PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

NEWS

VOLUME 18-08, FEBRUARY 2019

BROKEN RULES



DECODING THE CODE An alleged rape in 1921 and a murder in 1922 Hollywood caused American legislators to introduce close to 100 contradictory and paradoxical movie censorship bills. Faced with meeting impossible standards, the major movie studios banded together to self-censor under the Motion Picture Production Code. Prominent Hollywood photographer "Whitey" Shafer assembled the rules in the above photograph, a shot kept under wraps in the Code's heyday (1934-1954). While Hollywood seemed interested in moral filmmaking, how the Code was implemented gave studios the power to control actors' lives.

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PHSC NEWS

Editor - Sonja Pushchak Distribution - David Bridge Contributors - David Bridge, Louise Freyburger, John Morden



info@phsc.ca www.phsc.ca



Pictured above: The Mitchell BNC 35mm Motion Picture Studio Camera. Introduced in 1932, the "workhorse of Hollywood" was likely used in over 80% of the films that were produced in the United States from the 1930s to the late 1960s, although it was still in use in the 90s for the situation comedy Frasier. The Mitchell was the first motion picture camera to operate silently.

PHSC PRESENTS



Photographer Nina Leen lining up shot of fashion model, who is in slacks, circa 1954.

Born in Russia between two revolutions destined to change the world, Nina Leen (1909-1995) immigrated to the United States to become a photographer for *Life* magazine. Contributing to some 374 published issues, she became known and noticed for her unconventional, thought-provoking approach to fashion and events photojournalism. Her range was impressive. Equally entrusted with human interest, fashion-house couture or high culture (she took the now-famous 1950 *Life* photo of the notorious New York Abstract Expressionists, featuring art-world dons Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko), *Life* relied heavily on Leen's edgy frame of reference to take their current affairs weekly to the top of the North American publishing genre. Erin Levitsky presents highlights from her research into Leen's oeuvre, bringing us an extraordinary glimpse into the mind and manner of this prolific photographer.

Erin Levitsky holds a Master of Arts in Photographic Preservation and Collections Management from Ryerson University and a Bachelor of Arts from Western University in Media, Information and Technoculture. Curated shows to her credit include the forthcoming retrospective of *Life's* six women staff photographers at the New York Historical Society. Levitsky was the winner of the 2018 PHSC Thesis Prize for her research into Leen and *Life* magazine.

Join us at 7:45pm, main speaker at 8:00pm, on Wednesday, Februrary 20 in the Burgundy Room of Memorial Hall in the basement of 5120 Yonge St, North York, Ontario for this informative presentation. Admission, as usual, is free and light refreshments are provided. Need info? www.phsc.ca

BLACK HOLLYWOOD BY SONJA PUSHCHAK

The Camera, Politics, and Dorothy Dandridge



Dorothy Dandridge as Carmen Jones, the first African-American woman to be featured on the cover of Life Magazine. Photograph by unspecified staff photographer.

Photography, film and politics often cross paths. If previous motion picture awards' nights are any indication, some of this year's recipients will mention historic political struggles which have paved the way for the current honour. As the first African-American woman to win an Oscar for Monster's Ball (2001), Halle Berry thanked an earlier generation of under-appreciated black female actors including Dorothy Dandridge. At the 2018 Golden Globes, Oprah Winfrey declared that time was up on the practices and privilege of toxic masculinity, long an unwelcome condition of female employment. Dandridge's career, which rose and flourished briefly during the mid-twentieth century, was tainted by racism but derailed by the workplace harassment of a powerful man. It's easy to forget the extent of previous challenges faced by black subjects of the camera's gaze, the role that photography played, and what influence political philosophy and policy brought to bear.

Outgrowing a childhood of appearances as one of the Dandridge Sisters, Dorothy Dandridge was cast in bit parts in a string of B movies, then went on to develop a nightclub singing career. But popular culture commentator Anne Helen Petersen suggests that Dandridge's break only occurred with a 1951 feature spread in Life magazine. That a nation as mired in racism as the United States could suddenly rave about the talents of a young black woman was due in part to the policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, president from 1933 to 1945. Both Roosevelt and wife Eleanor had recognized the necessity of rhetorically supporting African-Americans, providing employment to black Americans in New Deal programs and tripling the number of black employees in the federal government. It seems apparent that the top administration's effort to have an effect on racial injustice produced a positive trickle-down effect for the American psyche.

Hollywood reporters Hedda Hopper and Walter Winchell promoted Dandridge in their newspaper columns, which helped make Dandridge a national name. This kind of escalating exposure played some part in drawing the attention of Otto Preminger, the then prominent film and theatre director. Cast in Carmen Jones (1954), his all-black adaptation of Bizet's opera Carmen, Dandridge received high praise for her performance, a cover for Life (left), and presided over the Academy Award for Best Editing, the first time a black actor was asked to present at the Oscars. This period was also the start of a four-year affair with Preminger which Dandridge ended when he refused to leave his wife. Reunited on the set of Porgy and Bess (1959), Preminger bullied Dandridge mercilessly. The movie failed to find an audience and offers for roles dried up. It is hard to know how much blame to allocate

to Preminger for the breakdown of Dandridge's career. The ability to make or break livelihoods certainly rested with powerful directors at the time, as it does now. While the film industry seems to be in the process of shifting its thinking, abuse of power continues to be its shameful secret.

The tragedy of a waning and wasted career was compounded with Dandridge's suicide at the age of 43. While the camera and Dandridge seemed made for each other, such an affinity could not ultimately sustain her career. But if any moral can be taken from Dandridge's life and times, it is that national attitudes are capable of positive change with the right leadership.

Sources

Scandals of Classic Hollywood by Anne Helen Petersen (2014)

The Photographic Historical Society of Canada

PRESENTS





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EQUIPMENT REVIEW BY DAVID BRIDGE

The Feline Nikon vs the Canine Canon Conundrum



The Lovely Nikon LiteTouch Zoom120 (left), with the Sturdy Canon Sure Shot 90 ull (right).

A recent rediscovery of two gems from a past PHSC auction challenged the reviewing team to take up the perennial camera-geek question: Nikon vs. Canon. Of course, this makes as much sense as the parallel cats vs. dogs argument, but the lab has thankfully suspended testing on this latter issue

In the pre-decline years of film, many sophisticated cameras of diminutive dimensions, legendary cost and pedigree were offered [Olympus XA, Rollei 35]. These were marketed to the more advanced (and moneyed) amateur, but a new genre of fully automated, auto-focus miniatures were eventually produced for the general, colour-print viewing public. Our two samples exemplify the approach: minimal controls, short-range zoom lenses that telescope into the featherweight camera, and no indication of aperture or shutter speed. Indeed, both units have only basic controls for flash modes and red-eye elimination, and a power zoom button pair.

Both units were easily auto-loaded (35mm can simply be pushed in and the leader placed on top of the take-up spindle), obediently winding themselves to frame 1. The Nikon, in a gold plastic colour which at the time would be called "champagne" has attractive gold accents - these are best appreciated by sliding the clamshell door to activate the camera. The Canon, in a more pedestrian silver, requires pushing a diminutive button [don't try this with gloves] to extend the lens. Both cameras have the frustrating habit of resetting the flash mode when turned off.

In use, the cameras were similar: with the noisy focussing, flashing lights and whirring film wind, it was somewhat difficult to ascertain exactly which "decisive moment" had been captured. Image quality? The negatives revealed that the Canon was slightly sharper in most cases, but this could be a result of slower shutter speed choices by the Nikon Program.

Which do we prefer? Cats... and dogs.



Sample images using Kentmere 400 film: Canon on left (stupid date function!), Nikon on right. Equally fun to use!



LIGHT ME UP BY JOHN MORDEN

The Rise and Fall of the Chelsea Flash Pistol

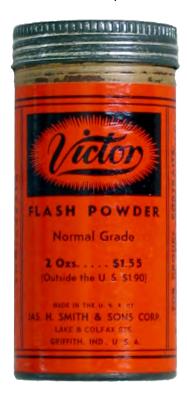
As phone ads now drill us on the horrors of flash photography in order to promote new lightsensitive sensors and fast lenses, it's easy to lose sight of flash as once the only way to take pictures in low-light conditions. At the same time, flash was always a remarkably unstable commodity in the marketplace, almost constantly in a state of reinvention. Limelight, the earliest form of artificial supplementary lighting, was a complex and operation cumbersome involving burning slaked lime. Relatively cheap and portable magnesium compounds soon took its place. However, these compounds were without their drawbacks. Numerous nineteenth-

century newspaper accounts speak of warehouses full of magnesium preparations spontaneously combusting and burning to the ground. Well aware of the dangers, manufacturers sometimes preferred to separate the magnesium from its combustion and booster chemicals for safer storage and transport. But, as Kate Flint has suggested, that made for some scary home chemistry while recombining components.

The Chelsea Flash Pistol was devised to answer some of these issues. Invented by the Chelsea Manufacturing Company in Chelsea, Michigan, it was marketed as a better flash than the platform-style device that had been industry-wide equipment previously. The Chelsea resembled a handgun with a handle and trigger, with a bowl to hold flash (magnesium powder mixed with potassium sulphate for brilliance and antimony chlorate as an oxidizer) where the barrel end would be. An ignition cap was placed in a slot under the hammer and magnesium compound was



Chelsea Flash Pistol, c1895-1902.



Victor Flash Powder. Usually sold in small quantities to minimize collateral damage.

loaded into the bowl. Pulling the trigger popped open the lid, causing the hammer to strike the ignition cap which created the flash. It was, in essence, a cap gun for photographers.

The earliest ads for the Chelsea appeared around 1895, continuing regularly in photo-related publications and newspaper advertising, until they disappeared around 1902-03. It is difficult to determine exactly how much of an industry standard the flash gun became. The Pistol, though a well-made item, was the only photographic that Chelsea gear Manufacturing produced. The initial cost of the pistol, \$2.50 in 1900 (\$75.00 in 2019 dollars), with special ignition caps and flash

powder sold separately, may have limited its use to the professional in a time when the consumer camera was increasingly available and affordable. Technology conceived in support of the advance of electricity would push the Chelsea firmly and finally out of the competition. Still using magnesium in the filament, the flash bulb was small, progressively cheaper and easy to load. It did away with open flames, smoke and chemistry; it might burn fingers but certainly not studios or warehouses. Most importantly, the bulb could also be automatically synchronized with the camera shutter instead of relying on the finger at the end of a tired arm.

Sources

"Victorian Flash" by Kate Flint, Journal of Victorian Culture, 2018, Vol. 23, No. 4.

"Let There be Light" by John Naslanic, Photographic Canadiana, Vol. 25, No. 1, May/ June 1999.

Chelsea Flash Pistol from the collection of Lewko Hryhorijiw.

WEB LINKS COMPILED BY LOUISE FREYBURGER

The Underrated Charm of Ice Fishing, By Cheri Thies November 9, 2017, Messy Nessy Chic www.messynessychic.com/2017/11/09/theunderrated-charm-of-ice-fishing/

"When winter arrives and those icy chills replace the Autumn thrills, most of us tend to curl up beside the fire with a good book, grab a hot chocolate or watch a classic movie. If you live in the northern middle states of the US however, you bundle up in your warmest clothes, pull on your hat, mittens, and boots, and head out the door to follow in the footsteps of your great grandparents, grandparents, and parents—you go ice fishing."





"How to Build an Igloo ..." / NFB - Douglas Wilkerson, 1949. archive.org/details/HowToBuildAnIgloo

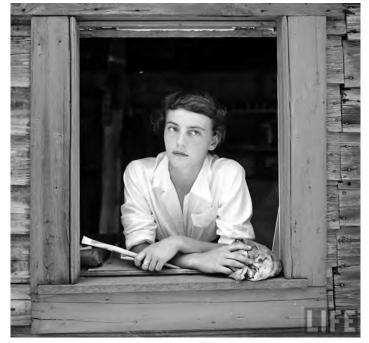
This classic short film shows how to make an igloo using only snow and a knife. Two Inuit men in Canada's Far North choose the site, cut and place snow blocks and create an entrance -- a shelter completed in one-and-a-half hours.

Wish You Were Here: Saugatuck Art Colony, 1949, By Messy Nessy, January 27, 2017

www.messynessychic.com/2017/01/27/wish-you-were-here-saugatuck-art-colony-1949/

"Saugatuck is a small lakeside town in Michigan with a population of around 925. It has been linked with painters and sculptors since 1910, when the Art Institute of Chicago opened an artists' camp there. More recently, the former artists' colony of Saugatuck has become a premier Michigan resort destination, compared to as the "Cape Cod of the West". Loomis Dean's photostory follows a summer school of painting that probably no longer is exists, but for a brief moment in 1949, it looked like an artist's paradise..."

Find the full story on LIFE Archives images.google.com/hosted/ life/1796638bdcf5181a.html



PHSC NEWS January, 2019

PHSC TALKS

Talks are free and open to the public on the third Wednesday of every month, from September to June, in the Burgundy Room of the Memorial Hall, in the basement of 5120 Yonge St, North York, Ontario. Guest Speaker appears at 8:00 pm unless otherwise specified. Please note: some of the presentations are tentative and subject to change. Check the website for updates.

THE HISTORIC BICYCLE

October 17, 2018

Lorne Shields brings in some of his most striking finds in historical bicycle technology and photography.

DIGITIZATION AND PRESERVATION IN BRITISH MUSEUMS

November 21, 2018

Ryerson FPPCM Masters thesis prize winner Daphne Yuen speaks on her research on current digitization approaches.

SHOW AND TELL & SILENT AUCTION

December 19, 2018

The Xmas party for members and guests, along with the Show and Tell and Silent Auction. Everyone welcome.

SPECIAL EVENT:

KODAK CANADA: THE EARLY YEARS (1898-1938)

SPECIAL DATE & TIME - January 23, 2019, 6 to 8pm SPECIAL LOCATION - RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE, 33 Gould St, Toronto, ON

Join us for the opening of the Masters Exhibition at the Ryerson Student Gallery, sponsored by the PHSC.

SNAKE CHARMER WITH A CAMERA February 20, 2019

Erin Levitsky, winner of the 2018 Thesis Prize Award, will present selections from her research on twentieth-century fashion and advertising photographer Nina Leen.

VIDEO EDITING: FROM BLAH TO BRILLIANT & JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY

March 20, 2019

There's a lot to putting together a tight instructional video that will get people interested. Mark Holtze will be in to demonstrate the basics and some of the tricks involved in making a marginal subject entertaining on film.

Japan has had a deep, dedicated and complex relationship with photography and its technology. Celio Barreto will reveal some its intriguing history and contributions in rarely seen images.

PHOTOGRAPH PRESERVATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

April 17, 2019

Chloe Lucas answers your questions.

PHSC EVENTS

CONSIGNMENT AUCTION ALL BUYERS WELCOME!



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DEMAND - Email <u>auction@phsc.ca</u>

Sunday, March 17, 2019 ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION #101 3850 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Toronto

Items accepted 8:30am to 10:00am
View Items 10:00 to 11:00 Auction starts at 11:00am
Free admission & parking
Clint Hryhorijiw - Chairman
Details at www.phsc.ca

SPRING FAIR

Sunday, May 26, 2019 TRIDENT HALL



145 Evans Avenue, Toronto

(south of the Gardiner, east of Islington Avenue) 10:00am to 3:00pm Admission \$7 / Students free / Free parking Mark Singer - Chairman - fair@phsc.ca



DOT ASKS VI

About a capricious collision of comely corsets

Vi: So darling, being as you're the fashionista of the family, I've been wondering about the corset.

Dot: Why? Has Duncan Hines noticed your muffin top?

Vi: Oh har, dear sister. I'm not talking about needing one. I'm wondering why corsets suddenly became popular in 1939, at the start of WWII. It makes no sense. I mean the Allies were gearing up to fight a war with economies depleted by the Great Depression. War rationing on top of that would mean that women had little money to spend on new fashion. And if that weren't enough, influential designer Coco Chanel had just spent the 1920s and 30s maligning the corset as an unhealthy Victorian antique with her straight silhouettes and masculinized suits.

Dot: You know what your problem is? You're too much of a big-picture historian. Sometimes you have to see the smaller picture. Think in terms of how two separate events in photography coincided to affect public perception. First, Horst P. Horst.

Vi: The fashion photographer?

Dot: Yes. Hitler attacked Polandon September 1 stand war was just a matter of official declaration when Horst photographed the Mainbocher corset in September 1939. Horst wasn't interested in reflecting haute couture or providing a winning advertisement for Mainbocher. His image was intended as an exercise in recreating an admiration for classical Greek and Roman antiquity. Horst amplified the ideal nature of his modern goddess by manually retouching her waist to make it impossibly narrow. It was his last image in Paris

before leaving his studio behind and boarding a ship for America.

Vi: You said there were two events in photography. What was the second?

Dot: The second the highly was anticipated Gone With the Wind. The movie's plot was a fictional romance set during the American Civil War. It featured Victorian-inspired costumes with a scene showing character Scarlett



Mainbocher Corset by Horst P. Horst, 1939.

O'Hara in a corset somewhat like the Mainbocher. Horst's picture had been slated to appear in the October 1939 *Paris Vogue* and *Gone With the Wind* had its premiere in December of 1939. But because the war interrupted normal business, the Vogue issue with Horst's image was delayed until December. Paris as the fashion capital and Hollywood as the movie capital ended up cooperating to change Western style by having the motion picture and the photo coincide.

Vi: Because Paris exerted significant influence over fashion at the time, I guess women were eager to follow its lead in ways they could afford. But I should add that *Gone With the Wind* wasn't all corsets and romance. It essentially promoted slavery.

Dot: To this day, some still believe Scarlett's imaginary plantation is how American slavery actually worked. It seems people must be constantly reminded that movies are fiction.

Sources

Photography Icons by Michel Frizot (1998)



Vivian Leigh and Hattie McDaniel in Gone With the Wind.

THE **CLASSIFIEDS**

Camera Shows

LONDON SPRING VINTAGE CAMERA SHOW

Sunday, April 14, 2019 10:00am to 3:00pm

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or tuckerphoto@rogers.com www.londonvintagecamerashow. vpweb.ca

36TH ANNUAL ANTIQUE PHOTO SHOW, WASHINGTON DC

Sunday, March 10, 2019 10:00am to 4:00pm

Everything photographic. Tables are available.

Holiday Inn, 1900 N Ft. Myer Drive, Arlington, VA 22209.

Admission \$10 - Students free 1-4pm antiquephotoshow.com/

Contact Mary Martin 410-939-0999 marymartinpostcards@gmail.com



Camera Shows

CAMERAMA CAMERA SHOW

Sunday, March 3, 2019 9:30am to 2:30pm

Cameras .. lenses .. darkroom.. binoculars & scopes .. collectibles.. video .. digital .. images , etc. Edward Village Hotel 185 Yorkland Boulvard, Toronto, ON Admission \$7 - Free Parking Tables are available Contact Gary Perry - 905-550-7477 Facebook.com/TorontoCameraShows

Exhibitions



PHOTOGRAPHY: FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914 - 1918 (PART II)

November 10, 2018 – April 14, 2019 2019 AGO, 317 Dundas St. W, Toronto, ON Free Admission Wednesday 6-9pm.

ago.ca/exhibitions/photography-first-world-war-1914-1918-part-ii

The history of the First World War is often presented as a simplified story of winners and losers, one that diminishes the complexity of war and the diversity of experience. To mark the centenary of the end of the conflict, this exhibition invites visitors to explore the AGO's significant collection of photographic albums and objects from this period, donated in 2004 by a private collector.

Exhibitions



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

December 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019 Royal Ontario Museum 100 Queen's Park Toronto, ON

www.rom.on.ca/en/wildlifephotographer-of-the-year-2018

A selection of the best wildlife photographs from across the globe in the Natural History Museum at the ROM. An entertaining and educational winter experience for the whole family.



SANAZ MAZINANI "Light Times"

January 12 - February 23, 2019 Stephen Bulger Gallery 1365 Dundas Street, Toronto, ON

Mazinani's camera-less photographs reappear across different media - unmade, reconstituted and recontextualized as sculpture, scent, sound, or technical print. These physical iterations come together to construct a consideration of the interpretation of the material nature of film