INTRODUCTION

Michael K. Komanecky
Interim Director and Chief Curator

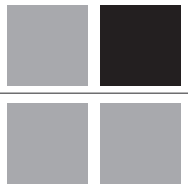
EVEN BEFORE THE FARNSWORTH ART MUSEUM opened its doors in August 1948, it avidly collected works by living American artists, an interest which was quickly extended to its exhibition programs. From its inception, the museum's focus was work done by artists who worked in Maine, whether as year-round or summer residents, or occasional visitors. It is a distinguished group of twentieth-century artists that met this criteria—among them Robert Henri, George Bellows, Rockwell Kent and Marsden Hartley. The museum's early exhibition program tended to favor those in this realist tradition, witnessed by its regular shows of work by Andrew Wyeth. In the 1970s, however, the museum began to embrace artists more readily associated with avant-garde currents in American art. Some were home-grown, like Louise Nevelson, who grew up in Rockland before leaving for New York. Others, like Robert Indiana and Kenneth Noland, came to Maine after establishing their reputations in that center of the American art world. Maine's many attractions, physical and otherwise, continue to draw artists who ply their talents either in response to its natural and man-made sights, or because of the quality of life that it is possible to enjoy here.

This exhibition, *Four in Maine*, celebrates four artists whose work and life stories exemplify the diverse motivations for making art here. Three are teachers at the university level, one is entirely self-taught and supplements his artist career as an antique dealer. Two are from Maine, two are not. Three live here year-round, one only in summer and on the occasional vacation from his normal teaching schedule. They include a photographer, a maker of prints and drawings, a sculptor, and a video and installation artist. The scale of their works ranges from a sheet of paper small enough to hold in one's hand to installations filling an entire room. Their subjects include infinitesimally small worlds seen through the electron microscope, fantasy structures derived from ancient ruins, commonplace scenes of mid-coast Maine fields and harbors, inventively conceived and fabricated women's dresses, and highly conceptualized commentaries on everyday human experience. What this extraordinary range of materials and subjects proclaims is that—unlike the art made in Maine during the previous two centuries, as much as the surroundings of this place may affect an artist's vision—contemporary artists here are fully engaged with notions about the nature of art that are part of a global dialogue.

The exhibition has been arranged as essentially four one-person shows. Each artist—Susan Groce, Chris Pinchbeck, Sam Van Aken, and Brian White—has been given a single gallery in which to present their work. For all but Van Aken, these shows are mini-retrospectives, including work from either an extended or a concentrated period in the lives of these mid-career artists. For Sam, the space offered him an opportunity to do a site-specific piece.

To each of these artists I extend my heartfelt thanks for making their work available, for encouraging their collectors to support the show by lending, and for making themselves available for the interviews that have been used to prepare the catalogue texts. To the many lenders as well goes our sincere thanks. I want to acknowledge, too, Jane Bianco, Robert Colburn, Bethany Engstrom, and Angela Waldron, members of the curatorial staff who eagerly took on the task of organizing portions of the show in addition to their regular duties, performing both with their usual high level of skill and dedication. The design of the Farnsworth's first online catalogue is the work of the museum's talented art director Mary Sesak. To the entire Farnsworth staff I offer my thanks as well, for the success of this or any exhibition requires collaboration and cooperation from all those who spend their work days and more in and around the museum.

Like most American art museums, the Farnsworth organizes exhibitions without the benefit of endowed funds, meaning we depend on the support of individuals, foundations and many other corporate and private sponsors for each and every project we carry out. The extraordinary economic circumstances witnessed throughout the country and the world in the past year have made these contributions more important than ever. *Four in Maine* has been made possible with grants from the Davis Family Foundation, the Artists Resource Trust, and the University of Maine, Orono; and with generous donations from Merril and Dolores Halpern, John and Sarah Ames, Deborah and Frederick H. Chatfield, Jr., Alix Thorne, and Mary R. Saltonstall and John K. Hanson, Jr. Our members and visitors, too, provide vital support for all that we do, exhibitions included. To all of them we offer our gratitude—and welcome them to *Four in Maine*.



FOUR IN MAINE

Susan Groce
Chris Pinchbeck
Sam Van Aken
Brian White

Chris Pinchbeck, ***Aspen, Cedar Breaks, Utah,*** 1998; direct positive pinhole photograph; 27 x 73 inches; courtesy of the artist

INTRODUCTION

Chris Pinchbeck

"This project was born from a need to keep the magic of photography alive within myself, and from a passion to see and record the tremendous world we live in.

" It allowed me to witness and be a conduit for the medium of pinhole photography and its power to capture nature in a way modern photography is incapable of doing. Long exposure times and large print size, combined with sharpness unlimited by optics provides for a unique presence and layering.

"The medium is now part of photographic history as the advent of digital has made this paper, the chemicals and machines used to process it—obsolete. They are the world's largest, one-of-a-kind direct positive pinholes ever to be made.

"The process invigorated my soul and kept the magic of photography and nature thriving within me. I can only hope you enjoy the images as well and are equally invigorated."

Chris Pinchbeck earned degrees in photography at Brooks Institute, in Santa Barbara, California, and environmental conservation at the University of New Hampshire, Durham. He teaches use of large-format cameras and studio lighting at the Maine Media Workshops in Rockport, Maine, and is an online instructor of color theory and introduction to digital photography for the MFA program at the Academy of Art in San Francisco. He also leads photography workshops through Canada and the United States, works as a commercial photographer, and has assisted with the Emmy-Award-winning television series *Anyplace Wild*.

Combining his love for the landscape with his skills as a photographer, Pinchbeck has exhibited in galleries in California and New England, and has published work in magazines and for national and international corporations. His work is found in private and public collections, including that of the Farnsworth Art Museum, and the large-format pinhole photographs are represented by Dowling-Walsh Gallery in Rockland, Maine. He lives in Hope, Maine.

Chris Pinchbeck, ***Cows***, 2002; direct positive pinhole photograph; 27 x 73 inches; courtesy of the artist

INTERVIEW

Chris Pinchbeck
conducted by Jane Bianco

Hope, Maine—Tuesday, November 11, 2008

We climb into the trailer parked outside the home Chris shares with his wife Lindsay, son Cameron, and two dogs, Riley and Sage, for a demo of the camera obscura and process used by Chris for his large format direct positive pinhole photographs. Chris created the camera by modifying a simple 5 x 8 foot wooden trailer with a composing hole, much smaller diameter pinhole, outer door and sliding inner panel door

CP: Basically, I needed a way to get in and out of the trailer while keeping it light tight, so I made this "pocket" space where I can just barely fit in order to close one door behind me and open the other. So we'll close it all up and I'll explain a few things.

You can see this particular image we're observing is slightly fuzzy. The reason is that this aperture, this composing hole, is large enough to let in stray light; and while it doesn't really pinpoint image detail for clarity's sake, I need it to compose and see the image quickly. The actual pinhole used to make the image here lets in so little light that it takes about 20 minutes or so for your eyes to adjust enough to see an image. In order to compose, I had to jump in, see the composition, jump out, adjust the trailer, jump in look, adjust, fine tune, etc. So if I actually take this white foam-core I've put in here to demonstrate this, as our eyes get adjusted to the dark—I cover the composing hole and I bring this board really close to the real pinhole—we can see the image. This image is far superior in clarity to the one projected through the larger diameter composing hole, and you can pick up quite a bit of detail such as the little highlights coming off the house.

JB: The author of a 1925 article from the *British Journal of Photography* wrote that a factor in determining image clarity is the diameter of the pinhole, ideally sized to be 1/3 of the distance from the hole to the picture plane, or the distance traveled by light.

CP: The term "clarity" used in the article corresponds closely in analogy to our definition of depth of field when we talk about lenses in modern cameras—it is the range between the closest and farthest points within the area of a photograph that is within acceptably sharp focus. However, clarity is a matter of subjectivity: you may see focus a little differently than I might. Although the concept is understood scientifically, there is room for your own interpretation, and this is what makes pinhole photography such a brilliant medium. As an example, if I were to move this foam-core board in and out, there would be a point at which clarity of the image projected on its surface is at an optimum place; but this understanding is fairly subjective, actually, because we're subjectively seeing clarity all the way through the image projected via the pinhole. But, yes, as a general rule of thumb, indeed the *British Journal* article is correct when we speak of optimum distance for pinhole sizing as it relates to distance to the light sensitive medium.

JB: In your vistas of the west and even in the closer woodland Maine scenes there is so much available information that it takes some time to read the image, almost as if there exists an infinite path that your eye can take. The range of detail and space present a scene into which the viewer can enter pathways that he might imagine himself physically walking along.

CP: Well, that's the great thing about the simple, panoramic format and the size of these prints. They invite us to choose that starting point and ending point and path through the image. The beautiful part about pinhole is that you do have clarity from zero to infinity, and that's something you don't see with modern lenses. What you see with modern lenses is a specific zone that's in focus, that depth of field I just spoke of. Pinhole offers a range of clarity from zero to infinity that modern cameras can't offer. I think it's my combination of panoramic format and accommodation of this specific pinhole process that draws us into the images but not so quickly out of the scene, so that we do take the time to visually travel through them, all thanks to the clarity throughout the image.

JB: What happens in the captured result of accumulated variations within a certain exposure time?

CP: How fleeting this movement is. If we were taking a picture of the dog Riley lying here just outside, we would maybe get his body, but not his moving head, which would be blurry. I had often thought about doing portraits of people—having them sit in a chair, literally a foot from this pinhole and filling this entire space with their portrait—had the materials continued to be made to fit my particular pinhole process. If subjects, say, would sit for two hours, as still as possible or doing whatever they wanted to do, what would result would be a human shape with no defining feature, I think. Interestingly, you'd be able to identify who it was—but the form of the subject would be undefined because of movement—because of breathing, blinking, etc. We move more than we think we do.

JB: Since the paper and chemicals that you used for the large-format direct positive pinhole photographs are no longer made, are you interested in continuing with pinhole on a smaller scale?

CP: No, because there was something so tangible about this—this fits who I am. I love to use my hands; I love to be consumed by something, love to tinker. This satisfied that creative process. Here we are, in this trailer—we smell it, we're inside it, we're cold, we're bouncing with the wind—all of our senses are involved—this is why I enjoyed it. It was a matter of getting in the truck and driving somewhere, setting this thing up with jacks—I'm more of a physical kind of person that way. Imagine rolling these large prints out after they've been processed and being able to witness them for the first time—wow! It wasn't this staged process where I took the picture in a small pinhole camera, got a negative, then took that into the darkroom, printed it in such a way as to create a print statement, and had repeatability through a negative. This was a one-shot deal: pin the paper up, expose it, process it, and you get what you get. What allowed me to be a part of this process at the same time caused me to stand back and simply be a conduit for whatever was going to be—that's what made it so awesome. It was very much about the tangible process, something we tend to forget in our work, when we're so often consumed with the end result that we forget what it means to enjoy the pathway there. I'm confident I'll be inspired by another avenue of creative endeavor, although I learned from this experience not to force it. I do believe there's something much larger out there than us and whatever it is, it has a plan. We should allow that to unfold. This isn't to say that I don't keep busy and creative in the meantime.

JB: This element of chance and surprise is part of what made pinhole photography intriguing for you?

CP: Absolutely. On a day like today with the wind blowing, I'm noticing this tree over here slowly whispering in the wind, and side-by-side with that is a dead tree that is not moving. You know that the resulting image would reveal a blurry tree and one staying still, but the color and the actual movement that comes back in the processed print is exciting to see, because you never can predict exactly how it will look. What a great surprise it always is.

JB: It seems to provide another kind of access to nature—forcing, in a way, closer observation. Little things recorded, documented in a way that you wouldn't notice if you were just walking through the wood.

CP: I tell you, you're hitting on a bigger subject which, at the core, is what is really exciting about this whole project. This process finally captured for me nature's soul, nature's movement. We might grasp little pieces of it when we're on a walk but this reveals a wholeness, I think, that we often miss. A great exercise I give my students is to go out somewhere—to a park or into the woods—somewhere where it's quiet. In nature, and without a camera, just to sit for an hour. Without moving, without having to fidget, without reaching for your wallet, combing your hair, or sifting through your phone messages, actually just sit there. If you take the assignment on, generally what happens is you're kind of frustrated for the first half hour, wondering why you're sitting out there; it's cold, it's windy, you have a million things to do in the house, your mind is clogged; but after a little while—forty-five minutes or so—things begin to move, to unclog, to flow. Things begin to reveal themselves; a new rhythm uncovers itself—things you don't see if you're walking by, or within your busy space. Most of the time when I give the assignment and people follow through with it, they end up spending a couple of hours or more at their chosen spot, saying that it was amazing how things around them became alive. This is what this long exposure captured that modern photography didn't, and doesn't—this movement of nature, subtle, yet powerful, quiet yet revealing. This movement—we freeze it so often with modern photographs; and when we intentionally gather nature's motion, we often quite successfully do so by feathering a waterfall, that kind of thing—but with relatively short exposures compared to pinhole—we're talking about the realm of five or ten minutes at the most verses one to six hours with the pinhole. Night photographs of star trails are probably one of the closer things we come to in modern photography that reveal this movement—a brilliant circle in the sky recorded over an eight hour exposure. But even the digital arena has severed the ordinary photographer's ability to make those long exposures. With this pinhole process during the day I'm able to depict that kind of brilliance and change in light we captured at night with film. Through pinhole photography's longer exposures we see the wind, we see tidal movements, we see this ethereal movement nature quietly reveals, something we just don't typically record on a still image otherwise.

JB: Do you think there may ever be an opportunity for the paper or the chemicals to return to production?

CP: I would like to hope—if that were to happen I'd jump right back into it, but I don't think it is going to be. I think our medium has changed to the point where unfortunately it's structured toward a commercial endeavor for companies like Fuji and Ilfachrome, manufacturers of these papers that just don't have the call for them anymore. I'm just one tiny fish in a big, big sea of photographic needs. To the best of my knowledge, mine are the largest color direct positive pinholes in the world.

JB: *We move out of the trailer and into the daylight. After entering the Pinchbeck home, we sit at the kitchen table.*

CP: I'll draw you a diagram of how a pinhole image works. The dynamic of light is actually pretty simple. We've got the sun shining down on the subject—light rays reflect off the subject and through the pinhole. Light stays in a straight line. It doesn't like to bend. If we were to follow a specific ray—let's say in this case the ray reflecting off the subject's head, we follow it through the pinhole and on down to the film plane inside the camera or light tight box – in a straight line. Now if we similarly follow a ray from this subject's foot, it travels through the pinhole and on up to the top of the film plane. Three dimensionally speaking, this would also be happening side to side for the resulting upside down and backwards affect of light traveling through a hole or lens. With film, we can look through and turn the actual film to resurrect the image as we know it in real life; of course, digital cameras flip and reverse the image back to the "correct" positioning, as we know a lens also flips and turns an image.

JB: I see this phenomenon illustrated in your picture of the aspens with the carving of backward letters on the tree—it reminds us that we're not seeing a copy of the scene, but rather a flipped version.

CP: Another subtle indication of this occurs in my photo of Port Clyde with the lobster company name written on the wharf shack. Anywhere there is writing that we see backwards in a place that we may know from memory, we're jarred enough to stop and ask why.

JB: Will you talk about those images that are especially important to you.

CP: It turns out with timing and the end of this paper manufacturing, there are so few of them I actually made that each carries specific memories for me. I made thirty-five or so what I would call successful images, many duds, and lost five in the mail the week after 9/11. Even if the paper still existed and I were doing this long term and producing many, each would have its own story, its own experience having meaning for me. That is part of the whole slow process of making an image—these might come together a little more quickly than making an oil painting or a sculpture, but they emerge from a much slower process than with a digital SLR.

There is one pinhole image of an old, horse-drawn manure spreader taken in Capitol Reef National Park in Utah—it's out in the middle of nowhere- in a good way, you know. I found this subject, this honey-wagon, I pulled up to it off the road, and commenced to jack the trailer up. The park ranger comes by—he says, "Are you all right? Do you need help?" That was usually the case, because when people saw the trailer on the jacks they figure this poor guy's got an axle issue or flat tire or something, right? And it was always, "No, this is a camera, and I'm making an exposure …" I had to jack the trailer up on all four sides for two reasons: first, to get the "bouncy" leaf springs off the ground so the box wouldn't move during the exposure, and secondly, to correct often for horizon tilt. Anyway, the ranger didn't want to believe me—so I explained the whole camera design, but he seemed to doubt me, thinking, "I'm not sure about this cat here. This is crazy." On this day he's had nothing going on, and out of nowhere sees this guy with this trailer jacked up out in the middle of nowhere explaining to him that it's a camera—Yeah, right! Unknowingly, in my hand I had the padlock I used to lock the back of the trailer, and I said, "If you want to get inside it, I'll close the door behind you and you can see the image." I'll never forget his look or what seemed to happen in slow motion: he literally looked at the padlock in my hand, then glanced down at his gun in his holster, looked back at me, stared into my eyes, sized me up, and finally said, "All right, I'll try it." He climbed in, and I closed the door behind him. It really makes it fun to be inside the camera and see movement from outside in the image, so I'd usually stay outside and walk into the scene when I'd show people this camera. I start moving around outside in front of the pinhole, and all of a sudden I hear through the trailer, "This is *#%*ing awesome!". I said, "I'll come and let you out," and I heard, "Wait a minute—I want to see this a little longer!" So finally I unhitched the door and he came out, shook my hand, smiled, and inquired about how it all worked. To me, that was just another thing this camera brought, and brings—so many different ways to touch people in a simple way, their responses, and an epiphany of sorts. I wonder if he's out there still telling the story of the nut with the padlock in his hand who had a camera trailer. Good stuff.

Something resonates when you've been able to combine the pinhole panoramas with the actual experience of being inside the trailer, or seeing how the photographs are made, how a camera obscura works. When I have a chance to show people this thing they walk away with a

completely different experience of the imagery. To me, pinhole photography is alive, ever moving, and has always added a new dimension to photography—even though it is the core of photography. The artist is the catalyst, but pinhole always carries its own voice as well, throwing you surprises here and there. You're never truly able to say, "This will be my specific result." It's almost as if the photographer merely asks the question while setting up for a pinhole exposure, and some other voice or force out there takes over and answers the question—each time with a unique answer.

JB: Your work seems to be a logical and direct extension of an earlier use of the camera obscura as a tool to delineate a scene for artists, for instance, or for city planners, or even as a fascinating amusement—

CP: Ironically, the camera obscura helped achieve a realist expression for artists, and to me, this camera and current pinhole artists in general try to break away from the realism and often exacting hand of modern photography in order to get back to—or reveal something—that isn't quite as precise or frozen. The colors are different, the exposures are oftentimes a little flushed out or sullen and there are a lot of imperfections about pinhole photographs. It delivers a real soft essence of light. By the time the sun has moved through the image, my camera renders a softening transition between highlight and shadow. It shows nature as something alive, ever moving.

JB: You earlier mentioned the difference in the blues in your images of the western United States landscapes vs. those of Maine.

CP: I would argue that the intensity of the light is the same out here in Maine, but that the spatial relationships between our surroundings here and the surroundings out west are what make the difference. So a scene of a foreground tree maybe four feet from the pinhole on out to a few hundred feet away is a subject of much closer proximity here in Maine; whereas, Lake Powell is an image from zero all the way out across the lake and into canyons off toward Navaho Mountain and beyond—a span of miles. Within that space there is a lot of atmosphere infused with this blue spectrum of light. In the medium, films and papers are structured using layers of dyes sensitive to the red, green, and blue spectrums of light. Typically emulsion layers are built such that the dye on top—usually yellow—is most sensitive to the color blue, and therefore exposes very quickly. It's always been a hurdle for photographers, but the "blueness" out west caught me by surprise—and I think it's a matter of that space.

JB: How did you set aside time to fit it in the pinhole photography as a creative expression apart from the commercial work that you were also doing?

CP: When I first got into this process it was an outreach for me to bring back the magic of photography that I had lost in the commercial arena—to find passion again. I never marketed this work; I made a few initial prints and showed them over at the Maine Photo Workshops to colleagues—but the process is what makes the enjoyment for me. However, now that the photographs stand as the largest direct positive prints series in the world and because there are no more, they are a part of photography's history. This requires a responsibility on my part to offer them for others to enjoy. There is now an importance attached to these images beyond just me that I would have never realized when I initially set out making them. They began as a weekend whim to define passion again in my photography and to enjoy the process of making photographs, the whole reason I came to the medium in the first place. As a result, I think, they kept their energy. None of these images came with any kind of timeline or pressure. They were made when I had the impulse, and there would be sometimes months and even a year between making them. Each time I brought the camera out, there was a specific, personal reason for me to do so—there was something that spoke to me—it was time to make an image.

JB: Can you describe a defining moment for your path toward pinhole photography?

CP: I used to live over in West Rockport near a cemetery where there was a beautiful lupine patch at the cemetery's edge. All early summer I'd pass this bed of lupines, and think, "I've got to make an image of that—it's beautiful." And I didn't for weeks. Every day I'd pass by and say, "That's awesome, it's beautiful," and then one Sunday morning I woke up and impulsively hooked the trailer camera on the truck. It was just a feeling: so I went over and made the image, packed the camera up and went home. On Monday morning, a bulldozer was on that spot and they graded the entire area over to make more room for grave plots. Gone were the lupines—within hours—the next day. This became a pivotal point in my thinking about the work. It helped me tap into something much larger in this process than just me. I began to feel like a catalyst, simply a conduit for energy much greater than myself to channel into the physical frozen state of a photograph. When I talk about each one of these images having a story, it's personal, but at the same time these are stories to be shared. For me, it was the fun of going out and doing this stuff without being forced to by a job or a gallery representation, and never needing to sell them. With time they've surely taken on a new role, and it's once again my responsibility to see they are preserved, understood and enjoyed by others, in my role as a facilitator, if you will.

JB: You spoke once about the feeling of excitement with the first snowfall—and of something that stems from childhood—captured in some of your other photographs.

CP: These images were made of that quiet, little impulse we don't tap into as much as we should. We tapped into it unknowingly but fluidly as kids—there was a joy about life, the energy of life, poking, prodding, having fun. As adults we often seem so ensconced in our daily lives—our email, our cell phones, this constant flush of stuff we convince ourselves we need to do—and we don't really listen to that little, quiet impulse that suggests we don't have to read email right now—it's snowing out. Let's go build a snowman. We don't listen to the kid inside us. These are all about the kid inside me, curious, inquisitive.

JB: Your picture of hay bales, those bundles that we often see: yours seem personified, sitting individually in a field with trees that remind me of African trees—Maine rolls of hay and African-looking trees.

CP: Lindsay and I went to Africa for our honeymoon, and these locust trees do have overtones of those in the Serengeti—but I didn't make that image after our trip. Every time I do see the hay bales—they hay our fields out here in Hope—it's a beautiful time to enjoy the fields with the bales scattered about. My dad had a bunch of hay fields, so I always had the bales in my life as a kid at harvest time. As kids you'd run up to these things, try to roll them, jump up on them; the dog follows you up, and when they're close by, you hop over the tops of them as if you were in a stream hopping over rocks. They made a great playground for a kid. Every time I see the bales I think of my childhood—lying over the top of one, looking up at the clouds, conjuring pictures in those clouds in the sky, watching the sun set in the summer warmth. This particular scene is down off Old County Road, and I wanted to capture a real quiet afternoon light with this image. There was a timing issue, because they'll bale these, and you don't know when they're going to come along and take them away. I drove by and saw they had hayed this field and again it was kind of an impulse: asked the old farmer if I could drive down on his fields and make the image. It happened to be a windy day, though, so although the bales remained still there was a wild motion all around them. There isn't much a story here as much as the potency of being in that environment, being able to smell the hay, or to feel the quiet light as it set. The good thing about this pinhole camera is that it forces you to stop at a spot, sit, engage, smell, feel the surroundings while you're making a picture—regardless of the picture. There is a real, tangible experience associated with each one of these photographs.

I was always outside because, believe it or not, if I sat inside the camera, something as subtle as my heartbeat would change the exposure—the trailer has to be absolutely still. When I'm sitting against that wall in the trailer I can feel my heartbeat moving the trailer. You are really in tune with it all … so I didn't dare stay in there. I usually stayed fairly close, and more often than not, I'd actually enjoy sitting and watching—just looking.

JB: *Autumn Stream, Camden, Maine*, in the Farnsworth collection, shows water movement, but conveys a certain ambiguity as to scale of the rocks over which the water flows, and therefore seems mysterious. Was this planned?

CP: *Autumn Stream, Camden, Maine* was somewhat of an experiment for me, because I wanted to see what this water movement would provide. This is the second image I ever made. I love that little cascade, and I was also experimenting because it was a windy day. There are so many scenes I go by on the highway—and knew this particular scene had elements I wanted in the image—the yellow, the birch there, the shape and tonal differences in the rocks, the variations in water color … It was also a trial because it was a cloudy day, very windy, but I wanted to test this camera in the wind, and why not have the added bonus of a cascade in the foreground? I set the camera up, and based on my exposure calculations it came out well-exposed, and again—what a great surprise. There is a motionless little twig, one tiny element that draws our eye once in awhile, then back to the cascade, then the rocks, then to the autumn colors … fantastic potpourri.

But to answer your question directly, I think any time we pull elements of reality out of an image we begin the building blocks of creating intent, a narrative and elements of mystery, contrast and the ambiguity you mention. Feathering water, blurred trees, a soft quality of light created over its physical movement during the span of three hours, all these things begin to blur our discernment of reality, our sense of grounding, or foundation from which to assess the "truth" of place in these images. In other words, a gentle displacement of our senses cultivates healthy questioning, which I think begins to embrace viewer involvement and also gesture. So in some respects, yes, these things are in subtle play here in the images. *Autumn Stream* is a good example of this and I consider that slightly ungrounded sense of scale to be an engagement of your interaction with the piece. But planned—I would be lying if I said yes. However it is one of those reoccurring epiphanies this medium delivers as a gift from time to time and I think it is part of the energy the pieces carry.

JB: Are there any photographs from this body of work that you'll never part with?

CP: *Pattison Trees*, my first one, was difficult to see go. Photos are meant to share. For a long time I had *Lupines* in our

bedroom and would wake up every morning and see something new. But for people to enjoy seeing the photographs, experience them, perhaps to make an association with the images—that's important to me now. Someone asked me, "What do you do that makes you worthy to have Autumn Stream, Camden, Maine in the Farnsworth Museum collection?" Because it belongs to the body of work that has become part of photography's history, this series of pinhole images is finite; I'm just the spokesperson in a way—there they are. It's not what I'm doing as an artist currently that makes them worthy—it's what these did and still do, regardless of me. So if these prints bring people joy and allow them to tap into personal experiences of their own or somehow help shed some light on a particular genre of photography as an art, great. What a pleasure it is to share this.

JB: There is an active group of pinhole photographers on the web—do they make a different kind of print using smaller paper sizes?

CP: Yes, and they're using smaller cameras. I'll grab a box of pinhole cameras that I've built and acquired over the years and show you exactly what those photographers are using.

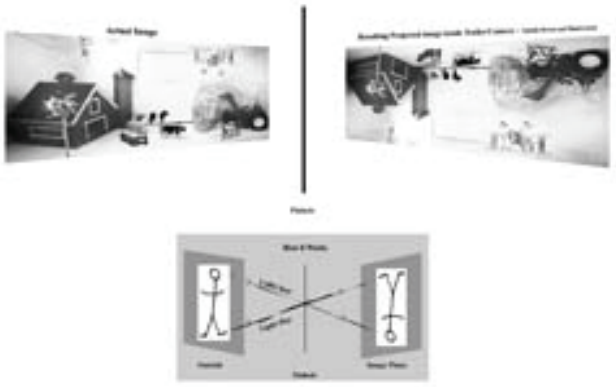
JB: *Chris brings out a box of an assortment of manufactured and homemade portable pinhole cameras.*

CP: There are some little gems in here. Anything you can make dark, you can make into a camera. Tins, boxes, cans….. I bring a bunch of these to schools for demos. Some even, the kids have made: they build cameras, we make exposures and often I take them into the darkroom for results they can see right away—great experience for kids. Here's a crude camera I made where I could put in 35 mm film and roll it on through with a simple roller which is actually just a bent-over nail: tested so I know that two-and-a-half turns gets the film from point A to point B for your next frame—it's a very simple means of doing things. Line it with felt, make the box black and light-tight, here's your pinhole, use black tape to cover and uncover for your exposure—you've got a camera. Light falls off and disperses over distance. The trailer camera light travels five feet from pinhole to paper. Therefore, it loses a lot of intensity during that travel and dispersion. With handheld pinhole cameras we've got an inch or a few to cover versus that five feet. The exposures of the smaller pinhole cameras, although long, are far less than the hours-long exposures required by the trailer camera.

The trailer gave me a huge stumbling block with a thing we call reciprocity failure—what is the ability of light sensitive material to capture light in a predictable, repeatable manner in terms of timing and color reproduction. The less light, the more this predictability changes, also changing with each emulsion batch. With such minimal light in the trailer, I was always on a precipitous edge of uncertainty regarding emulsion's actual ability to be sensitized by the minimal amounts of light it was receiving.

JB: *Chris continues to pull out other pinhole cameras, describing each.*

CP: These are made from boxes that I've collected, little tins, etc. The more you immerse yourself in this the more addicted you become to trying new, offbeat camera possibilities. The closer the film plane is to the pinhole, the wider perspective we see.



JB: *Chris draws another diagram to demonstrate this phenomenon.*

CP: In terms of magnification, telephoto, and wide angle—terms we know from modern photography: as the film plane is closer to the pinhole, the subject is smaller and as we move it away, it appears larger. In the context of using the same-sized piece of film throughout this range, the closer it is the pinhole, the more wide angle the result; and the farther away the film is taken from the pinhole, the more telephoto or "zoomed" in the affect.

JB: *Then Chris pulls out a camera built from a thin 8 mm metal film canister.*

CP: There are seven pinholes in this camera, and you end up with seven different images, same location or different, your choice. The sky's the limit with your creativity. They do make pinhole cameras commercially, and this is what a lot of the pinhole photographers out there use (Leonardo brand). These are production cameras built for a Polaroid film back—4 x 5 Polaroids—which just recently have also gone out of production, though 4 x 5 film is still readily available.

Pinhole photography is a great way to learn photography, as well. The common shutter speeds and apertures we know are f 4, f 5.6, f 8, f 11, f 16, f 22. As apertures keep

getting smaller, the applicable number gets larger. My trailer, for instance, works out to be something like f 898. What the Zero Image™ camera maker has done here is put a common scale on their pinhole camera, so that you can take a modern camera meter, point it to the light, read what a particular scene is calling for, say, a proper exposure of f 11 at a 60th of a second. You then dial that combo into this scale and see at the f 500 mark, your proper exposure time would indicate 30 seconds.

There is a guy out there who puts film in his mouth and exposes it through his teeth—makes a pinhole through the shape in his teeth, exposes, takes the film out, develops it. The sky is the limit and many of us work on the outskirts of what's possible in the medium. We're the rebels, if you will, or the nuts, depending on how you want to look at it.

JB: Is the tooth cameraman getting some kind of toxic exposure as well?

CP: Probably he is exposed to gelatin-based emulsion, but indeed, one that is full of silver. Here's a great concept where you put the film or paper into this whiskey tin camera and the film or paper is forced into a curve, providing distorted results.

JB: *Chris pulls out a gallon paint bucket.*

CP: This was another concept I came up with in school; green paint, because that's all I had laying around to darken up the interior, a camera with three pinholes around this curved surface, and within I created another curved surface (a soda can) to which we affix our film. So we go into the darkroom, affix our film to this can, put the lid on, light-tight—now we can carry our camera wherever we want, open one pinhole, close it, go somewhere else, make another picture through another pinhole, take the camera somewhere else and expose another image—so they all amalgamate into these three scenes that come together in a border-less, as one, fashion. Or you could keep the camera in one spot, make three images of separate sides of the room, all weaving into one image representing a 180degree view of the room. We become complacent with modern photography's flat film surface with one lens. Well, photography's means can be more dynamic; as we saw out in the trailer when we moved foam-core in front of the projected image, there was distortion—why not put an image around a curved surface or use more than one pinhole to expose an image on different parts of the film plane? The sky is the limit with the pinhole format—and it is such great fun; intoxicating when you're really involved in it all.

JB: You appear to be a natural as a teacher.

CP: I'm on the MFA faculty as an online instructor at the Academy of Art in San Francisco. I teach color theory and intro to digital photography with them. I'm five or six years into online teaching and considered somewhat of a dinosaur—I never thought I could teach photography effectively online, but the students often have more attention from me than in the setting of a live classroom because I'm there seven days a week. I log on every day, they get answers to their questions or critique of their work—a lot of individualized attention. I also teach at the Maine Media Workshops, usually during the spring. I teach large-format cameras and studio lighting. I love to teach, and I do love the classroom teaching experience. I've also taught lots of travel workshops throughout the U.S. and Canada. I do commercial work when it comes in. This combination of editorial, commercial, documentation, teaching—whatever pays the bills and keeps me enthusiastic. I'm a horrible marketer, however, as many of us are. It takes all kinds of weaving to make a living here in Maine but it makes for an interesting career, for sure.

JB: *We walk upstairs to see Pinchbeck's photograph, White Sands, mounted on the wall.*

CP: A barren land to a passer by, but it's just truly alive there. The sand is constantly moving and you think—all this white around. Coming from New England you look at white and you start shivering, but out there it's hot, sand is blowing in your eyes. The name says it all. It is as white as can be, and you combine it with that blue in the sky, the yellows in the sparse grasses, Yucca plants—it's really a beautiful place. The sand is constantly moving, engulfing plants, like an amoebic force. This image resulted from a short exposure: I stepped out of the truck and was just hit by the light—it slapped me. I stopped this exposure after half-an-hour. A lot of times the latent image on the photo paper has formed fairly quickly, but as the exposure progresses it's primarily the colors that are developing toward their "trueness;" that reciprocity I mentioned. If you stop the exposure too early the colors will be off. There's a bit of a magenta cast here, in my opinion, and I think that's a part of that reciprocity failure because I took such a short exposure. Had I made this exposure an hour long, it probably wouldn't have been too much brighter, but that magenta would have been pulled from the final result. It would have been whiter, cleaner, the colors a touch truer—what I'm talking about is a subtle, three point color shift, just barely discernable to the eye.

You have to understand the process but not be hindered by the science of it, know enough to use it fluidly and not allow it to stall creativity. Not using a light meter, for instance, teaches you how to look at light and to feel the intensity of light—directed intent, but relaxed enough to allow serendipity.

JB: Many of your photograph titles are simple place names.

CP: I don't want to bias the viewer with some fancy title. If the focus of the work had complex undertones, then I would name the pieces with a title that would provoke a specific reaction or thought. But I think these photographs have their own voice, they tell their own story. There's nothing complicated going on here. My statement is simple—to share with people this tremendous place that we live in—a simple revelation of the beauty we have around us. Often this is seen in the arts as trite but I feel it's a refreshing change of pace.

JB: Would this summarize your intent then?

CP: I guess quite closely. Why we work as artists is often difficult to explain. It's so very personally rooted although closely linked, there is a desire to have those roots understood by others. Often the act of the work is selfish in a way, it jazzes us up, involves us intimately in the creative process; it's addicting. Yet for me, the product of the work flourishes and reaches outward to become something less personally motivated.

This entire process gently nudged me to recognize and listen to a faint voice, an impulse, that gut feeling we often know is there but shove aside for what we think are more important matters. To listen and act on that inner voice is imperative. I think we'd solve a lot of problems in the world by slowing down and allowing the volume of that voice to become more audible. For me, it acted as its own catalyst, in resonating with a quiet simplicity, and it has invited me to slow down and enjoy my experiences in this inspiring place we live. What a great gift it provided me. The product of nurturing this seed is my intent. What more could I ask than this: that it might pave the way for similar discoveries for others along the way?