PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

snap shots

Volume 30 Number 5 January 2025

Crista Dix To Explore Current Trends in Photography
Sunday, January 5 th, 7:30 P.M., via Zoom

Crista Dix, Executive Director of the Griffin Museum, will delve into the current trends shaping the world of photography at the January 5th PHSNE meeting. Dix, a passionate advocate for the medium, shares her insights on the evolving landscape of contemporary photography.

One of the most significant trends Dix will highlight is the increasing diversity of photographic voices. Emerging artists from diverse backgrounds are challenging traditional norms and bringing fresh perspectives to the field. The Griffin Museum actively seeks to showcase this diversity, providing a platform for underrepresented photographers to share their stories.

Another notable trend worth discussing is the blurring of lines between photography and other art forms. Artists are experimenting with mixed media, incorporating elements of painting, sculpture, and performance into their photographic work. This interdisciplinary approach is pushing the boundaries of what photography can be.

M. Dixon, Griffin Museum

Dix will also emphasize the growing importance of AI and digital manipulation and its impact on the art form. While traditional film photography still holds a special place in the hearts of many, digital technology has opened up new possibilities for experimentation and creativity. The Griffin Museum embraces this digital revolution, showcasing a wide range of work created using both analog and digital techniques.

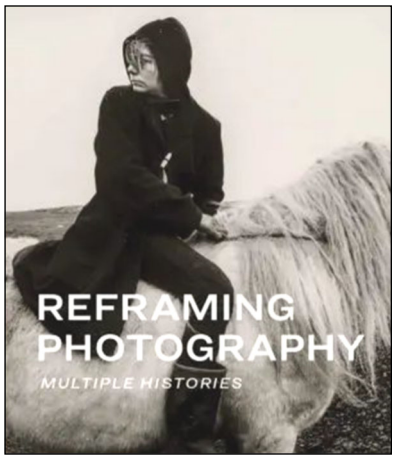
The Griffin Museum of Photography, in Winchester, Massachusetts, is more than just a museum; it's a destination for photographers and photography enthusiasts alike. With a commitment to showcasing the best in contemporary photography, the Griffin Museum offers a unique platform for artists to exhibit their work and for audiences to engage with thought-provoking images.

M. Dixon, Installation—Visitor

Besides being a space for exhibitions, the Museum is a community of photographers. It offers a variety of programs and workshops for photographers of all levels, from beginners to seasoned professionals. These programs provide opportunities for artists to connect with one another, share their work, and learn from experts in the field.

Before coming to the Griffin Museum in 2020, Ms. Dix spent fifteen years operating her own photography gallery, *wall space creative*, closing it in 2020 to make the move to New England and the Griffin. In addition to curating exhibitions and mentoring photographers, she has written essays about photography, been a member of panels and discussions on the craft, juried creative competitions, and has participated in major portfolio reviews across the country.

MFA: 100 Years Collecting Photography



Photography wasn't immediately recognized as "art" following its invention in 1839, so the MFA can take justifiable pride in this being the centenary of its photographic collection. In 1924, for a museum like the MFA to acquire photographs was still highly unusual. The Met didn't get its first photographs until 1928, and the Art Institute of Chicago not until 1949 (*https://tinyurl.com/yc6xzamd*).

Alfred Stieglitz launched the MFA collection by donating 27 of his images; today the collection has about 18,000 photographs. It includes images by pre-eminent photographers: Ansel Adams, Yousuf Karsh, Edward Weston, Margaret Bourke-White, and many others.

To celebrate its 100 years of collecting photography, the MFA published *Reframing Photography: Multiple Histories* to be released in December, 2024. MFA authors Kristen Gresh, Karen Haas, and Anne E. Havinga were asked to select one image from the vast collection and write about it. The book is available at multiple online sites including *mfa.org*.

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*.

Snap shots**,** edited by Beverly Regelman, is published monthly, September through June, by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453. Volumes 11-29 are available at *https://snapshots.phsne.org*. The current volume is only available to members.

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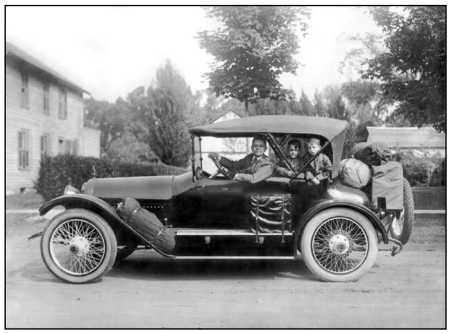
A Lantern Slide Trip Across U.S.

PHSNE member Art Vaughan presented the projected lantern slide program *Around the United States, 1919, the Spallholz Slides* at the October 2001 PHSNE meeting. In 2017, after posting a few images online, he was contacted by the grandsons of the person who took the family on that journey over 100 years ago. A long and fruitful association with Lance and Julian Spallholz led to the publication of *Auto Touring America's National Parks,* a book based on the Spallholz collection of lantern slide images (Texas Tech University Press). Vaughan's online album consists of 24 images, a small part of the total Spallholz collection (*https://tinyurl.com/y6xnjp3f*).

The arduous trip across the United States covered 10,400 miles over 96 days. Spallholz traveled in a Haynes Light Six four passenger roadster. Each carefully labeled image has a caption that explains what's going on in the photo plus some mention of how Vaughan came to acquire the collection. All the photos of the trip were taken with two cameras, a Kodak 3A Autographic and a 3A Graflex. They both used the same "post card" sized 3A film (3 1/4" x 5 1/2"). Each camera appears in a few of his trip images. Since he used only black and white film, during the journey he purchased a small number of hand-colored lantern slides to add to his projected programs, to demonstrate to viewers how colorful the west was. Vaughan found these slides and the original projector, a Bausch & Lomb "Home Balopticon" (combination lantern slide and opaque projector), in the Salvation Army store in Portland, Maine in 1967, paying full price of $15. Vaughan selected 160 slides from the 400 slide collection for a program presented to many groups over the years.



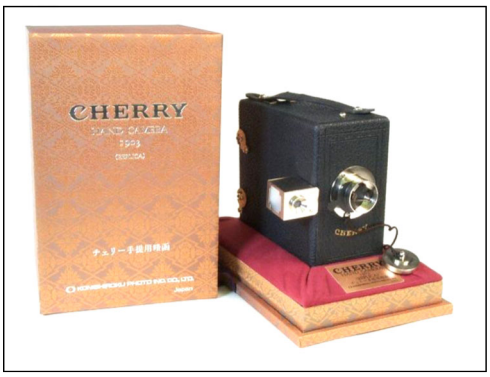
Salem, NY, June 11 , 1919

For many years he presented this program using the original projector, which only uses convection cooling (no fan). Years ago, at *Photographica,* he acquired a lantern slide projector that was built for the US Army in 1962, which has excellent fan-cooling of the slide carrier. Any future programs will be digitally projected to preserve the fragile slides.

The book is available at several sites including Texas Tech University Press, Thriftbooks, and Amazon.

Cherry Picking

Before there was Konica, there were several predecessors. Konica's roots date back to 1873 (pre-Kodak) when a pharmacist began selling photographic materials in his Tokyo shop. It has operated under a variety of names—Konishi, Konishiroku, Konishiroku Honten, Konishi Honten, and possibly others. Attributions and dates indicating which company produced which models vary in different sources. Regardless of the company name at the time, the Japanese firm produced a series of Cherry cameras, and the later Sakura series (the Japanese word for cherry blossom) cameras.



Cherry 1, mikeeckman.com

In 1902 Konishi introduced the "Cherry Portable Camera, the first Japanese produced end-user oriented camera. New products were released respectively, and Konishi Main Shop became the leading camera company in Japan."

Introduced in 1903, the Cherry "is historically significant as the first Japanese camera to have an individual brand name rather than a generic description)" (*https://camerapedia.fandom.com/wiki/Cherry*). Designed to be simple enough for use by children, the Cherry No. 1 is a very small, box-shaped magazine camera. It took six dry plates approximately 5.5x8 cm. The detachable reflecting viewfinder can be positioned for horizontal or vertical pictures. "The lens barrel protrudes from the front plate, unlike on the popular American box cameras of the time. It contains a special kind of rotary shutter, placed in front of the lens, that needs cocking for instant mode." The simple falling plate mechanism permitted plates to fall in a stack.

Though not necessarily designed for export or foreign markets, the identification read CHERRY rather than Japanese characters. "No surviving example of the Cherry No.1 has ever surfaced. A replica was made by the Konica company in the 1970s."

The Cherry No. 2 looks more like a typical box camera. The lens sits behind a plate containing three holes that adjust the aperture. The Cherry No. 3 is a larger model that takes six plates approximately 8x10.5 cm; it is otherwise similar to the Cherry No. 2. The company started using the name Sakura on its cameras in 1906-1907, and it produced a series of models from 1906-1939, some of which were box cameras. A Sakura box camera launched in 1931 was a wooden camera with fixed focus lenses featuring "brilliant finders for vertical and horizontal pictures" (*http://camera-wiki.org/wiki/Sakura_(box*)).

The shutter for the later Sakura model was reportedly made by the Konishiroku Company whereas previous cameras used shutters that were imported. The metal frame interior groups the exposure chamber, film rollers, spool holders, and lens. It is removed in its entirety to load the 127 film.

There are three versions of the Sakura 4x6.5. All have rectangular finder eyepieces. "The first version has a black finish, and a sliding release lever on the right-hand side. The second version has a crinkled brown finish with brown fittings, and a pivoting release lever attached to the front plate. The third version is similar but has a knurled advance knob instead of the advance key."


Sakura Box Camera, Ferry Knemeijer

There are also three known versions of the Sakura 6x9 which uses 120 film. The dual format cameras take 6x9 cm and 4.5x6 cm photos. "There are small prongs in the eyepieces to indicate the field of view for half frame exposures. The back has three red windows, grouped under a vertical metal plate on the right. There is a metal sliding cover which can take two positions, differentiated by the number *1* and *2* showing under a small frame attached to the sliding part. In position *1*, the top red window is opened for 6x9 exposures; in position *2*, the two other red windows are opened for 4.5x6 exposures. The numbers *1* and *2* probably mean "full frame" (one picture per frame) and "half frame" (two pictures per frame)."

Camera-wiki notes that changes in the 6x9 format are similar to those of the smaller format: the first has rectangular eyepieces and no visible aperture control; the second has round eyepieces and pivoting shutter release, the third has knurled advance knob replacing the advance key.

In 1987, the Sakura brand was discontinued worldwide and replaced with Konica.

Heyday of Spirit Photography

There was no shortage of photographers claiming to capture images of ghosts in the 19th century. "The newly invented medium of photography became a way to cope with death, and post-mortem photography offered a popular new way to preserve the memory of loved ones. . . . The invention of photography also coincided with the increasing popularity of hauntings, seances, and mediums during the rise of the spiritualist movement. Photography was a perfect way to connect with the spirit realm…or so it seemed" (*https://tinyurl.com/4v8p9phy*). These so called "Spirit Photographs" were most often achieved by the creative use of multiple exposure.

Since the daguerreotype's positive image developed directly on the exposed plate (and was generally intended to be a mirror of nature), the process was were rarely used for intentional multiple exposures. But the long exposure times often created accidental movement, leaving a faint ghost-like trace. When the glass plate negative process was developed, these accidental traces still occurred but the possibility for intentional multiple exposures became much easier. "Sir David Brewster, in 1856, recognized that these effects could be used deliberately to create ghostly pictures. The London Stereoscopic Company used Brewster's idea to create a series of images called *The Ghost in the Stereoscope*."

One prominent practitioner of Spirit Photography was Boston photographer William H. Mumler. A jewelry engraver by training, he is thought to have learned photography from Mrs. H. F. Stuart and worked in her studio in 1864-65; both Mumler and Stuart produced spirit photographs. Mumler moved to New York City where in 1869 he was accused of fraud – and acquitted. For additional information on Mumler and Mrs. Stuart, see *A Directory of Massachusetts Photographers: 1839-1900,* by Chris Steele and PHSNE member Ron Polito (p. 101 and 127 at *https://tinyurl.com/2p9frj7a*) and *Spirit Photography: Uncovering the Story of Hannah Green*). (*https://tinyurl.com/cppdj82y*).

Mumler, Mary Todd (and Abraham?) Lincoln

Mumler's most famous image might be his portrait of Mary Todd Lincoln, supposedly with the assassinated Abraham Lincoln behind her. View an online album of cartes-de-visite with spirit photographs at *https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/104J2P*.

Interest in spiritualism surged following the Civil War and during the Victorian era when the populace was confronted with death on a massive scale. Some ghost images were accidental, many due to slow shutter speeds; they were more common as cameras became widely available to amateurs (*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_photography*) .

Among the many serious believers in spiritualism, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle refused to accept the evidence as proof of a hoax." The popularity of spirit photography persisted until the 1920's.

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

Upcoming meetings:
February 2 -Barbara Bosworth and Emily Sheffer
March 2- Annie Sollinger, Paul Rheingold collection

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