

Adam Davis Introduces *Black Magic* PHSNE Zoom Meeting, Sunday, September 8th, 7:30 P.M.



Artist Adam Davis sits for a self-portrait

Adam Davis, born into a family deeply immersed in artistic and community pursuits, draws profound inspiration from his upbringing, guided by two accomplished multidisciplinary artists who founded a nondenominational church in the vibrant borough of Brooklyn.

Growing up surrounded by the creative energy of his parents' church, Davis developed an early fascination with the transformative power of art. At the tender age of six, he embarked on his musical journey with the drums, his first drumstick a cherished token from his childhood church, symbolizing the beginning of his artistic odyssey.

As Davis transitioned into adulthood, he discovered a new avenue for creative expression through photography, initially exploring this medium with the convenience of his iPhone and sharing his captures on social media. His passion for photography blossomed into a commitment to street photography, navigating the diverse landscapes of New York City and honing his ability to seamlessly blend into any environment, camera in hand. However, it was his move to Los Angeles at the age of 21 to pursue a career in education that marked a significant turning point in his artistic evolution.

In Los Angeles, Davis deepened his engagement with photography, cultivating a disciplined approach to his craft. He dedicated himself to capturing the

narratives of Black Americans and the burgeoning creative communities that shaped the city's cultural landscape. It was during this period that Davis discovered the historic wet plate collodion process, a photographic technique dating back to the 19th century, known for its distinctive aesthetic and the emotional depth it brings to portraiture. This discovery became a catalyst for Davis, inspiring him to create evocative tintype portraits that resonate with a sense of history and authenticity.



Now based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Davis continues to refine and expand his artistic practice through *Black Magic*, a visionary project dedicated to creating the largest contemporary archive of Black American and Global African Diasporic tintype portraits. Through *Black Magic*, Davis seeks to celebrate and preserve

the cultural richness and diversity of his community, while also challenging conventional narratives and stereotypes through the power of visual storytelling.

Davis' journey as an artist is a testament to his unwavering dedication to uplift and empower through creativity. His work not only documents cultural narratives but also serves as a catalyst for social change, inspiring others to reclaim and celebrate their own stories. Through *Black Magic*, Davis demonstrates how artistic expression can foster community resilience and empowerment, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of contemporary photography.

In this presentation Davis will shed light on how this project came to be, its progress, how to deepen your relationship with collaborative practices, and the importance of bringing Black stories to the forefront of the fine art world.

Vivian Maier: Unseen Work

Snap shots has previously reported about the post-humous discovery of thousands of Vivian Maier's negatives left unclaimed in a storage facility. "*Vivian Maier: Unseen Work* explores Maier's complete oeuvre from the early 1950s to the mid-1980s through approximately 200 works: vintage and modern prints, color, black and white, and Super 8 films and soundtracks, offering a complete vision of the dense, rich and complex architecture of this archive that provides a fascinating testimony to post-war America and the hell of the American dream" (<https://tinyurl.com/mu9b4r3e>). There's still time to catch this exhibit at Fotografiska in New York which runs through September 29th.



Self-Portrait, NYC 1954, press release
© Estate of Vivian Maier

Maier's treasure trove of negatives was discovered after her death; in recent years, she is gaining much deserved attention. She photographed what she saw while working as a nanny in New York City. Fotografiska hails this as the first major U.S. retrospective of her work. The exhibit is supported by *Women in*

Motion, a group that has fostered meaningful conversations "about the status of women in the arts and culture.

What To Do With Unclaimed Negatives

In this digital age, film labs scan negatives and send the photographs via email or website download.

Many customers don't bother to pick up their neg-

atives, leaving them piled up in the limited storage space of film labs. COVID exacerbated the situation; customers minimizing personal contact probably got in the habit of receiving them digitally. One owner estimated that 10 percent or less return for their negatives.

That leaves the film labs to figure out what to do with shelves—and rooms—full of negatives. Some are asking customers to indicate if they will pick up the negatives or not, notifying them the lab will only hold them for a limited time. The recent surge of interest in hybrid analog/digital photography compounds the problem. Many film users are young people who see no need for the negatives.

In a June 6th article in the *New York Times*, photographer Ali Watkins writes, "Whoever has the negatives has the mechanism to reproduce the work but not the copyright to do so; the artist sans negatives has the right but not the means."

A long-standing dispute exists involving the thousands of the posthumously discovered negatives of Vivian Maier cited in the previous article. The courts must weigh ownership of the negatives, which were found in a warehouse storage bin, against ownership of the copyright.

DO NOT CUT NEGATIVES
Leave in Strips
ORDER BY NUMBER
...FROM YOUR "LOOKING GLASS"

PHSNE Membership

New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$30 for students, \$50 for individuals and institutions, and \$55 for a family; foreign membership is \$60. Join or renew online at <https://phsne.org/join> or <https://phsne.org/renew>, or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to PHSNE Membership Chair, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453, email membership-chair@phsne.org, or use the Web form at <https://phsne.org/application>.

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Join Paul Rheingold at UMass Amherst Conversation: Photographic Archives

PHSNE member Paul Rheingold will appear for an in-person conversation about photographic archives at UMass Amherst in celebration of the recently acquired Paul D. Rheingold Historic Photograph Collection. The event takes place on Friday, September 20th, 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. at the Old Chapel. A reception will follow the discussion.

Visual Archivist Annie Sollinger, a photographer and art historian, will share her experiences with photography and archives as well as her work with the Rheingold Collection.

For more information, visit <https://libcal.library.umass.edu/event/12856670> or contact Annie Sollinger at annies@library.umass.edu.

Ready, SET, Go!

Kowa of Japan is known for high quality optics, including cameras and binoculars. Past President Joel Moses used a Kowa SE 35mm camera that his father had in the mid to late 1960's. It did not have a removable prime lens, but there were a few auxiliary add-ons available.

Moses also has a 2 1/4 square Kowa SLR, one of a series of models, the Kowa Six. It is a high quality, well built modular with removable, prism, lens, and focusing hood. Later versions had removable / interchangeable film backs.

Shown here is a Kowa SET from a member's collection. Produced in 1966, the fixed-lens camera has an f/1.8 50mm conversion lenses were available. It features a Seikosha leaf shutter and handled speeds from 1 second to 1/500 second and TTL metering. Interchangeable lenses were available on the SET-R which was introduced in 1968.

Reviewer Mike Eckman wrote, "Kowa SLRs like the SET were nicely designed and compact SLRs that came with good lenses and a competitive list of features, but over the years have suffered the same fate as many leaf shutter SLRs which is poor reliability" (<https://mikeeckman.com/2020/10/kowa-se-t-1965/>). Eckman noted that "the 'T' in the model name signified this camera had TTL exposure metering compared to earlier models that had a body mounted meter."

Also reviewing the Kowa SET-R, Eckman noted "Although the design of a leaf shutter SLR has a poor reputation for reliability, if you can find one that works, the SET-R becomes an extremely capable camera. The control layout is familiar and comfortable, the viewfinder is large and bright, the match needle exposure system is easy to use, and most im-

portantly, the camera produces excellent images" (<https://mikeeckman.com/2017/11/kowa-set-r-1968/>). He noted that the cameras are scarce, but most likely a good value if you could find one in working condition.

While Kowa continues to manufacture many products including binoculars, telescopes, and medical optics, its production of cameras, launched in 1954, was discontinued in 1978. However, "in 2005 [they] marketed a 'spotting scope' with integrated digital camera, thereby again becoming a camera manufacturer of a sort" (<https://tinyurl.com/8ahrjvyb>).



The company's history is atypical of the industry. Originally founded as a textile shop in Nagoya in 1894, it was involved in spinning and trading under the name Kowa KK. In an attempt to diversify after WW II, they created Kowa Koki Seisakusho or Kowa Optical Works in 1946. In the beginning, it produced eyeglasses, then items such as binoculars and rifle scopes that the U.S. purchased for its armed forces.

Its first camera made by Kowa was

the Kalloflex 6x6 TLR; this was followed by "a series of 35mm cameras with a leaf shutter, some with a fixed wide-angle or tele lens and some with an interchangeable lens. Many of these were rebadged by Graflex as the Century 35 series."

"In 1960, Kowa inaugurated a series of amateur 35mm SLR cameras, all with a leaf shutter. The last of the series was the Kowa UW190 (1972), equipped with a fixed ultra-wide-angle 19mm lens. In 1968, the company introduced a more ambitious project: the Kowa Six 6x6cm SLR, which would meet some success as the poor man's Hasselblad. It was upgraded in 1974 as the Kowa Super 66, which was Kowa's last camera in the century."

Feedback From a Michigan Colleague

It was gratifying to receive an email from MiPHS President and Treasurer Charles Fehl in response to the June *snap shots* article by Past President Joel Moses about the camera of the month. Fehl wrote the following:

"The reason I am writing to you is to relate my connection to your Camera of the Month - the ZI Ikonta 521/16. My sister and I grew up being photographed by a ZI 520, the pre-war version of your camera. It was an 'A' format (6x4.5 cm) model and my dad was a pretty good picture taker. The camera was probably dated in the early to mid thirties and had a Novar f/3.5 lens. That lens is not highly regarded, but its pictures are all sharp and contrasty, so it couldn't be too far behind the Tessar.

The camera was really my mom's. She had purchased it from her roommate at Oberlin College in Ohio where she met my dad. I believe she paid \$2.00! Anyway I first got a look at photography with one of those staring me in the face and later added it to my collection. It was in terrible shape by then, being almost 50 years old and run hard. It had electrical tape on the bellows and other home fixes as needed. I traded it at some point, which I will always regret.



Family photo taken with ZI 520



Ikonta 521/16

I have had practically all the Ikontas and Super Ikontas in my collection along the way, but the 520 will always be the one I remember best. Thanks for the memories Joel!"

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held online on the first Sunday evening of each month, September to June.

Upcoming meetings:

October 6— PHSNE member Vladimir Khazan, *From camera obscura to SLR*, 185th anniversary of photography

Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE's Web site is online at <https://phsne.org>. See <https://www.facebook.com/PHSNE/> for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history.

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails: a *snap shots* e-copy, and *Photographa* show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>.

For information on all available PHSNE publications, see <https://phsne.magcloud.com>.

Donations to (and from) PHSNE

Donations are a significant but relatively unknown part of PHSNE's operations. PHSNE accepts donations of photographic equipment, images, and photography books. At present, we do not accept movie or video equipment, slide projectors, or computer equipment, but we welcome most other photographic items. This is a valuable service for estates and collectors who are downsizing if they are searching for a home for items that can still be of service.

In turn, PHSNE donates much of this equipment to schools and other nonprofits: cameras and lenses, enlargers and other darkroom equipment. In June, we provided five enlargers after sending an email announcement indicating they were available. Schools are especially looking for cameras like the Pentax K1000 and Beseler 23C enlargers.

Other items are sold, with the proceeds contributing to PHSNE's annual budget. The bulk of items are sold at the annual *Photographica* show. We also sell items on eBay from phsneusa (<https://charity.ebay.com/charity/i/Photographic-Historical-Society-of-New-England,-Inc./347360>). People on our mailing list will receive advanced notice of upcoming eBay sales.

Please let us know if you are interested in helping the Donation Committee process donations which takes place at the PHSNE office at 47 Calvary St. in Waltham. Currently volunteers are usually present on Wednesdays and Fridays between 11:30 AM and 2:00 PM. It's an opportunity to see and handle a wide variety of interesting items.

Contact info@phsne.org to make a donation or help out, or you can click "Contact Us" or "Support Us" at the top of the phsne.org web page.