



Through the Eye of a Needle: The Science, Art, and Stewardship of Pinhole Photography

Dennis R. Venema

Pinhole photography, an endeavor with a noble scientific heritage, is enjoying a renaissance as a serious art form in our hasty, digital age. This form of photography has numerous features that mesh well with a Christian worldview. It is almost a “monastic” form of photography in its simplicity, patience, and spurning of technology. Most pinhole photographers make their own cameras from recycled materials; this fits wonderfully with environmental stewardship and a non-

materialistic ethic. There is something quite marvelous about an old lens camera, or a discarded cookie tin, or wood scraps becoming an object with renewed purpose and usefulness: as an instrument to record beauty. It is very fitting to capture the majesty of God’s creation in a way that is sensitive to its well-being. Pinhole photography is also an excellent way to teach the basic properties of light in a manner that inspires wonder at God’s design, especially to young people. ★



This image was taken on the Trinity Western University campus after a heavy snowfall. With the pond frozen over, this great blue heron is patiently waiting out the cold spell – and it was patient enough to wait for a three-minute exposure with almost perfect stillness. My camera was a simple plywood box constructed from scraps and fitted with a handmade pinhole drilled into scrap aluminum sheeting with a sewing needle.

Dennis R. Venema holds a Ph.D. in cell biology and genetics from the University of British Columbia. He is an assistant professor of biology at Trinity Western University, where he teaches courses in introductory biology, classical genetics, and cell biology. He and his wife Valerie have two young children (son Elijah and daughter Davin). Elijah has decided that daddy’s strange cameras take “pretend pictures” – since there is no immediate digital result to examine.