"Smith" Soft focus Lenses
Semi-Achromat-
Visual Quality
Synthetics
Six Series

Foreword

DURING the "Great Crisis" this Department devoted 100% of time to War Activities. Grateful for the privilege and honor we are now able to meet the demands and to anticipate the needs of our customers, who shared the sacrifice. Many changes in production, material and design have required considerable time before it was possible to announce our preparedness to resume. Within this catalogue will be found the old favorites "Smiths," and disclose the new series christened by Floyd Vail of New York City, the "SYNTHETIC LENS." The original series was suggested by Holland F. Day, Boston, the second and third by Alvin Langdon Coburn, London, England, the fourth by J. Wallace Gillies, New York City, and our latest success by J. W. Newton, Columbus, Ohio.

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY

Two Stores:

292–294 Boylston Street 13 Bromfield Street

BOSTON 17, MASS., U. S. A.

1920.

The "Smith" Lens

The sale of these lenses has never been large, as no great effort has ever been made to exploit them. Believing as we did, and still do, that only a very small proportion of photographers are artists, we realized the fallacy of putting into average hands a lens which required such careful handling, the planes of what seemed to be the focus were so many and it seemed to us hard to decide just when the lens was in focus, that we realized that to use Soft Focus Lenses and get results, the user must have a more artistic eye than we or the majority of us who take pictures possess.

The following tribute to the P. & S. Semi-Achromatic Lenses by Alvin Langdon Coburn, of 9 Lower Mall, Hammersmith, London, England, is published herewith because Mr. Coburn is undoubtedly one of the leaders of the so-called Impressionist School of Photographers.

The Question of Diffusion

A Tribute to the P. & S. Semi-Achromatic Lenses
By Alvin Langdon Coburn

"When the history of artistic photography comes to be written, the question of diffusion will assume its real importance, and the 'Smith' Lens will receive the recognition it so fully deserves, for one of the things that makes photography worth while as a means of personal expression, is lens quality. Back in the dark ages, it seems to me I gave some considerable thought to this question of diffusion. I used a battery of various size pin-holes, which were excellent, but for their excessive slowness. I enlarged through bolting silk, and printed from the reversed negative, but all these were makeshift methods at best. I well remember hailing with joy the news imparted to me by F. Holland

Day, that in Boston, Mass., U. S. A. (my native town), there was an optician by the name of Smith who had a theory, and was working on this very problem of diffusion, and was making lenses for photographic purposes only for the pleasure it gave him to produce something different than others made, and I am the proud possessor of one of the earliest he turned out. After making half a dozen exposures with this lens, I saw that it was exactly what I desired. It was a single combination lens, fifteen inches in focus, that gave a quality of image that I had dreamed of, but never believed that I would be able to get. To any one using a lens of this type for the first time, after using a fully corrected anastigmat, he will find much difficulty in deciding what is the exact focus. There will seem to be a belt of focus, more than an actual plane of definite sharpness, and such is really the case, for the Semi-Achromatic Lens has a great depth of apparent focus, but none actual. You have no more of what Bernard Shaw calls one of 'the infuriating academicisms of photography,' one plane of the picture sharp and all the others wooly and unnatural, a thing that no self-respecting human eye would ever see. The Semi-Achromatic here seems, in some extraordinary way, to break up this plane of sharpness and distribute it over the entire depth of the image. It gives to the distance in landscapes the shimmering quality of sunlight seen through a summer mist.

I now have about a dozen P. & S. Semi-Achromatic Lenses of various focal lengths, most of which have been especially made for me. When I am in Boston, I always make my way to 288 Boylston Street to enjoy a chat with a tall, kindly man who thinks in glass. I tell him my troubles and my needs, and not long afterward, I receive a package which, after burrowing through the excelsior packing, gives up a small glistening object. This is the lens — nothing

like it has been made before — nothing just like it is apt to be made again, for Mr. Smith is a revolutionary in photographic optics, and he gets lots of fun out of life. He batters down conventions and breaks all the rules of modern optics, but his 'chunks of glass' as he calls them, will give the most wonderful results. It is difficult for me to imagine what modern photography would be without the Semi-Achromatic Lenses, when you consider that F. Holland Day, Baron de Meyer, Stieglitz, White, Steichen, Kuehn, Seeley, Mrs. Kasebier, are only a few of the workers who use it, practically to the exclusion of other lenses.

If you compare the Semi-Achromatic quality, with out-of-focus results, you will at once see the difference. With the S. A. Lens you get modeling, roundness, suggestive of sculpture, atmosphere and texture. With the out-of-focus objective, you get — well, if you are a photographer, you probably are sadly aware of what you get, for even the best of us get the plate in the holder wrong side out at times, or the camera gets a slight jar during the exposure.

It seems to me that each of the S. A. Lenses has some charm of its own. They have individuality. You may not, and probably will not find out their full possibilities for some time. I had one lens in my possession for over two years before I discovered that it was the best one I owned.

Just a few words of practical advice in regard to the use of these lenses. Always fully expose, as you then get the best work out of your lens. Under-exposure (bad in any case) plays you queer pranks when the S. A. Lens is used. Never stop down to any great extent, as in so doing you lose much of the special quality of the lens. When you first get a P. & S. S. A. Lens, it is a good plan to take a nice, quiet, still-life subject, and practice focusing it on a large, light-colored object that you can readily see. It might be interesting, also, to slip your ordinary lens on the camera, and

make two comparative exposures. This kind of practice teaches you more than any amount of talk. I must warn you, however, of a danger if you make the comparative exposures that I have just referred to — you will probably throw the ordinary lens away. Don't do it. It is a salable commodity."

We publish Mr. Coburn's tribute to the S. A. Lens in the spirit, rather than in the letter in which it is written. It comes to few in photography to display and practice the infinite patience and feeling with which Mr. Coburn works, and the fact that the "Smith" Lens, as he insists on calling our product, was the Moses that led him to the Promised Land of his Art, places the lens so far above its fellows, in his estimation, that you may be led to expect more than the lens will really do when you first try it.

By J. W. Newton, Columbus, Ohio.
Synthetic No. 2. 3 x Ray-Filter, evening, 1/10th sec.

The following is contributed by J. Wallace Gillies, of 14 West 40th St., New York City.

The Smith Semi-Achromatic Lens won such wide favor that until within recent years, it was the "soft focus" lens most generally used by pictorial photographers here and abroad. While designed to work at an aperture of f:6, the Semi-Achromatic was usually employed at f:11 or, in exceptional cases, at f:8. In practice, however, the lens was so variable a factor that the worker could hardly count on just what effects he could get with it, and, of course, it could rarely be used with a reflex camera, this demanding an effective aperture of about f:6. To meet these and similar requirements, involving the standardization of the lens at its largest efficiency in speed and performance, Pinkham & Smith Company produced a new and better lens of the "soft focus" type.

It was decided that a firmer quality of definition, combining softness without wiriness, was desirable; that the lens should bring the chemical and visual images closer together, and have a flatter field than the earlier Smith lens. The instrument embodying these desirable qualities was finally introduced as the Smith Visual Quality Lens.

The Visual Quality lens was made in doublet form, this permitting of its better correction and the use of larger apertures, viz.: f:5.6 and f:6.5, without flare or halo. Thus the shortcomings of the earlier lens were eliminated, a wider angle of field assured, which permitted its use in motion picture work, and greater rapidity for reflex camera use.

This brings us to the present time and the Smith Synthetic Lens, a single lens with all the capacity of its two predeces-

sors and added good qualities all its own. I had the pleasure of receiving one of the first of these lenses, and my experience with it convinces me that it is the best "soft focus" lens thus far introduced.

The Synthetic lens was designed to work at f:5 and actually does work at that aperture. The lens sent me, however, had an aperture of f:4:—"Just to see if it would work, and if not you can stop it down," wrote Mr. Wolfe. Not to be outdone in daring, I determined to make it work at this large aperture of f:4. In this I was completely successful; the negatives had all the diffusion desirable, with beautiful quality and firmness of drawing, and the definition did not sharpen excessively on stopping down. Also it had the big advantage that it did not give halo unless very carelessly handled. To sum up, we have in the Synthetic lens all the qualities of the earlier series, with the many advantages of the single lens compared with those of the doublet or more complex construction; a working aperture of f:5, the most desirable diffusion effects variable at will, a flat field, and even diffusion all over the field. It is well adapted for reflex camera work, will make "snaps" at almost dusk, and is ideal for pictorial portraiture indoors or short exposures anywhere.

In the use of the Smith Synthetic Lens two points are of vital importance. First as to definition and focusing. Since at no point of focus may a sharp image be obtained with it, it is evident that a slight deviation from the point of critical focus will hardly be noticeable. Nevertheless, in the case of the Synthetic lens in particular and "soft focus" lenses in general, there is a point in the belt of focus (corresponding to the field of depth of definition in other lenses), at which the most desirable degree of diffusion is obtained. In the case of the Synthetic lens, which because of its large aperture has a limited depth of definition, the focusing is

more sensitive, and the most desirable diffusion effects are obtained when the lens is set at the point nearest the plate —within the belt of focus.

All "soft focus" lenses have hitherto had excessive flare or "run around" when used at the larger diaphragms. The amount of run around depended upon the contrasts in the subject, and with the earlier lenses was in part corrected or modified by stopping the lens down, which had the disadvantage of giving sharper definition—perhaps undesirable. In the design and construction of the Synthetic Lens, every effort has been made to correct this, so that the degree of diffusion as well as the amount of halo or run around shall, as far as possible, be under the control of the photographer.

Coming now to the second important point in the use of "soft focus" lenses, this concerns the development of the plate. Many workers have been confused and discouraged by the general haze or veil which creeps over the plate during its development, quite unlike the clear, clean progress of the same plate when made with the ordinary corrected lens. Do not let this haze confuse you, but carry on development until good density is obtained. The plate will clear satisfactorily afterwards. A little more bromide in the developer will help a lot. I am presupposing, of course, the use of double coated plates and tray development. These plates are particularly adapted to "soft focus" work because of the latitude they permit in exposure, by reason of the fast orthochromatic emulsion being coated over a slow contrast emulsion. Similarly, tray development is more suitable for this sort of work by reason of the larger control it offers the photographer, as compared with the tank or automatic method.

JOHN WALLACE GILLIES.

The Original "Smith" Lens

Series I f:6

Single Combination Semi-Achromatic Lenses.
Suggested by Mr. Holland Day of Boston.

PRICES STRICTLY NET

No.	Size of Plate	Diameter of Lens	Equiv. Focus	Price
1	$3\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{7}{16}''$	7″	
2	4 x 5	$1\frac{11}{16}''$	9″	
3	5 x 7	$2\frac{13}{16}''$	12″	
4	$6\frac{1}{2}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{7}{32}''$	14″	
5	8 x 10	$3\frac{3}{4}''$	16″	

Series II f:6

Semi-Achromatic Doublet

No.	Size of Plate	Diameter of Lens	Equiv. Focus	Price
1	4 x 5	$1\frac{1}{4}''$	8″	
2	$3\frac{1}{4}$ x $5\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{7}{8}''$	9″	
3	5 x 7	$2\frac{1}{4}''$	12″	

For Hand Cameras

The "Smith" Doublet

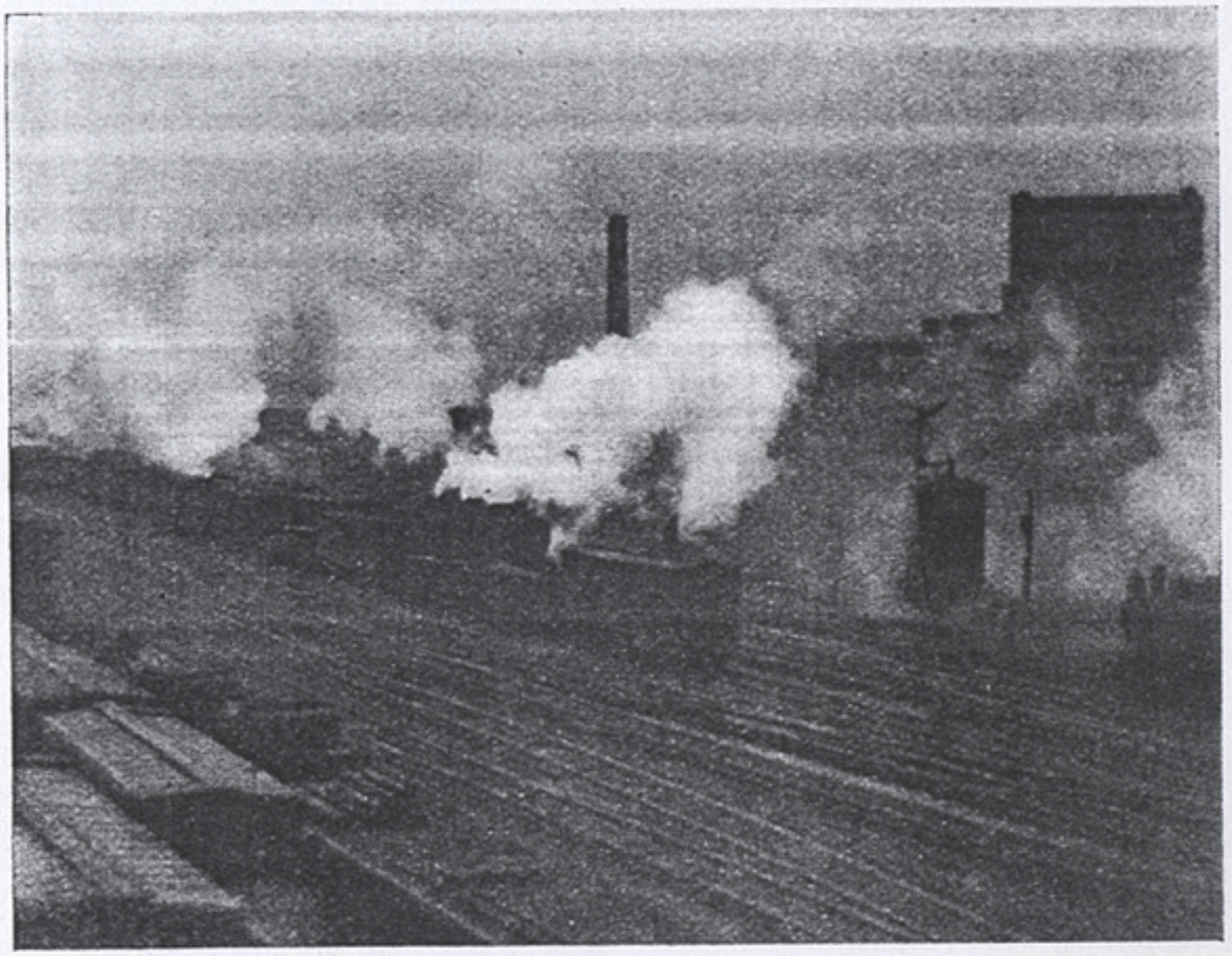
Series III f 4:5

Suggested by Alvin Langdon Coburn

This has been largely superseded by the "Visual Quality" which is especially constructed for portraiture. It is listed as an old favorite.

No.	Size of Plate	Diameter of Lens	Equiv. Focus	Price, with or without Shutter
1	5 x 7	2¾″	12″	
2	6½ x 8½	3¼″	14″	
3	8 x 10	3¾″	16″	

These lenses are fitted with Wollansak Studio Shutter without extra cost.



By Florizel Smith, Columbus, Ohio
Series VI. "Synthetic"

Series IV f 4:5

Visual Quality

(Doublet)

Suggested by J. Wallace Gillies

This series has been greatly praised by Professional Portraitists. We list this with the assurance of perfect satisfaction, as the large majority of workers are better pleased with the firmer drawing, being approximately half-way between the extreme softness of the Semi-Achromat and the sharp precision of the fully corrected lenses.

No.	Size of Plate	Diameter of Lens	Equiv. Focus	Price, with or without Studio Shutter
1	4 x 5	2¼″	9″	
2	5 x 7	2¾″	12″	
3	6½ x 8½	3⅜″	14″	
4	8 x 10	4″	16″	

No extra cost for Studio Shutter

In ordering, please state whether a shutter is required or not. The best shutter we know of is the Wollansak. Supplied fitted into the Barrel without extra cost.

The New "Synthetic" Lens

Series V f:5

Single Combination. Suggested by J. W. Newton, Columbus, Ohio, and Christened by Floyd Vail, New York City, who writes:—

The speed is great, Halation nil, the breadth and softness just what one wants for "Synthesis" instead of "Analysis" as with other lenses. By all means call it the

"Synthetic Lens"

"Synthetic whereby facts are stated, not literally, but interpreted through suggestion. There are two kinds of Artists—realists and impressionalists. Your new lens renders breadth, suggestion, simplicity, hence is —Synthetic—Thus you have a Visual Quality (depicting the objective or what is visualized) and the Synthetic rendering the subjective in art or what the mind sees, for that is what it is—and what it does is expressed by the name assigned."

No.	Size of Plate	Diameter of Lens	Equiv. Focus	Price
1	$3\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$"	7"	
2	4 x 5	2"	9"	
3	5 x 7	$2\frac{3}{8}$"	12"	
4	$6\frac{1}{2}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{3}{8}$"	14"	

Series VI Synthetic in special barrels for Graflex and other Reflex Cameras—write and give specifications.

The No. 2 "Synthetic" especially good for enlarging "*Sharp*" negatives.

Price List of Soft Focus Lenses

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY

Two Stores

292-294 BOYLSTON STREET *and* 13 BROMFIELD STREET

BOSTON 17, MASS.

On account of changing conditions of labor and material, we are compelled to issue our Catalogue without prices.

We shall at all times be ready to give our patrons the benefit of the prevailing prices.

This list in force March 1, 1920 until further notice.

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY

Series I.	Page 12	S. A.
No. 1		$22.50
No. 2		27.00
No. 3		32.00
No. 4		37.00
No. 5		45.00

Series II.	Page 12	S. A.
No. 1		$28.00
No. 2		30.00
No. 3		35.00

Series III.	Page 13	S. A. Db.
No. 1		$45.00
No. 2		50.00
No. 3		62.00

Series IV	Page 14	Vq.
No. 1		$35.00
No. 2		45.00
No. 3		52.00
No. 4		62.00

Series V.	Page 15	Syn.
No. 1		$25.00
No. 2		30.00
No. 3		35.00
No. 4		40.00

Series VI.	Page 15	Syn.
For Graflex		$30.00

A few kind words from admiring users.

"The lens (Synthetic) is a revelation to me. I do not think I ever did more beautiful work than with this splendid tool."

E. M.

"I would not trade sight unseen, for the best lens you ever made. I have been able to get a quality in my negatives *at all times*, that I had acquired but a *few times* in my old S. A. lens. I made well-exposed negatives after 6 p. m. last night, in the shade, with a 3 x Ray-Filter at 1/10th of a second, using full aperture."

J. W. N.

Later

"Oh! it's great, the more I use it the better I like it. Money wouldn't buy it—it's just what I've been dreaming of for years. I surely want to see you push it and make thousands as happy as it has made me."

J. W. N.

"The new 'Synthetic' is the best ever."—J. W. G.

"I am especially delighted with its wonderful speed. I no longer use my anastigmat for enlargements, as I prefer the quality of the 'Synthetic.' "—Florizel Smith.

"It is the lens for the pictorialist, and will enable such to do work formerly impossible. There will be wonderful softness, breadth, freedom from Halo and withal speed, and it is capable of suggesting atmosphere, moods, the variable aspects of light and expressing what an artist discerns and the emotions he experiences. This and much more, if the worker possesses the requisite knowledge of Art and Technique can be done by your latest production the 'Synthetic.' "—F. V.