

Color Durst Enlarger for 40 bucks

By *Guilherme Maranhão*

It was a day with no pictures, no assignments, no nothing. I decided to go visit a friend's studio. A guy named Caio owns the warehouse, Andrea rents, and he's also a photographer. In the middle of all of Andrea's boxes—she had recently moved in—there were some boxes that Caio had never opened. Andrea said—Come see this!—a Durst M605 color enlarger, all in pieces, inside one of the boxes.

I guess it took a whole year before I got Caio to sell me that box for 25 bucks. I've yet to find out who is the most stubborn. Inside the box I couldn't find the negative holder, lens board, several screws and the crank that lifts the enlarger's head. Lensboards wouldn't be a problem: I also have a M800 which uses the same boards, and I have plenty of them.

First thing I did was to run downtown. I knew a guy who had the negative holder, a very, very beaten one I'd seen some time before. My memory was not bad: I found a perfect match for 5 bucks. While I was around, I decided to get white Formica (4 bucks) and glue (2 bucks) for the new base I had to make.



I came back home and took the whole thing apart. The enlarger was all over the place. I cleaned all dust, excess grease and excess oil. I applied some phosphoric acid to the rusty parts after a little bit of sanding to restore smooth surfaces.

All I had noticed as missing so far were the base and the negative holder. In my mind it was all a matter of putting everything back together. I started with the color head, figuring out how it works was my first step, it took a while. I noticed a missing lamp, and no cord and socket. Two of the color correction dials were loose, so I had to cut some notches on the rods to which the dials were attached and glue



them again to the rods with 24-hour epoxy glue. I won't account for the epoxy glue since I had it, and I think every photographer should have it too. It's basic equipment. While the front of the color head was curing, I went to a hardware store searching for the electrical supplies I needed: another 4 bucks went away.

This new kind of dichroic lamp that doesn't need an adapter seemed really nice, will work but it didn't quite fit. I still have to look for one with thinner edges. When you want to install a tungsten condenser head in this enlarger you have to use the standard Durst socket for your lamp, it runs through the bottom of the head, where there's a hole lined with black felt. Well, with the color head that hole is pure light! Should be a plug over there. Instead, I painted black a Bufferin canister cap and it fit just perfect.

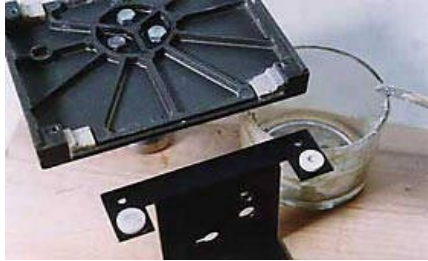


I had to clean the focusing rails. They were pretty sticky, but it all worked fine later. There was no screw to hold the lensboard in place. I turned my screw jar upside down into a darkroom tray and came up with a solution. All the screws that held the head cover in place, those that allowed head changes and the ones that held together the base and column seemed to have better uses inside the enlarger, their replacements came out of this tray as well. Whatever comes out of this screw jar is simply priceless. Aesthetics were no concern at this time. This enlarger is to be used in complete darkness.

I glued together a bunch of plywood to create a heavy base. My wife Gabriela was in charge of the Formica operation: it came out perfect! Then I installed the column on the base.

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When it was time to throw the head in, I realized that some of the bushings that keep the head sliding smoothly on the column were missing. There should be 4 round ones on the back of the column and 4 L-shaped ones in the front. Their job is also to keep the head looking straight down (L-shaped ones can be moved with the help of a screw to adjust head's inclination). I was short of 1 of the round and 1 of the L-shaped.

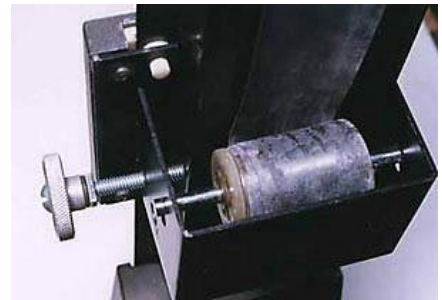


It was time to take a break anyway. A couple of days later, cruising down, I stopped by a dumpster just to check some weird shapes sticking out: of a couple of office chairs and an office table. Rough could describe it well, but what about drawer's parts? Well, I took one drawer with me. Drawers have to slide as well, and this one had bushings similar to the ones in my Durst. This solved the problem with the round bushing I needed. I still had the L-shaped one to come up with. In my mind I kept thinking: "I'm one bushing away from a color enlarger..."

In Brasil there's a thing called Plastic Compound Iberê, some kind of polymer that comes in a can, and there's a liquid that catalyzes the reaction to make it hard. Rules that apply for epoxy glue concerning

photographers also apply for Massa Plástica Iberê when in Brasil. I mixed some of it, put it where the L-shaped bushing should be, after couple minutes as it would get harder and harder I was able to cut it with a utility knife down to almost correct measurements. After half hour I sanded very lightly, it became very smooth, and correct size. Ohoooo!

Ok! I forgot there's no crank to raise the head. I removed the spring cover on the very back of the head, behind the column (the column runs through the head). I drilled a hole on the head chassis and set a tap there, installed a knob in quarter-inch screw that runs through this hole hitting the column. The spring - that was very rusty - helps me with the head's weight, and all I have to do is lock the head in position.



The enlarger is not like "brand new" again. But it works, instead of sitting at the very bottom of a cardboard box. It was made to last long, but not this long! Maybe next time it comes back to my workbench it will become a bunch of parts. But what do I know? Instead of someone else's garbage it is my new tool.

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