



ARTIST

Jo (Joseph Warren) Babcock

TITLE

Ammo Box (Pin Hole Camera)

DATE

1987

DIMENSIONS

7" H x 4" W x 10" L

MEDIUM

Mixed Media

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2018.176

CURRENT LOCATION

Light Work Collection Closet

JO (JOSEPH WARREN) BABCOCK

BORN

1954

BIRTHPLACE

St. Louis, MO

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1987
NYSCA Sponsored Project, 1989

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 56
Contact Sheet 63
Contact Sheet 97

ESSAYS

For a generation of Americans the Volkswagen bus is a symbol indelibly connected to a time of poignant protests for the freedom of expression filled with the promise of change and the elimination of repression. In the 1980's has the Volkswagen bus given way to the Plymouth Voyager? This slightly older generation of Americans is struggling to maintain a sense of personal politics in an age where even the term liberal is uttered with embarrassment and embraced with caution. Jo Babcock turned a Volkswagen bus into a pinhole camera to survey the current landscape of the American dream. His choice is a decision impaled with protest and informed by a road map of irony and innuendo. Since 1987 he has piloted his unconventional camera on a number of photographic excursions throughout New York State. This ambitious project was sponsored by Light Work and funded by the New York State Council on the Arts' Sponsored Work Program. Pinhole cameras were simple predecessors of today's modern cameras and continue to be utilized by a number of artists. Using a tiny 'pinhole' as a lens placed in the side of an enclosed box, room or other light tight container, light reflected off objects outside of the camera is captured as clear projections inside the camera. Babcock exposes color photographic paper to the pinhole light projections inside his 'lens on wheels.' This direct exposure process produces a negative color image in hues of yellow and orange that dramatically emphasize the artist's volatile outlook towards a country he sees awash in apathy and governed by greed. In all his recent work Babcock seduces the viewer with humor so the irony in his work can be absorbed while we are caught off guard. This subtle manipulation of the audience is evident in his photographs of statues of war heroes made with cameras fashioned out of ammunition boxes and his images of run down hotels made with cameras of old suitcases. Using a Volkswagen bus to make his photographs strengthens his voice, fortifying the contradictions between standing up for ones beliefs and believing in one's stand-ups. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1987