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NEW ORDER: ON KICKSTARTER, OLD TECH IS FINDING SECOND LIFE



Image courtesy NeoLucida

THEY SAY THERE is nothing new under the sun, and nowhere is that more true than Kickstarter, where anything old and cool is being made new again.

We've seen this before with everything from da Vinci masterpieces to old-school computers, and the latest example of crowdfunded retro-cool is the surprisingly successful NeoLucida project, which already has raised more than six times its initial pledge goal of \$15,000. The NeoLucida is a modern take on the camera lucida, a 19th century sketching tool. It's basically a prism on a stick, used to easily and accurately draw things in perspective.

The camera lucida was invented in 1807, and many noteworthy 19th century drawings, like those of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, are believed to have been created using it. Antique camera lucidas run around \$350 on eBay. The NeoLucida is priced at a budget-friendly \$30 — and is already sold out.

NeoLucida co-creator Pablo Garcia has been a longtime fan of the device. His collaborator, Golan Levin, stumbled upon the camera lucida more recently and was stunned to find it was little more than a footnote in the annals of art history.

“I thought there were quite a few hobbyists out there without much of an outlet other than the eBay auctions that attract bidders to the rare devices,” Garcia told Wired via email. “This Kickstarter response shows a hunger for this kind of investigation. There is a desire for imaging media from long ago, even if our project is the first time someone heard the term ‘camera lucida.’ ”

The NeoLucida isn't the first old-school tech to find new life on Kickstarter.

Museum-quality scale models of Leonardo Da Vinci's inventions, specifically his 1487 armored car design, saw a successful Kickstarter run in March, 2012. A DIY replica of a PDP-8 minicomputer, a 1960s and '70s era DEC PDP-8 computer, was funded in February.

A Huntsville, Alabama furniture maker raised \$8,000 to build a replica of an 18th century Oeben mechanical table, a dressing table that

transforms into a desk when you turn a key. On the artsy side of things, Long Beach-based Tara Rose Davidson ran a successful Kickstarter to become one of the first to record 18th and 19th century classical guitar arrangements.

Across the pond, you can still fund a project that's hoping to send a half-scale replica of the Dover Bronze Age boat to sea for its maiden voyage. The boat, built in 2012, wasn't made to be watertight, so the replica needs to be stripped down and rebuilt to make it ship shape.

There's also a project for a kit allowing you to build your own pinhole camera, a concept that dates back to the 10th century and saw its first lensed camera appear in 1850. Another Kickstarter currently underway: An effort to create a children's book using the "19th Century Classical Style" (so no computers).

Never fear, however. Kickstarter isn't being over run by nostalgia and we're in no danger of going back to the Victorian era. There are just too many movies to fund and too many gadgets that must connect to the Internet.