

Project Week Report 2015

Stereo Photography

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My project week this year has been a story of trial and error, but everything seems to have turned out all right in the end. This week I attempted to learn how to use my grandfather's stereo camera. Stereo cameras are unique in that they take two pictures instead of one each time the shutter is released. The lenses are placed eye distance away from each other, and thus replicate what each eye would see. The amazing thing that stereo cameras do is that when printed or used as slides, the two pictures can be placed next to each other and trick the eye into thinking that the image they see is three dimensional instead of two, as they actually are. I think that this medium is amazing, since I personally never realized what was missing from photography until it was put back in.

The idea for this project came to me during my last project week, during which I explored my family history. While I was doing so, my mother showed me some very interesting pictures of her family when she was little. They were small color slides that were placed into a viewer and then lit up from the back. The pictures appeared to be three dimensional, which I thought was spectacular, and I decided that I had to take some of those myself. Project week seemed like a good time to do this, as it allowed me to have the time to devote myself to it.

I began working on my project a long time before project week itself. The first thing I did was find the camera that I would be using and attempt to familiarize myself with it. I found it to be a bit confusing, however, so decided that I needed to find a manual to help me learn to use it. I managed to obtain one on the web, since the one that came with the

camera has been lost to the years, but the manual was missing several key pages, as I would later discover. I then put a roll of black and white film into the camera and tried to take pictures with it. Although I did not know it at the time, my first pictures would come out horribly wrong: they came out either extremely dark or extremely light. This was because I was still trying to figure out how to set the aperture and shutter speed settings, since the camera does not have an internal light meter. Thankfully, I eventually managed to clear up the light problem, first by using my normal camera as a light meter, and then by downloading an app onto my mother's phone, which I used as a meter. Once I finished the roll of film, I brought it in to my photography class and developed it. I then used a long cover sheet that Rusty gave me to protect it and set it aside for project week itself.

For the majority of project week, I spent a lot of time outside taking photographs. I had bought three rolls of color film, which I worked my way through. It was a long process, since each roll can take about thirty photographs, and I was very selective about each picture, since I had only a limited number. The process of taking a picture with the camera is arduous in and of itself, since first one must line up the picture, then take a light meter reading using a different machine, then set the camera to the settings determined by the light meter, then set up the picture again, then focus it using a different view finder, then check again to make sure it's lined up, and then finally take the picture. When I had filled up all three rolls, I sent them to a company to process the film, as color film is extremely difficult to develop and I cannot do it myself. The film will then be cut up and placed into slides, which will allow the pictures to be seen when placed into a viewer. I will likely not get the film back for several weeks.

The final part of my project was working with the black and white photos that I took. At first I struggled with how to create a contact sheet for the photos, as I did not know

how to cut the film. I was worried about the fact that there was absolutely no way to cut it without separating the two corresponding photos, and was afraid that that might cause problems. However, I eventually cut them, and then went to work printing very small (approximately an inch and a half by an inch and a half) versions of the best of the photos. I ended up printing five different sets of photos. I then mounted them onto slides so that they could be put into the viewer more easily. All five of the photos were successful, although some were more dramatic than others.

I really enjoyed this project. I ran into many mishaps—or instance, the fact that I did not figure out how to focus the picture until halfway through my second roll of color film, or how long I debated whether to cut the photos. In the end, I believe that the project was quite successful, and it is very satisfying to be able to look at a physical object and think 'I did that.' I also think that stereo photography is fascinating, and I'm really glad to have had a chance to work with it. If I did this project again, I don't believe that there really is anything that I would have done differently, since the only major mishaps came from a lack of knowledge that was not available for me. All in all, I enjoyed this project, and I would definitely recommend it to others.