

# Book launch exhibition:

## *Light for Art's Sake*

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The book *Light for Art's Sake* (2021)<sup>1</sup> was launched with a related exhibition at the University of Pretoria in October 2021. The way in which pinhole photography was practised for more than two decades at the University has allowed students to benefit from their practice of the medium in more ways than only producing photographs.<sup>2</sup> Prescribed limited budgets provided accessible means to learn basic skills related to such an old and widespread medium. Ways of working by hand in the darkroom also proved enabling when considered in other fields of life.

From a visual basis, opposites attract in a darkroom – darkness attracts one to light, photographic negatives are turned into positives, motion is immobilised in still images, and textures and perspective views all become flat planes on the two-dimensional surface of a photograph. Layered opaque surfaces invite transparency, and small marks seem to expand in meaning. Colour loses all chromatic values, while black and white areas substitute each other in both negatives and positives.

Published by



Book launch

Art, access and agency - Art sites of enabling

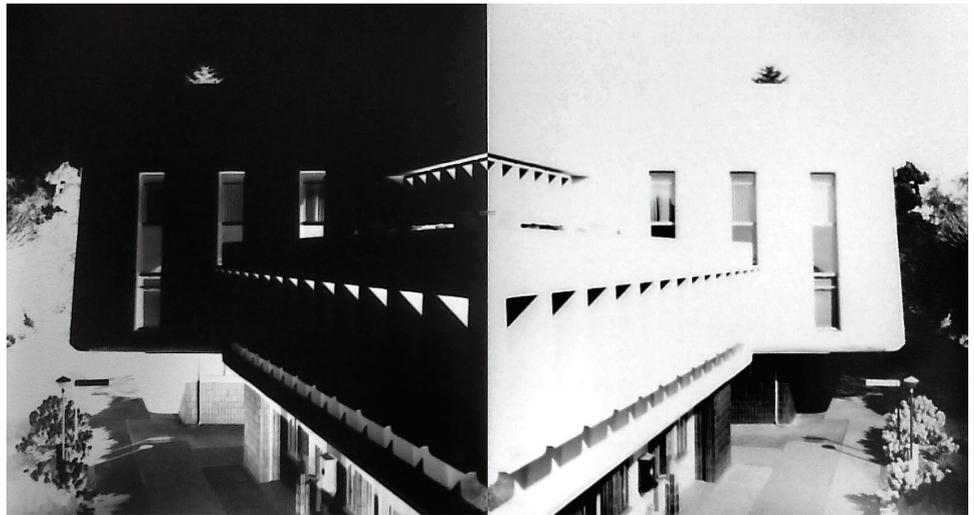


FIGURE **Nº 1**



Digital copy of original negative v positive images by Goitseone Moerane (2013).

In the darkroom, foreground and background elements appear similar in tonal values. The background – or negative space – is crucial in defining the foreground/subject. To a large extent, the background not only delineates the edges of the subject but enhances the viewer's perception thereof. Students thus learn to notice what lies beyond and around their chosen subject.



FIGURE **Nº 2**



Digital copy of original black & white positive photograph by Nina Rust (2005).

While observing the world, the human eye constantly shifts focus. Any entire view 'framed' by the eye is put into focus by our assumed knowledge of what we perceive. Depending on the size of the frame of view, the eye itself only focuses on a part of the view at a time (for example, with a rectangle of 2000 x 3000mm placed at a distance of 2000 - 3000mm, the eye focuses fixedly on approximately 200 x 300mm). Well-constructed pinhole cameras that are held entirely still during an exposure, show entire views with infinite depth of focus – no matter how wide or narrow the frame of view is.



FIGURE **Nº 3**



Digital copy of original black & white positive photograph by Jenna Snyman (2019).

Interestingly, the further the lens – or pinhole – is from the negative (the photo-sensitive paper inside the camera), the larger the subject will appear in the photograph – zoomed in, for that matter. In this instance – contrary to our intuition – distance brings us closer to the subject. Whereas one usually sees a landscape from a certain height, pinhole photography – with cameras placed on floor level – lets us see perspectives from a different angle. This expands our awareness of perspective and can enrich the way in which we consider the world around us.

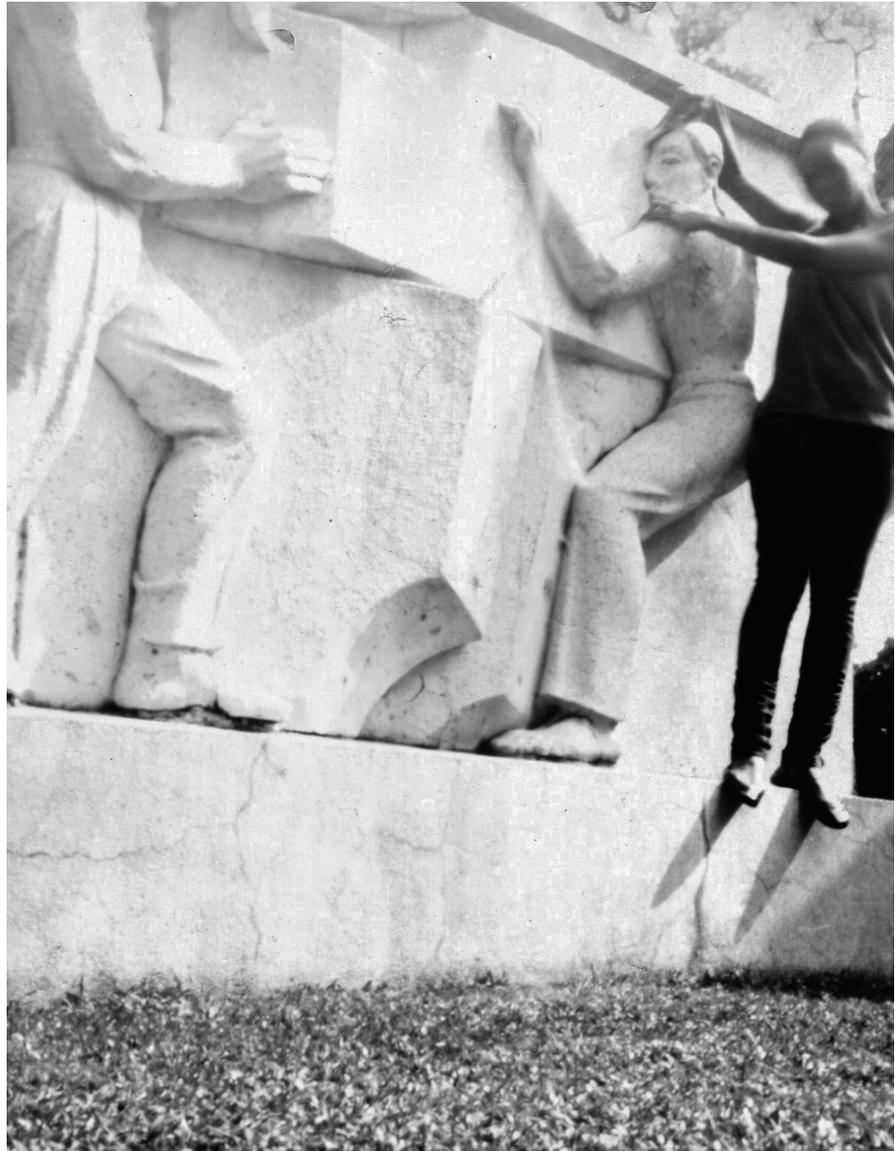


FIGURE **N° 4**



Digital copy of original black & white positive photograph by Odette Graskie (2012).

Furthermore, the unusually lengthy exposure times required to take pinhole photographs may encourage us to slow our actions to arrive at clear expressions of our intentions. Slow exposures also allow users to overlay more than one view of a subject – or different subjects – in the same image.



FIGURE **Nº 5**



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Digital copy of original black & white positive photograph by Kudzanai Chiurai (2002)

Pinhole photographs were scanned digitally to produce assembled images using additional electronic media. Such combinations of skills address the inherent inclusiveness that the medium enables.

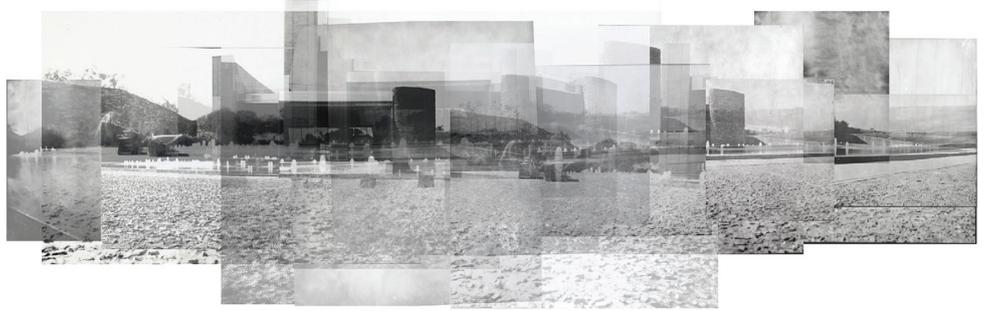


FIGURE **N° 6**



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Digitised Composite (of 22 students' pinhole photographs by Carla Crafford): *Ghosts Among The Living Amongst The Ghosts*, Freedom Park (2013).

## Notes

1. Self-published book (2021) compiled and written by Carla Crafford, with additional text by Lize Kriel and Colijn Strydom. Book is available on request from Carla Crafford or from the School of the Arts, UP.
2. For this essay, all images and text refer to black-and-white photography – produced in darkrooms at the University of Pretoria and elsewhere.