

Using a View Camera

The view camera is by design a tool for the thinking, hardworking photographer. It requires thought, deliberation, and careful calculation. Although there are some photographers who make two or more negatives of the same subject with different exposure and development, these are people who are very unsure of themselves and are attempting to apply 35 mm techniques to a completely different tool. This is a waste of good equipment, film, and time. Learn to use your equipment correctly and you will enjoy it.

The steps which follow may seem lengthy. Nevertheless, they are necessary and once the routine is established, they become automatic. Until that is accomplished, you may wish to make notes on a 3 X 5 card and carry it with you when you go out to photograph.

1. Use the viewing card and panchromatic viewing filter to choose your subject and the position of your camera.
 2. Set up the camera correctly.
 - A. Level the tripod, point one leg at the subject.
 - B. Mount the camera securely to the tripod.
 - C. Level the camera
 - D. Zero all movements
 3. Check the composition
 - A. Are the edges clean?
 - B. Do lines project from corners?
 - C. Are vertical lines vertical?
 - D. Do lines merge which shouldn't?
 - E. Have movements been used correctly, or do they distort the image?
 - F. DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHAT YOU WANT? IF NOT, START OVER.
 4. Check Focus Carefully.
 - A. Use loupe at center, **and** each corner.
 - B. Look through corners of ground glass to check lens coverage.
 5. Determine Exposure.
 - A. Meter carefully
 - B. What is the most important part of the image? In what zone should it be placed?
 - C. Remember to place important shadows on Zone III.
 - D. Is bellows extension a factor?
 - E. Is the indicated exposure one second or longer? If so, don't forget the reciprocity factor.
 6. Get Lens and Shutter ready for Exposure.
 - A. Close the focus lever.
 - B. Set shutter speed.
 - C. Set aperture - f 16 or smaller.
 - D. Trip shutter to be sure it is ready.
 - E. Re-cock shutter.
 7. Insert film holder.
 - A. Insure that film has not been exposed.
 - B. Open bail and insert holder.
 - C. Remove dark slide. Leave dark cloth over camera.
 - D. Wait for camera to settle, and wind to die.
 - E. If exposure is to be longer than one or two seconds, wait at least 30 seconds after removing slide. This allows film to pop.
 - F. Make exposure.
 - G. Insert dark slide, dark edge out.
 - H. Open bail and remove holder.
 - I. Return film holder to its' hiding place.
8. Turn around and look behind you. You may see a better picture there. If not, Zero the camera, pick up everything and move on.

These are only the basics and do not include such things as filters and pre-exposure.

ERRORS

Some of the most common errors include;

1. Failure to check focus along edges and corners.
2. Failure to recheck focus and composition after using movements.
3. Using too large an aperture in order to shorten exposure time.
4. Failure to include bellows extension factor.
5. Forgetting to close focus lever prior to removing dark slide.
6. Failure to include reciprocity factor.
7. Removing film holder prior to inserting dark slide.
8. Putting dark slide between holder and camera.
9. Failure to turn dark slide over after exposure.
10. Forgetting to shield lens from sun.
11. Shielding lens too much.

This looks like a lot to remember, but you will get used to it and it will become second nature.

EXPECT TO MAKE MISTAKES!