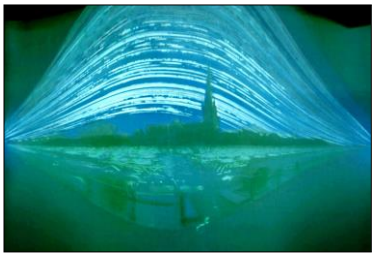
Alternative Photography Summer School

June Activity 1 - Solargraphy

Capture up to 6 months of sunshine in your own home.
Online Workshop Sunday 28th June. Register here:

Instructions for 'I-Can' Solargraph Camera



The 'I-Can' solargraph pinhole camera will take a photograph of the sun travelling across the sky for a duration of a few days up to a period of 3 - 6 months, capturing the arc of the sun as it rises and falls throughout the year.

Construction and installation video here:

Materials. You will need:

- Two empty washed out tall aluminium drink cans, (440ml) or larger
- A sheet of 5x7 light sensitive photographic paper (provided in the pack or buy some here)
- A 'flat' can opener, pair of scissors and a dressmaking pin
- A small piece of gaffer – carpet tape and a small piece of black insulation tape
- 3 cable ties

To 'process' the final image you will need a flatbed scanner (incorporated in some printers) or you can photograph of your negative on a mobile phone.

Construction (Parental assistance for small people may be required due to the possibility of mildly sharp edges)

- Take the top off the larger can with a flat can opener. (1) (Safe technique here).
- Make a lid from the second smaller can with scissors (2)
- Make the pinhole by pushing the pin right through the metal half way up the can (3)
- Cover the hole with a short piece of black insulation tape

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Loading the light sensitive photographic paper*.
In a curtained room or artificial light, take your photographic paper out of the packet (as long as there is no sunlight you have a minute until the paper begins to fog).

- Curl the paper lengthways so the slightly shiny (emulsion) side is inside the curl.
- Place this inside the can so the 1cm gap is at the position of the pinhole with the emulsion is on the inside of the can facing towards the hole.(4)

- Tape the short lid over the top of the can and put a piece of tape over the hole (5)

Installing your camera.
Find a position in your garden etc where the pinhole can point towards the Sun. This can be South West or South East but not north (unless you are in the southern hemisphere!) A drainpipe or fencepost is good.
Use cable ties to fix the camera in a vertical position ideally at the point on the can where the gaffer tape is to prevent the can from crushing.

If you can tilt the camera back slightly it will get the summer sun which gets high at midday. The final image is a very wide 170 degrees.
Peel the shutter (sticker) off and write on your calendar when you want to stop the exposure. This could be any duration from a couple of days (if sunny) to 6 months.
After the time has passed, place a tape shutter onto the hole and take the camera down.

Recovering the image (The clever bit).
You do not use any chemicals to recover the image. Over a period of time the image appears on the paper in a similar way to it getting a sun tan. The image that appears is then scanned into a computer using a flatbed scanner or photographed on a mobile phone.

- Close the curtains in your computer room
- Set the scanner on a high resolution (500dpi is good) and set on 'colour' scan
- Take the photo paper out of the can camera (If the image is damp, you may need to dry the paper with a hairdryer)
- Place it onto the scanner then press scan
- Save the negative image on your computer
- Place the undeveloped print into a box entitled 'scanned paper negs'
- Open up Photoshop
- Image > Inverse > Flip horizontal and play around with: contrast, brightness and levels.
- File > save

For further information and video see: https://www.realphotographycompany.co.uk/solargraphy

*Light sensitive photographic paper is not the photographic paper used in ink jet printers.

realphotographycompany@gmail.com
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