Interpretation of Alvin Coburn’s *The Bridge, Venice* in Pen and Ink

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Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966) was an early-20th-century photographer who became an influential figure in the development of American pictorialism. Although he was a Boston native, he lived most of his adult life in England and became a British citizen in 1932. Coburn was greatly influenced by his mother, a...
serious amateur photographer. He began taking photographs at the age of 8 after receiving a 4 × 5–inch Kodak camera from his maternal uncles during a visit to Los Angeles; he immediately fell in love with the camera and photography. At the age of 17, he took part in the New School of American Pictorial Photography exhibition, and 3 years later, he was elected a member of the Photo-Secession, founded by Alfred Stieglitz, to raise the standards of pictorial photography. When Coburn was 24 years of age, George Bernard Shaw proclaimed him “the greatest photographer in the world.”

Coburn’s work had a broad scope, and the subjects were portraits, landscapes, symbolism, and abstract images; however, his most impressive photographs are portraits. His portraits featured the famous people of his day including Henry James, Auguste Rodin, Gertrude Stein, Theodore Roosevelt, Henri Matisse, Mark Twain, Ezra Pound, and John Singer Sargent. Coburn dedicated the last 40 years of his life to freemasonry and the study of spiritualism, taking photographs only when on holidays.

This drawing is an interpretation of Alvin Coburn’s photograph *The Bridge, Venice*, 1908. It is done with a nib pen and black India ink by the stippling technique, in which patterns, shadows, and shapes are created using small dots with various intensities and sizes.

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