

HOME NEWS

The Turin Machine

A 'Shroud' Peep-Show for Bristol

Perhaps the one item of light relief amongst all the recent events was a special 'live' demonstration of how the Shroud may have been created photographically, as performed by Warwick University art teacher Caroline Rye at Bristol's Arnolfini Gallery the weekend of 7 December of last year. Inspired by the Picknett-Prince book, Rye designed her own 'Turin Machine' in the form of 'the largest pinhole camera in the world', a 30 ft x 11ft wood and canvas box. In one third of this she stood naked, covered in white stage paint, and brilliantly illuminated by 4000 watt lamps, while the other two thirds were kept pitch dark, the only light passing through this from a pinhole which projected her image upside down onto a sheet painted with photographic emulsion.

If after six hours of Rye standing in this way this cloth was removed to a darkroom and sprayed with developer, there resulted, in Rye's words 'suddenly, miraculously the shape of the body'. Visitors to Bristol's Arnolfini were invited into the darkness 'peep show' style to watch this process in operation, and there proved no shortage of volunteers to check this out (in the best interests of science, of course!), on the BSTS's behalf. General Secretary Dr. Michael Clift drove down specially from Gloucester and reported:

I found a rather curious set-up. The 'camera' is itself in a darkened room and one needs to be dark adapted before making out the single guardian labelled 'curator'. He then lets the observers in one at a time. I found it extremely difficult to see anything and came out disappointed. The next chap was allowed in and I rested in the dark anteroom hoping to improve my night vision. After a very long time the other chap came out and I went in again. This time I was able to make out a very, very faint column of light. This was the so-called image. Had I not been told I would not have detected that it was a human figure upside down. The curator confirmed that the image was forming on a length of linen impregnated with a light-sensitive substance.

I asked him how it was impregnated and he said it was a liquid brushed on the surface. I asked him to repeat this '*Brushed* on?' Apparently, yes. Three observations arise: (i) There are no brush strokes on the Shroud of Turin; (ii) If the woman is behind the linen then the image is forming on the surface away from the observer and we are seeing it through the cloth - but the image on the Shroud is *entirely* superficial; (iii) The image as shown on the Arnolfini explanatory leaflet has sharp edges, quite unlike the Shroud image.

Thankfully this Editor's congenital night-blindness precluded any excited dash from Australia. In the words of a Czech-born former neighbour in Bristol, who with her husband Graham was one of the earliest to attend:

Did see b... all. Was told to try again and longer, and saw, after a while, some sort of shimmering outline of a female body. That was it! Graham seems to have been luckier. Apparently she was moving for him. Mind boggles! What a lot of cobblers!