

snap shots

Volume 12 Number 8

April 2007

Baby Steps in Color Photography

George Ehrenfried worked at Kodak when consumer color photography was new, and at the April meeting he'll tell us about it

In early 1936, Building 59, the brand-new home of the Kodak Research Laboratories in Rochester, New York, was being built from the top down. No kidding, you could still see the sky between the girders below, while the labs and darkrooms on the sixth floor were already in business.

Dr. Merrill W. Seymour and his four assistants, including George Ehrenfried, were trying to find the best way to make enlarged color prints from Kodachrome slides — which were just about to hit the market. It was a very hot time in the history of color photography, and George Ehrenfried will be our speaker at the PHSNE meeting at 1:30 on April 1 to share his up-close-and-personal reminiscences of those days.

Color photography hadn't always been hot. In fact, it got off to a rather slow start. The great Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell made the first permanent color photograph in 1861.



But color photography advanced in baby steps, through a series of wild ideas and dead ends that took more than 70 years to find a color process that could be adapted for a consumer market.

Ehrenfried was deeply involved in the development of two of these steps at Kodak: the laborious but high-quality process which finally became known as “Dye Transfer,” and the easier but also high-quality process called “Azochrome,” which was soon starved to death by a shortage of a crucial chemical.

Ehrenfried’s talk will touch on the history of several of those old processes, and show images made using some of them.

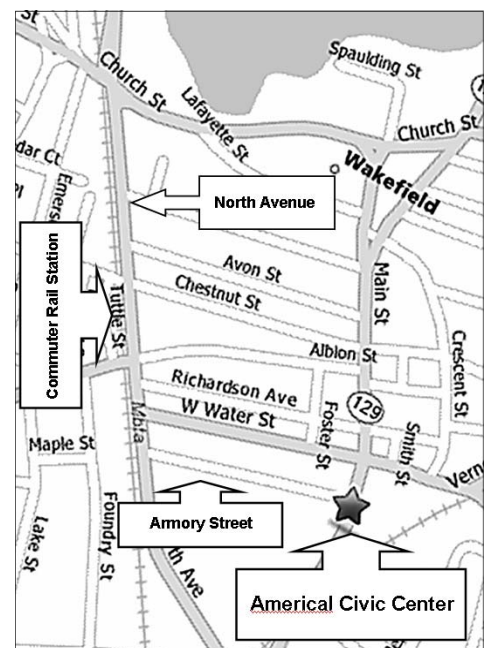
Photographica 67 Moves In April to a New Home and New Dates

Photographica 67 is coming to a new location and on new dates. PHSNE's photographic show and sale will move to a new home, no longer in Watertown, but beginning with this show in Wakefield, MA, at the Americal Civic Center, 467 Main St. The new location is conveniently located near I-93 and I-95, with ample parking.

Because of the change in venue, the dates for the April event have been rescheduled as well, to Saturday and Sunday, April 14 and 15. Hours are Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5, students and seniors \$4, and \$3 for PHSNE members. For more information see the PHSNE Web site at www.phsne.org or call 781-592-2553.

Driving directions: From I-95 take Exit 39, North Ave., and turn south onto North Ave. toward Wakefield/Melrose. Travel 1.2 miles south on North Ave. through two major intersections and turn left onto Armory St. The Americal Civic Center is at the end of Armory on the right, facing Main St.

Public transportation: Wakefield is on the Haverhill Commuter Rail Line. On both Saturday and Sunday, three trains from North Station run to the Wakefield stop during show hours -- 8:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 2:45 p.m. Inbound trains depart the Wakefield station both days at 1:57 p.m., 4:57 p.m., and 8:02 p.m. From the Wakefield station, at the corner of Tuttle St. and North Ave., the Americal Civic Center is within walking distance: walk east on Chestnut or Albion, and turn right on Main St.



Exhibitions and Shows in the New England Area

The **Addison Gallery** at Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, will open *William Wegman-Funney/Strange* on April 7, 2007. Included are more than 200 works, among them the signature 20 x 24 Polaroids, as well as early black and white and altered photographs, paintings, drawings, collages, artists books, videos, and film.

Wegman is famous for his humorous photographs of his Weimaraners, beginning with one named Man Ray in the 1970s and continuing through three more generations of photogenic and long-suffering canines up to the present.

Wegman was born in Holyoke, Massachusetts in 1943. He earned a BFA in painting at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and an MFA at the University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana in 1967.

The exhibition will continue through July 31, 2007, then travel the country. (Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, 978-749-4015, www.addisongallery.org.)

"*Where We Lived*" gathers fine photographic prints from 1859 up to the 1970s at PHSNE member Mack Lee's **Lee Gallery**. The show includes the work of a varied group of photographers, including Walker Evans, Wright Morris, Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz, Leonard Freed, Jack Delano, and others. (Lee Gallery, 9 Mount Vernon Street, 2nd Floor, Winchester, MA 01890, 781-729-7445, www.leegallery.com.)

At the **International Center for Photography** in New York, a personal scrapbook of Henri Cartier-Bresson's best work from his rich early period (1932-46) provides an extraordinary window into the development of an artist who occupies a unique place in the history of photog-



Courtesy of the Lee Gallery

"House with Porch," by Wright Morris, a vintage silver print, ca. 1947, 9 1/4 x 7 1/2, in the Lee Gallery's "Where We Lived" show.

raphy. The scrapbook, which originally included 300 prints, is on exhibit through April 29, 2007. (ICP, 1133 6th Ave. at 43rd St., New York City, 212-857-0000, www.icp.org.)

Jack Farber of Hunt's Photo

Jack Farber, president of Hunt's Photo & Video, died Feb. 19. He lived in Ogunquit, ME, and was formerly of Medford, MA.

The Farber family has operated the chain of Hunt's stores since the 1950s, when it was Hunt Drugs in Malden. Jack Farber refocused the company on photography in 1990 and built his company into a six-store chain that has been a mainstay of the photography marketplace in New England and a long-time participant in Photographica shows, .

Jack M. Goldstein Dies

Jack M. Goldstein, a longtime PHSNE member and familiar figure at meetings and shows, died Feb. 6. He was 79. Goldstein had a long career as a research scientist in the field of chemical biology. Interested in cameras and photographic history, he also loved his dogs and was a familiar figure out walking them in his neighborhood in Wayland, MA.

Membership News

New members — Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA; Armando Vergara, Newton, MA.

PHSNE membership is \$30 for an individual, \$36 for a family, and \$40 for foreign membership. Please send checks in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar-denominated international money orders for dues payments. Communicate all changes of address and other contact information, to: Adrian Levesque, 4 Sugar Hill Drive, Nashua, NH 03063, or e-mail ALEvesque@aol.com.

snap shots, edited by David DeJean, is published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, Inc., P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465-0189. Send news briefs to ddejean@dejean.com.

This article, which originally appeared in the February 2007 of the PHSC E-Mail, published by the Photographic Historical Society of Canada, tells the story of an international search for the only known prototype of the Altair, one of the first quick-return-mirror SLRs.

By Sam Mabuchi

The Itabashi district of Tokyo has a long history in Japan's optical and camera industry. Last year, in connection with a project to document the history of the Itabashi district, a Japanese photography magazine, *Classic Camera Special*, launched an effort to find a missing unique camera that was created in the district, known as the Altair SLR.

In the 1950s the Itabashi district was home to many small "cottage" businesses producing optical parts such as lenses, mechanical parts, and screws. These workshops also assembled binoculars and TLR camera parts. A few large industries were also located here — Tokyo Optical Mfg. and later Topcon, Bronica, Aires, Copal Shutters, and others.

In 1955, Mr. Taikichi Arae, then president of Arae Optical, invented the quick-return mirror mechanism and applied for a patent. It was a swing-back-type quick-return mirror called an "auto reverse mirror." Remember the days of the "blacked-out" viewing screen? In 1956 a prototype Altair camera was built and given its first public exposure in the February issue of *Asahi Camera* magazine. The camera, built by Misuzu Kougaku (Misuzu Optical), was the first to make use of the patented quick-return mirror. Sales were to commence in March at a price of 30,000 Yen.

However, the camera did not go into production. The prototype was the only Altair ever manufactured, and this important piece of Japanese camera history is missing.

Interviews with former employees and relatives of company officials have filled in the details. The existence of the Altair has been confirmed: Mr. K. Nakata, who



worked on the electroplating of the top and bottom covers of the Altair SLR, has been interviewed.

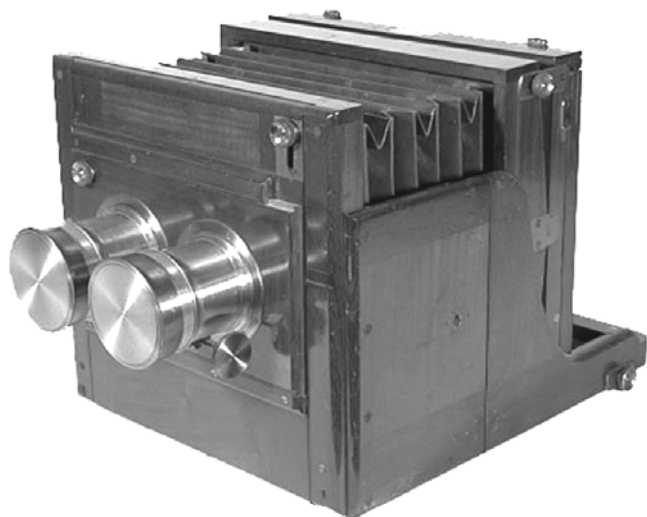
But where did it go? It has been long thought that a Misuzu marketing representative took the prototype with him on a trip to Europe to promote camera sales, but this was firmly denied. There is a possibility that a dealer from the United States may have brought the camera to America for marketing purposes. In those days American purchasing agents were like gods to the Japanese camera industry. A small manufacturer like Arae would have eagerly offered the proto-

type to assist sales promotion. So somewhere in America or Canada, a collector may possibly have the missing Altair SLR.

A memorandum left by Mr. Arae indicates that the Altair dimensions are the same as the Contax-S. The photographs and drawings from *Asahi Camera* (including the one above) are the only images that give a realistic concept of the camera. Information can be forwarded to Sam Mabuchi at mabuchi@mvd.biglobe.ne.jp.



The magazine article that introduced the Altair included this portrait taken by Taikichi Arae of his wife using the prototype Altair SLR. It appears that the outer edges of the image are not sharp.



Courtesy of Stereographica

This wood and brass stereoscopic field camera by Meagher, London, dating to the 1880s, is one of the items in the Stereographica auction. The focusing screen measures 8.5 by 6.5 inches.

Stereographica Auction Closes March 24

Stereographica’s spring Online Auction closes Saturday, March 24, 2007, at 3:00 p.m. EDT. The catalog for the sale is at <http://www.stereographica.com>.

The auction features 500 lots of antique images and photographic hardware, including daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, stereoviews, cabinet cards, cartes de visite, union cases, autochromes, cameras, stereoscopes, optical toys, kaleidoscopes, magic lanterns, lantern slides, ephemera and related material.

The auction features live, real-time, online bidding, but you must register on the Web site to bid. Stereographica is operated by PHSNE member Bryan Ginns.

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month at 1:30 p.m. at Waltham High School, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE board at 11:00 a.m.

May 6 — “Street Portrait Photography,” Eaton Lthrop.

June 3 — Annual field trip: the New Hampshire Institute of Art, and Marti Jones’ house/museum.

Directions

Waltham High School is at 617 Lexington St., Waltham, MA. The high school is at the top of the hill, behind other school buildings.

From I-95 (Route 128) Northbound: Take Exit 27 and follow Totten Pond Rd. 1.2 miles east until it dead-ends into Lexington St. Turn left and go .5 miles north. Turn right into the school complex.

From I-95 (Route 128) Southbound: Take Exit 28, Trapelo Rd., east 1.3 miles to Lexington St. Turn right and go south .8 miles to school complex on the left.

From Boston/Cambridge: Take Rte. 2 west to Exit 54B, then Lexington St. south 1.7 miles to school complex on the left.

From Lincoln and West: Take Route 2 east to Exit 53, Concord Ave. Go east 1 mile, then right onto Lexington St. and 1.3 miles south to school complex on the left.

PHSNE Online

PHSNE is online at www.phsne.org. PHSNE member Ralph Johnston is the Web master.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
Address Service
Requested

Photographic Historical Society of New England
Next Meeting: Sunday, April 1,
'Early Color Processes'



**snap
shots**

PHSNE
P.O. Box 650189
West Newton, MA 02465-0189