



Introduction to the View Camera

Basic Camera Controls

View Cameras and Accessories

The view camera incorporates many of the same basic camera parts found in other cameras, including a camera body, a viewing system, a lens and a shutter for admitting and controlling light as well as a film plane where the image is formed on film.

Camera body is referred as either a rail or flatbed. The front and rear standard are mounted on and move along a rail or flatbed. Rails offer more flexible movement, but flatbeds make the view camera more portable.

Lens admits light rays to the camera, and causes them to converge at the film plane and create the image.

Front Standard holds the lens mounted on a lens board and is designed to tilt, swing, or shift the lens into various positions.

Rear Standard, holds the film holder, and contains the ground glass. It is designed to tilt, swing, or shift the film into various positions.

Bellows holds the front and rear standards are connected by a lightproof bellows, designed to let the two standards move independently.

Ground Glass is a matte, light-diffusing surface that is mounted on the rear standard. It sits at the film plane when a film holder is not in the camera, and the lens projects the image onto it -- upside down. The photographer composes and focuses the upside-down image on the ground glass, using the loupe to check sharpness. Once the image has been composed, a film holder with pre-loaded film is inserted and exposed.



Advantages/Disadvantages in Using a View Camera

Advantages

Large format film, from 4" x 5" and larger, renders an image of the highest visual quality, including sharpness, resolution, tonality as well as color description and saturation.

View camera offers more control over perspective and focus through the abilities to control the front and back of the camera.

Disadvantages

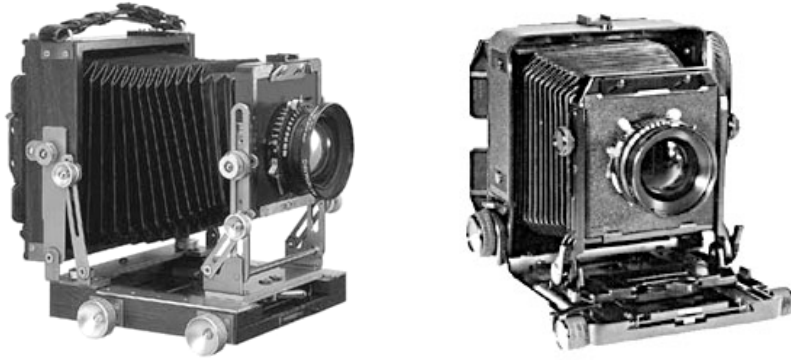
The high cost of view camera equipment, including cameras and lenses, as well as film and materials.

Due to its large size and the necessity to utilize a tripod in most shooting circumstances, the photographic process with a view camera tends to be more methodic and slower compared to working with a small format camera. However, in considering the work of Bruce Davidson and his landmark book *East 100th Street*, the use of the view camera can be advantageous in suggesting a presence and serious intent.



The work of other photographers, who utilize the view camera, including landscape, portraiture, studio and documentary, can be found at <http://www.masters-of-fine-art-photography.com>

Types of View Cameras



Flatbed Camera

The earliest photographic cameras made and utilized in the history of photography by Joseph Nicephore Niepce and Henry Fox Talbot were simple wood cameras, which have gradually evolved into the modern view camera of today. Deardorff cameras were considered by many to be the finest wooden field cameras made.

Other types of flatbed cameras include field camera, press camera, technical camera as well as banquet and panoramic cameras. Unlike many field and press cameras, the technical camera has full standards movements much like a monorail camera, but can also be handheld.

The most popular type of flatbed camera was the tailboard camera, with a front standard fixed to the front of the baseboard and a focusing track behind it. Folding versions were made for portability.

A second type of flatbed, which is used in the design of contemporary field cameras, has a focusing track, often hinged, fixed to the back of the camera and extending forward. The front standard is made to slide along the track for focusing. The bellows are tapered to collapse into a smaller space.



Rail Camera

The first all-metal monorail camera originated in the United States in 1941. Contemporary models include Horseman, Toyo, Wista, Cambo, Sinar, Linhof and cameras made for Calumet.

Monorail cameras have full front and rear standard movements, making them preferred cameras of choice for architecture, commercial and landscape photographers.

Press Camera



Weegee with Graflex Speed Graphic

Until the mid-1950's, the standard camera used by photojournalists' was the press camera, primarily the Graflex Speed Graphic. The camera was versatile, durable and inexpensive, allowing for handheld large format and quality enlargements.

Other Cameras



Process Camera



Dorothea Lange with Reflex View Camera

View Camera and Digital

Currently, digital image capture for large format cameras is done with the use of digital camera backs, which replaces the film holder on standard view cameras. Due to their high cost, approximately \$20,000 and higher, digital camera backs are primarily used within a high-volume commercial environment, including studios that specialize in catalog work. It has been suggested that the dynamic range that can be captured with a large format digital back is more than 9 stops greater than that of film.



Imacon Digital Capture Back

Accessories and Options



Camera Stand and Tripod

Camera stands, which are utilized in studio environments, and tripods, are utilized to stabilize the view camera due to its cumbersome size. It is recommended that a tripod should weigh at least as much as the view camera to minimize any kind of vibration.

Tripod Heads

Three types of tripod heads, including **single-tilt**, **double-tilt** and **ball**.

The single-tilt tripod head allows for adjustment only on the horizontal axis.



Double-tilt tripod head

The double-tilt tripod head allows for adjustments on front and back as well as side-to-side axis. Commonly found on tripods for still photography.

The ball tripod head allows for full adjustments on all axes, but is not considered sturdy enough to support a view camera.

Quick-release brackets and adapters are utilized to facilitate ease in placing the view camera on the tripod.

Cable Release



The cable release is utilized to trigger the shutter to minimize any body vibrations.

Types of Light Meters



Incident-Light Meter

Hand-held, faced toward the camera from the position of the subject, measuring light falling on subject.



Spot Meter

Either hand-held or built into a camera, measures reflected light from small part of subject.



Flash Meter

Measures the output of light from an electronic light, such as a flash or strobe.



Film Holders and Film

The standard film used with view cameras is sheet film and is loaded into **double-sheet film holders**, which allows for two sheets of film per film holder. The dark slide protects the unexposed film and is pulled only after the film holder has been loaded into the back of the camera and the lens is closed.

Film Sizes

Typical large format film sizes include **4" x 5"**, **5" x 7"** and **8" x 10"** as well as larger sizes.



Magnifying Loupe

Magnifying loupes are used to assist in focusing the image on the ground glass.