped the record for previous sales of an Adams photograph, \$609,000 for *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*.

The auction also brought highest-ever prices for photographs by other artists: \$290,500 for Chuck Close's *9-Part Self Portrait*; \$242,500 for *Japanese Sky I*, part of Robert Rauschenberg's Bleacher series; and \$194,500 for an SX-70 collage by David Hockney, *Imogen & Hermione, Pembroke Studios, London, 30th July*.

Additional details about the sale, as well as a complete list of prices, are available at numerous web sites that are easily accessed via an Internet search. Auction catalogs can be purchased from Sotheby's.

### PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June, at 1:30 p.m. at the Americal Center, Wakefield, MA, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE board at 11:00 a.m.

### Upcoming meetings:

**October 3** — No meeting due to late September Photographica

**November 7** — *Windows of the Soul*, Alexandra Avakian (to be held in Belmont)

**December 5** — *My Favorite Camera*, presentations by members

**January 9** — German 3D presentation, Ralph Johnson; Lantern slide show, Lew Regelman

### Directions to Americal Center, Wakefield

I-95 to exit 39, North Ave. toward Reading/Wakefield. Turn right at North Ave; then turn left at Main St. Destination is on the left: 467 Main St., Wakefield, MA 01880.

Parking available next door at the school, behind the building, and on Main St.

The Wakefield station of the Haverhill rail line is within 1/2 mile of the Center, and a bus line stops in front of the building. Details are available at [mbta.com](http://mbta.com).

### PHSNE Online

PHSNE's Web site is online at [phsne.org](http://phsne.org). George Champine is the Webmaster.

Join the PHSNE Forum online discussion moderated by Joe Walters; sign up and log in at [phsne.org/forum](http://phsne.org/forum). For an archive of back issues of *snap shots* and meeting presentations, visit [phsne.org/archive](http://phsne.org/archive).

Requested  
Address Service  
FIRST CLASS MAIL



West Newton, MA 02465-0189  
P.O. Box 650189

PHSNE

[phsne.org](http://phsne.org)

snap  
shots

Photographic Historical Society of New England  
Next Meeting: September 12, 2010  
Getting Started With Cyanotype  
Americal Center, 1:30 P.M.