



# The Photogram

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PHOTO 1. The first Argus designed slide projector was the pre-War All-Purpose projector, Model PA. This early example used a quarter-circle lamp housing, the full round slide carrier, chrome lens ring and lacked the elevation adjustment added later. After the war internal design improvements resulted in the new PA-100.

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**THE PHOTOGRAM** welcomes contributions to its pages from both MiPHS members and non-members. To submit an article, review, occasional photo ad (MiPHS members only) or informational item for publication, write to:

Janice Schimmelman  
Department of Art and Art History  
Oakland University  
Rochester, MI 48309-4401  
e-mail: schimmel@oakland.edu

Please include your e-mail address with all correspondence. Authors and advertisers are responsible for the accuracy of their contributions to *The Photogram*. The views of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

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June 1 (July-Summer issue)  
August 1 (September-October issue)  
October 1 (November-December issue)  
January 1 (February-March issue)  
March 1 (April-May issue)

The MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an organization dedicated to advancing an understanding and appreciation of the history of photography through membership meetings, special events and publications, and through shared endeavors with other organizations and the general public. The MiPHS is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation chartered by the State of Michigan.

The MiPHS welcomes new members. Dues are \$35 per year (January 1- December 31), \$15 for students with valid ID. For information and application form, call 248.549.6026, visit us online at [www.miphs.org](http://www.miphs.org) or write to:

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello members!

Well, we have another successful Photographica show behind us. Almost everyone liked the new hall. There was only one complaint from the almost 200 dealers and attendees, which isn't too bad to say the least. Hope those that attended found a treasure. I know I did, several in fact. One of these items is a leather case that held four daguerreotypes, something I had never seen before. The price was right and I had "the fever." I was sorry to hear that this same dealer had some circus cabinet cards stolen. May the thief have mildew form in his socks. It was also nice to hear from a member of the MiPHS on-line group thanking me for the interesting emails. Sometimes it seems the info is just shot out into space and it never lands. I also want to thank the folks that helped, especially Mark O'Brien who sold all the donated equipment, brought some (serious) funds into MiPHS coffers, and returned some space in our garage to my long suffering spouse. (Four enlargers DO take up some footage!) There's a special THANKS to those members that donated these items: Kathy Erwin, Marty Magid and Phillip Wilson. I also want to thank Carl Meyering's granddaughter who helped at the admission table.

One last thing, we have an interesting meeting coming up, probably in late February or early March, at the William L. Clements Library in Ann Arbor, where Len Walle will talk about historical astronomy through photography.

Stay safe folks,

— CINDY MOTZENBECKER, PRES.

## PHOTO-HISTORY CALENDAR

- Sept 2-Jan 3: Exhibition - *Photography: The First 100 Years*, Detroit Institute of Arts, [www.dia.org](http://www.dia.org)  
Nov 8: Postcard & Paper Show, Knights of Columbus Hall, Clawson, MI, [www.MidwestPostcards.net](http://www.MidwestPostcards.net)  
Nov 8: Photograph Fair, Park Inn Hotel, Bloomsbury (London, UK), [www.photofair.co.uk](http://www.photofair.co.uk)  
Nov 12-15: Daguerreian Society Symposium, Crowne Plaza, Philadelphia, PA, [www.daguerre.org](http://www.daguerre.org)  
Nov 22: Detroit Photorama Camera Show & Sale, Novi, MI, see [www.photorama.com](http://www.photorama.com) for this and other shows in Midwest  
Nov 22: Toronto International Camera Show, Thornhill Community Centre, Thornhill ON, [suewootton@hotmail.com](mailto:suewootton@hotmail.com)

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

Please consider writing an article or essay for the next volume of *The Photogram* (2010-11). It can be personal (on your collection), philosophical (the future of vintage photography), practical (cataloguing and conservation), technical (making a silver gelatine print) or historical (history of the paper negative). Since MiPHS is strongly visual, please include high resolution (300-400dpi) digital images to illustrate your essay. If you have a question, an idea for an article, or one to submit, please contact me at [schimmel@oakland.edu](mailto:schimmel@oakland.edu).

— JAN SCHIMMELMAN, EDITOR

The "Light of all Nations": The little that was seen of the sun has already disappeared within the last few days. An alarming rumour prevails that he has been totally "used up" by the Daguerreotypes.

— *Punch Magazine* 2 (London, 1846): 211



PHOTO 2. In 1948 the PA design was modified to introduce taller, more stylized rectangular-looking lamp housings. Represented here by the Model PA-200, this change was the work of Frederick W. Hertzler of Harley Earl Associates.

# The Design and Marketing of Argus Slide Projectors

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BY ROBERT E. KELLY

Argus was arguably as much a projector company as it was a camera company. It marketed its first slide projector the same year the Argus A became the first widely-available 35mm camera. Twenty-five years later, in the early 1960s, with camera production largely moving overseas Argus constructed a new plant for slide and movie projectors carrying on the firm's "Made in America" tradition.

Fundamental marketing principles, likely created by Sales Manager Homer Hilton in the early 1940s, guided Argus throughout the life of its slide projector products. First, was to always understand the projector as a focus for family-oriented events. Second, offer choices at all price points in the market, emphasizing "best product for the money" appeal. Third, bundle offerings into kits or outfits to increase sales of high-profit accessories. Fourth, and most important, respond to consumers changing expectations. Consistent application and variations of these principles resulted in very successful slide projector sales.

Other manufacturers essentially designed and/or built the first three Argus slide projectors. However, in the early 1940s Argus was creating its own projector to be produced in Ann Arbor and it featured a watershed design. Ed Nimke, who supervised production of this projector (named the All-Purpose projector, or Model PA), credits much of the conceptual work to Argus employee Bill Carr. Research indicates that Argus engineer Gustave Fassin filed the ornamental design and slide carrier patents. The PA projector introduced three key design components: the base assembly frame, the quarter circle lamp house cover at the back of the projector, and a lens-mounting bracket at the front. Also incorporated into the design was a new rotating slide carrier. These same basic components can be seen in every Argus projector into the early 1950s.

PHOTO 1 (See *The Photogram* cover.)

A new-look projector followed with the PA-200 in 1948 using the same basic frame as the PA and incorporating a taller, more rectangular-looking lamp housing and a dark gray color. This design change was the work of Frederick W. Hertzler of Harley Earl Associates. Later variations on his design and the addition of colors to the projector's body allowed his work to influence the slide projector line for many years.

PHOTO 2

"Blows Cool, Shows Cool!" was the marketing ad tag for the next slide projectors that incorporated the "Blower Base Case." With this design, when the top of the case was lifted off, the projector remained sitting on the bottom of the case for use. The bottom portion was called the "blower base" and included a cooling fan and storage space for cords and accessories. Even by adding the new base, Argus projectors continued to be small and portable for easy family use in the home.



PHOTO 3: An example of the "Blower Base Case" is shown here with the PBB-300 from 1953. A cooling fan in the base allowed bulb wattage to increase, providing brighter photos on the screen. Projector housing colors also became an element of the design starting in the late 1940s.

PHOTO 3

Argus had a well-thought-out sales presentation which it encouraged retailers to use. Based on a review of Argus sales literature dating from this era, a "Quick Closers" sale approach would go something like this: The salesman would start off by asking "What kind of projector do you use?" thus quickly identifying a prospect. Next, he would use a tie-in with a widely-recognized product by saying something like, "Did you know that Argus uses Pyrex to protect your valuable slides from the heat of the bulb?" The mention of a familiar high-tech application was designed to soften sales resistance by associating Argus with a well-known beneficial product "that your wife uses all the time." With the projector on and the lamp lit to show how bright the image was, the salesman would then lift the slide out of the holder and place it on his cheek, to demonstrate how cool it was, pointing out that perhaps the fan was so quiet the customer may not have even noticed it. The problem of needing to rearrange furniture was overcome by pointing out the 4-inch lens did not require this in a normal size living room. Now the "hook" closer would be tried: "Would you like to take it home and use it with your slides?" If the customer continued to resist, the salesman would go on with providing more information about the outfit being complete and point out there was nothing more to buy. By this time the sale likely had been made. If not, the final closer focused on ego and went like this: "Just think how impressed your friends and neighbors will be when your slides show 35 percent brighter than theirs."

In the mid-1950s Argus made an exterior design change for their entire projector line responding to new design looks consumers were seeking. They eliminated the three distinctly-separate projector components of the 1940s and moved to a new look with smooth exterior lines and more modular components, thus improving the efficiency of the assembly process. Also, the cooling fan was integrated into the projector housing, allowing versions of the projector to be introduced without the bulky blower base that had become standard.



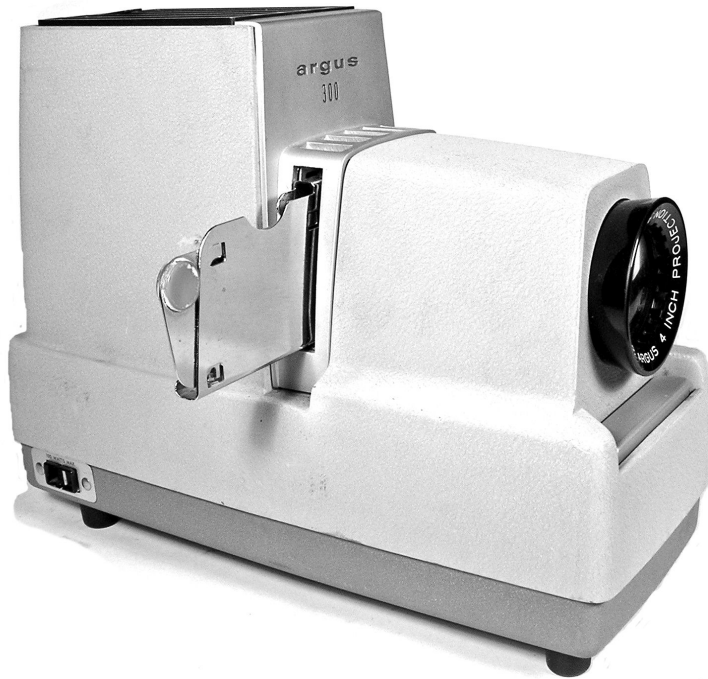


PHOTO 4: During the mid-1950s an exterior design change was implemented for all Argus projectors. As seen here in the 300 Model III, the past individual elements of the housing were integrated into a unit with smooth exterior lines. Versions with slide trays and stack loaders also appeared.

#### PHOTO 4

With quality becoming a much more important concern for consumers in the mid-1950s, Argus used in-home trials by its own employees to check the functionality of new projectors. In addition, the concepts of “preservation” and “leisure time” became an important part of Argus’ marketing approach in the comfortable mid-1950s. For example, in a 1956 *Popular Photography* campaign for a new projector, Argus stated, “Treasured color slides that preserve precious memories for you deserve to be treated with extraordinary care. And that’s the kind they get from the new Argus Automatic” They also realized consumers were looking for projectors with increasingly brilliant pictures on the screen. Responding, Argus announced there would be more brilliant light in the soon-to-be-introduced new Argus 500-watt Model V. The new projector provided more than twice as much light as the previous 300-watt projectors.

Starting with the twin projectors, Models 38 and 58, in the late 1950s and continuing with all the following 500-series projectors, a more box-shaped design took over. The projectors’ design moved away from smooth flowing lines and curves to what may best be described as a “building block” look. Except for the round lens, the entire projector consisted of straight lines, 90-degree angles and block shapes. This approach seems to have been due to a change in industrial design philosophy that occurred when Argus and Sylvania merged in 1957.

#### PHOTO 5

In 1959 Sylvania merged with General Telephone, forming General Telephone and Equipment (GT&E). This merger later resulted in a decision to sell the Argus Division of Sylvania. However, management recognized the potential for slide projector sales and with movie projectors beginning production in Ann Arbor the need to make an investment in efficiency was clear. Work continued on the design of a modern new projector plant focused on maintaining a competitive advantage over foreign manufacturers. Construction of the new plant started on October 11, 1960 in the right-to-work environment of Columbia, South Carolina.

The last major design change for Argus slide projectors took place in 1961, the same year that Kodak released its first Carousel projector. Appearing like a small piece of luggage this style was essentially a rectangular box shape with fold-down or sliding doors covering the front and back panel. Retailers were very enthusiastic about the new unconditional guarantee policy that impressed their customers, reinforcing an age-old rule for success in retail sales: “Learn to love what your customer loves.”

#### PHOTO 6

“Effective April 29, 1962 Mansfield Will Acquire Argus” was the lead story in the *Photo Trade News* as the sale was announced by Mansfield president, Herbert R. Leopold, Sylvania president Gene K. Beare and Argus Cameras president J. Jackson Riggs. This event signaled the beginning of the end for the heritage Argus Company from Ann Arbor. Mansfield management continued the luggage-style projector line and made plans to leverage joint marketing of Argus and Mansfield-branded projectors. The well-received luggage style of the early 1960s was refined in 1968 with the introduction of the sleek briefcase-sized 900 Roundabout family, the last Argus manufactured slide projectors.



PHOTO 5: A "building block" look was implemented in the late 1950s. This Model 58, from 1958, represents a design of straight lines, 90 degree angles and block shapes with only the lens remaining round.



PHOTO 6: Like small portable luggage may be the best description for the early 1960s Argus projectors. With a handle on one end and doors that opened front and back portability with quick set-up was emphasized in advertising.



PHOTO 7: Sleek briefcase size projectors were the last in the Argus designed line. The Roundabout family of projectors also incorporated a round slide tray for the first time. After the mid-1970s Argus projectors were manufactured by others, such as GAF in Portland, Oregon.

#### PHOTO 7

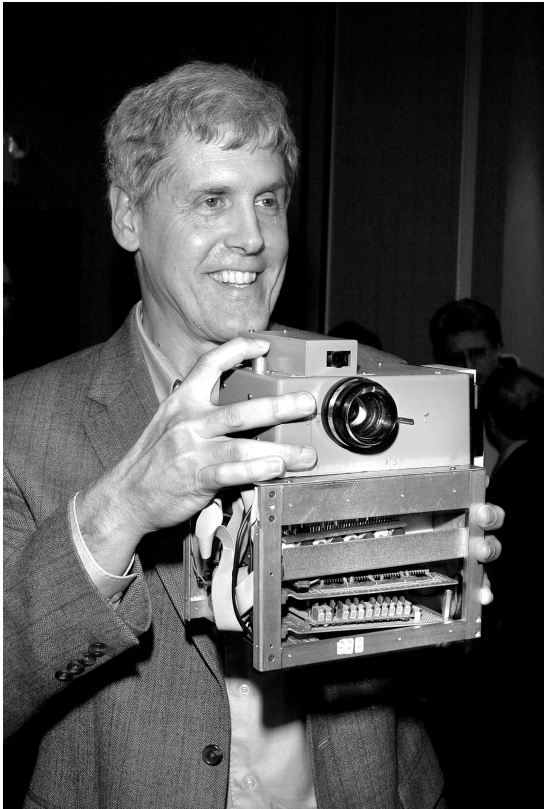
There was a gap in slide projectors marketing, starting in the mid-1970s when the Roundabout line was discontinued. While old stock was sold off, design and production of new models had ended. Other Argus products were now fully imported and the company no longer manufactured items as major internal business transitions occurred. Unexpectedly, in the late-summer of 1978 Argus announced it was reentering the slide projector market with machines built by GAF. This restart was an attempt to leverage the respected Argus brand name with re-branded products acquired in other business transactions. Not surprisingly, a family of slide projectors was offered and marketing focused on the currently identified consumer expectations. However, this last gasp effort proved unsuccessful and it ended the Argus slide projector line after 42 years.

Starting with solid marketing principles, using partners to get established, creating an innovative initial design and keeping a consumer focus served Argus well in its efforts to succeed in the slide projector business. In the 1950s and early 1960s sales were expanding and their comfortable “Made in America” process was providing successful products and taking care of the “Argus Family” of employees and dealers.

In the end competition was turning world-wide, the market place changed at an ever-increasing pace and price discounting, so attractive to consumers, was not endorsed by Argus. Their traditional slow paced design and manufacturing, with high mark-ups and a family style distribution system was failing. Like so many American firms, Argus ultimately proved itself unable to make the shift from a successful “Made in America” institution to an efficient, rapidly responding, and world-economy business.

#### SELECTED REFERENCES:

1. Argus, Inc. documents used for this article provided a wealth of information. Argus Annual Reports, Dealer Price Lists and advertising were used to analyze business trends and trace the introduction of new models. The Argus News, Argus Eyes and Employee Meeting Notes from August 1961 also proved valuable. All of these documents are on file at the Argus Museum in Ann Arbor.
2. Interviews with past Argus employees are a key source for information. Ed Nimke was interviewed in 1988, at an Argus reunion, where his memories of slide projector production were captured. The Nimke interview transcript is on file at the Argus Museum. Richard Kinsey, past Argus national repair manager discussed the last series of GAF slide projectors.
3. Argus slide projectors from the collections of several Argus Collectors Group members were used for analysis of modification and improvements.
4. Publications like *Popular Photography*, *Camera 35*, and *U.S. Camera*, as well as wholesale photography catalogs, were used as reference.
5. Henry J. Gambino assisted in several ways through correspondence and sharing materials when he was preparing his 2005 book titled, *Argomania*. His presentations in 2002 titled, “Argus Product Review” and “Argus Advertising” in 2006 were a great assistance.



Steven Sasson, electrical engineer at Eastman Kodak and co-inventor of the digital camera. Here he holds the prototype of the digital camera. The first image was made with this camera in December 1975.

— Robert Lansdale, photo.

## PHOTOHISTORY XIV AT GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

BY CINDY MOTZENBECKER

PhotoHistory XIV at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, was again a wonderful symposium where all types of photography buffs gathered to enjoy its history. MiPHS was well represented in speakers and attendees. Yuki Kawaii and Les Newcomer spoke on their loves, Nikon and Graflex respectively.

I won't go into the list of members who attended as there were LOTS! As for myself, I went with three other folks and a potential new member I met through the Vanderburgs at the Camera Connections Second Sunday Show ([www.cameraconnectiononline.com](http://www.cameraconnectiononline.com)). Sam T'ang, a working photographer, was referred to me as he had just purchased a Century 9A portrait camera, including stand, from Craig's list. My comment was: "Is it like having a new roommate?" Referring to its large size. His response was he had a 200 square foot studio! He said he couldn't find much information about it on the internet. I then told him about the symposium and he decided to come along!

So five of us set out driving to Rochester early enough to visit a wonderful antique mall outside of town. We even arrived in time to have some hor d'oeuvres before we went out to dinner. The next morning the lectures started at George Eastman House at 8:00am. We REALLY enjoyed the talk on bicycle history enough to consider the speaker for our annual MiPHS dinner. He had some WONDERFUL bicycle images and his passion for the subject was quite apparent. Matt Isenburg also spoke in his usual dynamic manner about "The Many Faces of Daguerre." The afternoon was set up in two sessions where one had to choose which one to go to. It was tough as I wanted to absorb everything. There was a flurry of activity and was over way too fast. The dinner speaker was Steve Sasson, the co-inventor of the digital camera. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from RIT. He had to sit down to regain his composure before he could commence his talk. It was a great discourse.

The next morning was the Photographica Trade Show and Sale. A friend was setting up and asked me to be his assistant so I was able to watch the commotion of those setting up and the dealers buying from one another. I stayed out of the fray for the most part as I didn't want to get caught up with the "buying fever" that was going on. (I did pretty well sitting on my wallet and mostly bought books all weekend.) Early admission was at 9:00am and everyone else was allowed in at 10:00am. Sam was lucky enough to hook up with Rob McElroy, who copied a Century Camera catalog for him, but alas, his camera wasn't listed. It seemed to skip over it. So if there's anyone out there that knows, please let me know so I can forward this information to him.

Our caravan then gathered around 1:00pm so we could start the 5½ hour drive home. We were in a semi rush as we wanted to stop at a Canadian antique mall in Cambridge. Relying upon my GPS unit, it took us on some lovely back roads where we could see some of the rolling Ontario landscape and towns. We did find a booth with images in it, but the dealer obviously knew the difference between a daguerreotype and an ambrotype, and how to price them. I only bought a couple of cabinet cards. The selections were ALL from the States too. What's up with that? Anyway, we arrived safe and sound back in the Detroit area around 9:00pm with only one anxiety along the way when I couldn't find my "on the floor" passport at the Sarnia-Port Huron border crossing. I pulled over to the side to look and was then scolded by the guard as I had "drawn lots of attention" when I did that. Scary. As the rule says: "Don't mess with Mother Nature and Customs"! I should have known better!