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"How to make a Camera Obscura"

instruction from 'MaBareBare, an expression of Khelobedu in the present' (2019)

For my contribution, I would like to offer some step-by-step instructions of "how to make a Camera Obscura" (pdf) in your own home/room or personal space. This instruction is an excerpt from my doctoral submission 'MaBareBare, an expression of Khelobedu in the present' (2019).

A camera obscura is a darkened room (big enough for a human body) with a small hole projecting the scene outside the room as an upside-down image into the darkened room. My reason for choosing to contribute an instruction for making your own camera obscura at your home or space is because I think it's an important tool for reflection, and the situations we find our self in requires much contemplation. As we reflect on the emotions, restrictions, changes and fears brought out by the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to add the camera obscura as a tool among others to thicken this reflection processes. The nature of the camera obscura as an upside-down live image of a scene happening simultaneously helps us to be cognisant of the nature of an image. What is key here, is that this image is everywhere and is fleeting. There is no permeant record of it. I guess I hope to somehow say this COVID-19 moment will pass, but that seems to not be so important. What is perhaps important is to be present and see what is happening around us. Since reality is hard for some of us to grasp without the aid of pictures, perhaps seeing an "picture" of our immediate environment literally upside down might just help us accept or comprehend the new reality and help us deal with the feeling and reality that our lives have been turned upside down.

Offering this instruction is a way of showing solidarity with my fellow man and offering a possible way of coping during the COVID-19 moment. I would like to reiterate that I am an artist and my aim and job is to facilitate some form of avenue/outlet for an experiential comprehension using methodologies associated with the medium of art. As such I do not try to explain or offer context or explicit insight, but to simplify facilitate a situation you would not normally find yourself in. This instruction would offer such an avenue.

The link is one offering a simple tool, technique and activity for people to comprehend or reconcile their lived reality (restricted movement and hyper digital engagement) with an image process that might offer an avenue for comprehending the changes Covid-19 has brought to our lives. As well as offering an alternative image that is not digital in times where the digital platform is taking over our lives and routines. In short, I am offering a process of comprehending the confinement and havoc associated with being stuck at home and not being able to go about one's business. ☀

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Notes about the materials for the Camera Obscura
For lenses you can use a magnifying glass (even a toy one works) or domestic reading glasses, which are available at chemists or pharmacy supermarket, a general +0.5, +1 or +3 reading glass lens is sufficient for a good image. You can substitute the tracing paper with baking sheet paper, bedding linen or just plain paper.

"How to make a Camera Obscura" instruction from 'MaBareBare, an expression of Khelobedu in the present' (2019)

continued

HOW TO MAKE A CAMERA OBSCURA

What you will need:
tape (duct tape is best)
scissors or a cutter
opaque card or cardboard
or heavy duty plastic

lenses
tracing paper

step ① choose a space:
pick a small room
with the least windows
possible. → (bathrooms are the best!)
The time of day is
also important –
~~the~~ pick a time when
the sun won't be
shining directly
through the window.

step ② block out the windows:
measure out the window size
and cut the same size card or
cardboard (or plastic)
& use tape to stick it over the
window

step ③ check for light leaks:
see if you can see any light
leaking through the window
or the door to the room.
use a towel or more tape
to block it out. The room
must be completely black.

step ④ make a hole:
find a spot near the middle
of the window and make
a small (5mm) hole in the
card or plastic. Use your
scissors or cutters, or a
sharp pencil.

→ (the hole should
open onto clear
glass. If you prefer
you can open the
window)

step ⑤ what do you see?
look at the wall behind
you – an image should
appear. If you can't
see anything – make the
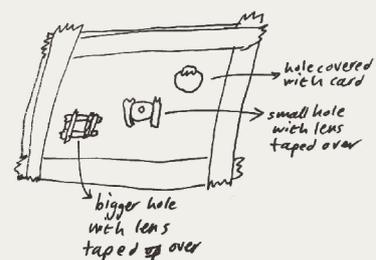hole a bit bigger, but
don't go above 5cm.
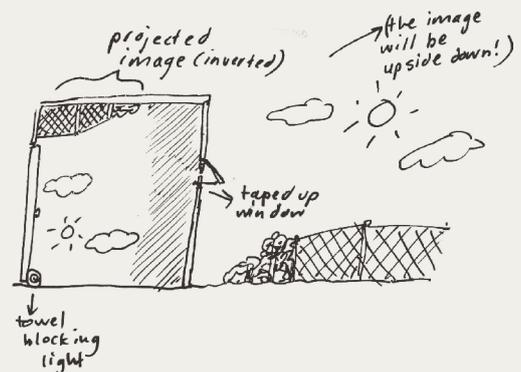
step ⑥ experiment
Your image will probably be
out of focus. Use the paper
to catch the image coming
through the hole and move
backwards or forwards
to find focus.
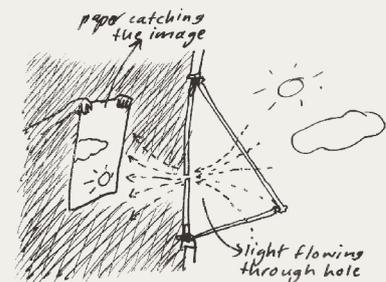
step ⑥ continued...
experimenting with lenses:

Use reading glasses.
Take some tape and fix
the lens to the hole
where the light is coming
through. Use the trace
~~against to~~ paper and follow
the guide to focus the image.

This is your basic
camera obscura...
You can also experiment
with different heights
and distances. If you're
using the lenses you
can make the holes
bigger – up to the size
of the lens itself – which
will lead to a brighter
sharper image.

Don't worry about making
the perfect camera obscura,
just be there for the process
and the making of it

projected image (inverted)

the image will be upside down!

taped up window

towel blocking light

paper catching the image

slight flowing through hole

You can cut additional
holes to get more images.
Cut some extra
pieces of card
or plastic and use
tape to stick them
over the holes like
lids or covers as
you experiment.
Work with one hole open
at a time until you're
comfortable with the method.

hole covered with card

small hole with lens taped over

bigger hole with lens taped over