

snapshots

Volume 17 Number 5

January 2012

Al Holmy on Soviet Cameras January 8, Americal Center, Wakefield, MA

With the end of the Cold War, Soviet made cameras became much more common in the West. While export models of new cameras had been available in some markets for years, these were often not quite the same as those produced for domestic consumption. But when political relations finally thawed, for a while a flood of hitherto little known models appeared, and more significantly, older examples of the cameras now appeared for sale. It was finally possible to build a comprehensive collection.

For those interested in documenting the evolution of a design, two are of particular interest. The original Kiev rangefinder is the most famous Eastern bloc clone of a Zeiss Contax. Actually, some would argue that it originally was more than a clone. Shortly following World War II, the Soviet government seized the Zeiss camera factory and moved its assets to the Kiev Arsenal. The assembly lines were rebuilt and production resumed using Zeiss components until they ran out and were replaced with Soviet made ones. Over the very long life of this camera, the internal design changed significantly several times.

There was also a Leica II copy made under the FED name for domestic use and after WW II, the ZORKI name for export.



Zorki 1C

Production began during the 1930s as part of an effort to make the Soviet Union entirely self-sufficient in technology, thus making the importation of the highly esteemed Leica unnecessary.

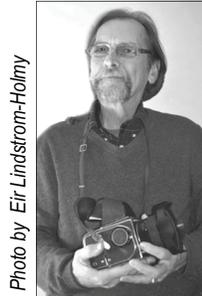


Photo by Eir Lindstrom-Holmy

Al Holmy



Kiev 4AM

Photo from Wikimedia Common

Pre-war models came identified as FED, NKVD, and so forth, reflecting changes in bureaucracy. Production moved to Moscow during the war, resulting in the ZORKI. All the while there appeared improvements to the original design. Commemorative models with special engraving, leather, and plating came out on a regular basis. So there is plenty here to interest the collecting bug.

But that's not all! The camera still looked enough like a Leica that many were "converted" by "entrepreneurs" who altered the engravings. Furthermore, as WW II military Leicas skyrocketed in value, many suspiciously clean examples started appearing. They did not fool collectors who knew the details of the cameras, but for a while so much was out on the market that collecting "genuine fakes" became a serious interest in and of itself.

Our guide to the very interesting world of Soviet cameras is long time PHSNE member Al Holmy. Known to all as the master of ceremonies of the Show N' Tell section of our monthly meetings, he is also a highly regarded dealer at Photographica. For anyone interested in not just an overview of this field, but in seeing examples of some very uncommon and unusual cameras, this is going to be a very worthwhile presentation.

~John Wojtowicz

Correction: Can you identify mystery bride?

A few lines were accidentally dropped from the December issue in the article titled *Mystery Bride* concerning some recently discovered glass plate negatives. There is a note on the back indicating that the family name was Rogers, and it is believed that the wedding took place in the Boston area around 1915. If you can help us identify this beautiful bride, please send the information to snapshots@phsne.org.



2011 Membership Directory

The 2011 *Membership Directory* has been mailed to all members in good standing as of September 2011. Information is constantly being updated; there are already nine new members as well as other changes.

Members may download directory updates from the members only section of our Website. Go to phsne.org/archive/membersonly where you will receive a password challenge. Check the most recent printed copy of *snap shots* - the password is provided on page 2, near the center fold. This password changes every few months, so you will need a recent *snap shots* to have the current password. If you did not receive the directory, or need to update information, contact me at membership-chair@phsne.org.
~Joe Walters, Membership Chair

New Record: Image sells for \$4.3 Million

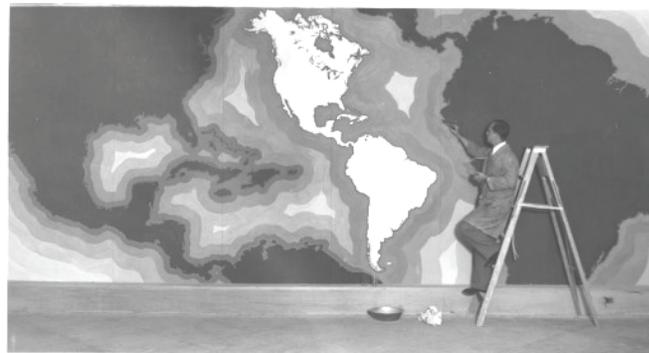
Rhein II, an image of the Rhine River by German artist Andreas Gursky, was sold at a November auction at Christie's for \$4,338,500, the highest sale price ever recorded for an image. A google search will offer several sites where you can view the image in color and get more information about the image and the artist.



Rhein II, Andreas Gursky, 1999
C print mounted to plexiglass
81 x 140 inches; Wikipedia

Archives of American Art Donation Goes to Wikimedia Commons

Most readers of *snap shots* are familiar with and have probably used the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*. They are less likely to know about Wikimedia Commons, another project sponsored by the Wikimedia Foundation. This related project offers free public domain images, videos, and other media as well as supplying multimedia content to *Wikipedia*.



Artist Guy Maccoby at work on a mural at the Brooklyn Museum as part of the WPA's Art Work for Public Buildings Project.
Photo courtesy Archives of American Art

Working with the Smithsonian Institution, Wikimedia Foundation recently received a donation from the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art consisting of almost 300 photographs from the WPA era. The WPA photographs were selected because they were already in the public domain.

According to *Wikipedia*, the Archives of American Art is the largest collection of primary resources documenting the history of the visual arts in the U.S. consisting of over 16 million items of original material stored in research centers in Washington, D.C. and New York City.

A major announcement of the donation appeared on a blog at the Smithsonian Website on October 24th, 2011, noting that, "this is the first time [the images] are available to the public in a high-resolution, digitized format." Quoting IT specialist Sarah Stierch of the Archives of American Art, the blog notes, "We've got photographs of works being created—showing the techniques of how to make a lithograph, how to make stained glass, how they sketch these giant murals. It's a really varied collection of photographs, showing all different processes of art creation." For the full article, check online at blogs.smithsonianmag.com/aroundthemall/2011/10/archives-of-american-art-releases-photo-collection-to-wikimedia-commons/.

PHSNE Membership

PHSNE membership is \$15 for students, \$35 for individuals and institutions, \$40 for a family, and \$45 for foreign membership. Join or renew online at phsne.org/paypal or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order.

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; or use the Web form at phsne.org/contacts).

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Area Exhibits:

The Exacting Eye of Walker Evans
Florence Griswold Museum, Lyme, CT
through January 29, 2012



The Exacting Eye of Walker Evans presents an exhibition that examines the post-Depression era work of photographer Walker Evans. Evans (1903–1975) captured

a place in American social, cultural, and artistic history with his unforgettable images of the Great Depression. The photographs, particularly those of rural Southern sharecroppers, launched his career and remain among the most iconic images of American art. His work in ensuing years, however, has been largely overlooked.

This exhibition recovers Evans' post-Depression work by tracing the thread of his recurring artistic themes, in the process revealing images of economic hard times, and discovering the beauty in common things through the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. New research delves into his career and the artist's life in Connecticut. No exhibition has yet addressed these decades, which Evans spent in the state as a teacher at Yale and resident of Lyme.

Gelatin silver prints of his work for the Farm Security Administration in 1935–36 are exhibited with an invitation to re-experience these familiar images of



poverty in the rural South through new, enlarged inkjet prints. The prints were produced under the direction of John T. Hill, the former executor of the Estate of Walker Evans and co-curator of the exhibition along with the Museum's Assistant Curator Amanda Burdan. Shown at large scale (some over 4

feet wide), these photos reveal Evans's eye for both the grit and poetry of daily life. Portfolios assembled and printed in the 1970s under Evans' close supervision present the photographer's own retrospective thinking about his career.

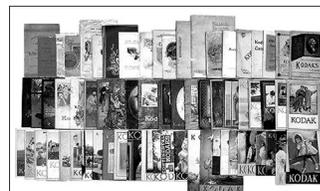
The museum itself is worth a visit. A former boarding house for artists, some works in the permanent collection are painted on the doors; however, the Kriebler Gallery, added in 2002, is a modern facility that houses changing exhibits. Visit flogris.org for additional information.

~Photos from Library of Congress collection

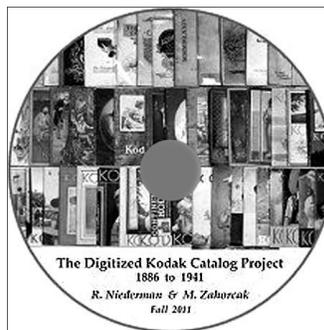
The Digitized Kodak Catalog Project
1886-1941

A group of dedicated collectors have created *The Digitized Kodak Catalog Project: 1886 to 1941* as a service to the collecting community. Rob Niederman and Milan Zahorcak have produced a DVD of 67 Kodak catalogs from 1886 to 1941 as high resolution PDF files containing some 3,908 pages. Optical character recognition was used to make the files searchable.

To quote from their project history (provided in the disk): "Our initial objective was to include just the annual amateur catalogs, but it turns out that many cameras only appear in certain professional and specialty catalogs. We included as many of those as we could obtain so that almost every Kodak camera made in the US, Canada and Europe, would be documented - at least up to about 1941. After that, it becomes much more difficult as Kodak stopped producing annual catalogs as their product line became increasingly more diversified."



Serious consideration of the project began with discussions among Steve Shohet, Rob Niederman, Milan Zahorcak, and Charlie Kamerman in 2010. Shohet provided a number of catalogs for test scans and the project started in earnest. Milan Zahorcak did most of the scanning. Charlie Kamerman provided the vast majority of catalogs used in the project. Others who participated in the project and loaned catalogs for scanning include Ryerson University (Toronto), George Layne, Mike Kessler, Ralph London, and Michael Pritchard.



Niederman & Zahorcak estimate that after scanning 3,908 pages an additional 100+ hours were spent in technical work to convert the scans into searchable files.

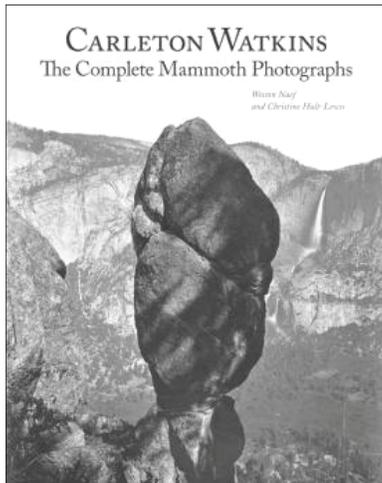
Those interested in obtaining the digitized catalogues can order the DVD

at Rob Niederman's antiquewoodcameras.com/new or contact the project at digitized.kcp@gmail.com.

~ Joe Walters

~Photos from the Digitized Kodak Catalog Project: 1886-1941, Fall 2011 DVD

Carleton Watkins: The Complete Mammoth Photographs



Drawing on major collections of Watkins prints at the J. Paul Getty Museum and others, authors Weston Naef and Christine Hult-Lewis have catalogued all of Watkins's known mammoth-plate photographs. These include views of Yosemite, San Francisco, and the Pacific Coast, as well as railroads, mines, and lumber mills throughout the west.

The extraordinary body of work produced by photographer Carleton Watkins (1829–1916) between 1858 and 1891 constitutes one of the longest and most productive careers in nineteenth-century American photography. Nearly thirteen hundred “mammoth” (18 x 22 inch) glass-plate negatives were produced, the majority of which exist in only one surviving print. Of these, fewer than three hundred have been previously reproduced or exhibited.

The catalogue is organized by region and includes an inventory of Watkins's negatives and an illustrated guide to his signatures, both of value to scholars, collectors, and dealers. The 608 page catalog from Getty Publications includes 1,351 duotone images.

Weston Naef is curator emeritus in the Department of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Christine Hult-Lewis is an independent scholar based in San Francisco.

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, 467 Main St., 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:

February 5– Members' Auction

March 4– 19th Century Stereophotography, G. Mutter and B. Fishman

Driving directions to Americal Center:

I-95 to exit 39, North Ave. toward Reading/Wakefield (right turn on North from the south; left turn from the north). Drive approximately 1.5 miles, 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.

Public transportation:

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.

PHSNE Online

PHSNE's Web site is online at 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. For an archive of back issues of *snap shots* and meeting presentations, visit phsne.org/archive.

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Photographic Historical Society of New England
Next Meeting: January 8, 2012
Americal Center, 1:30 P.M.
Al Holmy on Soviet Cameras

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