

CAMERA LUCIDA

Comments

A camera lucida is an optical device used as a drawing aid by artists. *The camera lucida performs an optical superimposition of the subject being viewed upon the surface upon which the artist is drawing. The artist sees both scene and drawing surface simultaneously, as in a photographic double exposure. This allows the artist to duplicate key points of the scene on the drawing surface, thus aiding in the accurate rendering of perspective. At times, the artist can even trace the outlines of objects.*

The name "camera lucida" (Latin for "lit room") is obviously intended to recall the much older drawing aid, the camera obscura (Latin for "dark room"). There is no optical similarity between the devices. *The camera lucida is a light, portable device that does not require special lighting conditions. No image is projected by the camera lucida.*

Procedure

In the simplest form of camera lucida, the artist looks down at the drawing surface through a half-silvered mirror tilted at 45 degrees. This superimposes a direct view of the drawing surface beneath, and a reflected view of a scene horizontally in front of the artist. The instrument often includes a weak negative lens, creating a virtual image of the scene at about the same distance as the drawing surface, so that both can be viewed in good focus simultaneously.

If white paper is used with the camera lucida, the superimposition of the paper with the scene tends to wash out the scene, making it difficult to view. When working with a camera lucida it is often beneficial to use black paper and to draw with a white pencil.

