

Image Matters

CYRUS PENARROYO

University of Michigan

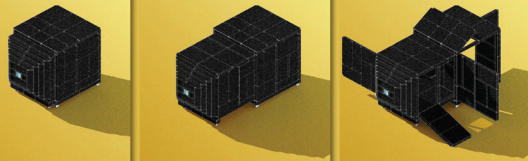
MCLAIN CLUTTER

University of Michigan

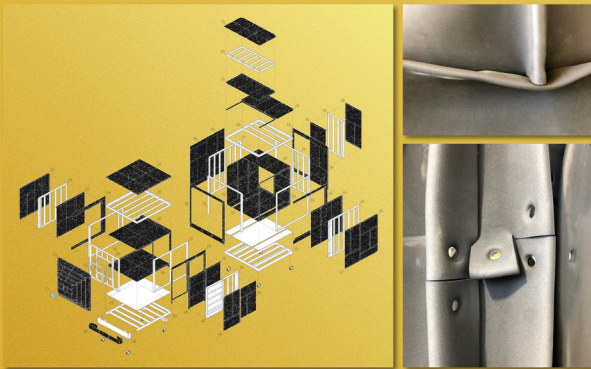
Images are everywhere in contemporary culture: illuminated through pixel, stored in silicon, and still ever-present in a range of photographic formats. Typically conceived as representations of external content, the amount of physical and virtual space images occupy demands that they be understood as objects in their own right. If images are a ubiquitous part of our material world, what is the status of the materiality of images? Image Matters explores this question through a design and making-based project consisting of two parts. The first is an occupiable sliding-box camera named the Conditions Room, a study of the spatial and material consequences of image-making. Clad in neoprene foam, particular attention was paid to the paneling details, which elevate the light and thermal requirements for image making to the level of architectural expression. Aluminum reproductions of these details are the substrates for the second part of this project, prototypes for an image-embedded wall panel system. These pieces have been photo-sensitized through the use of wet-plate collodion photographic processing, an archaic procedure entailing chemical and physical reactions that produce a direct-positive photographic image. Wet-plate prints have a texture and depth granting heightened material presence, vastly exceeding that of the typical snapshot or digital pic. The prints evince familiar photographic effects while refusing to cede their object-quality to the realm of mere appearances. Once sensitized through the wet-plate process, our panels are exposed within the Conditions Room, capturing the image of digitally manipulated material textures that we have designed and staged afront the Condition Room's aperture. The resulting prints appear strangely familiar. They are unmistakably photographic and yet sufficiently distinct from most images to interrupt habitual consumption, confusing the flat and the thick, the digital and archaic, all in order to disrupt or slow-down image circulation to secure moments of rare attention.



The Conditions Room (Closed, Extended, and Open for Exhibition)



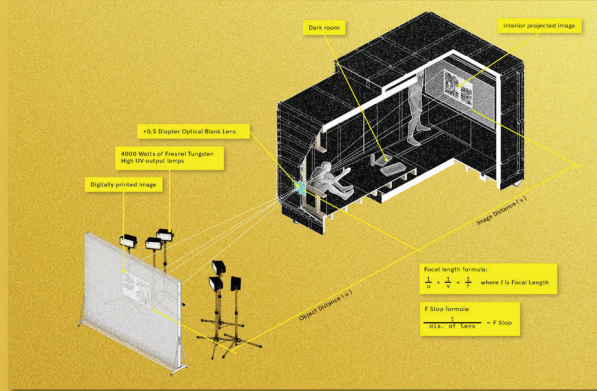
Digital Patterns vs. Physical Wet-plate Collodion Wall Panel Prototypes



The Conditions Room (Assembly Axonometric)



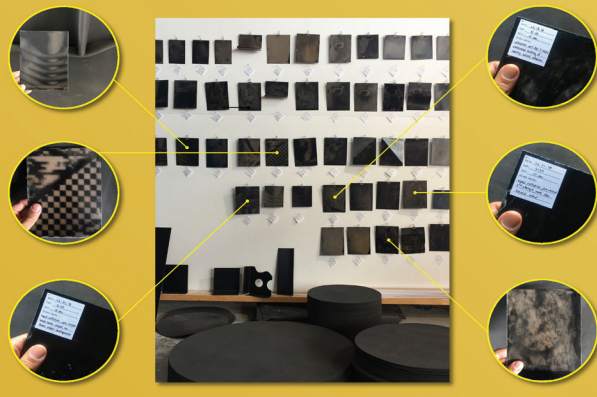
The Conditions Room (Details)



The Conditions Rooms (Optics)



The Conditions Room, as gallery



Wet-plate Collodion Studies (Calibrating Exposure Times, Development Times, and Chemical Ratios)

IMAGE MATTERS

Images are everywhere in contemporary culture: illuminated through pixel, stored in silicon, and still ever-present in a range of photographic formats. Typically conceived as representations of external content, the amount of physical and virtual space images occupy demands that they be understood as objects in their own right. If images are a ubiquitous part of our material world, what is the status of the materiality of images? Image Matters explores this question through a design and making-based project consisting of two parts. The first is an occupiable sliding-box camera named the Conditions Room, a study of the spatial and material consequences of image-making. Clad in neoprene foam, particular attention was paid to the paneling details, which elevate the light and thermal requirements for image making to the level of architectural expression. Aluminum reproductions of these details are the substrates for the second part of this project, prototypes for an image-embedded wall panel system. These pieces have been photo-sensitized through the use of wet-plate collodion photographic processing, an archaic procedure entailing chemical and physical reactions that produce a direct-positive photographic image. Wet-plate prints have a texture and depth granting heightened material presence, vastly exceeding that of the typical snapshot or digital pic. The prints evince familiar photographic effects while refusing to cede their object-quality to the realm of mere appearances. Once sensitized through the wet-plate process, our panels are exposed within the Conditions Room, capturing the image of digitally manipulated material textures that we have designed and staged front the Condition Room's aperture. The resulting prints appear strangely familiar. They are unmistakably photographic and yet sufficiently distinct from most images to interrupt habitual consumption, confusing the flat and the thick, the digital and archaic, all in order to disrupt or slow-down image circulation to secure moments of rare attention.

