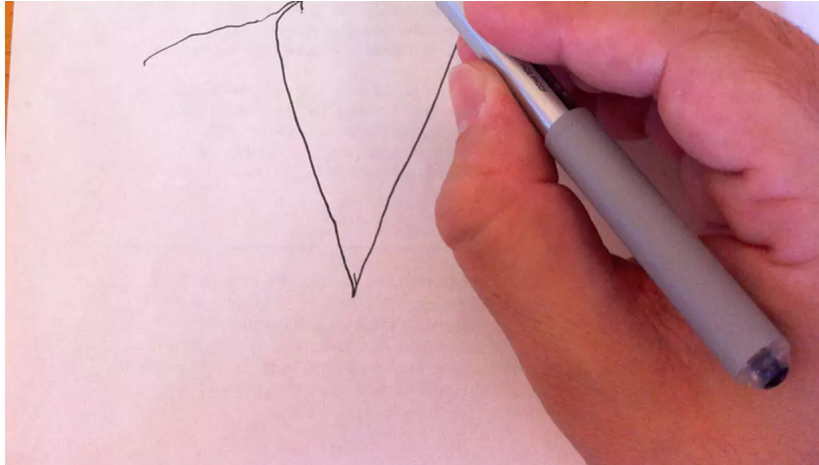


NeoLucida brings 19th Century sketching tech into the present

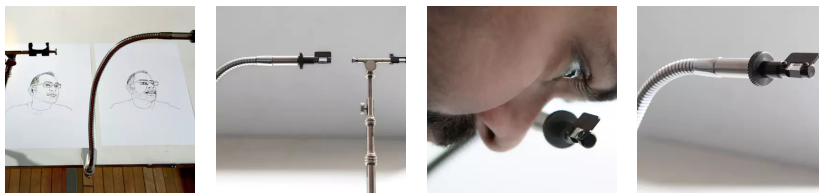


Ben Coxworth | May 8, 2013



A view through the eyepiece of the NeoLucida

As long ago as 1807 - and possibly up to 200 years earlier - many artists used an optical device known as a camera lucida to help them in sketching subjects. A controversial theory even suggests that some of the famous Old Masters created their masterpieces not by sketching freehand, but by using such gadgets. Now, two art professors are trying to bring the camera lucida back, in the form of the low-cost portable NeoLucida.



The new device was created by Pablo Garcia, who's an Assistant Professor of Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Golan Levin, an Associate Professor of Computation at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University.

Just like the original camera lucidas, theirs contains no electronics. Instead, it mainly consists of a small, prism-containing eyepiece. That eyepiece is pointed toward the subject and extended over the paper on a goose-neck mount, which is simply clamped to one edge of the easel. When the user looks down into the eyepiece, they see the paper beneath it, along with a reflected image of the subject superimposed over top.

Then, they just start tracing. Is it cheating? Maybe, but if it is, at least it's Old Masters-league cheating.



Vintage camera lucidas can currently be found on eBay, but according to Garcia and Levin, they typically sell for at least US\$300. The NeoLucida, by contrast, is available for a minimum pledge of \$30 to the project's Kickstarter campaign. Unlike other such campaigns, however, this one isn't aimed at starting an ongoing business. Instead, Pablo and Golan are more interested in using the NeoLucida to draw peoples' attention to the relationship between art - particularly photo-realistic art - and technology.

Pledges will be used to cover a limited run of at least 500 of the devices, after which no more will be made. Once they're all gone, however, the designs, CAD files and parts-suppliers data will be made freely available, open-source, to anyone who wishes to continue production.



Other modern camera lucidas are already available, although a couple of them are priced around \$200, while another utilizes mirrors instead of a prism, resulting in the reflected image being displayed upside-down. All of them are also less compact and portable than the NeoLucida.

More information is available in the pitch video below.

Sources: NeoLucida, Kickstarter