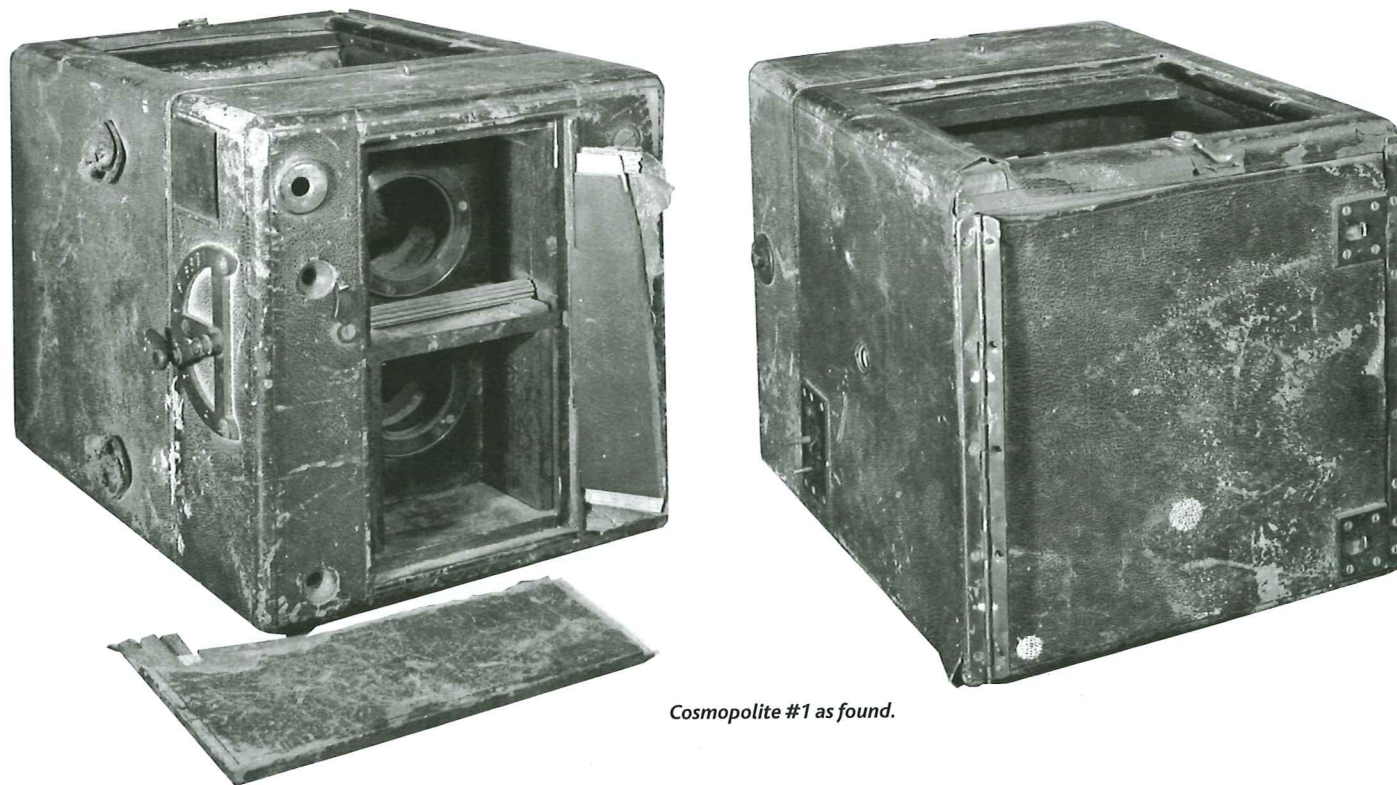


London Stereoscopic Company's Twin Artists Reflex and the Français Cosmopolite

By Jos Erdkamp

The article about the London Stereoscopic Co's Twin Artists camera (PW 127) reminded me of a camera I once had: a Cosmopolite with serial number 1!



Cosmopolite #1 as found.

IN 1989 I HAD organized a exhibition in the museum of a local history group to commemorate the 150th anniversary of photography. One day I went to the museum where the administrator told me someone had left a plastic bag with a mouldy old Brownie, all in pieces and not worth anything.

I peeked in the bag and at once I knew there was something special in it. I took out the wreck of a bulky box camera. The leather was very dirty and worn, parts were missing, some wood joints had separated, the front door was broken. I recognized that it was a nineteenth century twin

lens reflex, but both lenses were missing.

The camera came from the town of Roermond in the south of the Netherlands. If I remember well it was found on an attic in the Willem II Singel, one of the best streets in Roermond around the turn of the century (1900), where the notables lived. How it came there I do not know.

I took my treasure home and could identify it quickly as a Français Cosmopolite. Inside was stamped the serial number 1. Alas was the camera in a lamentable state. The top

door, ground glass, lenses, handle and three screws on front were missing. Other parts were there, but not attached. The shutter didn't work. I decided to have it restored and asked William Nitkin if he would do it. So the camera went to Massachusetts where Mr. Nitkin did a truly wonderful job. He also replaced the lenses with a pair of stereo lenses from the same period as the Cosmopolite.

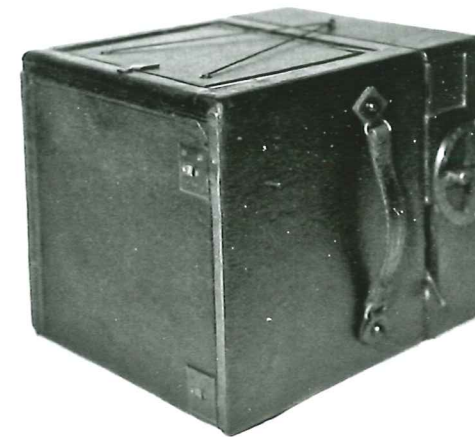
Their focal length was not quite correct, but the lenses made the camera look much better. The wreck had become a nice display piece.

I regret to say that I sold the camera

in the early nineties at an auction. It did not fit in my collection. Now I wish I had kept it.

There are some differences with the camera in Photographica World 2009/1. My camera had a little reflex finder and a strap on the right hand side (seen from the photographer). The front part of the box was attached by four big screws, not with a hook. Also the construction of the back is different. My camera had a hinge. A flat spring was attached inside the front door, but I believe that the camera in PW also had such a spring. I think you still can still see two screw holes. About the shutter I only can remember that it was a rotating disc with a long coil spring, but I do not know if its construction was similar to the one in PW.

I'm sorry that I have sold the camera, but I am glad that I have played a part in the conservation of this historical instrument and saved it from further disintegration.



Left and right: The Cosmopolite after restoration.



The Twin Artist's from the front, look out for the differences noted in the text.



A note from the Editor

As the author of the original article in PW 127 I was delighted to get this news. As Jos says, there are some differences between the two cameras. Mine has the carrying handle on the user's left, the Cosmopolite has it on the right. I can't see why, and don't think it would make much difference.

The attachment of the front half to the rear has obviously had some attention, and the original Cosmopolite screws have been replaced in my (presumably later) camera by a quick-release system of hooks. Why? When it comes to the back door, it's plain that mine must once have had a hinge just like the Cosmopolite.

My back door has the screw-holes for a hinge, in the correct places. A hinge would make functional sense too, as at present the door doesn't hold properly in place. Inside my back door are four screw-holes for a nameplate, and two more which could easily have held a spring, to press the plate-holder down.

I also see that the Cosmopolite has a spring to pop open the front door, and I have the screw-holes for that one too, but no spring. In terms of original equipment, though, the biggest difference is the little reflex finder in the Cosmopolite, to allow the camera to be used on its side. The Twin Artist's doesn't have that, and it would be useful if it did.