Using the View Camera

Basics to Using the View Camera

Because of the large-scale nature of the view camera, it is necessary to follow basic steps in setting-up the camera in order to work in a comfortable and productive manner. This includes the following:

- Setting Up the Tripod
- Mounting the Camera
- Positioning the Camera and Zero Position
- Framing and Focusing
- Light Metering Techniques
- Making the Exposure

Setting Up the Tripod

The tripod is utilized to stabilize the view camera due to its cumbersome size.

Extend the tripod legs so that the tripod head is at chest level with the legs extended far apart to provide stability and in zero-position (level).

One leg of the tripod should be pointed forward with the remaining two legs parallel from behind so the camera won’t tip forward.
Mounting the Camera

Locate the threaded mounting bolt projecting from the bottom of the tripod mounting head. The mounting head should be in the level position.

Thread and attach the monorail-clamping bracket to the tripod so it is secure.

With the camera in both hands, mount the camera monorail to the clamping bracket. Balance the camera with one hand and proceed to tighten the clamp to secure the camera to the tripod.

Positioning the Camera

The front of the camera should be pointed forward along the same axis as the front tripod leg. This will provide for plenty of room to work behind the camera without tripping over the other two tripod legs.

In positioning the camera, it will be necessary to train your eye to see the way the camera sees. The use of a digital point-and-shoot can be helpful in determining framing and vantage point strategies.

Zero Position

Zero position, sometimes referred as neutral position, for a view camera means that all of its adjustments are set as though it were a rigid camera body:

Front and Read Standards are level, at right angles to the monorail and parallel to each other.

Rear of lens is pointed straight at the center of the ground glass.

Infinity Setting

Once the camera is mounted and all the movements have been set to zero position, extend the bellows by setting the front and rear standards approximately one focal length apart. This setting, referred as infinity setting, is a good starting place to begin working.
The aperture, shutter speeds, press-focus lever, cable release attachment to trigger the shutter, and the strobe sync attachment are typically located on the front of the lens.

To view the scene through the camera, open the shutter using the press-focus lever on the front of the lens, and set the aperture to the widest setting.

Then, facing the subject, stand behind the ground glass and cover with a dark cloth to be able to view the image that appears upside down on the ground glass.

With the view camera, the image is being looked at on the ground glass, not through it.

With the image projected, disengage the focus lock on the rear standard and focus on the scene by moving the rear standard along the rail. For precise focusing, utilize a magnifying loupe against the ground glass.

Although under most circumstances, the focus can be adjusted from either the front or rear standard, it is good practice to use the rear standard. It is especially difficult to focus up close when using the front standard because it changes the magnification, making the image larger or smaller. This alters the lens to subject distance. Using the rear standard to focus insures appropriate focus on an object at a fixed distance.
Light Metering Techniques

Once the scene has been framed and the focus set, **secure the focus lock and check to make sure all other movements are secure.**

**Take an exposure reading** with an incident light meter and select the appropriate shutter speed / aperture combination.

![Light Meter Diagram]

a. Set ISO/ASA of film being used.

b. Hold light meter in front of scene with the sphere pointed at the camera.

c. Depress center button.

d. Needle will move to a reading.

e. The reading is measured on the foot-candle scale. Do not utilize the listed f-stops, as these do not correspond to the film speed.

Depending on the lighting conditions, there are two settings that can be utilized – the **Red Arrow** setting (when the High Slide is inserted in the slot below the sphere) is used outdoors in bright light and the **Black Arrow** setting (High Slide is removed) is used in lower light circumstances.

f. Move dial to Black Arrow setting when High Slide is not used so that the number lines up with the corresponding number of the foot-candle scale.  

or

g. Move dial to Red Arrow setting when High Slide is used so that the number lines up with the corresponding number of the foot-candle scale.

h. Shutter speed scale

i. Aperture scale

With the shutter speed and aperture set, **close the shutter using the press-focus lever.**
Making the Exposure

Once the tripod, camera and lens have been set, open the spring back of the ground glass frame using the bail lever to insert the loaded film holder.

Double-check the shutter to insure that it is closed prior to removing the dark slide from the film holder.

It will be necessary to cock the shutter in order to trigger the exposure.

Gently remove dark slide from the side of the film holder facing the lens. In dry climates, too rapid a movement of the dark slide may generate static electricity that could mark the film.

Hold the end of the cable release with enough slack in the cable to prevent motion being transmitted from to the camera.

Make the exposure by pressing the cable release to trigger the shutter.

Once the exposure has been made, insert dark slide back into the film holder with the black side on the outside to signify that the film has been exposed. Secure dark slide with latch to insure slide is not accidentally pulled.

Remove film holder.

Film Holders and Film

The standard film holder for sheet film is the double sheet-film holder, which provides space for two sheets of film. Each side of the holder has a hinged flap at the bottom to facilitate the loading of film.

Dark Slide

The dark slide is an opaque plastic sheet that protects the film from light until it is pulled from the film holder to expose the film.

The handle of the dark slide is white on one side and black on the other.

The white edge of the dark slide signifies unexposed film and has bumps for identification in the dark.

The black edge of the dark slide signifies exposed film and is smooth.
Film

When a box of sheet film is opened, the film is double-boxed in opaque boxes to protect the film from light. After loading the film, it is important to double-box the unused film for future use.

Film Code Notches

Film manufacturers cut film code notches into the corner of each sheet of film for identification of the film in dark for which side is the emulsion side and which is the base side. The film notches also identify the type of film.

When film is loaded into the film holder, the emulsion side is facing out.

If the film holder is held in the **vertical position**, the **film notch should be located in the upper-right** to load the film with the emulsion out.

If the film holder is held in the **horizontal position**, the **film notch should be located in the lower-right** to load the film with the emulsion out.

Loading Film Holders

Before attempting to load film, it is necessary to the work area is clean and uncluttered. It is helpful to use compressed air to clean out film holders just prior to loading and to use self-sealing plastic bags to store loaded film holders.

a. It is beneficial to stage the box of film, the film holders and storage bags prior to loading to insure minimal exposure of the film to air and dust.

b. The dark slides (white edge out) of each film holder should be pulled part way to facilitate the loading of the film.

c. In the dark, completely open the double-boxed film. It is sealed in a foil pack.

d. Remove the film from the foil pack and place face-down with all of the notches in the same orientation.

e. Handling the film by its edges, remove one sheet at a time from the top of the stack and load the film in the film holder.

   Note the location of the film notch (**upper-right when loading in a vertical orientation**, or **lower-right when loading in a horizontal orientation**) for proper loading.

f. Close and latch dark slide immediately.

g. Flip and repeat process with other side of film holder.

h. Once double-sheet film holder has been loaded on both sides, place film holder in self-sealing plastic bag.

If you don’t have access to a darkroom to load film, a changing bag made of an opaque material can also used.