



APRIL

POETICS OF LIGHT

Contemporary Pinhole Photography

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Eric Renner
and Nancy Spencer

By Eric Renner and

Nancy Spencer

Essays by Roy L. Flukinger
and Joanna Turek

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The art of capturing an image through an improvised pinhole device traces back to ancient China and Greece through the

Renaissance and reaching its height of popularity in the 1880s. The era of the modern sharp-focus lens camera marked the end of pinhole photography as a major art form. Three decades ago Eric Renner resuscitated the form with his publication *Pinhole Journal* that ushered in a resurgence of interest by artists seeking an alternative, often conceptual vision and alternative to sharp-focus photography. Renner and Nancy Spencer have out of this effort built the world's most extensive collection of pinhole art from 31 countries and 500 of artists comprising 6000 images.

Pinhole offers new ways of exploring the world using the simplest, improvised mechanisms fashioned of oat boxes, sea shells, and other surprising materials to create images of mysterious, sometimes disturbing beauty in dreamlike landscapes, portraits, still lifes, abstractions, and politically charged images. In pinhole it is the camera object that looks but the artist that sees, thus accounting for the considerable mystery and poetry that is pinhole photography. Primitive in technological terms, it allows us to visualize things we cannot see. A photograph made with the pinhole camera is always a recording of the camera's "gaze," showing what it looked at, not what the human being saw. The photographer no longer constructs subjective representations; he merely assists at the birth of the image.

Poetics of Light, along with the accompanying exhibition, presents two hundred contemporary images representing the finest artistry achieved in pinhole photography, most never before published. Artists Paolo Gioli (Italy), Shi Guorui (China), and Bethany de Forest (Netherlands) join an exceptional roster from Belgium, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Poland, and the United States, accounting for the comprehensive nature of this monumental collection.

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