



**Concerning
Strange Devices
from
the Distant West**

遠西奇器述

by Naomi Iizuka
directed by Lisa Portes

STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by
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— STUDY GUIDE —

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The Playwright: Naomi Iizuka



Naomi Iizuka is a nationally recognized contemporary playwright and also serves as head of the MFA Playwriting program at the University of California, San Diego.

Iizuka's work discusses memory and ways of seeing, and often utilizes elements from various forms of media. Her plays focus on the moments during which our identity (dis)appears and folds or morphs into something else. She layers and juxtaposes multiple perspectives with a unique simplicity and sensuality.

In addition to *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, which received its world premiere at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in February 2010, Iizuka's plays include *The Last Firefly*; *Ghostwritten*; *Anon(ymous)*; *At the Vanishing Point*; *17 Reasons (Why)*; *36 Views*; *Polaroid Stories*; *Language of Angels*; *War of the Worlds* (written in collaboration with Anne Bogart and SITI Company); *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls*; *Tattoo Girl*; and *Skin*, among others.

Iizuka's plays have been produced around the United States and internationally, including at Actors Theatre of Louisville; Berkeley Repertory Theatre; Campo Santo at Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco; Dallas Theater Center and Undermain Theatre in Dallas; FronteraFest at Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, Texas; Printer's Devil Theater and Annex Theatre in Seattle; The Public Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Soho Rep and Tectonic Theater Project in New York; Sledgehammer Theatre in San Diego; Edmonton's Northern Light Theatre and Montreal's Alternate Theatre in Canada; and the Edinburgh Festival.

Her plays have been workshopped by San Jose Repertory Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, The Sundance Institute Theatre Lab, A.S.K. Theatre Projects in Los Angeles, McCarter Theatre Center in New Jersey, A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Midwest PlayLabs, En Garde Arts/P.S. 122 and New York Theatre Workshop.

Iizuka is a member of New Dramatists and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Whiting Award, a Rockefeller Foundation MAP grant, an NEA/TCG Artist-in-Residence grant, a McKnight Fellowship, a PEN Center USA West Award for Drama, the Stavis Award from the National Theatre Conference, Princeton University's Hodder Fellowship, and a Jerome Playwriting Fellowship.

Naomi Iizuka's Plays

- 2011 – *The Last Firefly*
- 2010 – *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*
- 2009 – *Ghostwritten*
- 2008 – *After a Hundred Years*
- 2006 – *Anon(ymous)*
- 2006 – *Hamlet: Blood in the Brain*
- 2006 – *Strike-Slip*
- 2004 – *At the Vanishing Point*
- 2003 – *17 Reasons (Why)*
- 2001 – *36 Views*
- 2000 – *War of the Worlds* (in collaboration with Anne Bogart)
- 2000 – *Language of Angels*
- 1999 – *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls*
- 1997 – *Polaroid Stories*
- 1996 – *Marlowe's Eye*
- 1995 – *Skin*
- 1994 – *Tattoo Girl*
- 1994 – *Carthage*
- 1994 – *Coxinga*
- 1994 – *Ikeniye*
- 1992 – *Crazy Jane*
- 1992 – *Portrait of Bianca*
- 1992 – *Greenland*
- 1990 – *Lizzy Vinyl*
- 1990 – *And Then She Was Screaming*

***Concerning Strange Devices* Production History**

Les Waters, Associate Artistic Director at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in California, commissioned Naomi Iizuka to write *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* in 2009. The play premiered at Berkeley Rep in 2010. TimeLine Theatre's production is the play's second production and its Midwest premiere.

The Triptych

This play is written as a triptych—a story told in three panels/parts. Each part lives independently of the others, but when viewing the panels side by side, they give each other context and inform the greater vision on the story. Like a camera facing a giant cavernous landscape, it is impossible to capture the whole image. You must zoom in and out of this story and put the pieces together like a great puzzle.

About Naomi Iizuka's Work

Playwright Naomi Iizuka is fascinated by the “distant historical past” and how we remember. Her plays usually deploy images from other media as observation points, frames that yield alternative and complex views of the seemingly ordinary. Iizuka feel like theatrical gumbo—her work includes actual chronicles of events as well as fictions of what could have been. This complicates what is usually a linear experience of a play. Iizuka brilliantly remixes our perspective in attempt to help us see through multiple perspectives and create new realities. By providing multiple viewpoints, there is often no singular truth in her play, but multiple possibilities. In an interview with Berkeley Repertory, she says, “I wonder a lot about how we see and recall a person or an event, the distance between what we think we see and what actually is.”

By zooming in and out of truth and the possible, Iizuka challenges audiences to address their personal preconceived notions. As a mixed race and Amer-asian woman myself, I find that her plays sub-textually discuss who we feel we are and who others perceive us to be. Mixed-race or multi-ethnic people are navigating this question all the time. Her use of multiple perspectives allows us to be multiple things, multiple people and of multiple cultures all at once.

The Interview: Playwright Naomi Iizuka

During rehearsals, TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) talked with nationally renowned playwright Naomi Iizuka (NI) about her life travels, playwriting inspiration and long-time collaboration with director Lisa Portes.

(PJP) While you currently reside in California, I know you were born in Japan and also have lived in various places around the world. How has that exposure to different cultures influenced your writing?

(NI) I have moved around a fair amount both as a child and an adult. I think that leads to a certain level of healthy uncertainty. I don't take anything for

granted. I know people say it's a small world. Well, I actually think it's the opposite. I think it's a big world, and a rather strange world.

Whether I'm in Minneapolis or Tokyo, I am always struck by the strangeness, the pockets of mystery, the unexpected ways that people do things, the way they speak and see their worlds, the idiosyncrasies of each of those different cultures I find myself in. It's those differences that I'm drawn to, trying to make sense of those differences. There are also those differences that you can't make sense of—what do you do with the knowledge that there are things you may not ever understand? I think all of that informs my writing.

(PJP) With your plays *36 Views*, *Ghostwritten*, *After A Hundred Years* and now *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, you've explored the relationship between the United States and the Far East, be it Japan, Vietnam or Cambodia. What inspires this exploration and do you plan to continue the focus with upcoming work?

(NI) Some of it is an accident of birth. My father is Japanese. I think some of the investigations I've done of Japanese culture come from a desire to understand that part of my history. But then I also spent time in different cities in the Midwest, and found myself through whatever fluke of circumstance meeting a number of Asian adoptees. That led to writing a play about a Vietnamese adoptee. And then a friend's brother was a journalist in Cambodia, and that led to my writing a play that looked at the legacy of genocide in Cambodia today. I don't know that there is a purposeful plan to explore the relationship between the U.S. and Far East. As with a lot of my writing, there's a person I talk to or something I come across—a book, a picture, some apocryphal story—that piques my curiosity.

(PJP) What was the initial impetus to write *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*?

(NI) I saw an old Meiji-era photograph, and I wondered about the model and also the photographer. That was the starting point. Who were these people? What were their lives like? What happened to them?

(PJP) In your 2000 play *36 Views* you started exploring themes that carry over into *Concerning Strange Devices*— themes like art history, art dealing, authenticity and forgery. What inspired your interest in those things for that earlier play, and how have you approached them differently with this one?

(NI) I find myself circling back to this idea of truth and these satellite questions around the truth. Can you ever know the truth of another person? Can you ever know the truth of what happened? Can you trust your perceptive faculties? These are questions that I gravitate back to.

(PJP) Photographs and tattoos are prominent in more than one of your plays. Why?

(NI) I have an intuition that it has something to do with an anxiety around mortality. I find old photographs to be endlessly fascinating. I find myself looking at photographs of people who I know are long dead and wondering about them. I think it's something similar with tattoos. There's this impulse toward permanence, toward etching something into your skin permanently, and what that means when you yourself are not permanent.

(PJP) We feel quite fortunate to have one of your closest collaborators and friends, Lisa Portes, directing this production. How did you two meet and start working together?

(NI) I met Lisa on the first night of graduate school. There was a party. She was sitting on a very high stool in the middle of a crowded room. I walked up to her not knowing anybody. I remember Lisa had a lot to say. I remember she was very, very funny. And she was spunky.

I would use that word to describe Lisa both then and now, and it's one of many qualities that I love about her. We started working together shortly afterward, and we never stopped.

(PJP) You obviously greatly admire Lisa as a director. What is it about her and her work that has resulted in your collaboration?

(NI) Lisa is a wonderful director for a lot of different reasons, but she has several qualities that I have come to really treasure over the years. She's an expert at inviting others to play. There's a generosity that she has and an enthusiasm that inspires everybody else in the room. She's game. Lisa is open in a way that is rare. She will go to far-flung places with you. She doesn't get scared away. She's both brave and patient. She also has a knack for knowing which direction to head toward.

Lisa is a fantastic travel companion when you're traveling to places you've never been before—which is the perennial state of a playwright when writing a new play

(PJP) What's next for you?

(NI) I'm working on a couple of different projects. I'm currently revising a play for Children's Theatre Company that is a contemporary Kabuki play for kids. I'm also working on a piece with La Jolla Playhouse and Cornerstone Theatre that explores the aftermath of the wars in the Middle East on the military community of San Diego.

“The whole of Japan is pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people.”
— *Oscar Wilde*

Commodore Perry Opens Japan

In the summer of 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Tokyo Bay with the mission of re-establishing regular trade between Japan and the western world.

He was to complete an agreement that detailed the protection of shipwrecked or stranded Americans and to open one of more ports for supplies and refueling. Displaying force, Perry approached forbidden waters surrounding Tokyo and presented Japanese ministers with a letter from U.S. President Millard Fillmore seeking “friendly relations.” In 1854, the Treaty of Kanagawa was signed. The Japanese also promised to grant the United States the right to appoint consuls to live in all port cities.

The opening of Japan to the West by Commodore Perry profoundly affected the American imagination. At the time, many Americans believed that they had a special responsibility to modernize and civilize the Chinese and Japanese. In the case of Japan, missionaries felt that Protestant Christianity would be accepted where Catholicism had generally been rejected. Other Americans argued that even if the Japanese were unreceptive to Western ideals, forcing them to interact and trade with the world was a necessity that would ultimately benefit both nations.

The Creation of Japan

Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived on the shores of Yokohama with the mission of opening the East to Western trade. With the force of large ships dominating the harbor, local Japanese officials had little choice but to concede. From this moment on, the East became the “Orient” as we know it—full of mystery.

By opening the East, the rest of the world’s population was (for the first time) able to access a people and a country wholly alien to them. Tradesman, reporters and government officials flocked to Japan and to the new opportunities available on its shores. These tourists became the Western world’s guides and experts on the Japanese people and their culture.

Upon returning from their journey to the Orient, Westerners told stories of geishas, cherry blossoms, tea houses, fans, rice gruel and raw fish, Samurai,

rickshaws and the incessant sounds of cicadas. These things grew into staple Japanese characteristics and hence forth, our understanding of the Japanese people has been skewed by Western perspective.

What the Americans wanted to see in Japan, they saw. What they found to be strikingly un-Western and uncivilized helped to redefine and affirm the parts of America that they loved. In an era fraught with opposing discourse about American culture and the nation's priorities, American travelers found themselves desperate for the "other." This need to see something different, to have a secret, to escape, to figure out who they were, opened their imaginations to the idea of Japan.

As these tourists explored this new culture, they actively re-imagined it, distorting the truth with their own predilections. The Japan captured by these Westerners both in photographs and memories is a fictional one.

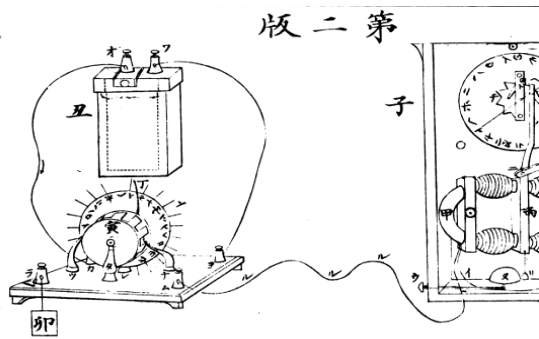
On Travel in Japan

"Travel only served to open up or develop new professional opportunities; it could also be a way of turning over a new leaf following failure. Most important, encounters with other cultures were understood to play an important role in producing enhanced understanding and appreciation of what it meant to be an American." — *Longfellow's Tattoos* (9)

"Not knowing such rules adds intensity and suspense to the simplest interactions. I think this rubs off on the Japanese too. They can play the role of guide, an interpreter of their culture or they can invent rules, make up "Japan" as they go along. This is one pleasure and danger of being a traveler; one never really knows how much to trust one's guide."
— Cathy N. Davidson, *36 Views of Mount Fuji* (90)

"Many individuals went to Japan with the belief that its culture had qualities lacking in their own. In the American imagination, Japan was peopled with individuals who, regardless of class or education were innately artistic. Such a vision was partially attractive in the decades following the Civil War, when the American had become increasingly attentive to how they make their own lives more cultureally refined."
— *Longfellow's Tattoos* (xiii)

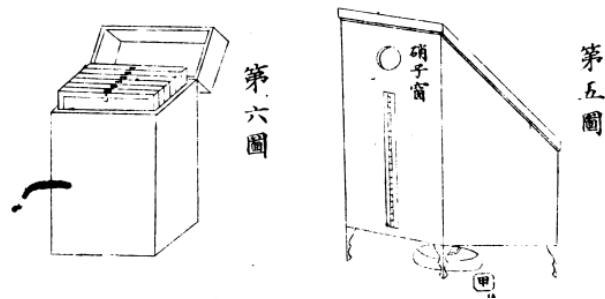
“Strange Devices from the Far West”



“Strange Machines from the Far West” was written by Komin Kawamoto about the physics of a steam engine and the daguerreotype and collodion cameras. It was completed and published in the mid-1850s. Kawamoto was a chemist and scientist.

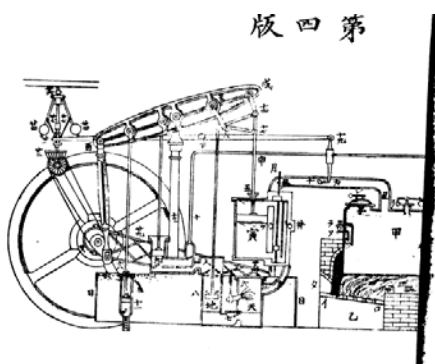
I find it fascinating that there is no English translation of this document. When I traveled to numerous libraries and asked a few friends fluent in Japanese, they were puzzled by the writing. The words and the structure of the writing are too far in the past for a modern speaker to readily be able to translate them.

When looking at his drawings of these machines, the strange devices, I am both tantalized and soothed by the precise lines and the delicacy of Japanese curiosity: organized, specific and un-translatable.



What is it that made these items so strange? Their size? Their products? Their gears and sounds and intricate inter-workings?

The process of encountering foreign objects or places is a process of magic and gestalt. What we see “at first” is both scientific and imaginative.



The eye will pick out the objects most central, large, or that contrast with a background or framework. The imagination interprets the shapes and colors and combination of angles and perspective to tell us the story of this subject, both imagined and actual. Looking at Kawamoto’s sketches—his attempt to chronicle the foreign, the science and the magic of the devices—I am inspired to discover the magic and the actual within our world.

Research pulled from The Japan Academy online library

The Strange Devices

The famous 19th Century Japanese chemist Komin Kawamoto wrote “Strange Machines from the Far West” in an attempt to decipher the mystery and magic of foreign objects—such as the daguerreotype camera and the steam engine—that were then arriving on the shores of Japan.

The camera was first discovered in 400 B.C. by Mo-Ti, a Chinese philosopher who described the invention as a “locked treasure room.” It was not until the 19th Century that this discovery was translated into the device known as the “camera obscura” and the modern process of photography began to evolve.

The daguerreotype camera arrived in Japan shortly after the country was opened to Western trade in 1854. This device allowed American tourists in Japan to take their own photographs. These images had two ultimate purposes— to catalog and record an experience and to prove the existence of the subject, and to exist as a solid, tangible memory—one, as the character Isabel Hewlett says, “you can hold in your hands.”

These photographs were made by wet-plate photography—requiring exposure times upward of 20 minutes, absolute stillness from the subject, chemicals mixed just the right way, and multiple transfers before getting to a print.

Many discoveries in technology since the mid-19th Century have transformed the camera from a cumbersome box with lengthy exposure times to tiny, built-in iSights on our MacBooks and cell phones. Today we can take a picture and immediately post it online to be accessed by our friends, family, followers and the World Wide Web.

While the order of operations has been simplified—from wet-plate processing to Instagrammed self-portraiture in a matter of moments—the photographs these strange devices produce have maintained their magic.

The ability to capture a moment, to document it, to isolate a moment in time exactly as you saw it or hoped you saw it, is to have it, to consume it. To take a photo is to take that moment, to steal it.

With modern technology, it is easier for us to understand the concept of manipulation and alteration. To understand that in fact, to use Photoshop or Instagram is to forge a truth, to re-imagine the moment or the subject you captured. With each new filter, we do as Western tourists in Japan once did—forge the idea before us from the actual to the imagined.

“Context, as we know, is everything. How you perceive a thing depends on everything around it ... What we see, what we think we see, is always up for grabs. If photography teaches us nothing else, it teaches us this.”
— Dmitri, from *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*

Modern Fascination with Filtered Photography

Instagram (if you don't already know what it is) is an application for your cell phone that allows you to take pictures with your built-in camera, edit them with a standardized set of filters (black and white, sepia, lomo fi, etc.) and post it for view by your followers (friends and family within your network). The application has more than 100 million users to date.

It is not surprising that Instagram has reached such mass popularity. With a few clicks of a button, all your friends and family can see where you are and what you are doing. Most importantly, they can access your viewpoint or perspective on the activity or subject you photographed.

Browsing through your friends' photos, it feels like you are right there with them—traveling abroad in India taking photos of the Taj Mahal, sitting next to you by a fire, or snapping shots of the snack you are about to devour. Both the photographer and the viewer are able to travel away from the pressure of the current moment. Searching through your feed of photos from friends, you can sit in your office and be mentally transported to another part of the world, into someone else's shoes. Photographers have the power of interpretation and mass distribution of their ideas.

The application's key appeal is the ability to access your friends' viewpoints. Filters allow you to change the photo and bend reality—for instance, to make it darker or brighter depending on your mood. You may also blur the photo and focus on one particular detail: The background in an airport is fuzzy, but your adorable daughter holding her “Welcome Home Mommy” sign is clear as a whistle.

The room you're in is not that dark. The snack you just ate was not that perfect shade of golden brown around the edge. Although your daughter is cute, the actual photograph you took of the bustling airport is blurred into non-existence. With each filter and edit of the photo, the truth of the moment fades away.

For some, this is a good thing—the ability to provide your artistic perspective or comment about the moment you are experiencing is like an awesome daily art project. How many followers can you get to “like” the photo you took? How many people will think this is as precious as I do?

Yet the more our culture believes and invests in the edited and the false, the more we drift away from the honest things before us. Has our incessant need to re-write events of the past infiltrated our ability to see our environment and ourselves clearly?

When making contact with something foreign—as Westerners did when Japan was opened to trade—a human instinct to perform kicks in. For example, when you go off to college orientation, you can leave your high school gothic sneakers at home and change your image entirely. You can be a whole new person, start over, re-write yourself.

Identity and viewpoint and forgery of truth are issues that everyone actively deals with consciously and subconsciously every day. Identity is not static but fluid. It adjusts depending on the context you are in, be it a meeting, at dinner with your wife, at a bar, or on a safari. Like a chameleon, we adapt to our surroundings and even if only slightly, change whom we are depending on the room we're in. We are conscious of the way people interpret us, and we are conscious of our interpretation and preconceived notions of the other in front of us. This is what enables us to filter our photograph to our following's liking. We know what they "like" and we know how to make our reality fit into that framework.

We are constantly negotiating the truth of the moment, the memory, the person and the facts. Whether we're filtering a snapshot or editing what we are about to say to someone, human beings have a natural desire to transform—to live simultaneously in the honest present, interpret it and forge ourselves.

The Man Behind the Lens: Adolfo Farsari (1841-1898)



Adolfo Farsari was born in Vicenza, Italy. He was passionate about military life at a young age and quickly adapted the lifestyle. Shortly after graduating military school in Italy, he earned a mid-ranking position in the Italian army. Although his discipline and commitment to serving his country was dogged, so was his interest in gambling and spending money.

Farsari continued to make trouble; he frequently started brawls with his fellow soldiers. His father was once called to the military hospital, where instead of finding his son injured, he found Farsari bruised and drunk.

Neck-deep in debt to multiple creditors, Farsari fled Italy for America, where he would cease communication with his family for more than 20 years.

Upon arrival in New York, Farsari married and had his first child, Edmund Farsari. Still eager to rejoin the military, he served in the Union Army during the Civil War. But again, after participating in multiple brawls and suffering a few minor injuries, he left the military.

Shortly thereafter, and perhaps as a result of the intense grief he felt due to the death of his only son, Farsari fled America for Yokohama, Japan, leaving his wife behind.

Upon arrival in Yokohama, Farsari discovered that he could make a great living by producing photographs and maps of the country for tourists. In 1885, Farsari purchased the Japan Photographic Association and began his business. In the purchase, he also acquired the portfolio of the previous owners/artists, which boosted his credibility and stock of images. But six months into business, the studio suffered a tragic fire. During the reconstruction, Farsari traveled Japan, working as a cartographer and photographing the landscapes. The color in his photographs of the time is said to be some of the best from the Meiji era.

Farsari fathered a second child with an unknown Japanese woman. After 10 years living in Japan, Farsari took his Amer-asian daughter back to Italy, where he ultimately died.

“If you cannot understand why the photographs in this portfolio are worth more than a picture you can get down the street, take your business somewhere else.”

— This is a phrase that hung near the door of Adolfo Farsari’s photography studio in Japan

Farsari’s Studio

Known as a wild personality with eccentric behavior, Adolfo Farsari was easily one of the most colorful photographers in Japan during the Meiji era. Farsari never spoke of photography as an art, but rather as a scientific and specific process that produces a certain quality of product. In a letter to his sister in Italy, Farsari wrote: “I am not a great photographer. I am able to take good pictures because it is a mechanical thing.”

After leaving Italy as a teenager, Farsari fled to New York and started a family just before joining the Union Army during the Civil War. He left the army after numerous issues with brawls and creditors and headed to Yokohama. Farsari landed in Japan seemingly by chance and lack of options.

Becoming a photographer was never a dream or an active pursuit for Farsari. The magic or art of photography was of no interest to him. Rather, as a European in Japan, he caught on quickly to the opportunity to profit from the

Western perspective of this unfamiliar landscape. Seeing travelers snapping photos of everyday things in Japan (farmers, rickshaw drivers, girls in kimonos), Farsari knew that if he could stage the photos with a Western eye, the photographs he could produce would make a fabulous profit.



Capitalizing on the West's fascination with Japanese culture, Farsari staged photos with hired subjects. He paid everyday workers to pose in costume and under precisely angled lights, positioning them like Western family portraits and thus capturing a precise image of Japan—both the Western perspective and style and the Japanese subjects were under the microscope. These photos of geishas and samurai flew off his shelves.

After buying the Japan Photographic Association in 1885, Farsari dispensed with all Western competition within a few months. Even though competing studios were also

selling “forgeries” of Japan with their pictures, no other studio could color a photo like Farsari did.

The coloring of his photographs was unique. Farsari trained his colorists for two to four months with no pay until he deemed them ready for hire. Once qualified, colorists spent full days adding color to one to three photographs per day. Farsari demanded perfection from his colorists, for instance requiring that the specific color added to the sash of a woman's obi be the exact color seen on the subject.

It is hard to believe that Farsari's desire to adhere strictly to the truth in color derived from his ethical need to create an honest photograph. It was more likely a calculated attempt to ensure that the photographs felt real—that the quality of his photos was extraordinary. Nobody could capture “Japan” like him.

Regardless of his lack of interest in the magic of photography, there is something ethereal and evasive in Farsari's photos.

The magic of the Japan that he depicted is perfectly preserved and isolated in his daguerreotypes. There is a simplicity, a quiet, a demureness—both a connection to nature and a repression of it—that makes these photos boil up a sense of desire and curiosity in our bellies. Something unidentifiable simmers under our surface as our imagination of the Orient is ignited by the subjects Farsari created.

How to Take a Daguerreotype Photograph

The steps required to take a photograph have evolved along with the technology. When staging *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, it was crucial to ensure that the steps Farsari performed prior to snapping photographs were accurate. The following research came from PBS.

1. COAT WITH COLLODION

The first step in making a collodion negative begins with a solution called, not surprisingly, collodion.

Photographic collodion is a mixture of raw cotton (which has been treated with nitric and sulfuric acids) dissolved in ether and alcohol, with a little iodide and bromide mixed in. What exactly it's made out of doesn't really matter that much, though—in 1880 you can buy it pre-mixed. What matters is that this solution is transparent and sticks to nearly everything.

Pour the collodion onto a glass plate, then tilt the plate until its entire surface is coated with the solution. Then pour the excess collodion back into its bottle.

2. DIP IN SILVER NITRATE

Now it's time to move into the darkroom (or, in the field, the dark tent).

While the plate is still wet, dip it into a solution that contains silver nitrate. The silver nitrate binds with the iodide and bromide to make a silver halide coating, which is sensitive to light.

Wipe the silver nitrate solution off the back of the plate with a clean cloth.

3. PLATE TO CAMERA

While still in the darkroom, insert the plate into a light-proof holder, which is constructed to fit in your camera.

Take the holder to the camera and insert.

The silver nitrate solution will drip from the holder, even when it's in the camera. This is normal.

There's a slide in the holder that covers the glass plate. Remove the slide. The collodion plate is now ready for exposure.

4. EXPOSE

Expose the plate by removing the lens cap. This will allow light to enter the camera and strike the light-sensitive collodion.

Expose the plate for 20 seconds to 5 minutes. (Exposure time depends on how fast the silver halides react to light, how much light enters through

the lens, and the amount of light hitting the subject.) Replace the lens cap to end the exposure.

Reinsert the holder's slide. The holder can now be safely removed from the camera and taken back to the darkroom or dark tent.

5. POUR ON DEVELOPER

Remove the glass plate from the holder.

While holding the plate over a tray, pour the developer over the plate. The developer is a solution of iron sulfate and acetic acid. It turns the silver-halide grains that have been struck by light into metallic silver. Rinse the glass plate with water to remove the developer.

You can now take the plate out of the darkroom.

The grains of metallic silver are still on the plate, as are the silver halide grains not struck by light.

Remove the unexposed silver-halide by placing the plate in a tray of sodium thiosulfate, which acts as a fixing agent.

6. WASH AND VARNISH

Wash the plate one last time in water to remove the fixing agent, then dry.

To protect the delicate image, apply a coat of varnish to the plate. Application is conducted in much the same way that the collodion was applied to the plate.

First, heat the bottle that contains the varnish over a flame. Also heat the glass plate over a flame. When both are blood warm, pour the varnish onto the emulsion side of the plate, tilt the plate until it is fully covered, then pour the excess back into the bottle. On the glass plate is a visible negative image. There is a dark coating of silver where light has struck the plate; the plate is clear where it was not exposed to light.

7. MAKE A PRINT

To make a albumen print from a collodion negative, float a sheet of paper on a solution of albumen (egg white) that contains a chloride. Dry. Float the paper on a solution of silver nitrate. This produces a coating of silver chloride. Dry again. Within a printing frame, align the negative over the paper, then place both in direct sunlight. The sun will print the picture. Wash the print in water, then tone in gold chloride. Wash again. "Fix" the print in sodium thiosulfate, then give it a final wash. Your print is now ready for mounting.

How it Works: The Human Eye and the Camera

Perhaps the easiest way to understand the inner workings of a camera is to examine its similarities to the human eye. Though there are differences in the way in which the two systems function, our eyes receive and process light in very much the same way as a camera. Utilizing a complex system of lenses, aperture, shutter speed, and photosensitive material, both the human eye and the camera enact the phenomenal process of recording light into discernible images. Let's take a look at how!

For starters, both cameras and eyes utilize lenses. Oddly enough, they both use the same type of lens—a converging, or convex, lens. On a camera, the lens is the front-most portion of the device through which light travels. A camera lens can be swapped out to achieve varying degrees of focus. Through a process called “tele-photoing,” a camera lens extends or retracts to focus the way light is received. In the human eye, the cornea acts like both a lens and a lens cover, receiving and bending diverging rays of light. Further back in the eye sits a crystalline lens that adjusts shape similar to the way that a camera lens tele-photos, allowing for the eye to focus.

To control the amount of light received, photographers utilize a camera's aperture setting. A camera's aperture shrinks or widens to control the amount of light allowed through to the film, accounting for relative degrees of brightness or darkness depending on the environment. Many modern cameras make this adjustment automatically. Our eyes do as well. In the human eye, the “aperture” lies within the pupil, where the colored iris expands or contracts based on the relative brightness of the light received. The iris dilates and constricts the pupil like the diaphragm of a camera.

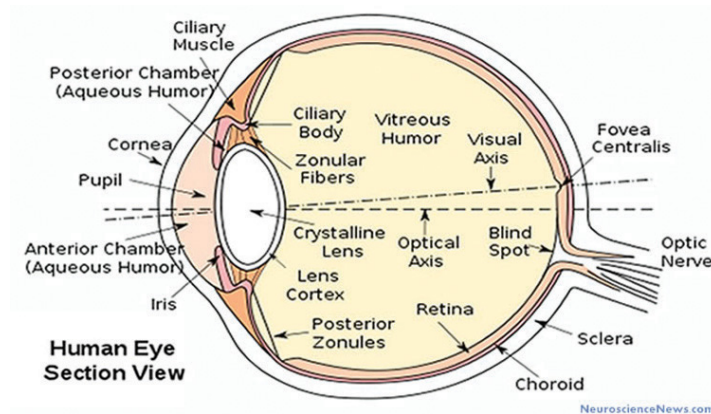
The very back of the eye is lined with a sensitive membrane called the retina, which consists of photoreceptor cells. The retina acts like a camera's film, recording the light received through the outer parts of the eye. This information is sent through the optic nerve and gets processed by the brain.

Light only touches a camera's film when its shutter is open. Our eyelids act like shutters in a similar way.

This is where it gets interesting. In both the eye and the camera, an image is inverted by the time it reaches the receiving material—the film or the retina. In photography, the process of allowing light to burn an image onto film creates a negative, or opposite image. To create a photograph, that negative is loaded into an enlarger, wherein light is shown through the negative onto photosensitive paper, resulting in an opposite-opposite, or a positive, image. In the eye, the wondrous brain does all that work for us. We never have to think twice about whether or not the image we perceive is correct. It just is.

The camera betters the eye in one area only: It is without a blind spot. At the base of the optic nerve, on something called the optic disc, there exists no photoreceptor cones or rods. As such, there is a blind spot. This is part of the reason we have two eyes. Due to rapid eye movement and, again, the wonders of the brain, most humans would never know this blind spot exists. But it does. It is miniscule, but it's there.

The Blind Spot



Humans are blind.

The human eye sends signals to the brain that allow us to navigate our environment. For the most part, we see things as they are. However, the human eye has a blind spot—located at the area of the retina where the optic nerve leads to the back of the brain.

These spots in each eye are symmetrically aligned; at each given moment one eye is compensating for the blind spot, or loss of vision, in the other. We take information from what surrounds that blind spot and fill in the blank.

Unless you're James Bond, you can only see what scientists call "visible light." Some animals are able to see infrared and ultraviolet, but we cannot. Also, humans are unable to distinguish the difference between polarized and non-polarized light, but many birds can.

Light passes through the pupil directly to the retina, where the light is "digested" by proteins. The information the retina receives from the amount of light given is sent through the optic nerve to the brain. This tells us what we are seeing—or what we think we see.

This can be tested by covering one eye and focusing on one singular detail. A corner of your line of vision falls away and the details are blurred.

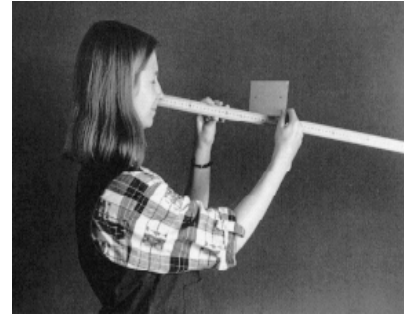
Activity: Find your Blind Spot

To see, or not to see

The eye's retina receives and reacts to incoming light and sends signals to the brain, allowing you to see. There is, however, a part of the retina that doesn't give you visual information. This is your eye's blind spot.

You will need

1. 3 x 5-inch card or stiff paper (mark a dot on one end and an “x” on the other end)
2. Meter stick



To do and to notice

- Hold the card at eye level about an arm's length away. Make sure that the “x” is on the right.
- Close your right eye and look directly at the cross with your left eye. Notice that you can also see the dot. Focus on the cross but be aware of the dot as you slowly bring the card toward your face. The dot will disappear, and then reappear, as you bring the card toward your face.
- Now close your left eye and look directly at the dot with your right eye. This time the cross will disappear and reappear as you bring the card slowly toward your face.
- Try the activity again, this time rotating the card so that the dot and cross are not directly across from each other. Are the results the same?

Photography Terms

Exposure — The action of uncovering or leaving without shelter or defense; in photography, the length of time that film is exposed to light.

Lens — A piece of glass, or other transparent substance, with two curved surfaces, or one plane and one curved surface, which serves to cause regular convergence or divergence of the rays of light passing through it.

Aperture — A usually circular and often variable opening in an optical instrument or device that controls the quantity of radiation entering or leaving it.

Shutter — A device for opening and closing the aperture of a lens in order to regulate the duration of the exposure.

Portrait — A two-dimensional representation of a person, object or scene.

Zoom — Camera shot in which the range is shortened to close-up without focus.

Irezumi: The History of Japanese Tattooing

“The very process of tattooing is essentially sexual. There are long, sharp needles. There is also the liquid poured into the pricked skin. There are the two participants of the act, one active, the other, passive. There is a curious marriage of pleasure and pain.”

— *Longfellow’s Tattoos*

Until very recently (the last fully tattooed Ainu woman died in 1998), Ainu women retained a tradition of facial tattooing, lending support to the argument that the ancient Jomon employed the custom in the distant past.

For the Ainu, tattooing was exclusive to females, as was the profession of tattooist. According to mythological accounts, tattoo was brought to earth by the “ancestral mother” of the Ainu, Okikurumi Turesh Machi, who was the younger sister of the creator god Okikurumi.

Because tattooing represented an ancestral custom derived from one common female ancestress, it was carried down through the centuries in the matrilineal line. Viewing tattoo practices through the lens of kinship, it is not surprising that the position of tattoo artist was customarily performed by grandmothers or maternal aunts, who were called “Tattoo Aunts” or simply “Tattoo Women.”

At various times in history, Japanese authorities prohibited the use of tattoos by the Ainu (and other ethnic peoples under their authority like the indigenous peoples of Taiwan) in attempts to dislocate them from their traditional cultural practices and prepare them for the subsequent process of Japanization. As early as 1799, during the Edo Period, the Ezo Shogunate issued a ban on tattoos: “Regarding the rumored tattoos, those already done cannot be helped, but those still unborn are prohibited from being tattooed.”

In 1871, the Hokkaido Development Mission proclaimed: “Those born after this day are strictly prohibited from being tattooed” because the custom “was too cruel.” And according to one Western observer, the Japanese attitude toward tattooing was necessarily disapproving, since in his or her own cultural system, “tattooing was associated with crime and punishment whereas the practice itself was regarded as a form of body mutilation, which, in case of voluntary infliction, was completely averse to the prevalent notions of Confucian filial conduct.”

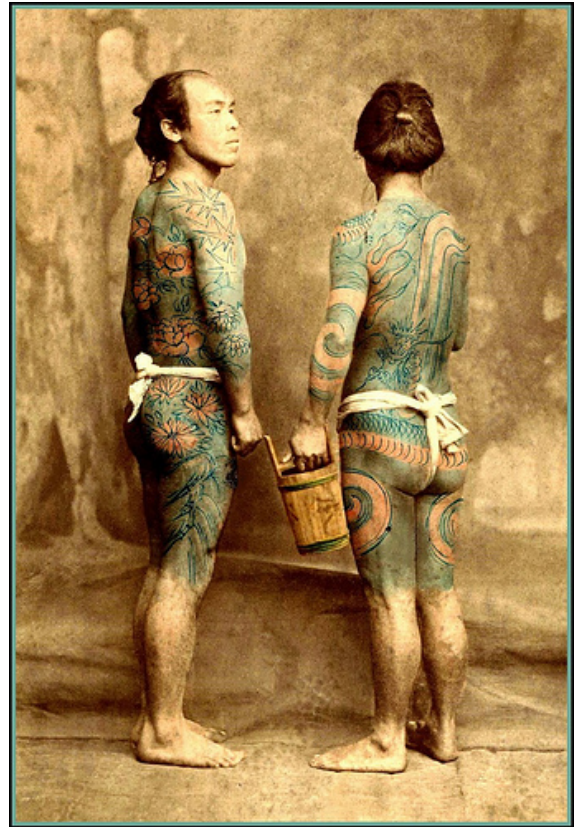
Research pulled from “The Ainu Aunts”, Josephson.

For a short film on Irezumi and the single modern man championing the art form (Hiryoshi III), go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llhEHNe62UM&feature=player_embedded

The Art of Japanese Tattooing

When Commodore Perry opened the East, the Japanese/Meiji government felt increased pressure to produce a particular, elevated image of their culture for the modern world. To avoid appearing savage and backward, the Meiji government banned the practice of irezumi (traditional Japanese tattooing).

The indigenous Ainu people of Japan—for whom irezumi was an important cultural practice, particularly among women—were forced to hide their tradition under a cloak of assimilation. Rooted in the world’s natural elements, images in irezumi tend to be monsters of nature. Bodies are covered with giant warriors, dragons, snakes, fish, fire and water. Often, firemen and sailors would get tattoos in hopes that when encountering dangers, these images would scare off opposition and protect them from harm.



The meaning of the tattoo depends on the canvas it covers and the viewer’s desire to create a story about it. If anything, the images represent the strength and endurance of the person wearing them. With discipline, this person sat through hours and days and months and years of pain—all with the goal of marking their body as theirs.

Irezumi’s history of abolishment and disgrace through the actions of the Meiji government forces this art form into symbolizing strength and the agency to be who you are. Participating is to mark yourself permanently, to say “I am here,” to take control of your image and to (ultimately) let someone in—to be passive as another person, someone you trust, is trusted enough to change you and your body forever.

Traditional irezumi tattoos covered the body from mid-bicep to neck, covered the chest and stomach, and ended at the mid-thigh. These tattoos took one to two years to complete, with individual sessions occurring twice a week for hours at a time. The detail in outline, color, shading and gradient make these images on the body both overwhelming and tantalizing.

On Maternal Abandonment and The Umbrella Symbol

Maternal abandonment leaves the children to deal with significant emotional, mental and psychological after effects. A mother doesn't have to pack her bags and physically leave the house in order to abandon her children. It can take place emotionally and psychologically, as she withdraws either because of her own childhood issues or from other mental health issues.

Abandonment occurs when a mother physically, emotionally or psychologically removes herself from her children. She does this by ending or ignoring her responsibility to parent her children, or ending her relationship with her children, according to Peter Gerlach, MSW (Master's of Social Work).

The child who has been abandoned by his mother develops low self-esteem. His thinking is, "My mom didn't love me. She left me, so this means I'm not lovable." He experiences confusion and asks questions about why his mother left him. He feels guilt, believing that he did something "so bad" that it made his mother leave him behind.

He is fearful of developing bonds with other adults—teachers, stepparents or caregivers. The child believes that if he begins to love the new adult, that person will also leave. He grieves for the lost relationship. As he grows older, he starts grieving over any hopes he has had for a happy reunion with his mother, according to Gerlach.

The most common form of maternal abandonment is physical, when a mother physically leaves her child behind. This kind of abandonment is sudden and unexpected, causing the child to feel shock that her mother has chosen to leave her. The child experiences grief and guilt over the lost mother-child bond and believing she did something that was so horrible that her mother didn't want to be associated with her any more.

The child who has lost his mother to abandonment experiences sadness and confusion when he hears his friends talk about their mothers. It is difficult for him to see other children experiencing a normal life with an intact family, according to *Bella Online*.

It is said that the umbrella symbolizes protection or loss of protection. Since rain in dreams is often interpreted as emotional outpour, an umbrella may also symbolize the need or preparedness for emotional release/tension.

Research pulled from LiveStrong's "Mother Abandonment & the Effects on the Child," Genevieve Van Wyden (2011)

Glossary of Terms

triptych

A set of three writing-tablets hinged or tied together. Also, a picture or carving (or set of three such) in three compartments side by side, the lateral ones being usually subordinate, and hinged so as to fold over the central one; chiefly used as an altar-piece.

photograph

A picture or image obtained by photography; originally, a picture made using a camera in which an image is focused on to sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment; later, a picture made by focusing an image and then storing it digitally.

picture

A visual representation, such as a painting, drawing, photograph, or other visual representation on a surface; especially such a representation as a work of art.

tattoo

To form permanent marks or designs upon the skin by puncturing it and inserting a pigment or pigments, practiced especially by many Malayo-Polynesian peoples, also by some ancient nations, and by individuals in developed countries since the 18th Century.

naked

Having no clothing on the body, stripped to the skin; unclothed, nude; formerly also wearing only an undergarment. In extended use, lacking in something, bare, inadequate, destitute, or devoid of something.

travel

Originally the same word as travail, which means to torment, distress, to suffer affliction, to labor. Later, to make a journey, to go from one place to another.

souvenir

A token of remembrance; something (usually a small article of some value bestowed as a gift) that reminds one of some person, place, or event; a keepsake.

heathen

An individual or a people who hold religious beliefs of a sort that are considered unenlightened, especially ones of a primitive or polytheistic nature; specifically not of the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim faiths.

native

A member of an indigenous ethnic group, frequently with a suggestion of inferior status, culture, etc., and hence (especially in modern usage) considered offensive. Also, a member of the indigenous ethnic group of a country or region, as distinguished from foreigners, especially European colonists.

light

That natural agent or influence which (emanating from the sun, bodies intensely heated or burning, and various other sources) evokes the functional activity of the organ of sight. It is viewed as the medium of visual perception generally. Also, the condition of space in which light is present, and in which therefore vision is possible. Opposed to darkness. In a painting: Light or illuminated surface, as represented in a picture, or considered in regard to such representation; any portion of a picture represented as lighted up.

flesh

The visible surface of the body, with reference to its color or appearance.

capture

As in “capture the likeness;” to represent, catch, or record (something elusive, as a quality) in speech, writing, etc., especially in literary and artistic contexts.

memory

An act or instance of remembrance; a representation in the memory, a recollection.

science

Knowledge acquired by study; acquaintance with or mastery of any department of learning. Also, a particular branch of knowledge or study, a recognized department of learning. Also, a craft, trade, or occupation requiring trained skill.

scabrous

Risky, bordering upon the indelicate. Now frequently used in various extended senses as nastily abusive, disgusting, repulsive.

inveterate

Settled or confirmed in habit, condition, or practice; habitual, hardened, obstinate.

magical

Resembling magic in action or effect; enchanting. Also, produced as if by magic.

chagrin

Acute vexation, annoyance, or mortification, arising from disappointment, thwarting, or failure.

indigenous

Of, relating to, or intended for the native inhabitants; ‘native’, vernacular.

artist

A person skilled in any of the fine arts; now more generally, a person who practices any creative art in which accomplished execution is informed by imagination.

intimate

Pertaining to the inmost thoughts or feelings; proceeding from, concerning, or affecting one's inmost self; closely personal.

private

Being intimate or confidential with a person; sexually intimate.

modest

With reference to statements, estimates, demands, constraints, etc., it means free from exaggeration; moderate, not excessive; maintained within reasonable bounds; not unduly exacting or imposing.

portrait

A drawing or painting of a person, often mounted and framed for display, especially one of the face or head and shoulders. Also, an engraving, photograph, etc., in a similar style.

mutual

Of something that is an attribute of each of two or more parties independently: belonging to each respectively; respective. Also of social intercourse: intimate, close (in early use applied specifically to sexual intercourse).

obtuse

Annoyingly unperceptive or slow to understand; stupid; insensitive. Also, of a remark, action, etc.: exhibiting dullness, stupidity or insensitivity; clumsy, unsubtle. Formerly also rough, unpolished.

gall

Assurance, impudence.

unmitigated

Not modified or toned down; absolute.

tawdry

Of the nature of cheap finery; showy or gaudy without real value.

provincial

Having or suggestive of the outlook, tastes, character, etc., associated with or attributed to inhabitants of a province or the provinces; especially parochial or narrow-minded; lacking in education, culture, or sophistication.

curiosities

An object of interest; any object valued as curious, rare, or strange.

myopia

Lack of imagination, foresight, or intellectual insight.

civilized

At an advanced stage of social and cultural development, usually marked by the existence of organized communities and an adherence to established conventions of behavior; highly developed; refined and sophisticated in manner or taste; educated, cultured.

frisson

An emotional thrill.

intrepid

Fearless; undaunted; daring; brave.

titillating

That titillates; pleasantly exciting, exhilarating, stimulating.

exotic

Outlandish, barbarous, strange, uncouth. Also, having the attraction of the strange or foreign, glamorous.

bilious

Choleric, wrathful, peevish, ill-tempered.

intemperate

Without temperance or moderation; going beyond due bounds; immoderate, unbridled; violent.

wholly

Completely, entirely, to the full extent (so that there is no deficiency); altogether, totally, thoroughly, quite.

Terms as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary

Timeline: A Selected History of the Camera

400 B.C.

Chinese philosopher Mo-Ti first discovers a version of the pinhole camera. He refers to his invention as the “locked treasure room,” essentially a darkened room with only a pinhole in the window shade, through which light can project images on the opposite wall.

350 B.C.

Aristotle appropriates Mo-Ti’s technology to safely observe solar eclipses.

1021

Abu Ali Al-Hasan Ibn al-Haitham, an Egyptian man, is first to document the technology of pinhole cameras in a book called *Book of Optics*. Not until the 19th Century will the “camera obscura” be combined with photo-sensitive paper to record images.



1839

Louis Jacques M. N. P. Daguerre presents his Daguerreotype process to the French Academy of Sciences, and the Daguerreotype camera is born. Early Daguerreotype cameras require exposure times as long as 30 minutes and are incredibly cumbersome. The earliest of these devices are today some of the most expensive cameras available.

1883

After toiling with wet-plate technology for years, George Eastman announces the invention of the first dry photographic film.

1888

Eastman begins selling the Kodak camera, which is designed to utilize the new Kodak film in rolls. These revolutionarily inexpensive and portable devices come loaded with 100 exposures. Once all exposures are used, the whole camera is sent back to Kodak headquarters in Rochester, N.Y., for processing and reloading.

1900

Eastman Kodak releases the Brownie, the most inexpensive and user-friendly camera to date. The slogan: “You push the button, we do the rest.” With an initial price of only \$1, the Brownie quickly becomes one of the most popular cameras of all time. Millions will be sold through the 1960s, when the Brownie is finally discontinued.



1947

The Sakura Seikei Company develops the Petal Camera in Japan. Round and no larger than a quarter, the Petal is far and away the smallest camera produced to date. It is capable of six exposures at a time. The Petal is initially produced for export only and costs just \$10 in the U.S.; it is popular among American spies and private eyes.



1948

Edwin Land patents the Polaroid camera, the first camera for which the film is also the photo print. These early instant cameras can capture and print a photograph in about 1 minute.

1978

Konica introduces the first point-and-shoot autofocus camera, the Konica C35 AF. Nicknamed the “Jasupin,” the C35 AF lays the groundwork for all the subsequent, more popular point-and-shoot technology still to come.

1981

Sony demonstrates the Sony Mavica—the world’s first electronic still camera. Though not actually a digital camera (its sensor produces an analog video feed recorded onto a mini disk), the Mavica is positioned as the pioneer of the digital era. Images can be displayed on a television monitor or sent to a color printer.

Early 1990s

Dr. Eric Fossum develops the CMOS (“camera on a chip”). It will be credited as the first step in realizing the modern camera phone.

2000

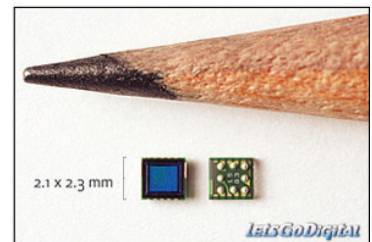
In Japan, J-Phone introduces the world’s first camera phone, Sharp Corporation’s J-SH04. Only released in Japan, it is the first cellular phone to integrate a built-in camera and color display.

2005

Canon launches the EOS 5D. It is the first consumer-priced, full-frame digital SLR (single-lens reflex) camera with a 24x36mm CMOS sensor.

2005

OmniVision releases the OV6920 CameraChip. Utilizing micro CMOS technology, it is the world’s first 1/18-inch camera sensor and is therefore the world’s smallest camera. Wireless and about as small as the tip of a graphite pencil, the camera is designed to work as part of a pill which can be swallowed and flow through your digestive system. Of course, the technology can be used for other, less noble pursuits as well.



2007

Misumi releases the MO-R803. Featuring a 1/18” color CMOS camera chip, the MO-R803 is a “snake camera” on a bendable wire, making it a useful medical tool or a slick spy device.

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