

Bringing the Camera Lucida back from the dead

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(Credit: Pablo Garcia & Golan Levin)

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Think of the **Camera Lucida** as a sort of tiny reverse overhead projector. Popularised over 200 years ago, the device superimposed a reflected image of the scene in front of the artist onto a sheet of paper — allowing sketch artists peering through the viewfinder to simply trace real life.

Although the Camera Lucida was useful across the sciences as well as art, it has only been available as a highly specialised tool in recent years, falling into disfavour and disuse. Until two artists and art professors decided to bring it back.

Pablo Garcia and Golan Levin have redesigned the Camera Lucida, creating an affordable, portable version of the device, which they are calling the **NeoLucida**. It is the first portable Camera Lucida, they claim, to be produced in over a century, and, at just US\$30, the most affordable one ever made.

"We want to make this remarkable device widely available to students, artists, architects and anyone who loves to draw from life," the pair said on Kickstarter. "But to be clear: our NeoLucida is not just a product, but a provocation. In manufacturing a Camera Lucida for the 21st century, our aim is to stimulate interest in media archaeology — the tightly interconnected history of visual culture and imaging technologies."

Part of their aim is to bring back the relationship between photo-realistic drawing and the imaging technologies used by the artists who perfected it. Although students are taught to draw photo realistically, Garcia and Levin said that they're not taught about the tools. By bringing the tools back into the equation, they hope to reopen the discussion about art and technology.

The NeoLucida is built almost exclusively from prefabricated parts, allowing the team to keep the cost low. Unfortunately, though, the Kickstarter run of 2500 units has already sold out, and Garcia and Levin have no plans at this point to create any more. But hope is not lost.



(Credit: Pablo Garcia & Golan Levin)

"Once we've finished distributing the NeoLucidas, we will publish our designs, CAD files and all of our supplier data with a liberal Creative Commons and Open-Source Hardware (OSHW) licence, so that anyone who wishes can continue the project (including, potentially, commercially)," they said. "Our design and other manufacturing information will appear on **NeoLucida.com**, Instructables, Scribd and other appropriate sites."

And, because the **Kickstarter campaign** was so successful, so quickly — receiving US\$90,865 of its US\$15,000 funding goal in just a few days — they may create additional units further down the line, especially for schools.