

Around the gallery is a series of large-scale black and white photographs, close-up images of underwater starfishes and sea anemones. In the center of the exhibition space a small river kayak rests on two white pedestals, appearing much as it would in the environment of a museum. Over its entire length the kayak is fitted with a number of mechanical apparatuses, some holding such common domestic objects as thermoses and others seemingly for some more scientific or experimental purpose. Primary among these objects is a complex aluminum box, secured to its deck mounted carriage with a coiled lanyard. Others of these constructions are displayed elsewhere in the exhibition. One of them, weather-worn and covered in barnacles, is also displayed in a museum-like manner, inside a glass topped pedestal. Here two of the hatches are open, showing the box to be a camera of sorts. The front hatch acts as a shutter while the other provides access to a film holder that is rusted from being under the water.



Installation view of the Kayak/Darkroom and Underwater Pinhole Photographs

These are underwater pinhole* cameras, constructed so that they may be lowered under the water to gather the images of sea animals seen around the Gallery. A handle on the top of most of the cameras acts as a light-tight funnel to allow chemicals to be poured inside, with the camera serving a double function as its own developing tank. The thermoses on the bow of the kayak contain the necessary chemicals so that this process can be carried out from the cockpit as the camera is respectively lowered into and raised out of the water. On the deck, behind the cockpit, is a collapsible printer/darkroom, fabricated of aluminum and the upper half of a neoprene survival suit. The top of this collapsible printer/darkroom is the lens from a Nikonos diving camera. The refinement of this optical instrument provides a counterpoint to the cruder, pseudo-technological look of the cameras and the kayak's other mechanisms.

In this work the pinhole cameras and photographs are reminiscent of earlier photographic and pre-photographic forms and technologies that range from the soft focus effects of nineteenth century "Pictorialists" and "Naturalists" to such optical instruments as the camera obscura and the camera lucida of previous centuries. The manner in which the essentially simple, almost poetic photographs of the sea animals play against the overburdening technology of the kayak echoes ideas in earlier bodies of work in which I have explored relationships between our urban and wilderness landscapes. In bodies of work such as *The Beach* (1985), *Romantic Commodities* (1993), and *The Sled* (1986), I have brought together my interests in wilderness camping with an exploration of the manners in which we as individuals, and our urban society generally, provision ourselves for experiencing the wilderness. In the *Underwater Pinhole Photography Project* such ideas are brought together with my particular interest in sea kayaking. The impetus for this work was a simple one: to photograph the intertidal life seen from my kayak. In relation to earlier bodies of work it may be understood less as such a practical pursuit and more as an elaborate exaggeration of the attitudes which we take towards nature.



Polaroid Pinhole Camera beside tidal pools, Botanical Beach, 1999

*a camera (commonly a simple cardboard box) which admits light through a small opening rather than through the more complex configuration of lenses, shutters and (more recently) microchips, common to photographic technology