

Vladimir Khazan Presents a Brief History of Soviet Modular Medium Format Cameras, Sunday October 4th 7:30 PM via Zoom

This presentation will briefly describe the history of one of the oldest Soviet plants in Kiev (then under Soviet rule) and the line of Soviet modular medium format SLR cameras.



Photo by Eugene Khazan

The Salut S was one of the medium format Soviet cameras produced in the early 1970s by the Arsenal Factory in Kiev. It represented a significant milestone in the country's photographic industry. Engineers adopted similar modular concepts featuring interchangeable lenses, viewfinders, and film magazines from the Swedish Hasselblad 1600F and 1000F cameras. Although the external resemblance was unmistakable, the Salut S was not a direct copy.

Soviet designers modified numerous internal mechanisms, creating a camera suited to local manufacturing methods and available materials.

The Salut S used 120 roll film, producing twelve 6×6 centimeter negatives per roll. This larger image format delivered exceptional detail and tonal range compared with standard 35 mm cameras, making it popular among portrait, landscape, studio, and scientific photographers. The camera featured a waist-level finder as standard, while optional prism finders allowed eye-level shooting. Interchangeable film backs enabled photographers to preload different film types and switch between them as necessary.

One of the camera's most recognizable features was its standard Volna-3 80mm f/2.8 lens, known for producing sharp images with pleasing contrast. Arsenal also manufactured a growing range of compatible telephoto and wide-angle lenses.

The Salut S gained a good reputation throughout the Soviet Union and other countries. It was widely used by professionals, advanced amateurs, universities, and government institutions. Its rugged construction allowed it to withstand demanding environments, but its weight made handheld photography more difficult than with smaller cameras.

Today, the Salut S is appreciated by collectors and

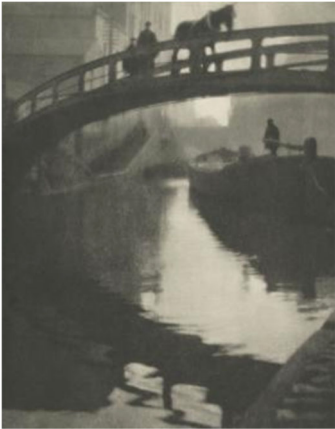
film photography enthusiasts who value its historical significance, distinctive engineering, and unique character. The camera remains a fascinating example of Soviet industrial design and an enduring symbol of the USSR's effort to create professional photographic equipment capable of standing alongside respected Western systems.



Vladimir Khazan is a mechanical manufacturing engineer by profession, but photography has been an important part of his life since he was 12 years old. His father introduced him to photography and taught him the basics of using a camera and darkroom techniques. He feels each camera has its own story and represents a small piece of photographic history, especially in understanding how these beautiful mechanical instruments work.

~Camera photo by Vladimir Khazan

Two Photography Shows at Yale



Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Regent's Canal, 1909*, <https://britishart.yale.edu/exhibitions-programs/sightlines-british-landscape-photography-1840-now>

Sightlines: British Landscape Photography, 1840 to Now is on display at the Yale Center for British Art through January 24, 2027. In addition to many photographs, the hundred plus items include lithographs, postcards, screen prints, drawings, and photo albums.

The photographers represented include early inventor William Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton (documenter of the Crimean War), and Alvin Langdon Coburn (<https://tinyurl.com/36hkzfr8>).

Just across the street, the Yale University Art Gallery is host to *W. Eugene Smith and the Art of Witnessing* through December 6th. The exhibit emphasizes “Smith’s mastery of the photo essay and the humanity of his approach to photography. All photo-journalists witness the events they cover. Smith’s aim went well beyond that: not just to witness, a documentary exercise, but to bear witness, a moral act.” The show features almost 50 Smith photographs and eight vintage copies of *Life* magazine containing Smith’s photos.

PHSNE Membership

New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. address) is \$50 for individuals and institutions, and \$55 for a family; foreign membership is \$60. Current students and educators receive complementary membership. For details contact membership-chair@phsne.org. Check PHSNE website, <https://phsne.org>, or email membership-chair@phsne.org for information about PHSNE activities and membership.

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.

Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome. Send to snapshots@phsne.org. Authors retain copyright to their original articles; however upon written application to the *snap shots* editor, PHSNE may grant non-profit societies with similar aims and interests a one-time right to reproduce a *snap shots* article as long as the author and source are credited and a complimentary copy of the publication is sent to PHSNE.

Henry Weisenburger Award

The Henry Weisenburger Achievement in Education Award was established by the Photographic Historical Society of New England in memory of the late Henry Weisenburger. The award honors one or more individuals or an organization whose work represents a significant contribution to photographic education or photographic history. It may recognize a lifetime of achievement or a singular contribution — such as a landmark publication — that meaningfully expands public understanding of photography and its history. The recipient will receive \$1000 and a five-year complimentary membership to PHSNE. Details about submission are being worked out and will be announced soon.

Henry was a Charter Member and an Honorary Life Member of PHSNE who devoted decades of



service to the organization. He served as President for more than five years between 1977 and 1996, as Vice President for five years between 1976 and 2007, and as a Member-at-Large for much of PHSNE’s 50-year history.

Widely regarded as the “unofficial—but

authoritative—” historian of PHSNE, Henry authored *PHSNE’s First Ten Years, 1973–1982*, published in the Spring 2005 issue of the *Journal*, and reprinted in the Society’s 50th anniversary issue. A frequent contributor to the monthly meeting “Show and Tell” sessions, he was considered the organization’s resident expert on nearly every aspect of photographic history. In addition, Henry was a long-term member of the Boston Camera Club and generously shared his extensive knowledge with anyone eager to learn.

Editorial Change

Dana Gee, PHSNE Program Director, will be taking on the editorial responsibilities of *snap shots* beginning with the November, 2026 issue. She replaces long-time editor and PHSNE member Beverly Regelman who is stepping down from the role. PHSNE thanks Regelman for many years of *snap shots* leadership and welcomes Gee to the new role.

Supersize That Polaroid

Polaroid's 20x24 and its Museum Camera were both introduced in 1976 to satisfy the "announced desires" of Edwin Land. The 20x24 was designed to "juice up the 1976 shareholders' meeting" and the Museum Camera to obtain a life-size replica of a Renoir painting at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (<https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2017/08/a-tale-of-two-cameras>).

The Museum Camera was built at the MFA and housed there for a number of years. Building it on site eliminated the risky process of transporting the Renoir and subsequent paintings it was created to photograph. The camera boasted a 50 pound custom-made lens and film 44 inches wide which, when used with 80 inch high sheets, produced instant photos larger than a standard door.

Beside making high quality life-size copies of art works, the Museum Camera made it to *The Guinness Book of Records* with "the largest box camera ever constructed, a super-sized version . . . in order to photograph Raphael's *Transfiguration of Christ* at the Vatican."

The somewhat smaller, but still oversized, 20x24 was also used to photograph art works, but its purpose was less clear: "The 20x24 existed, and the company had to dream up its purpose after the fact. Today, it's considered an artist's tool. Back then, it was a product in search of a market."

Wikipedia designates the 20x24 as "one of the largest format cameras currently in common use [that] could be hired from Polaroid agents in various countries" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polaroid_20%C3%9724_camera). Its film plates measure 20x24 inches; however at least one camera can take 23x36 inch photographs. Like a field camera, the 20x24 can be collapsed and transported. "The bellows are compressed into the body, and the body lowers into its base."

Very few were built initially, only six from 1976 to 1978. Famous photographers were given the opportunity to use them at the Polaroid studios if they allowed Polaroid to keep some of the images. Perhaps most widely-known is Cambridge, Massachusetts photographer Elsa Dorfman. The 20x24 self portrait, standing next to another 20x24 shown here, appeared in the September 2020 issue of *snap shots* as part of Dorfman's obituary.

According to the *Harvard Magazine* article cited earlier, in 1978 Polaroid "constructed four [20x24] cameras, with plans for three more. But they cost

about \$50,000 apiece—before operating expenses. Polaroid determined that each camera should be serviced by two full-time staff members: a 'back man' who took care of the film supply, mechanics, and logistics, and a 'front man' devoted, essentially, to promotion. He'd be 'the synthesis of a sound businessman and an excellent photographer'—someone who 'knows who the photographers of importance are...convinces them to try using a 20x24, and guides them to having a very successful first experience.'"



Self portrait of Elsa Dorfman with her Polaroid 20x24 camera
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elsa_Dorfman

The 20x24 reappeared in 1997, built by former Polaroid employee John Reuter seventeen years after the 20x24 Studio was spun off from Polaroid and two decades after the appearance of the very few original models.

Step Into This Camera

It's a bit out-of-the-way for New England residents, certainly not a PHSNE field trip, but it's worth knowing about a unique museum in Australia. Designed to resemble an actual camera, the structure houses over 1,500 working cameras in the personal collection of Charles (Chic) Wadley.



<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-big-camera>.

Built in 1995, the museum's exterior resembles a very oversized 35mm camera; the lens serves as the doorway. Included with the cameras, that span a time frame from earliest commercial cameras to current models, is information outlining the history of photography. "There are informative signs around the collection with several parts of the museum giving a detailed spoken history at the press of a button" <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-big-camera>.

The museum is located in Meckering, a small town in western Australia, about 80 miles east of Perth. It is probably the only museum in the country dedicated entirely to photography and open to the public.

Watch for a Critical Survey about the PHSNE Journal!

PHSNE members will soon receive a five-minute survey about the PHSNE *Journal*, either by Constant Contact or regular mail. Returning the survey promptly is critical to the direction of the *Journal's* future.

Thank you!

PHSNE Meetings

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

Upcoming meetings:

November 1—Lorne Shields, *Early Cycling Photography*

Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

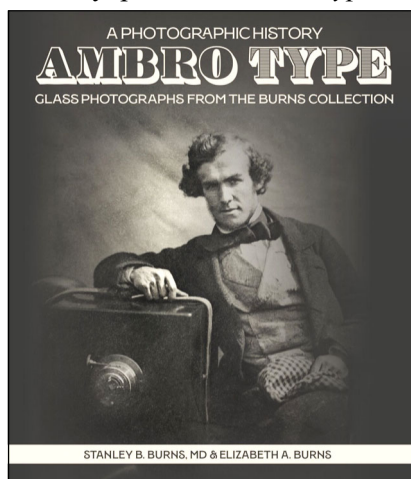
PHSNE's Web site is online at <https://phsne.org>. See <https://www.facebook.com/PHSNE/> for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit <https://snapshots.phsne.org> for *snap shots* issues Volume 11 (Sept 2005) to Volume 29 (June 2024).

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails and show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>.

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

Ambro Type, Glass Photographs from the Burns Collection

PHSNE members Dr. Stanley B Burns and Liz Burns recently published *Ambrotype, Glass Photographs from the Burns Collection* which includes an entire section on New England photographers.



"The Burns Archive houses unparalleled collections of early medicine, memorialization, Judaica, and the African American experience. It is renowned for its iconic images depicting the darker side of life: Death, Disease, Disaster, Crime, Racism, Revolution and War" (<https://www.burnsarchive.com/>).

More than a million historic images held at the Archives document events from the early days of photography to the present.

For forty years researchers have turned to *The Burns Archives* and utilized this unique source of visual documentation. The Archives has published numerous books and curated many exhibitions. It actively acquires, donates, researches, lectures, exhibits, publishes, consults, and shares its unique photographs and expertise worldwide.

PHSNE members are offered a \$10 discount using the code PHSNE26, valid through the end of the year (<https://www.burnsarchive.com/online-store>).