Smith Soft-Focus Lenses

Pinkham and Smith Company · Boston

Foreword

IN view of the appreciation with which our last booklet was received by pictorialists all over the world, we are impelled to issue a new edition, in order to present our series of soft-focus lenses.

The illustrations might have been made entirely from Salon pictures produced with our lenses and offered to us for that purpose; but instead we selected the work of patrons, never before published or exhibited, in order to show the results and quality obtained by pictorialists in general.

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY
292-294 BOYLSTON STREET : 15 BROMFIELD STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.

Walter G. Wolfe,
Originator and Designer of
Pictorial Lenses.

Photo by C. P. Price, Boston.
14" VISUAL QUALITY.

"Smith" Lenses — Then and Now

ARTHUR HAMMOND, A.R.P.S.

MUCH water has flowed under the bridge since that day in 1910 when the writer went into Pinkham & Smith's store on Boylston Street in Boston and purchased from Mr. Smith a single, semi-achromatic lens similar to those that were being used at that time by Alvin Langdon Coburn and F. Holland Day. The transaction was a momentous one, though it was treated very casually by Mr. Smith. He happened to have on hand an 11-inch lens which he said had been returned by someone who was not satisfied with it. "You can have it" he said "and if you don't like it, bring it back and we will return your money." It was never brought back and is still one of the writer's most treasured possessions.

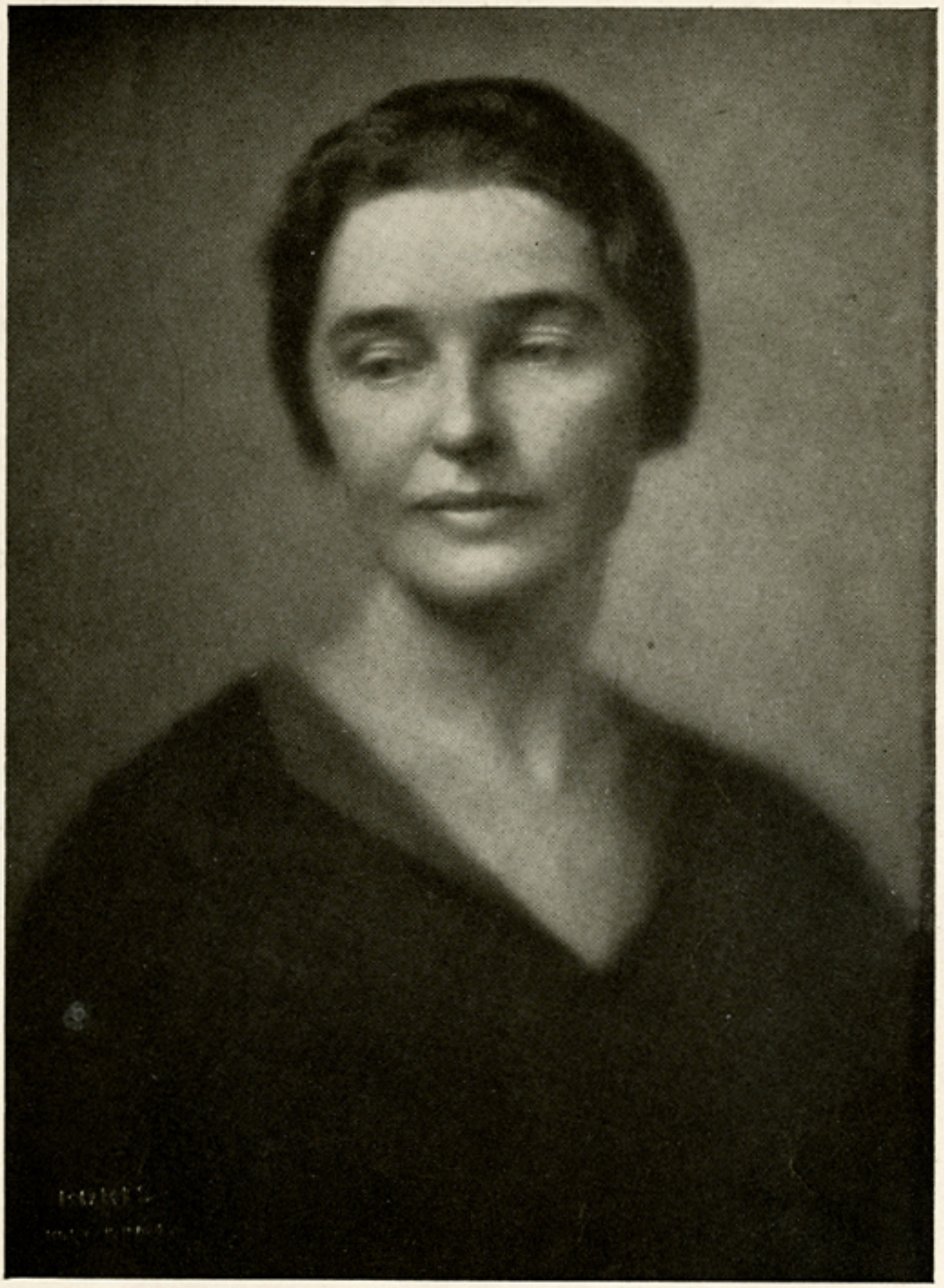
At that time the craze for soft definition in pictorial photography was regarded by Mr. Smith and by many others as a fad that would soon pass. But, instead it grew rapidly, not only in America, but in other countries and it gave rise to considerable controversy.

As was to be expected, the American tendency to carry things too far soon manifested itself. People who did not understand the lens or its purpose got results with it that were out of focus, blurred and hazy and that did not show any of the really delightful quality that the lens was capable of imparting. Those early lenses needed

careful focusing and the diaphragm had to be adjusted according to the type of subject and the prevailing light conditions. When the lenses were not used with some appreciation of their limitations as well as of their possibilities, the results were often ludicrous. A lot of mushy stuff was turned out in the old days and dubbed pictorial photography.

However, the fundamental idea was sound and therefore it has survived and the modern photography of today shows that a soft-focus lens is a very necessary and valuable tool for a photographer who wants to depict people and things in such a way as to make his pictures natural and pleasing and hence artistic.

The distinguishing quality of photography that entitles it to take its place among the fine arts is its ability to reproduce infinitely delicate and subtle graduations of tone. The literalness and the tendency to hard edges resulting from the use of a highly corrected lens is what the artist resents. What the artist craves is a method of softening outlines while still retaining to the full the beauty of photographic tones. That is what a soft-focus lens will do when it is used by one whose photographic technique is adequate to enable him to get the quality he wants in the negative.



By "Boris",
Newbury Street,
Boston.

SERIES IV. 16" VISUAL QUALITY

The Original Smith Lenses

Series I. Semi-Achromatic f6.

Series II. Semi-Achromatic Doublet f6.

Series III. Semi-Achromatic Doublet f4:5.

are listed as old favorites, and are now only made to order. Prices on application. The "Synthetic" single landscape Series V and f5 and the "Visual Quality" Portrait Doublet Series IV, f4:5, having largely superseded these.

By Walter Dole, Brighton Mass. SERIES V. 9" SYNTHETIC

Visual Quality and Synthetic Lenses

THE introduction of these lenses was a logical sequence to the semi-achromatic. It was necessary to make the soft-focus lens more "fool-proof". In these later lenses the diffusion is modified considerably so that the lens can be used at a large aperture without too much overlapping of light into an adjacent shadow. Even the modern snappy portrait lightings are not beyond the capabilities of these newer lenses.

This has caused these lenses to make a strong appeal to the professional portrait photographer who has found that he can get firm drawing and a beautiful even quality all through the picture with sufficient softening to reduce the need for a lot of retouching. He can get clear definition evenly distributed throughout the various planes instead of intense sharpness in one limited plane, falling off rapidly into unnatural diffusion such as is often obtained when using a highly corrected lens at a large aperture.

Modern methods and modern lightings demand a lens that has speed and that will give just such quality as can be obtained with the "Visual Quality" or the "Synthetic". The "Visual Quality" lens gives a quality of definition that is about half way between the extreme softness of the old semi-achromatic lens and the critical definition of an anastigmat. At f:5.5 there is practically no diffusion, only a pleasing softness of definition that is clear and firm but not harsh. At the full aperture of f:4.5, a little diffusion can be obtained, just enough to impart a suggestion of vibrating sunlight. At smaller apertures, the definition becomes sharper.

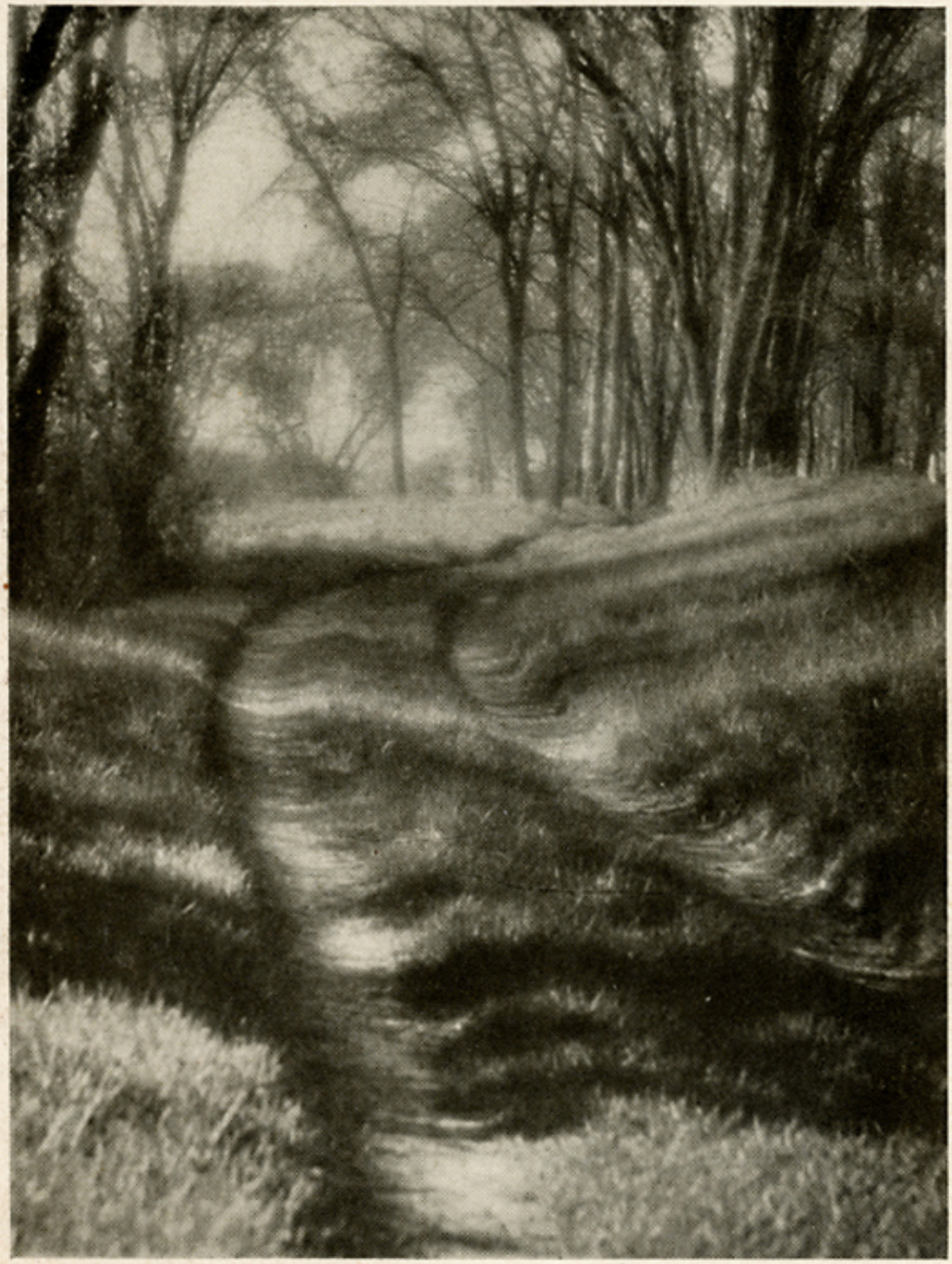
For portraits, as a general rule, the "Visual Quality" lens can be used at its widest aperture so that full advantage can be taken of its speed. In the case of a very

contrasty lighting, it may be necessary to stop down a little, but the experienced portrait photographer will arrange the lighting so that the contrasts are not too great and will avail himself of all the speed his lens can give.

In using a soft-focus lens it is necessary to study the *quality* of the definition. A fully corrected lens gives definition that is either sharp or not sharp, otherwise it does not vary. On the other hand a soft-focus lens is capable of giving a quality of definition that varies to some extent according to the way the image is focused. In all such lenses there is a belt of focus rather than a definite plane; the lens can be racked in or out a little without altering the apparent definition on the focusing screen, but we are focusing the yellow rays rather than the blue and violet whereas the plate or film will tend to be more strongly affected by the blue and violet. Therefore it is usually best to bring the lens and the plane of focus as close together as possible and the trick is this — rack out beyond the point of focus and then bring the lens slowly back towards the ground glass screen, studying the image all the time and continuing to rack the lens back until you reach the point where the principal object just begins to lose sharpness. In other words, focus on the inner edge of the belt.

The "Synthetic" soft-focus view lens has a maximum aperture of f:5. It is a single lens that imparts a most delightful breadth and softness to landscape pictures. Even at its maximum aperture it does not produce the halo or "run-around" that was often found when the early "semi-achromats" were used wide open.

A photographer who has had some experience in the use of soft-focus lenses will find the "Visual Quality" and the "Synthetic" very responsive to his needs. The beginner may find it hard at first to realize the possibilities of such a lens, but he will find it a most absorbing study. Naturally, in order to get the best out of it, the photographer must understand his lens; he must know what it can do and what it cannot do.



By George S. Hawley.

SERIES V. 12″ SYNTHETIC

Series IV f 4:5

"Visual Quality"

(Doublet)

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, without the necessity of retouching, 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
1	4 x 5	2¼″	9″
2	5 x 7	2¾″	12″
3	6½ x 8½	3⅜″	14″
4	8 x 10	4 ″	16″

For prices see enclosed slip.

In ordering, please state whether a shutter is required or not. The best shutter we know of is the Wollansak Studio, fitted to order only.

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
1	3¼ x 4¼	1¾″	7″
2	4 x 5	2″	9″
3	5 x 7	2⅜″	12″
4	6½ x 8½	3⅜″	14″

For Prices see enclosed slip.

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.

By Paul W. Cloud, Boston.

SERIES IV. 16" VISUAL QUALITY

The "Ames" Depth Lens

For Obtaining Pictorial Effects of Distance

THE technical device ordinarily used to achieve the illusion of distance and atmosphere in pictures is called perspective. The device is usually understood to consist in giving certain arbitrary directions to the lines of the picture and reducing the apparent size of objects in proportion to their assumed distance from the spectator.

But there are many other subtle but important supplementary means for obtaining pictorial effects of depth. Among these are variations in color hues, values, and intensities, the purposeful distortion of accepted aspects of perspective, the relative definition of the edges of depicted objects, the accentuation of radical or tangential lines, as the case may be, and so on.

Investigation of a long series of notable paintings indicates that all the really great masters of drawing and painting — both past and present — have relied upon some various means of obtaining the illusion of depth, but that not one among them has used all the means at his disposal.

An analysis of pictorial effects and discussions of the proper method of using various supplementary means of securing effects of depth and atmosphere in pictures are presented in an illustrated brochure entitled DEPTH IN PICTORIAL ART, by A. Ames, Jr., Research Professor of Physiological Optics in Dartmouth College.

The discussion is fully and clearly illustrated with charts in full color, with reproductions of specially taken photographs showing certain aspects of linear distortion, as well as with reproductions of twenty-one master paintings which exemplify the use and misuse of various means of obtaining effects of depth. The painters cited include such men as Rembrandt, Daubigny, Troyon, Verneer, Corot,

Turner, Winslow Homer, Israels, Rubens, Abbot Thayer. A list of paintings in the museums of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, which exemplify the principles enunciated by Professor Ames is likewise included in the brochure.

As an indispensable aid in the study and analysis of supplementary means of obtaining depth effects in pictures Professor Ames has developed an ingenious Depth

Pictorial Commercial Advertising,
by Paul W. Cloud, Boston, Mass.

Lens. This is a small glass which, when held before the eye causes the objects in a correctly painted picture to appear to occupy different planes in space very much as they would in a stereoscope photograph. In consequence any object which is improperly depicted either because of wrong color value or because of any other error of delineation on the artist's part will appear to hang in space out of its proper place in the picture.

The depth lens is most helpful not only in studying the methods of the great masters but also in maintaining a sound critical attitude toward one's own progress in developing a picture. It provides indeed the only means of sure judgment as to whether or not objects are occupying their correct planes as the work progresses. Because of this aspect of its usefulness the Depth Lens is being used today by a number of the leading American artists.

When the artist wishes to produce a picture that is flat: — i.e. without indication of receding planes the technique described in Professor Ames' brochure supplemented by the use of his Depth Lens will again be found indispensable. The works of Puvis de Chavannes are excellent examples of flat pictures whose effects are achieved by what might be called a reversed use of certain of the effects by which most painting renders the illusion of distance.

The brochure DEPTH IN PICTORIAL ART, by Prof. A. Ames, Jr., is obtainable from us postpaid on the forwarding of $1.00. The Depth Lens in a pocket case will be forwarded for $2.00. The influence of this inexpensive outfit of book and glass seems so likely to be epoch-making that no person interested in ancient or modern art should fail to equip himself.

Send all orders to

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY
Main Store, 292-294 Boylston Street
Down Town Store, 15 Bromfield Street
Boston, Mass.

Testimonials

I can assure you I have tried nearly every lens on the market today and for the last two years used nothing else in Portrait commercial and copying work but my "Visual".

In May, last year, Kodak of Rochester, New York gave me a studio light number and all portraits published were made with the "Visual". I asked them to send the original prints along to you after the magazine had been made, did you ever receive them?

I had five portraits accepted by the London Salon of Photography, all made with the "Visual" and practically no retouching required, with the pictures I have forwarded to you.

M. L., Sydney, Australia.

* * *

I wrote you the other day about the new single lens which you sent me. Since then I have tried the lens, and I enclose three or four of the prints. All wide open lens. I think the lens is the most beautiful thing I have had. There is a luminous life about it that is charming.

G. S. H., Bridgeport, Conn.

* * *

This is the first diffused lens that we have found that gives perfect half-tones on film negatives, such as is usually found in the good grades of glass negatives, The Visual Quality is perfect for the type of work that we engage in, and if they continue to stand up as have the first two that you have sent us, we expect to eventually equip our entire chain of studios with them.

BACHRACH INC., Baltimore, Md.

Since this was written Bachrach Inc. have purchased 56 lenses, size, 14 inch Visual Quality.

* * *

Amongst prominent users are the International Newsreel Inc., Underwood & Underwood Inc. (who use 36 of our VQ lenses), Baron de Meyer, Paris, etc., etc.

RAND AVERY SUPPLY CO., BOSTON


PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY
292-294
BOYLSTON ST.
15 BROMFIELD ST.
BOSTON, MASS.
OPTICIANS, PHOTOGRAPHIC SUPPLIES

Retail Price List of Soft Focus Lenses

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY

Two Stores

292-294 BOYLSTON STREET *and* 15 BROMFIELD STREET
BOSTON, MASS.

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

The old type Semi-Achromat Series No. I, II and III discontinued. Made only to order.

PINKHAM & SMITH COMPANY

March, 1928

SERIES IV VISUAL QUALITY

For Portraiture f 4.5

No.	Focus	f value	Diam. Lenses	Out. Diam. Flange	Price in Barrell	Price in Shutter
1	9″	f 4.5	64 m.m.	4″	$54.00	$ 64.00
2	12″	f 4.5	76 m.m.	4 5/8″	68.00	78.00
3	14″	f 4.5	90 m.m.	5 1/4″	76.50	90.00
4	16″	f 4.5	105 m.m.	6″	90.00	105.00
4B	18″	f 5	105 m.m.	6″	95.00	110.00

SERIES V SYNTHETIC

Soft Focus View Lens

For Landscapes, etc., f 5

No.	Focus	f value	Diam. Lenses	Diam. Barrell	Out. Diam. Flange	Price
1	7″ & 8″	f 4.5 f 5	47 m.m.	2 1/8″	2 3/4″	$34.00
2	9″	f 5	57 m.m.	2 7/16″	3 1/2″	42.00
3	12″	f 5	64 m.m.	2 7/8″	4″	51.00
4	14″	f 5	76 m.m.	3 7/16″	4 5/8″	60.00
5	16″	f 5	90 m.m.	4″	5 1/4″	72.00

Nos. 1 and 2 mounted in Aluminum Front Board, so constructed as to permit Front Door to close with Lens in position —for Graflex, etc., $2.50 extra.

Previous Price Lists Cancelled