

Seven Japanese Pinhole Photographers
ALT. Eight Alternative Queensland Photographers



**Queensland
Centre for
Photography**

Somewhere between the making, the idea and dreaming: Post-technology Photography

Ban lenses and viewfinders. Ban your auto-wind buzzy-flashing built in obsolescence jewellery. Give up aspiring to the conventional. Play with light, rediscover your vision and party.

Justin Quinnell¹ talking about pinhole photography

Who would have thought that age old processes along with out dated technology would have any relevance in the seamless slick technological digital image world. Or even that the latest digital technology could become hijacked as a mere emulator of the appearance of old time photos. With its arcane history of chemicals, darkrooms and focussing cloths photography is now morphing into a brave new emancipated world where everything old can be new again and anything goes.

Many photographers find this review of processes and technologies liberating—providing an alternative avenue for exploring photography often resulting in the excitement of discovering new visions. A recent popular photobook on the Holga² camera illustrates a kaleidoscope of visual imagery created with this simple plastic camera. In the introduction to the book Adam Scott exemplifies this method of working, “I had already been shooting for many years with single lens reflex cameras and was

Macoto Matsushima, courtesy of the artist.



Yasuko Oki, courtesy of the artist.



beginning to get bored of photography, but the Holga reopened my eyes and injected me with new love, I felt as though I had discovered a new sense or a new colour.”³

Into this argument steps curator Ian Poole with this exhibition entitled *ALT*. Photographers in this show are similarly enamored by this technological tinkering as Scott and dust off old junk cameras like the Russian Lubitel or dislocate a Diana lens and relocate it onto a DSLR sensor. Some photographers may use new technology like the ubiquitous iPhone as creative stimulation for follow-up imaging. But is it the technology that lubricates creativity in these photographers work? As in Justin Quinnell’s challenge in the opening quote “give up aspiring to the conventional” these image makers aim to subvert the ‘conventional’ and reinvent photography for and by themselves.

The images made by photographers in the *ALT* exhibition exalt and capitalise on the vagaries and flaws arising



above: Ian Poole, courtesy of the artist.

below: Adam Finch, courtesy of the artist.



from technology, uncontrolled serendipitous moments and the slowing of time. All of these questionable qualities are commonly regarded as poor technique from faulty and inadequate equipment. Through their experimentation these photo-rebels appear to be reacting against technological control by preferring the serendipity and imperfections of real human experience.

It seems that these processes allow a space for pure wonderment much like that of children at play. Here the photographer's imagination is stimulated by 'tinkering' with technology and the conventions of photographic practice from which new approaches to subjects and concepts arise. Critically the act of making, discovery and reflexive action is fundamental throughout the process. In other words the photographer *makes* the photograph—not the technology.

Pinhole photography is another malleable medium for the tinkerer. The exhibition, *Seven Japanese Pinhole Photographers*, brought together by Hideharu Matsuhisa a respected graphic designer and pinhole photographer, shows the diversity and commonalities of the pinhole experience. In the catalogue specially produced by Matsuhisa for this show, Reiji Kanemoto comments, "These pinhole views of restless waves show me the passage of time, condensed into a single moment that lives

Hideharu Matsuhisa, courtesy of the artist.



Michihiro Ueno, courtesy of the artist.



forever.” This is an experience that is common to many pinhole photographers as long exposures are inherent in the process. In a recent exhibition of Matsuhisa’s pinhole photography at Caloundra Regional Gallery, the Director, John Waldron referred to pinhole photography as “part of the *Slow Revolution*”.⁴

Slow cameras: slow photography—creates a kind of image making approach that is just as satisfying and as good for you as slow food. For some Japanese pinhole photographers the work is meditative as Michihiro Ueno finds when working with pinhole cameras that, “I’m made to be more conscious to face time and objects.”⁵ Alternatively Yasuko Oki is motivated by the pure wonderment of capturing unseen visual phenomena as she photographs fluids in glasses (water, juice and beer) that she drinks everyday.

Reiji Kanemoto (detail), courtesy of the artist.



Sawako Gemma, courtesy of the artist.



As the camera, the lens and the darkroom/computer are increasingly open to subversion, the photograph maybe now free from connection to a specific technological time and place and it's associated obsolescence. Although there has always been a cult following for the "alternative" in photography, what we see strongly from this exhibition series, and more broadly in the electronic medium, is that photographers are well equipped and ready to grasp, shape and fiddle with any means to extract images. Is this the sign of the onset of a post technology condition? Has the "alternative" contagion gone viral? Can technology or iPhone apps keep pace with the imagination and the inventive nature of the photographer? Certainly, photography has loosened up. Rather than being the keeper of secret knowledge and technological proficiency, the photographer is now more . . .

Victoria Cooper and Doug Spewart

Victoria Cooper and Doug Spewart are visual artists working in the fields of photoimaging, artists' books and photo education. Victoria and Doug have collaborated on many art projects and exhibitions including pinhole, projections, the room and car camera obscura. Their images and artists' books are included in major national collections.

¹ *The World through a pinhole* (catalogue) curated by Diane Stoppard and Ellie Smith, Wellington, New Zealand, 1998.

² Lomographic Society International (ed.), 2006. *Holga, The World through a plastic lens*, compiled by the Lomographic Society International and Adam Scott. Lomographic Society International, Vienna, Austria.

³ Introduction by Adam Scott, *Holga, The World through a plastic lens*, Page 17.

⁴ <http://lucidamagazine.com/?p=414#more-414>

⁵ See catalogue, *Seven Japanese Pinhole Photographers*, by Hideharu Matsuhisa.



Doug Spewart and Victoria Cooper,
courtesy of the artists



above: Robert Cobcroft, courtesy of the artist. below: Nicola Poole, courtesy of the artist.



Contact Details

Cnr of Cordelia and Russell Streets, South Brisbane
PO Box 5848, West End Q 4101, Australia

+61 7 3844 1101
www.qcp.org.au
admin@qcp.org.au

Director: Maurice Ortega.
Catalogue essay: Victoria Cooper & Doug Spowart
Cover image: Mieko Tadokoro *San Marco, rue Thorigny* (detail)
1998, courtesy of the artist.
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Opening Night

Saturday 7th May 5-8pm

Exhibition Dates

8th May - 5th June 2011

Public Program

Sunday 15th May, 1.30pm
Artists' tour of the exhibition

Thursday 26th May, 5.30pm
'Experimental Photography' presented by Victoria Garnons-Williams

NEW Gallery Hours

Wednesday - Saturday 10am-5pm
Sunday 11am-3pm



Queensland Centre for Photography

Seven Japanese Pinhole Photographers

Hideharu Matsuhisa, Yasuko Oki, Macoto Matsushima, Michihiro Ueno, Mieko Tadokoro, Sawako Gemma, Reiji Kanemoto.

ALT. Eight Alternative Queensland Photographers

Adam Finch, Ian Poole, Nicola Poole, Cameron Attree, Robert Cobcroft, Doug Spowart, Victoria Cooper, Richard Muldoon.

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