



The American Snapshot: In Praise of the Quotidian

PHSNE Presentation by Peter Bosco , November 5, 2017

Woman's Club Workshop, 72 Columbus St., Newton MA, 1:30 P.M.



Photo by Stephen DiRado

We live in what writer John Rember calls, “the thin moment of the present.” When we take a snapshot, we are intuitively aware of our fleeting and ephemeral lives - and hope to preserve it in time and place.

Part of the appeal of a snapshot is that it lives in the moment – without ego, pretense or higher order. We are reminded of photography’s unique vernacular of storytelling and its gift to inform without judgment or malice. The snapshot is also perhaps photography’s most democratic process and finest steward. It is, at once, both folk-art and poetry of the commonplace. Snapshots are a chronicle of time and living history steeped in American culture that often dwells within the scrap-book tradition. The pursuit and realization of the American Dream is often a theme imbued in a suite of snapshots.

Peter Bosco will share from his vast snapshot collection of America from the past century. We will explore the Golden Age of American snapshots between the early 1900s through the 1960s. The true pleasure lies in discovering the secrets these sweet, anonymous jewels hold dear. Be part photo-detective, archaeologist, sociologist in this fun and lively discussion. Social, cultural



Peter Bosco, MFA

and political overtones are revealed both by lens and the distancing of time. We will compare the earlier snapshot with our current iPhone/Snapchat culture.

A photographer for 30 years, Peter holds an MFA in photography from Ohio University. He has taught photography at several colleges including Manchester Community College and Eastern Connecticut State University. Peter served as teacher coordinator at the renowned Maine Photographic Workshops in Rockport, where he met celebrated portrait photographer, Arnold Newman. He later served as Mr. Newman’s first assistant and personal printer in New York City.



Peter works with large and ultra-large format cameras, utilizing traditional silver and platinum materials. He is an artist grant recipient from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. His photographic work has been shown throughout the northeast, featuring inclusion at an exhibition at Yale University and a solo show at the New Britain Museum of American Art. His photography is in the collection of the Newark Museum of American Art and the Mount Washington Observatory, New Hampshire. In addition, Peter produced a documentary film, *George Tice: Seeing Beyond The Moment*, which premiered, October 2013, on the life of renowned American photographer George Tice. Peter is also working on a tome of American snapshots from his extensive personal collection. He lives in Shaftsbury, Vermont.

Enlarge your vision and appreciate the humble but magical snapshot during this entertaining event!

Update: *Journal Survey*

PHSNE would like to thank those members who completed the 2016 *Journal* survey. Your feedback is important and will certainly guide future issues. A numerical breakdown of survey results, along with all anecdotal comments received will be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/ydz46qa2>. These will be available until December 31 of this year.

The *Journal* Committee invites continuing input at any time and can be reached through journal-editor@phsne.org. One desire expressed in the 2016 survey was for more equipment-related articles. The Committee recognizes this lack of balance, and asks members to contribute material in this area, as well as in all areas of photographic history.

Rare *Antiques Roadshow* Discovery

Fans of the popular PBS staple *Antiques Roadshow* often see photographic items, some with unusual provenance, which occasionally command hefty prices. One item that turned up a number of years ago was a gold-plated Leica Luxus II Camera used during the 1940s and 1950s. The camera, whose estimated value fluctuated dramatically over the years, sold for \$380,000 in 2013. For photo and more details visit <http://definition.org/most-valuable-antiques-roadshow-finds/8/>.

PHSNE Membership

New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$20 for students, \$40 for individuals and institutions, and \$45 for a family; foreign membership is \$50. Join or renew online at www.phsne.org/join or www.phsne.org/renew, or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order. Check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453. (Call: 617-826-9294; email: membership@phsne.org; or you can use the Web form at www.phsne.org).

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Kodak Opens Film Processing Labs



Did the headline take you by surprise? While it once appeared that digital photography was sounding the death knell for film cameras, film production, and film processing, there is a resurgence of interest in all things film. Evidence of this phenomenon includes Kodak's opening of two film processing

labs in spring of 2017, in Long Island City and London; building a new film lab in Queens, N.Y. that is already in service though not officially open; partnering with Pinewood Studios, the largest production house in the UK, with plans to operate a film negative processing lab there; and the acquisition of a film processing lab in Atlanta. The company plans to open quality labs in major cities world-wide.

While dealing with 35mm, 16mm, and super 8 film, the labs will also process film for movies and television. Increasingly, producers are turning to film for the highest quality images. The first customer at the Long Island City lab was Steven Spielberg, bringing his latest film, *The Papers*, for processing. Anne Hubbell, Kodak Vice-President of Motion Picture, commented that "Kodak is making it easier and more affordable to shoot film. The (Long Island City) lab has already been a game changer—allowing artists to shoot on their preferred medium and bringing more work to New York State" (<http://nyslovesfilm.tumblr.com/post/164797536128/kodak-opens-film-processing-lab-in-new-york>).



In the same posting, Clark Henderson (Senior Vice President, Theatrical Services of Technicolor-Post Works New York) commented, "Since interest in film is definitely back in a dramatic way, having the Kodak lab in New York is a major contribution to the post-production industry, helping us to capture business that would otherwise go to another state."

Robot Promises a “Camera That Never Loses a Picture”

In an early ad, the manufacturers of the ROBOT promise you will capture “those rare, *unexpected* pictures so often missed by other cameras.” They go on to say that no time is lost “re-setting, re-winding or



Robot II with Xenar lens, Wikipedia

fussing with range finders and other gadgets. You just keep on clicking the s h u t t e r — making as many as four exposures per second, if you wish—up to twenty-four without stopping!” According to Wikipedia, this ability is based on a rotary shutter. When released, “a light-blocking shield lifts, and the shutter disc rotates a full turn exposing the film through its open sector; when the pressure is released the light-blocking shield returns to its position behind the lens, and the spring motor advances the film and recocks the shutter. This is almost instantaneous.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robot_\(camera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robot_(camera)).

In his 2003 *shutterbug* blog, Roger Hicks wrote, “Robots are probably the most underrated and underpriced world class cameras on the market today (<https://www.shutterbug.com/content/classic-camerasbrthe-robot>).

He claims they are built to standards comparable to Leicas and Contaxes, but are, in fact, “tougher and more reliable,” and are readily available, though a little easier

to find in Europe.

One reason for the lack of interest in the Robot is that standard cassettes don't work

with the early model; therefore a lost cassette results in a useless camera.

German watchmaker Heinz Kilfitt designed the camera circa 1930. The original intent, according to

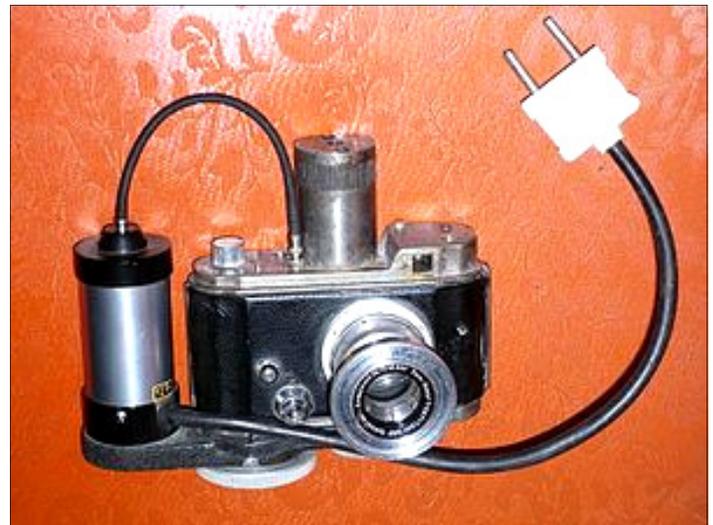


Robot Royal II with zoom lens

Wikipedia, was that Robot I would come without a motor and Robot II would have a spring motor; however a delayed release resulted in the inclusion of a spring motor in Robot I. Because the camera was intended for use with short focal length lenses, it does not have a rangefinder.

The stainless steel body was produced by WMF, the spring film wind by Bauerle (clock manufacturer), the shutter by Gauthier, and the lenses by Schneider and Zeiss. The camera originally used proprietary K cartridges, but later models, after 1951, accepted standard and popular 135 film, 35mm cartridges. Image size varied with the camera model.

The 24 x 24 mm square frame allowed over 50 exposures per roll (Leica film) instead of the usual 36. Both Kodak and Agfa turned down the design which was instead sold to Hans Berning whose firm (Otto Berning) held the Robot patents beginning in 1934.



Robot Luftwaffen Eigentum with solenoid shutter actuator, Wikipedia

From the start of WW II, the camera was no longer available for civilian use; however the Luftwaffe used it as a gun camera. During the Cold War, the small Robots were used as spy cameras. They could easily be concealed, with the lens hidden behind a small opening, and activated by a concealed cable release.

The Wikipedia article notes that “Within their limits the Robots did an excellent job of sequence photography. The . . . Xenar lenses were extremely sharp, even by today's standards. . . The reliable motor drive was as fast, if not faster, than later electrical drives, and there were no batteries to run down.”#

Worcester Offers Historical Exhibit

REDISCOVERING AN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF COLOR: The Photographs of William Bullard, is on display at the Worcester Art Museum through February



Portrait of the Jackson Children

25, 2018. Bullard was an itinerant photographer who worked in Worcester

from 1897 to 1917. An unusual feature of the photos is that the subjects can be identified based on the logbook Bullard kept; at the time, people of color were rarely identified in photos. This makes it possible to find descendants of the images' subjects (<http://www.worcesterart.org/exhibitions/william-bullard/>).

As was often the case, Bullard barely eked out a living as a photographer, and his work was not known. His brother stored over 5,000 glass negatives for four decades, eventually selling them to a postman whose grandson sold them to collector Frank Morrill in 2003.

Janette Thomas Greenwood, a professor of history at Clark University, was amazed when shown the pictures and further stunned when she learned of the logbook. She had written a book, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900* in 2009 and was now looking at the faces of her subjects. Greenwood and Morrill contacted the museum, and the result is the current exhibition.

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June, at 1:30 p.m. preceded by an open meeting of the PHSNE Board at 11:00 a.m.

Upcoming meetings:

December 3—Annual Holiday Party

Driving directions to Woman's Club Workshop, 72 Columbus Ave., Newton Highlands MA:

From I-95/Rt-128 exit 20 take Rt-9 East toward Brookline/Boston. Turn left at Woodward St, right onto Lincoln St, and left onto Columbus St. WCW will be to your right. The WCW is about 1.4 miles inside 128.

Coming west on Rt-9 from Boston, turn right on Walnut St then left on to Lincoln St, then right onto Columbus St. The WCW (#72) will be to your right.

Limited time parking rules do not apply on Sundays. Park on Columbus or Lincoln. There is a public parking lot on the other side of Lincoln opposite the Church.

Public transportation:

See mbta.com/rider_tools

Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE's Web site is online at phsne.org. See facebook.com/phsne for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit phsne.org/archive for PHSNE history and *snapshots* issues. Scheduling changes due to weather conditions or other factors will be posted on this website.

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

Useful Online Sites

<http://bit.ly/McCallionThesis> - new PhD thesis, available online, has extensive section on the Woodbury type process.

Some interesting videos at Marc Silber's Advancing Your Photography YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYYY0OELyiUyMfyHn0ZL6vw> - Videos about Edward Weston's darkroom approach with a tour by his grandson and some footage of Weston. Also videos on Ansel Adams and a gallery tour by Annie Leibovitz. And lots of videos on shooting technique.

<http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/usa/oldest-photos-of-america-usa> - very old photos; poor quality but interesting.