

GHOST RANCH
Shooting B&W With Low-Tech Cameras
May 3-9, 2026
Kent Bowser and Margs Musson

May can have variable weather at Ghost Ranch so check the Abiquiu, New Mexico forecast just before you pack. The month is usually characterized by warm afternoons and cool evenings. Bring a rain jacket or poncho for potential showers. Hats with a large brims and chin straps will help protect you from the sun. Sunglasses will help protect you from the strong UV at our high altitudes and are necessary for transitioning from the darkroom into sunlight. Don't forget sunscreen, skin lotion (low humidity and darkroom chemicals), a bandana, and it's possible that insect repellent will come in handy. A sturdy pair of shoes or light hiking boots that are broken in will make your hikes more pleasant and keep the cactus spines at bay. Head lamps or flashlights are useful for walking around the ranch at night. Water bottles that attach to the outside of your camera bag round out these needs.

Bring your Holga or Diana camera (or knockoffs). These are 120 film cameras. Both the Holga and Diana are still available online, but you might want to check first with your local used stores such as the Salvation Army or Savers to find an inexpensive one. There are also some 35mm plastic, low-tech cameras. Search the internet to find these. If you have a pinhole camera or two, bring them with you. Pinhole cameras you may find on the "net" range from inexpensive cardboard ones to quite expensive ones that are beautifully designed. We will make some pinhole cameras, so don't worry about having to bring one, but I do recommend looking them up on the internet. The darkroom has the capability of developing 4x5 film, but I prefer using paper negatives for 4x5 and larger sizes.

Purchase or go the library for these two important sources: Michelle Bates' Plastic Cameras, toying with Creativity (2nd ed.), and Eric Renner's Pinhole Photography, From Historic Technique to Digital Application (4th ed.). An optional book that may interest you is Chris Keeney's Pinhole Cameras, a Do-It-Yourself Guide, which could provide one with years of entertainment and visual exploration.

Each of you needs to bring Kodak T-Max 400 film – call me to discuss the quantity. Tripods are often used for pinhole cameras, while Diana and Holga cameras are most often hand held. So, bring your tripod, as well as a table top tripod if you have one. If your camera can take cable releases, bring one or two. For tape (light leaks on these cameras), bring Gaffer tape or Scotch 235 – we'll have some Gaffer tape available. You will be provided with fiber-based and RC paper, chemicals and negative sleeves.

This class is fun and we will create amusing and strange imagery. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone and having a wild time. Please do not hesitate to call with questions.

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Tentative Schedule (May change to work with other scheduling needs/wants)

Sun	Morning	5/3	Arrival, meeting after dinner
	Afternoon		
	Evening		
Mon	Morning	5/4	Overview, load and shoot plastic and pinhole cameras
	Afternoon		Shoot and develop film
	Evening		Printing demo, printing
Tue	Morning	5/5	Printing
	Afternoon		Shoot and develop
	Evening		Review work, lecture on range of low-tech cameras
Wed	Morning	5/6	Shoot -- try other cameras, build cameras
	Afternoon		Shoot, develop film
	Evening		Print
Thu	Morning	5/7	Review work, critique
	Afternoon		Print
	Evening		Toning lecture, toning
Fri	Morning	5/8	Edit and show prep
	Afternoon		Hang Show
	Evening		Show, clean darkroom
Sat	Morning	5/9	Departure