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# 'Poetics of Light': gauzy dreams through a pinhole



'Poetics of Light: Contemporary Pinhole Photography' offers up a compelling collection of pictures that are not so much snapshots of reality but gauzy dreams and visual mysteries.

By **Craig Nakano**

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Many of the images in 'Poetics of Light' are not so much snapshots of reality as gauzy dreams

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**Y**our typical phone camera comes with so many low-light sensors, image stabilizers and apps for artful filters that sharply focused, high-resolution pictures pile up faster than you can overshare on Facebook. Heck, even cats can take pretty good selfies. (Yes, there is Tumblr for that.)

Perhaps that's why the blurred, distorted and fragmented images that fill the new book "Poetics of Light: Contemporary Pinhole Photography" (Museum of New Mexico Press, \$55) are so compelling. Many of these pictures — some rudimentary, some brilliantly constructed — are not so much snapshots of reality but rather gauzy dreams, visual mysteries that prompt more questions than answers: What am I seeing, where and why?

Eric Renner began collecting the photography for the first issue of his Pinhole Journal in 1985. Some artists submitted works made with a camera that was little more than a box with a minuscule hole that transferred its view to light-sensitive material inside.

Nancy Spencer joined Renner in 1987, married him in '89 and co-edited the journal with him. Sixty-four issues later, the couple found themselves with 6,000 images from about 500 artists in 35 countries — a trove dubbed the [Pinhole Resource Collection](#) that they donated to the New Mexico History Museum's Palace of the Governors Photo Archives. More than 200 of the collection's images and 40 pinhole cameras are on view at the museum through March 25 in an exhibition timed with the publication of the book. From Hanover, N.M., Renner and Spencer also operate [www.pinholeresource.com](http://www.pinholeresource.com) for those who want to try for their own bit of pinhole perfection.

