

Specimen Dissection and Photography for the Pathologist, Anatomist and Biologist

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BOOK REVIEW . . .

Specimen Dissection and Photography for the Pathologist, Anatomist and Biologist, M. Donald McGavin and Samuel Wesley Thompson, Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois 62794, USA. 1988. 290 pp. \$54.75 US.

This text contains five chapters: Facilities and Equipment, Backgrounds and Accessories, Photographic Technique, Specimen Preparation and Photography, and Clinical Photography. Each of these topics is discussed at considerable length.

In justifying this text the authors deplore the quality of many of the transparencies used for teaching in classrooms and conferences. We support their stand. In particular they disapprove of poorly dissected and incorrectly oriented specimens, obtrusive backgrounds including inappropriate scales and rulers, and poor photographic technique.

This text attempts to demonstrate how to avoid these errors and in this it succeeds, for we have no doubt that the tyro who follows meticulously the instructions given would achieve excellent results. However, persistence would be required since this book tends to prolixity, pedantry and repetition. We assume that the intended audience is beginners (we cite the discussion of the reciprocal relationship between f-stops and shutter speeds (page 126) in support of the assumption) but still feel that fewer words could have achieved equal or better results.

Our negative criticisms fall into the substantive and the trivial. The overwhelming fault of this book is the virtual absence of photographs demonstrating the effects of proper and improper techniques. The value of such demonstrations is exemplified on those few occasions that they appear, Figs. 3.1, 3.12 and 4.58 for example. Instead of photographs, comparisons are made using line-drawings, scarcely designed to instil confidence in the reader. We hope that any future editions of "Specimen Dissection and Photography" will correct this glaring deficiency.

It is our opinion that more consideration could have been given to the use of electronic flash equipment for gross specimen photography. Admittedly there is favorable reference to it in the preface and elsewhere but there is no mention

of electronic flashes in the section on lighting equipment beginning on page 98, and the summary of photo-technique on page 138 assumes that photographic lamps are to be used. We feel that much of the tedium of obtaining excellent photographs can be avoided by utilizing electronic flashes. They permit higher f-stops with their attendant increased depth of field, faster exposure times, and also avoid drying out of specimens produced by high wattage photo-floods. We also disagree with the use of several small square specimen boxes as opposed to one large rectangular multi-purpose surface on the principle that simple equipment is best because it is more likely to be used. Along the same lines, the use of complicated formulas for calculating close-up exposure factors could be avoided by taping the values supplied with the lens to a nearby wall.

There also are errors of fact in this book such as that on page 23, where the use of 200 ISO film and the equipment listed allows apertures up to f32 rather than f22 to be used. Similarly the Medical-Nikkor lens described on page 31 allows ratios of reproduction from 1:11 to 2:1 not 1:11 to 1:1. On page 36 the discussion of format deals entirely with film type—it is our understanding, supported by "The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography," that format refers to film size. Spelling and other errors are also common. Notable examples are "formally . . . arithmetic" for "formerly . . . arithmetic" (page 35), "scapel" for "scalpel" (pages 86 and 87) and "concensus" for "consensus" (page 245). In addition, redundancies as "pathological lesions" (preface) and "old . . . adage" (page 116) are mildly irritating.

In summary, "Specimen Dissection and Photography" contains a large amount of information that would help the beginning photographer to obtain excellent results. However, diligence and patience will be required to assimilate the facts and develop a system yielding best results with least effort. We refer it to our colleagues with these reservations.

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