











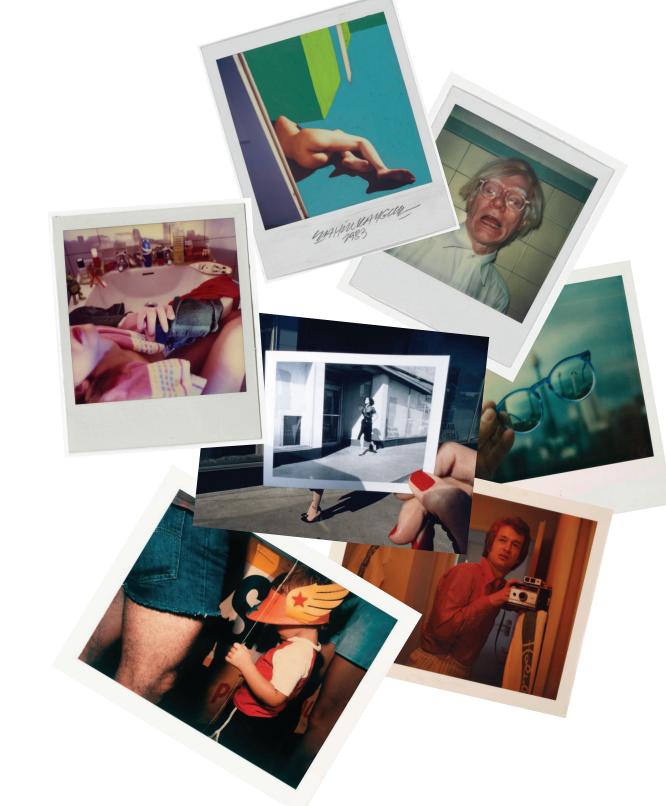


Written

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Long before Polaroid pictures invoked sun-bleached nostalgia, dreamlike memories and a lust for a bygone analog age, they were considered a flash of impossibly futuristic technology.

When the company's SX-70 OneStep instant camera was released in 1972, the US was still drafting conscripts for the Vietnam War, the Sony Walkman was seven years away and most people had to wait days — or even weeks — to see the pictures they'd snapped.

For acclaimed director and photographer Wim Wenders, who arrived in the USA from his native Germany that year, the SX-70 was the epitome of progress. The device was a technological marvel.

Filmmaker Jonas Mekas reveals the private world of '60s legends

He went on to take 12,000 Polaroid photos in a frenzy of creativity in the early 1970s. The format was "at the dawn of the digital age, a promise of things to come," said Wenders in an email interview.

"For years, everybody would stand behind you and look at the little print, not only in amazement, but also with longing — 'Gimme that thing!" said Wenders, who directed the epic road movie "Paris, Texas" and the Oscar-nominated documentary "Buena Vista Social

"Kids especially went crazy. Today, we take it for granted that we can see everything immediately on ... our devices, but then, it was nothing less than a cultural revolution. We all felt we were looking at the future. And we were.

Square Polaroid snaps captured the world's attention in the 1970s, and have remained the subject of fascination since. Their fun aesthetic continues to influence creatives like photographer Ryan McGinley and artist Julian Schnabel. Instagram may also owe some of its early success to its

How a square-shaped nostalgia symbol paved the way for social media

digital," she said. "It is still important nowadays as a comment on the world becoming more abstract and digital — and maybe, somehow, more fake."

The future of Polaroid

After making rough starts to the digital age, Polaroid and its old rival, FujiFilm, both threw their weight behind attempts to revive physical instant photos. Nonetheless, Polaroid ended its film and analog camera production in 2008 amid dwindling sales and a second bankruptcy.

A European company called Impossible Project acquired the rights to Polaroid's intellectual property and continued to produce its instant film. The group secured the Polaroid name in May 2017 and brought its film and cameras (under the brand Polaroid Originals) to the market last September.

In the meantime, contemporary artists have continued exploring the limits and meaning of instant film. For many, the format remains an ultimate expression of nostalgic fun that harks back to a time when the future seemed brighter.

Some nod to the tousled glamour of Andy Warhol and Edo Bertoglio's Factory-era Polaroids — those high-contrast, nonchalant portraits of Debbie Harry, Grace Jones and Madonna — while others have used the format to bring intimacy to political issues such as the migrant crisis.

But in the age of high-resolution phone cameras, some, including Wenders, believe that the Polaroid's time is up. The filmmaker, who recently debuted his documentary "Pope Francis: A Man of his Word," has consistently embraced new technology, including the use of 3D filming for his 2011 dance documentary "Pina."

Polaroids show iconic artists in New York

Wenders is still prone to nostalgia, admitting that he wishes he had saved more of his Polaroids. "Oh, man, if only I had kept half of them!" he said, expressing his desire to see images that Dennis Hopper, who died in 2010, took of himself during a key scene in the 1977 movie "The American Friend."

"(Hopper) made a whole series of selfies with the SX70, (then he) laid down on a pool table and let those Polaroids rain down on him. It was a strange act of remorse, or some ritual of self-purification.

"We used a new pack of film each time, and we shot several takes of that scene. But there's not a single one of these Polaroids left. Either Dennis kept them all, or everybody in the crew grabbed one."















