

# Lomography: Photographic Counterculture

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## Abstract

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From the first daguerreotype to the latest digital cameras, photography has been a medium of great importance and controversy. As it is totally unique in its power to render the world so accurately and so effortlessly, the applications of photography are unlimited and ubiquitous. These applications span from quotidian purposes such as cell phone snapshots and magazine covers, to professional use and the creation of art. Pulsing underneath the last two decades of photography's polemic timeline is a grassroots counterculture movement known as Lomography. The objective of my Global Scholars project is to understand Lomography and explore its role in photography and subsequently its role in art.

As such, in order to explain Lomography the first section of this paper will begin with its necessary predecessor: photography. The medium will be examined in great detail, with particular emphasis on the underlying purpose of photography, including the true nature of a photograph and photography. This section will discuss whether photography is fundamentally social or artistic, and provide necessary background information for later analysis of Lomography. The next section will continue the discussion of photography and comprise an inquiry into the medium's much debated position in the realm of art. This section will include an array of opinions from noted philosophers, photographers, and writers to determine the artistic value of photography.

The following section deals specifically with Lomography—what it is and how it came to be. The history will help explain the following section on the philosophy of the Lomographic Society International, especially the famous “10 Golden Rules” and Lomography Manifesto. This section will also delve into the line of Lomography products, as the cameras and films manufactured by Lomography are the heart of their unique style.

## Abstract

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Finally, the last section will discuss Lomography on the basis of its artistic merits, and the philosophy of Lomography will be pitted against that of established artistic photography. The intention of Lomography as a counterculture photographic movement will be juxtaposed with its conditional classification as art, and the ramifications of this will be briefly discussed. As Lomography is not a heavily studied topic from a scholarly standpoint, the majority of discussion into Lomography's role as a social and artistic movement will be covered in the findings section, along with questions which remain and the implications of my project.

# Outline

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**Research Question:** What characterizes the Lomography movement, and where does it belong in the realm of photography and art?

## I. Photography

### A. Definitions

### B. Why people photograph

## II. Aesthetics

### A. Argument – is photography art?

1. “Mechanism and Expression” by Franz Roh
2. “Seeing Photographically” by Edward Weston
3. “Pictorial Photography” by Alfred Stieglitz
4. “Photography at the Crossroads” by Berenice Abbott
5. *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes
6. “Is Photography a New Art?” from *Classic Essays on Photography*

### B. Conditional – when photography is and is not art

## III. Lomography

### A. Lomography basics

1. History
2. Philosophy
  - a. Lomography Manifesto
  - b. 10 Golden Rules

### 3. Specifications of Lomography products

### B. Lomography as art

1. Is it meant to be art?
  - a. Philosophy of Lomography
  - b. Philosophy of artistic Photography
2. “Hints on Art” by Peter Henry Emerson
3. Conclusions

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Photography is an intriguing medium—one with a duality unlike any other. On one hand, photography is commonplace; it saturates our world and we are all photographers, be it through cell phones or \$5,000 digital SLR cameras. On the other hand, photography is debatably capable of producing fine art. Perhaps it is because of this duality that photography is not definitively a fine art; however, it is with both the social and artistic function of photography in mind that this paper will examine the photographic counterculture movement known as Lomography.

According to their website, Lomography is “a magazine, a shop, and a community dedicated to analogue photography” (“About”). Characterized by funky cameras and a “no rules” attitude, Lomography is a photographic maverick. The crux of Lomography is its distinctive aesthetic, combined with a unique history and philosophy. To understand Lomography, it is first necessary to understand the underlying principles of photography, and the ideas that surround the debate as to its status as an art form. For this reason the paper will spend a great deal of elaboration of the artistic value of photography. With a strong understanding of this, the paper

may then assess Lomography on its own aesthetic merit and briefly explore the social and photographic reverberations of the Lomography movement.

## **Photography**

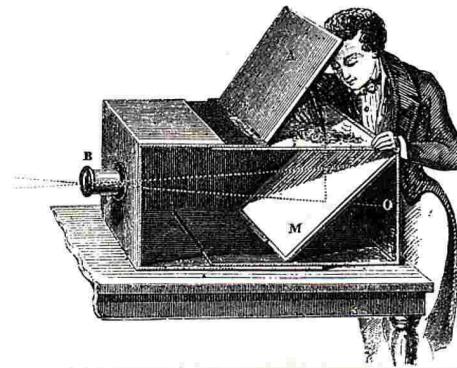
“Photography is the only ‘language’ understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence—where people are free—it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. We become the eye-witnesses of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind.” —Helmut Gernsheim (Sontag 192).

### *Photography and the Photograph*

Photography is the act of using a camera to produce images. Photographs are the products of photography. These denotative definitions are simple, and can be deemed accurate by anyone with a concept of photographs and photography; however, they are not encompassing, nor do they provide a suitable stage for discussion. It is the connotative definitions of these words that matter. That being said: photographs are evidence of the existence of an event, a person, or an object (Sontag 5). They are “the most perfect specimen of realism the world could produce” (Robinson 96), “...pieces of it [the world], miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire” (Sontag 4); and yet, they are invisible: “it is not it [the photograph] that we see,” but rather the object photographed (Barthes 6). Photographs provide material truth, express pure

objectivity, offer knowledge, and are often a means of focusing attention on their chosen subjects (De Zayas 130). This “deictic language” of photographs is inherent (Barthes 5).

Before photographs, scenes and objects were duplicated in paintings and drawings, the creation of which required much time and ability, which is why the media are considered fine arts. These practices are, however, interpretations that have been filtered through the brain (Sontag 4), whereas a photograph is technically pure representation. Early methods of photography included the camera obscura (*fig. 1*) and the daguerreotype, which first gained credibility in 1826 and 1839 in France, respectively (“History of Photography”). The camera obscura involved projecting an image onto a mirror, which reflected it up to where an artist could trace the image. The daguerreotype, given its name by the creator of the process, Louis Daguerre, involved a similar apparatus, but instead of a human tracing the reflected image it was reproduced onto a silver-coated copper plate (“History of Photography”). In the beginning, photographs were nearly as difficult to produce as paintings; they required a photographer devoted enough to operate and lug the heavy camera apparatus around, and with the invention of film photography, demanded specialized skills in the darkroom to develop the negatives and print the film. Despite initial challenges, photography offers the potential to capture the largest possible number of subjects (Sontag 7). It has an innate ability to “democratize all experiences by translating them into images” (Sontag 7)—an image, which is “the language of all nationalities and all ages,” and the “symbol that brings one immediately into touch with reality” (Hine 111). The implications of this are to us, as citizens of the twenty-first century, obvious—



**Fig. 1.** “Camera Obscura.” Drawing. *The Delights of Seeing*. N.p., Oct. 2010. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

we see the pervasive nature of photographs every day in the photographic content we are bombarded with; “the *picture* has almost replaced the *word* as a means of communication” (Abbott 179).

For the difficulties proposed above photography did not gain popularity until much later, through industrialization during the 1900s, which provided the medium with a clear social use. It is now “as widely practiced an amusement as sex and dancing” (Sontag 8), which subsequently means that it is not practiced by most people as an art, and is now mainly “a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power” (Sontag 8).

### *Why People Photograph*

The earliest popular use of photography was to memorialize the achievements of loved ones—“cameras go with family life” (Sontag 8). In fact, a study done in France found that a household with children is twice as likely to have at least one camera as a household in which there are no children (Sontag 8). The content of familial photographs is meant to be cherished, and allows each family to “construct a portrait chronicle of itself—a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness” (Sontag 8). Minor White was an American photographer from the early twentieth century. In his words, “the camera is always pointed at a subject. Occasionally, only one of the camera’s photographs points away from the subject, toward the mind, or the heart, or the imagination” (Gerald 4).

White’s quotation is echoed in *Camera Lucida*, the work of noted French philosopher and critic Roland Barthes. Barthes describes his relentless search for a photograph of his mother after she died—one that he felt embodied his childhood perception of her (Barthes

64). He finally finds what he has been searching for—the “Winter Garden Photograph.” It is not reproduced in the book for he believes that for anyone else, “it would be nothing but an indifferent picture” (Barthes 73). The “Winter Garden Photograph” is pointing at Barthes’s heart and imagination in this instance, and revealing the personal nature of photographs.

Likewise, Charles Baudelaire, Parisian poet and art critic, believed that “photography best serves to aid man’s memory” (Baudelaire 83), and Susan Sontag, noted author, believed that by virtue of being photographed, subjects are touched with pathos (Sontag 15). With these assumptions, it is easy to see the reason for an accumulation of family photographs, and another popular category of social photography: tourism. Travel is a retreat from the humdrum activities of daily life; this makes it memorable and therefore a frequent subject of photographic desire. Taking photographs while traveling “gives shape to experience” (Sontag 10), and “will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, and that fun was had” (Sontag 9).

On the other hand, photography may also be the product of anxiety. Susan Sontag reasoned that those with a ruthless work ethic who have qualms with not working and suffer from an inability to relax may take pictures to ease this anxiety, for the act of photographing is a “friendly imitation” of working—“stop, take a photograph, and move on” (Sontag 10). The omnipresence of cameras in our society has prompted the idea that time is composed of events that should be photographed. These events should be completed, and the introduction of a photograph into the world should follow their completion, which will “confer an importance and immortality to the event,” exclusively brought upon by photography and its unique ability to capture all (Sontag 11). These are examples of photography that is realized not to be significant

to the photographer or the human race, but photography simply for the sake of taking pictures.

This is the type of photography in which most people partake.

Susan Sontag was correct in saying that photography is now mainly “a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power” (Sontag 8). The power of photography to convey and persuade was recognized long ago, and is seen in fields such as photojournalism. Often this field overlaps with the discussion of photographic art. Photojournalism operates under the assumption that the definition of a photograph provided earlier is indeed true—that a photograph is a piece of reality and represents material truth. It lays claim to photography’s “peremptory rights” to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on (Sontag 11).

A relatively well-known example regarding these “rights” and the effectiveness of photojournalism is Steve McCurry’s haunting photograph from the cover of a 1985 National



**Fig. 2.** McCurry, Steve. “Sharbat Gula, Afghan Girl.” Photograph. *Steve McCurry*. N.p, 1984. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

Geographic magazine (*fig.2*). The photo is of an Afghani refugee girl; her striking green eyes and fierce face invoke immense pathos from the viewer. Another example, mentioned by Susan Sontag, is Nick Ut’s 1972 photograph (*fig.3*) of a naked Vietnamese girl as she runs screaming towards the camera after a napalm attack (Sontag 18). Sontag reasoned that this single

photograph did more to increase public revulsion for the war than a hundred hours of television barbarities (Sontag 18). Both images demonstrate photography’s ability to transcend the simple existence of a photograph into something meaningful and cogent.



**Fig. 3.** Ut, Nick. “Phan Thị Kim Phúc.” Photograph. *BBC News*. BBC, 1972. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

The aforementioned are classic applications of photography; they grew popular in conjunction with the medium and remain popular in the present climate. These applications are primarily recreational; however, especially with the advent of digital photography and rapid growth of technology, both commercial and institutional applications for photography have developed. Commercial applications chiefly include advertising, seen in the magazines, newspapers, billboards and flyers that populate our surroundings. One institutional application is that of identification—photographs are used on drivers' licenses and passports, in criminal databases for the government and employee databases for companies, and countless similar examples. Another institutional application is a role in science—for example, medical photography may serve to teach and forensic photography may serve to prove.

The final, perhaps most important and elusive motive of photography is that for the sake of art. “The functions of photography are: to inform, to represent, to surprise, to cause to signify to provoke desire” (Barthes 28). Photography must achieve these functions through the intent of a photographer; however, the degree of success achieved when a photographer attempts to do so is almost always contentious. In the previous example of photojournalism, it is obvious the photos described fulfill these functions, but whether they are artistic is entirely separate.

## Aesthetics

Alexander Baumgarten coined the term “aesthetic” in the eighteenth century to refer to “cognition by means of the senses” (Goldman 255). It morphed into referring to the perception of beauty by the senses, especially in art, and Kant furthered it by applying it to judgments of beauty in both art and nature (Goldman 255).

“Art is by nature self-explanatory. We call it ‘art’ precisely because of its sufficiency. Its vivid detail and overall cohesion give it a clarity not ordinarily apparent in the rest of life.” – Robert Adams (Adams 31)

### *Is Photography Art?*

Photography’s place among the fine arts has been in question since its creation, despite the fact that artistic use was chief among the aims of its inventors (Maynard 612). These objectives became true and remain so today, as the intention of art is a popular motive for photographing—the less controversial motives for photography were discussed earlier. The principles governing artistic photography have not changed much since Daguerre’s day (c. 1830); the original, artistic incentive of the inventors of photography was “reproduction (copy) of nature in conformity with the rules of perspective” (Moholy-Nagy 165). However, the criticism to banish photography’s moniker from the art world once and for all has not changed much either. The main objections as to why photography cannot be art are that in being produced by a machine, it is too mechanical—the camera does not allow the photographer control over his subject (Weston 171), and that in being the most realistic of the visual arts, it is therefore the most facile and not on par with established fine arts such as painting or drawing (Sontag 51).

In his article “Mechanism and Expression” from 1929, art critic Franz Roh assessed that the reason photography is not considered art is either because the definition of art is “wholly time-bound, arbitrary and ungreat,” or that human sight is completely deformed and susceptible to only one kind of beauty, “even opposite nature” (Roh 157). He said that if we understand art as an end in itself, “called forth by man and filled with ‘expression,’” that good photographs

would be included in the realm of art; similarly if we understand art as a “manual production expressed by the human hand under guidance of the mind,” it becomes possible to establish a new category of art without diminishing the aesthetic value of existing, indisputable art forms (Roh 157). Roh declared that “it is a grave, subjectivist error to believe that forms pervaded by the aesthetic arise exclusively when every line has sprung from the ‘smelting-pot of the soul,’ i.e. the mind-guided hand of man himself” (Roh 157).

A blatant example to illustrate Roh’s point and contradict wholeheartedly the notion that photography is too mechanical to be an art lies in the established fine art of music. “What a simple and confined instrument is the piano” Roh said, with the “ever-returning” octave; yet, every pianist can change and arrange his given elements and “draw forth a world of his own” (Roh 159). Noted photographer Edward Weston, a contemporary of Ansel Adams, offers a similar take. He goaded that, “perhaps if singers banded together in sufficient numbers, they could convince musicians that the sounds they produced through *their machines* could not be art because of the essentially mechanical nature of their instruments” (Weston 171).

Weston’s arguments in favor of photography were aimed at the so-called “photo-painters” of the time—photographers who used the medium to produce painter-like results. His arguments are similar to Roh’s opinions that the term art must not be given uniquely to those creations that have come one hundred percent from “the mind-guided hand of man himself.” As a photographer, Weston heavily opposed the criticism that photography did not allow the photographer control of his work; in fact he proposes that “actually, the problem of learning to see photographically would be simplified if there were fewer means of control than there are” (Weston 173). He mentions that by camera position and angle, lens focal length and aperture, light and filters, length of exposure and a plethora of darkroom manipulations, the photographer

truthfully has quite a bit of control (Weston 173). “An enjoyment of photographs is strong for the subtle distinctions involved” (Adams 30). Another great photographer, Alfred Stieglitz, argued to the same extent as Weston, making note of the fact that it has never been possible to establish a scientifically correct scale of values between the highlights and the shadows, so the photographer is the same as the painter and must depend on his observation of and feeling for nature in the production of a photograph (Stieglitz 119).

Though Stieglitz was a photographer (*fig. 4*) advocating for photography’s status as an art, he was not biased. He classified photographers into three categories: the ignorant, the purely technical, and the artistic (Stieglitz 119). In the pursuit of photography, the first bring nothing but what is not desirable; the second a technical education; and the third bring the feeling and inspiration of an artist (Stieglitz 119). It is an intimate acquaintance with this group that brings people to the realization that “the ability to make a truly artistic photograph is not acquired off-hand, but is the result of an artistic instinct coupled with years of labor” (Stieglitz 118). Stieglitz quotes Peter Henry Emerson, a great authority on the subject of photography.

Photography has been called an irresponsive medium. This is much the same as calling it a mechanical process. A great paradox which has been combated is the assumption that because photography is not ‘hand-work,’ as the public say—though we find there is very much ‘hand-work’ *and* head-work in it—therefore it is not an art language. This is a fallacy born of thoughtlessness. The painter learns his technique in order to speak, and he considers painting a mental process. So with photography, speaking artistically of it, it is a very severe mental process, and taxes all the artist’s energies even after he has mastered technique. The point is, *what you have*



**Fig. 4.** Stieglitz, Alfred. “Georgia O’Keeffe—Hands and Grapes.” Photograph. *Alfred Stieglitz*. N.p., 1921. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

*to say and how to say it.* The originality of a work of art refers to the originality of the thing expressed and the way it is expressed, whether it be in poetry, photography, or painting. That one technique is more difficult than another to learn no one will deny; but the greatest thoughts have been expressed by means of the simplest technique, writing. (Stieglitz 118)

Edward Weston remarks that each medium of expression imposes its own limitations on the subject, and that we select our medium because we feel that within the confines of that particular medium, we may best express whatever it is we have to say (Weston 170). Weston chose photography (*fig.5*); for him it provided “a means of looking deeply into the nature of things, and



**Fig. 5.** Weston, Edward. "Winter Idyll." Photograph. *Edward Weston*. N.p. 1945. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

presenting his subjects in terms of their basic reality" (Weston 174). He saw good composition not as a set of rules for photographers to follow, but as “the strongest way of seeing the subject” (Weston 175). Following rules of composition can only lead to a tedious repetition of pictorial clichés because “when subject matter is forced to fit into

preconceived patterns, there can be no freshness of vision” (Weston 175). He reasoned that those who practiced photography for its own sake and didn’t worry whether or not art was produced in fact created the most artistic works (Weston 171). Likewise, Stieglitz once wrote that, “the greatest work is being, and has always been done, by those who are following photography for the love of it” (Stieglitz 117).

The philosophy of female photographer Berenice Abbott is aligned with that of Weston and Stieglitz, especially the latter with his classification of the artist category of photographer,

though she remarks especially on the “selectivity” of photography as its ability to transcend its existence from just a “pretty picture” to a “significant document” (Abbott 183).

To define selection, one may say that it should be focused on the kind of subject matter which hits you hard with its impact and excites your imagination to the extent that you are forced to take it. Pictures are wasted unless the motive power which impelled you to action is strong and stirring. The motives or points of view are bound to differ with each photographer, and herein lies the important difference which separates one approach from another. Selection of proper picture content comes from a fine union of trained eye and imaginative mind. (Abbott 183)

Roland Barthes, the famed French philosopher and critic, has a name for the subject matter Abbott speaks of—he calls it the *punctum*, a Latin word describing “the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” (Barthes 26). The *punctum* is only one component of two in a photograph; the other half Barthes coined as the *stadium*, another Latin term meaning the vaguely important pull of a photograph for its historical, political, or cultural testimony—essentially the photograph’s genre (Barthes 26). All photographs have *stadium*, and thus provoke a “polite” interest from certain viewers, whose curiosities are heightened by the mere fact that the photograph falls within a genre in which they generally interested. The *stadium* is of the order of *liking* not of *loving* (Barthes 27). The *punctum* is what “disturbs” the *stadium* and makes the photograph interesting; as Barthes says, “a photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (Barthes 27).

An anonymous article entitled “Is Photography a New Art?” was published in the photographic journal *Camera Work* in 1908 that offered incredible insight and rationality in classifying photography as a fine art. The article offers more clarity on Weston’s definition of composition, stating it as “the esthetic quality which all fine arts must possess” (“Is Photography...” 137). The author points out the question being asked is whether photography is

one of the *fine* arts or not, though in trying to either prove or disprove this question the “disputants” always use painting to generalize resemblances or dissemblances between these arts and photography (“Is Photography...” 133). This is fallacious; the question is not, “is photography one of the *graphic* arts?” for it may be proven beyond a doubt that it is not, but status as a fine art does not necessarily follow status as a graphic art (“Is Photography...” 133). So what does?

The author enters a deductive discussion analyzing each of the fine arts. Music appeals to the sense of hearing with sounds as its symbol, and the elements of time and rhythm are important. Poetry is considered an entirely different art form but appeals in much the same way, with an element of thought involved that plays upon the sentiments. Painting appeals to the sense of sight with imitations of nature as its symbols, and the element of space is important. Sculpture is also visual, and the elements of space and time—the rhythmic appearing, changing, and disappearing of lines in successive views—are important. Dancing is much like sculpture, but time is equally important as it is in music (“Is Photography...” 134). The author concludes that the components of the fine arts are not completely different from one another, but that the proportions of their components vary in quantity (“Is Photography...” 135). “None of the fine arts possess all of the possible qualities, but each has at least one quality in common with another” (“Is Photography...” 135).

The author mentions a quality which all arts must possess—something termed “the personal touch” (“Is Photography...” 135). In painting the personal touch is the presence of “local touches and exaggerations,” marks bearing the stamp of human handiwork. In music the personal touch is the “fingertouch” of the player, for machines that exactly render a score cannot make music. In dancing the personal touch is the dancer, the human form. In oratory, the personal touch

is the personality of the person; it is given its own name—magnetism—and is of the utmost importance. In sculpture, the personal touch is similar to painting—small imperfections that simulate nature. Architecture does not have a personal touch and appeals to our emotions solely through proportion (“Is Photography...” 136). How then, do all fine arts need the personal touch and is architecture considered a fine art?

The author reasons that there are two classifications of the personal touch; the one referenced above is the corporeal touch (“Is Photography...” 136). The second kind of personal touch is “the true and philosophic meaning, namely, to create with the brain, and bring into concrete existence, through one or other of the physical organs, as by the hand” (“Is Photography...” 136). Creation by the brain and bringing into existence is another way of describing composition. The author of “Is Photography a New Art?” declares that, “man cannot truly create; but he can stick things together in such ways to illude (sic) into the belief that he has created; and it is this esthetic quality of composition which all the fine arts must possess, but is the only one which they must possess in common” (“Is Photography...” 137).

Weston once wrote that “to consult rules of composition before making a picture is a little like consulting the law of gravitation before going for a walk” (Weston 175). Though he achieved enormous success as a photographer and condemned the term “composition” as a set of rules, “Is Photography a New Art?” proposes some common sense practices for composing. The elements present should convey an idea to the mind of the spectator, and they should not be in a superfluous quantity so as to detract from the idea that is to



Fig. 6. Bresson, Henri Cartier. “Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare.” Photograph. *Art Blart*. N.p., 1932. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

be conveyed (“Is Photography...” 137). The elements present should lead the eye over the picture in such a way that there be presented an aesthetically logical sequence of facts. A composition is like an anecdote (*fig.6*); if different parts of the story are in a wrong sequence, or the raconteur adds or omits parts, the point is either entirely lost or marred (“Is Photography...” 137). Just as



**Fig. 7.** Gilpin, Laura. “The Hymn to the Sun.” Photograph. *Vintage Obscura*. N.p, 1925. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

Stieglitz said there was no scientific scale of values between highlights and shadows, “Is Photography a New Art?” argues that a composition is different than a scientific statement in which the facts may be stated in any order without destroying their truth; the truth of a composition “is purely dependent upon their special juxtaposition” (“Is Photography...” 137). This juxtaposition is the “strongest

way of seeing a subject” Weston noted and the “artistic instinct” of the artistic class of photographers (*fig.7*).

Psychologists will say that composition appeals to the subconscious part of the brain, and philosophers will say that a sense of absolute order exists somewhere within ourselves, and it is pleased or displeased depending on the presence of order or disorder in a work (“Is Photography...” 138). Therefore the only solid statement regarding composition is that “to compose is to give order” (“Is Photography...” 138). The other fine arts give order through lines and proportions in the case of the architect, through voice and physical stature for the orator, through lines and color and light for the painter, through sounds and silences for the musician (“Is Photography...” 138). “Where order has been produced, art has been produced”; if photography is capable of order it is therefore capable of art (“Is Photography...” 138).

In portraiture, a photographer exercises his sense of order in arranging his subject, the background, and the light. The critique is then that the subject is the actual work of art, and the photograph merely a picture of a work of art; however, if this were true, the portrait-painter who paints his subjects as realistically as possible is no more of an artist than the photographer (“Is Photography...” 138). The posing of a model is a means to an end, and both the portrait and the photograph are works of art. In landscapes (fig.8), order must be found in existing compositions presented by nature (“Is Photography...” 139). The credit for finding such a composition goes to the photographer, for it is just as difficult to see and grasp the meaning of a natural composition as it is to piece one together as a painter does (“Is Photography...” 139). Because a photograph can be a composition, it is capable of order, it is therefore art. It cannot be judged as a painting any more than can music or sculpture. “Photography is photography, neither more nor less” (“Is Photography...” 139).



**Fig. 8.** Adams, Ansel. “The Tetons and the Snake River.” Photograph. *Ansel Adams Gallery*. N.p, 1942. Web. 20 Feb. 2011.

#### *Conditional Clarity on when Photography is and is not Art*

Marius De Zayas was a Mexican-born writer for the same journal that “Is Photography a New Art?” was published in, *Camera Work* (Trachtenberg 125). He believed that Art was the expression of a concept or idea (De Zayas 125), and that imagination—“creative faculty”—was the principal law of Art (De Zayas 127). “Nature inspires in us the idea. Art, through imagination,

represents that idea in order to produce emotions" (De Zayas 125). He stated that the "circle of Art" has been completed by the human intellect, and that those searching for new inspiration in art are only following the line of the circumference; photography on the other hand, escapes through the tangent of the circle, and is as a result able to show a new way to progress in the comprehension of form, which De Zayas saw as the current purpose of Art (De Zayas 126). This new purpose for Art is because creative Art has disappeared—the circle has been completed—but the pleasure for Art is not extinct (De Zayas 127). In De Zayas's words, "Art presents to us what we may call the emotional or intellectual truth; photography the material truth," (De Zayas 129) which he attributes to the fact that the reality of Form can only be transcribed through a mechanical process, in which the influence of man is void (De Zayas 128). The magic of photography is in its ability to "draw away the veil of mystery with which Art envelops the represented Form" (De Zayas 129). Whichever way Art envelops the represented Form is what causes Art to make us feel emotions in the presence of a work that give insight into the emotions of the artist (De Zayas 129). Photography, on the other hand, teaches us to realize and feel our own emotions (De Zayas 129). De Zayas seems to be against the classification of photography as an art, but later in his essay he states that, "photography is not an Art, but photographs can be made to be Art" (De Zayas 130). Below is a chart of his philosophy with the left-hand column describing photography which may not be considered Art, and the right-hand column that which can.

<b>Photography</b>	<b>Artistic Photography</b>
Man tries to get at that objectivity of Form which generates the different conceptions that man has of Form (130)	Uses the objectivity of Form to express a preconceived idea in order to convey an emotion (130)
Process of indigitation—pointing out (130)	Means of expression (130)
Man tries to represent something that is outside of himself (130)	Man tries to represent something that is in himself (130)
Free and impersonal research (131)	Systematic and personal representation (131)
Photographer tries to get out of nature a true state of conditions (131)	Photographer uses nature to express his individuality (131)
Photographer expresses pure objectivity (131)	Photographer envelops objectivity with an idea, veils the object with a subject (131)
Aim of photographer: knowledge (131)	Aim of photographer: pleasure (131)

De Zayas's final words on the subject were that it is difficult to say which of the two sides of photography is more important; "for one is the means by which man fuses his idea with the natural expression of Form, while the other is the means by which man tries to bring the natural expression of Form to the cognition of his mind" (De Zayas 132). In splitting photography into two categories and specifically spelling out the criteria a photograph must meet to be included in one or the other, he has formed a complete definition of photography on the subject of Art.

## **Lomography**

"Lomography is a Magazine, a Shop, and a Community dedicated to analogue photography" ("About"). When confronted with the word Lomography, the majority of people will respond with the question, "What *is* Lomography?" This is an exceedingly difficult question to answer; Lomography is esoteric and intangible, best understood through experience and not simply text. The quote above services a relatively concrete definition, but it is by no means a

complete one. Generically speaking, Lomography refers to the photography that is created using Lomography products, which are all analogue. The name “Lomography” is derived from a camera manufacturer in St Petersburg, Leningradskoye Optiko Mechanicheskoye Obyedinenie (LOMO), who presented the world with a revolutionary camera (“Chapter 3...”).

### *A History of Lomography*

General Igor Petrowitsch Kornitzky, right-hand man to the USSR Minister of Defense and Industry, slammed a little Japanese compact camera onto the desk of his comrade Michail Panfilowitsch Panfiloff, the Director of the powerful LOMO Russian Arms and Optical factory. Panfiloff carefully examined the item, observing its sharp glass lens, extremely high light sensitivity and robust casing.

Realizing its potential, the two gentlemen gave orders to the LOMO PLC factory in St. Petersburg, Russia to create an improved version of the Cosina CX-1 – and the first working sample of the LOMO LC-A (*fig.9*) was born! (“Timeline”)



**Fig. 9.** “Lomo LC-A.” Photograph. *The Wide Lens Project*. N.p., 26 Nov. 2010.  
Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

This is the first entry in the Lomography Society International (LSI) timeline, for the birth of the LC-A camera is considered the first step towards the birth of the Lomographic movement. The

decision to improve upon the cheap Japanese Cosina CX-1 was in 1982 (“Timeline”), the same year the popular Holga camera was being produced in Hong Kong (LSI and Scott 10). These cheap, Asian cameras were first referred to as “soap dishes” by the Russians due to their plastic lenses (BBC) and would later inspire the extensive line of cameras created by the Lomographic Society. In the meantime, production of the LC-A, the “Lomo Kompakt Automat” or “Lomo” for short was at first solely for the Russian market; however, it soon expanded to other Communist countries such as the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even Cuba. After this success, the buzz about the LC-A soon simmered down and eventually production was stopped (“Russian Precision”).

In 1991, a group of Viennese students in Prague were travelling and two boys came across an old LC-A in a camera shop. They experimented with the camera—taking wild pictures of anything and everything—and upon returning to Vienna, developed their film. The students were impressed by what the camera had produced, as were their friends and family. The “happy accidents” produced by their LC-A compelled the students to found the Lomographic Society International in Vienna in 1992. Though the LC-A was out of production, the LSI founders dutifully scoured Russia to meet the demands for the camera. With the help of current President Vladimir Putin, a self-proclaimed Lomo user (Chen 4), in 1996 they convinced the LOMO factory heads to resume production of the LC-A, and the Lomography movement was born (“Russian Precision”).

## *The Lomography Philosophy*

In order to understand Lomography, it is absolutely essential to first understand its origins and the philosophy of its creators. The nonchalance and disregard of conventional photographic wisdom displayed by the Viennese students is at the very heart of the Lomography philosophy. There are two components that will clarify this creed: the Lomography Manifesto and the 10 Golden Rules.

The Lomography Manifesto was written by a devoted Lomographer in 1992 and became the first article published about Lomography when a Viennese newspaper, *Wiener Zeitung*, queried the Society as to what Lomography actually was. The manifesto begins by defining Lomography as “a consequence of an accidental meeting concerning the technical, economic, social, and artistic conditions,” that as such “had to be developed” (“Chapter 3...”). It then goes on to describe the specifications of the Lomo camera that characterize the Lomographic image, followed by the social and artistic atmosphere of the early nineties that allowed the LSI to flourish. The artistic climate consisted of two inverses, highly contrastable, due to the social climate. On one end there were the “elitist and in many respects holier-than-thou” cultural institutions such as theatres and museums that struggled to survive on their own or were subsidized by the State (“Chapter 3...”). At the opposite end were the artists who do not shy away from and sometimes emerge from the private sector. These artists have a grasp of art as a “neutral medium of expression.” The creative expressions that emerge from this group of artists go beyond their own commercial interests, and “therefore defy the sovereign State and its often seemingly medieval regulations (trade regulations, media laws) with pirate radio, graffiti, illegal placards and the like” (“Chapter 3...”).

The manifesto declares Lomography as “a fast, immediate and unashamed form of artistic expression,” available to the masses due to its freedom from economic and financial constraints (“Chapter 3...”). Lomography is a worry-free photography: “The essence of Lomographic methods lies in the short time it takes between discovering your motif and the exposure” (“Chapter 3...”). The “core of Lomography,” as stated in the manifesto, is clearest in its original form:

Slowly we are approaching the core of Lomography. Art work and constructing themes take a back seat. Photography is not thought up but emerges as a document and at the same time as an integral part of a situation. There are no “good” or “bad” photos only more or less “true,” “authentic” photos. This authenticity is achieved through almost mechanical, routine, and “thoughtless” snaps. What is important for Lomographers is that the paradox role of the smart voyeur may be captured at the centre of events.

The art of “junk,” the desire to publish, the joy in consumption and in alleged mass numbers (no motif is unworthy of being lomographed), the destruction of traditional practices (seriousness of art, privacy, classical aesthetics of photography etc) are the salt of Lomography, supermarkets are the butter and the LOMO LC-A is the bread. (“Chapter 3...”)

The manifesto’s final word on Lomography makes reference to its situation on the blurred boundaries “between public and private, between art, consumption and commerce, between the general and the specific,” and the ability of Lomographers and their Lomos to “stroll across these boundaries” (“Chapter 3...”).

The other, more famous and equally crucial aspect of Lomographic philosophy is the 10 Golden Rules. These Golden Rules essentially serve to number and clarify the Lomography Manifesto. And as the Golden Rules were written in 1992, when the original Lomo was the only camera associated with Lomography, they are tailored to and defined by the LC-A.

1. *Take your camera everywhere you go.* What better way to carry out the “core of Lomography” as proposed by the manifesto? One of the founders of the LSI stated that, “we like looking at very mundane things that are not that exciting in themselves but say something about the way we live our lives, and the society and surroundings we live in” (BBC). The elongated first rule proposes the idea that the best photos arise from “spontaneous, impulsive” situations and therefore often are not captured due to lack of a camera (“10 Golden Rules”). If a photographer follows this rule and always has his compact and fast LC-A on his person, he will enable the LC-A to work its magic—to touch “photographic spheres” that other cameras can’t, to capture “the most vibrant parts of life” (“10 Golden Rules”).
2. *Use it any time – day or night.* In tandem with the first golden rule, the second recalls to mind a primary reason for photographing—“conserving the present for your future” (“10 Golden Rules”). It also reminds us that our feelings, our memory, and our Lomographs all service a “new, complete, and more authentic view and perception” of us and our lives. It facetiously asks the question, “you don't only perceive in sunshine, daytime, on holidays and on Aunt Frida's birthday, do you?” (“10 Golden Rules”)
3. *Lomography is not an interference with your life but part of it.* “Life inhales Lomography and Lomography inhales life” (“10 Golden Rules”). Lomographers are not only photographing situations, they are an essential part of them. “Lomography is a powerful sign of your existence, a constant confession of your lust for life and a magnetic field of your most intense feelings” (“10 Golden Rules”).
4. *Try the shot from the hip.* This is perhaps the most important and unique rule of the ten. The Viennese students in Prague were the first to try this, and as they were amazed with

the results, so the concept became one of the Golden Rules. The shot from the hip epitomizes the goal or “core” of Lomography as a free form of expression; it allows the photographer to experience “absolutely free and boundless dimensions of sight” and to do away with the “nonsensical convention” of looking through the viewfinder that limits the perspective of a photograph (“10 Golden Rules”).

5. *Approach the objects of your Lomographic desire as close as possible.* The idea is that just as with people, building a relationship with one’s subject is important and that affection for said subject will be strongly reflected in the resulting image. “More communication equals better Lomography” (“10 Golden Rules”).
6. *Don’t think.* Instincts are meant to be followed in the world of Lomography, and one’s very first impressions are always the “brightest and clearest” (“10 Golden Rules”). A clear contradiction to the traditional photographic practice of composing an image, this rule holds high importance among the ten. “Lomography is a surprising diversion to your egghead-life and will enlighten you with true, simple and wonderful revelations” (“10 Golden Rules”).
7. *Be fast.* As the world moves fast, so should a Lomographer trying to capture it. The simplicity of the LC-A makes possible the ability to follow rules one and two, six and seven. “Hold your breath, be brave, take a chance, move, shoot, run, have fun, act fast – that’s Lomography!” (“10 Golden Rules”)
8. *You don’t have to know beforehand what you captured on film.* This is the rule most important to fully embracing the Lomo way of taking pictures and defining its unique aesthetic. Aside from the unreliable, inconsistent nature of the inexpensive Lomography cameras, at the heart of all analogue photography lies an innate lack of certainty that what

one meant to capture was indeed captured. Outside factors such as the film, the light, and how the film is developed means the control a Lomographer has over his film is intensely limited; he has even less control if any previous rules have been followed. It is necessary to embrace this lack of control. “Living with the LOMO LC-A means always living with unpredictability, uncertainty and coincidence; it is therefore living in freedom” (“10 Golden Rules”).

9. *Afterwards either.* “You'll never completely understand the world. But you'll understand your Lomographs even less!” Analyzing Lomographs defeats their purpose, which is to tell a story, to be “a constant record of your existence that illustrates the adventures of your life, in all its anomalies, moods, shapes, colours, faces and blurs” (“10 Golden Rules”).

10. *Don't worry about any rules.* Though this is a somewhat predictable and cliché final golden rule, in satirizing the ubiquitous doctrines in the minds of normal photographers, it holds much truth. If a Lomographer actively followed the Golden Rules, he would be contradicting at least a few of them, most notably “don't think.” The purpose of the final rule is to drive home the core of Lomography: freedom in expression. Don't think about the aforementioned rules (though ironically most devoted Lomographers do follow many, if not all, of the above rules). If there is no photographic precognition and the core of Lomography is fully grasped, the other rules will become natural. As the elaborated final rule states:

Don't listen to others; remain true to yourself, follow your inner Lomographic voice and never forget that not all that glitters is a golden rule. Discover your own Lomography, forget about your education, socialisation, indoctrination, knowledge and everything you've learned and not learned about photography. Set free your innermost desires, never stop

moving, never stop Lomographing; believe in yourself, focus on the important and not so important things, enjoy life in all its variations, forget about the camera in your hand and shoot 'til your eyes are glowing! ("10 Golden Rules")

### *Specifications of Lomography Cameras*

The quintessential Lomography camera is the original LC-A produced by the LOMO Factory in St. Petersburg; however, the Lomographic Society also manufactures its own line of cameras and accessories. The line is quirky and unpredictable, as to be expected from the Lomographic Society. They are all, of course, analogue cameras, and most are quite cheap in relation to a point-and-shoot digital camera. Most of the Lomography cameras are plastic, inspired by the "soap dish" Asian cameras that originally inspired the LOMO Factory to create the LC-A (BBC). The LOMO production of the LC-A ended in 2005, and a copycat Chinese camera, the Lomo LC-A+ was released in 2006 ("Russian Precision"). The LC-A+ had all the features of the original LC-A and some improvements, including an extended ISO range, the ability to exchange the back of the camera to allow for instant film photography, and notches along the lens to allow for a multitude of accessories to be fitted (fisheye lenses, filters, etc.) ("Russian Precision"). This new Lomo is at the higher end of the Lomography camera price range, with a price tag of about \$250 (LSI). It is there with several other Russian cameras—many of which are also difficult to manufacture or are out of production and extremely rare.

The cameras actually conceived and manufactured by the Lomographic Society are the cameras that have come to truly facilitate the fulfillment of the Lomography Manifesto and the 10 Golden Rules. Among them are fisheye cameras with a 170 degree view (*fig.10*). All fisheyes are plastic, ranging from \$40 to \$100 depending on the optional bells and whistles; the simplest

fisheyes do a fine job taking impeccably distorted pictures, and the more advanced offer features such as underwater shooting capability, multiple exposures (*fig. 11*), built-in flash, and a setting for long exposures (LSI).



**Fig. 10.** “Fisheye No 2 Rip Curl Special Edition.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 11.** “Fisheye No 2 Pink Edition Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

An extremely distinctive member of the Lomographic line is the multilens cameras, with four, eight, or even nine lenses that snap in sequence to create a unique amalgamation of images on a single 35mm negative. These too range from around \$30 for the basic cameras to \$60 for special edition releases (LSI). Figures 12-19 offer examples of these cameras. Even still there are panoramic cameras: a few that offer many options and adjustments, costing between \$325 and \$475; the Sprocket Rocket (*fig. 20*) that uses two exposures and the sprocket holes per panorama on a 35mm roll; and finally the Lomography Spinner (*fig. 21*), the only camera to include the photographer in every shot (*fig. 22*), with a 360 degree panorama produced simply by pulling a ripcord to turn the lens a full revolution and capture all surroundings, costing \$145 (LSI).



**Fig. 12.** “ActionSampler Clear.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 13.** “ActionSampler Clear Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 14.** “SuperSampler – Yu Bin (orange).” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

**Fig. 15.** “SuperSampler – Yu Bin (orange) Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 16.** “Oktomat.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 17.** “Oktomat Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 18.** “Pop 9 – Golden.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

**Fig. 19.** “Pop 9 – Golden Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.





**Fig. 20.** “Lomography Sprocket Rocket.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 21.** “Lomography Spinner 360°.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 22.** “Lomography Spinner 360° Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

These cameras pay homage to the Lomographic Society’s founders in their intrinsic ability to break free from the conventional and stimulate creativity; they each produce completely unique photographs that cannot be duplicated by a traditional analogue film camera. Though the aforementioned cameras are arguably the most innovative Lomography products, there are two plastic cameras that are nearly at the same level of fame as the LC-A.

The Diana (*fig.23*) and the Holga (*fig.25*) were both produced in Hong Kong, in the early 1960s and early 1980s, respectively (“History of the Diana”). They were made entirely of plastic except for the shutter, and took medium format 120 film. The Diana cost consumers about a dollar during its first years of production, and had two shutter speeds, three aperture settings, and manual focusing from about 1m to infinity (“History of the Diana”). The Diana did not see success as a mainstream product and production was discontinued in the 1970s. Though it was being surpassed in the East by 35mm film and Instamatic cameras, it quickly gained popularity

in the West with artists who were fascinated with the light leaks (*fig.26*), blurred and vignetted (*fig.24*) images, and the camera's general unreliability. As the camera surged into popular taste, price tags went from the original \$1 to around \$150 on Ebay ("History of the Diana").



**Fig. 23.** "Diana F+." Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 24.** "Diana F+ Ex." Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

The Holga camera was the answer to the Diana's discontinuation, and was also created in Hong Kong in 1982 as a cheap alternative for photo enthusiasts who wished to sample the expensive world of medium format film ("The Origin of the Species"). The name Holga is derived from the term *ho gwong* meaning "very bright" and making reference to the city lights of Hong Kong; it was later adapted to the present "Holga" to make it more European-sounding ("The Origin of the Species"). The Holga exhibited the same dreamy effects as the Diana; due to its plastic lens and body it allowed light to enter and vignetting to occur around the soft-centered focal point of the photograph. Its initial popularity was in the US and Asia, and wasn't written about in Europe until 1998 (LSI and Scott 12).



**Fig. 25.** “Holga CFN 120.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 26.** “Holga CFN 120 Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

The Holga was never discontinued like the Diana, it retained relative popularity until 2003, when the LSI put the Holga Starter Kit on the market and it became “world famous at last” (LSI and Scott 12). Today it is still a contradiction—a cheap, almost entirely plastic camera that takes professional quality, medium format film. Holga devotees still treasure the lo-fi dreaminess and traditionally “fatal defects” the camera produces (“The Origin of the Species”). To date, Holga exhibitions have been held in some of the most prestigious galleries around the world. Ironically, as cameras become more technical and automatic, the counterculture community of Holga users grows and grows (“The Origin of the Species”).

Diana on the other hand had to be completely rebuilt using a rare original as the model; “the color scheme was tweaked to get that crazy shade of blue just right. The lens was designed and tweaked about a thousand times to obtain that ‘perfectly imperfect’ mix of sharp, blurry, and ‘What the hell is that?’ looks” (“History of the Diana”). The Holga and the Diana F+ account for a large majority of the accessories on the Lomography Shop website; they are the most popular and therefore have the most options to accessorize. The Diana F+ has four optional lenses, a “splitter” (fig.27) that allows the Lomographer divide multiple exposures on a negative (fig.28) by means of a semicircle cutout, 35mm adapters, all sorts of flashes and filters, and even Diana

lenses that can be mounted on any digital SLR camera (LSI). The accessories for the Holga are equally numerous and varied to satiate any Lomographer's desire.



**Fig. 27.** "Diana+ Splitzer." Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 28.** "Diana+ Splitzer Ex." Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

Of course, what would these Lomography products be without film? The archaic member of photography is yet another vehicle for Lomography to exercise creativity. Lomography manufactures its own line of films for sale online and in stores, along with other leading names in film, such as Ilford and Kodak. Popular choices among Lomographers include slide films, redscale films, and even expired films. Under normal conditions, slide film must be professionally developed using a process called E-6, which is different than the one used for standard color film, called C-41; however, it may be processed in C-41—available at most drugstores—to yield profound color shifts and saturations (*fig.29*), generally in the blues (*fig.31*) or greens (*fig.33*) of a picture. Infrared films used in conjunction with a filter on the lens will produce stunning whites (*fig.30*) in black and white photography, and redscale films range from deep orange to yellow depending on the exposure (*fig.32*).



**Fig. 29.** “Lomography X-Pro Chrome 100 35mm Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 30.** “Ilford SFX 200 120 Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 31.** “Fuji Sensia 200 35mm Expired Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 32.** “Lomography Redscale 100 120 Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.



**Fig. 33.** “Lomography X-Pro Slide 200 35mm Ex.” Photograph. *Lomography Shop*. Lomographic Society International, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2011.

### *Lomography as Art*

It is logical to say that Lomography is a specific kind of photography, at least a branch or offset of it. This paper has thoroughly discussed various motives for photography and criteria under which it may be considered artistic. Does Lomography meet De Zayas’s criteria for artistic photography? May it only be created artistically by those with the rare combination of inherent ability and phenomenal technical skill? Does it exhibit composition and therefore order sufficient to merit its artistic status? The answer is no, not usually; yet, there is an undeniably aesthetic

appeal to Lomographs whether it is the saturated colors, vignetted corners and light leaks, soft focus and blurs, or weird combination of all of the above and maybe a fisheye or panorama.

Peter Henry Emerson is cited previously by Stieglitz as a great authority on photography. A photographer himself and a critic concerned with the status of art photography, he lived from 1856 until 1936 and was the first to assign different styles and purposes to artistic, scientific, and commercial photography (Trachtenberg 99). Emerson's work reflected his philosophy, and that was "direct artistic encounters with life" (Trachtenberg 99). His piece "Hints on Art" was obviously meant to be applied to photography, but bears an uncanny similarity to the Lomography attitude. It is not so much an essay as a list comprising several pages; selected are key hints that might as well be added to the Golden Rules.

Seize on any aspect of nature that pleases you and try and interpret it, and ignore—as nature ignores—all childish rules, such as that the lens should work only when the sun shines or when no wind blows. (Emerson 100)

If you decide on taking a picture, let nothing stop you, even should you have to stand by your tripod for a day. (Emerson 100)

Be broad and simple. (Emerson 101)

Be true to yourself and individuality will show itself in your work. (Emerson 101)

Avoid prettiness—the word looks much like pettiness—and there is but little difference between them. (Emerson 101)

The value of a picture is not proportionate to the trouble and expense it costs to obtain it, but to the poetry that it contains. (Emerson 102)

Keep rigidly within the limits of your medium, do not strive for the impossible, and so miss the possible. (Emerson 102)

Spontaneity is the life of a picture. (Emerson 102)

Art is not found by touring to Egypt, China, or Peru; if you cannot find it at your own door, you will never find it. (Emerson 103)

Without a doubt, if Emerson's opinion were the only one that mattered, Lomography would be considered art based on its philosophy alone; but alas, he is not. In Jonathan Friday's book *Aesthetics and Photography*, he recalls the first theoretical battles between photography advocates and critics. He says that there were two argumentative strategies the advocates used. The first involved arguing that because photography could produce pictures with the same sorts of aesthetically pleasing properties of other pictorial media, it should be considered continuous with these media, "not to be distinguished from them either in aesthetic kind or value" (Friday 1). The second strategy involved arguing that photography gave birth to a new way of making pictures that possessed aesthetically significant qualities that could *not* be possessed by other pictorial media, and as such has created a new art and distinctive medium for "artistic creation and aesthetic investigation" (Friday 1).

It was reasoned earlier in the paper that the most "aesthetically pleasing properties" that granted photography the status of art were those of composition ("Is Photography..." 136) and selection (Abbott 183)—the ability to choose a subject in nature that would strike an audience so as to evoke emotion from them. Can Lomography do this? Certainly; it would take an exceptionally fastidious critic to browse the photostream on the Lomography website and not find a single photo that evoked emotion, or demonstrated composition praiseworthy from the best of photographers. So, though one may argue the first strategy to validate Lomography as an art, it would be on a conditional basis.

The Lomography aesthetic is not entirely due to the application of its philosophy, but heavily relies on the use of Lomographic cameras, sometimes in conjunction with the

Lomography philosophy. Consider this situation: a photographer intensely strategizes and composes his photos and what they will mean—he is the antagonist of Lomography; however, if his subjects are captured on a Lomography camera, the quirks of whichever camera and film he employs will inevitably work their way onto his negative. It will be rife with distortions; sometimes his picture will be completely ruined due to a light leak, but sometimes, it will be enhanced to achieve a degree of appeal he could not have attained using anything but his Lomography camera. Under these conditions, Lomography falls under Jonathan Friday's second category: it possesses aesthetically significant qualities that cannot be possessed by other pictorial media, and as such has created a new art and distinctive medium for “artistic creation and aesthetic investigation” (Friday 1).

## Findings

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Conclusions based on research:

Whether photography and Lomography are considered art will always be on a conditional basis and will always come back to the idea that art is in the eye of the beholder. It can be logically reasoned that the fine arts have in common the idea of composition, the ability to give order (“Is Photography...” 138), and as photography has this ability, it is a fine art. Composition can be seen as a set of rules, or as “the strongest way of seeing a subject” (Weston 175). Regardless, a composition is only important to an audience if the piece exhibits *stadium* and *punctum*, terms offered by Barthes to refer to the general interest in a work due to its genre and the element(s) that make the work worth contemplating, respectively (Barthes 26). Marius De Zayas simply states this in a different way; he says that “photography is not Art, but photographs can be made to be Art” (De Zayas 130). Basically, that photography which exhibits a *punctum*, which transcends representation of a subject into a means of expression for something emotional and meaningful, is Art. As Lomography is first and foremost photography, these same ideas for meriting artistic status should apply; however, the question then is whether Lomography’s nonconformist philosophy should automatically exclude it from these artistic discussions—if it isn’t trying to be art, why should it be given consideration as art?

Whether it is art or not, Lomography is a photographic movement that has caused a resurgence of interest in analogue photography and shows no signs of slowing down. In late March of 2010, an article was posted in the online Lomography magazine entitled “Spread the Word about Lomography: Help Us Reach 50,000 Members!” and by mid-April another was posted boasting “Lomography is Now 65,000 Members Strong!” Likewise, the Lomography Facebook page went from 100,000 fans in late May 2010 to 200,000+ in mid-November 2010 (LSI). Exactly three months later, an article was posted announcing that the Facebook page had

## Findings

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surpassed 230,000 fans (LSI). Lomography has Gallery Stores in fourteen cities worldwide and Embassy Stores in twenty-nine cities, together spanning six continents (“Worldwide”).

Questions which remain:

As I finish this project, I have many questions left that I was unable to answer through my research. When I began the project my intention was to get right to the bottom of how and why humans respond aesthetically to art, with more of a case study in photography and Lomography. I changed my mind quickly though, and decided not to delve quite so deep; however, this is still an important issue. Why do we respond aesthetically to images, and is it even possible to react to images unaesthetically? More specifically related to my topic, what exactly are the properties of Lomographs that allow us to respond aesthetically to them?

Something else I found interesting throughout my research was the potential discrepancy between what Lomography strives for and how its goals are actually perceived and practiced by the Lomographic and worldly communities. In other words, though the Lomographic movement is characterized as a counterculture movement that laughs at pre-established doctrines about how to photograph, is it really much different in the end, given that people do respond aesthetically to Lomographs, much in the same way they would respond to a work of art fashioned by traditional means? With that in mind, it is important to consider where the significance of Lomography lies. Does it have exceptional aesthetic qualities to stir the timeless arguments surrounding the arts, or does its importance lie with society as a socio-cultural movement—or perhaps both at the same time? Photography has been fighting to gain artistic status since its creation, whereas Lomography is not created to be art; the goal is not to make a pretty photograph, but to capture scenes of our lives the way they really are, and to relish the results no matter what. Nowhere in

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the Lomography Manifesto, Golden Rules, or on any website or microsite produced by the Lomographic Society is there a mention of artistic intentions. If Lomography is not trying to be art, why should we be contemplating it as such?

The scope of Lomography as demonstrated above is growing rapidly; this is especially noteworthy considering the concurrent growth of digital media—which refers to a host of things especially relevant to Lomography, including digital cameras and digital editing software. The constant evolution of photography, particularly in the digital arena, made this paper extremely difficult to write. As I compiled the body I felt myself questioning the legitimacy of many of my arguments while considering ideas of digital media. In my paper I choose to focus on analogue photography, for that is what Lomography is. I chose articles and essays pertaining to photography's artistic merits before the advent of digital cameras, cells phones, and digital editing software. A paper that encompassed digital photography as well as analogue in the aesthetic discussion would have required a substantial amount of additional research, and I chose to limit the scope of my paper so that I could thoroughly research the area most specifically related to Lomography. To future scholars I would absolutely recommend incorporating digital photography into their research—what is the attraction to digital photography and the underlying reasons for its success? If it was argued in Daguerre's day that photography was too mechanical to be an art, what do present day art scholars have to say about digital photography?

Another issue connected to my topic that interested me is photo editing software. Programs like Photoshop can impair photography's integrity as a representational medium. I mentioned in my body some modern applications of photography, such as the idea of photography as identification. Given that it is near common knowledge that anyone with access to Photoshop can doctor a photograph, be it for an official document or Facebook profile, how reliable is

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photography nowadays? Photoshop also renders obsolete the crux of many of the arguments in the body of my paper, most notably that of composition. With Photoshop, anyone can now crop and modify any picture to enhance the *punctum* of the photograph so that it may be construed as art. What are the ramifications for photography and subsequently art of programs such as Photoshop?

Along those same lines is the idea that programs like Photoshop also threaten the integrity of Lomography as a unique form of photography. Google has its brand of photo editing software named Picnik, where a user can upload a photo and add filters or effects to change the appearance of the picture, much like Photoshop. There is a whole slew of effects that could be classified as Lomographic characteristics—vignetted corners, soft-focus centers, cross processed and infrared film—but most notably there are filters specifically named “Holga-ish” and “Lomo-ish.” These effects are fundamentally different than Lomography because they are calibrated to produce similar results no matter the image to which they are applied, whereas the appearance of “effects” vary significantly from Lomograph to Lomograph and depend on a number of factors; however, does this mean that the future of Lomography is at stake as computer programs become better and better at replicating their “unique” effects?

Furthermore, there is a company called Lensbaby that manufactures lenses and digital camera optics that are meant to create the same Lomographic effects for digital cameras. Lensbaby is essentially Lomography simplified; it offers the perks and quirks, but none of the wait or anticipation. The only difference is that Lensbaby lenses are made for digital SLR cameras, which often cost upwards of a thousand dollars. The company is only seven years old—how many years will it be until this technology is adapted to point and shoot digital photography?

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Finally, the idea of cell phone photography was in the back of my mind throughout this project. Cell phone cameras pertain to my research in two ways. The first is that they fulfill the first Golden Rule of Lomography—take your camera everywhere you go—and subsequently almost all of the other nine. This clearly threatens the integrity of Lomography as a distinct way of photographing; even more so when one considers apps on smartphones such as Hipstamatic, which serves as a mobile phone Photoshop of sorts and advertises that “digital photography never looked so analog.” Secondly, by virtue of the fact that most cell phones are equipped with digital cameras, most cell phone owners are also photographers. This constitutes an entire population involved in the quotidian photography that is almost always distanced from artistic photography, and it is a very large group of people—perhaps many more than the group that engages in photography for other purposes discussed in my project. What fuels our obsession with images, and is it something *a priori* or something that we are conditioned towards, as members of a consumer society rife with images?

Implications and recommendations:

Cyrenaic Hedonism is the proper term for the school of thought engineered by Aristippus between 435 and 350 BCE. Aristippus rationalized that immediate pleasure was natural for man and should therefore be embraced; the crux of his philosophy is that life should be full of pleasure—live it up. There is a general consensus that our society, particularly my generation, has become more Hedonistic, and that the trend will only increase. The question is whether we are inherently Hedonistic, and how the evolution of technology, including photographic technology, is a ramification of this. With its philosophy the Lomographic movement is in effect taking a stand against technology, but there are aspects of Lomography that are ironically quite

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Hedonistic. The idea that to be a Lomographer is to nonchalantly and unremittingly capture the world around oneself is not exactly the same instant gratification of digital photography, which produces the final product—the photograph—immediately; however, the constant act of being absorbed in the serendipitous is in a way its own sort of immediate pleasure-seeking.

Another ethical theory that is relevant to my project is Utilitarianism, specifically the school of Utilitarianism called Qualitative Hedonism. This theory was realized by a man named John Stuart Mill in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It disagrees with the Cyrenaic Hedonism of Aristippus; Mill believed that sensual pleasure alone put us on the level of a pig, and that through social consensus we are able to recognize the higher faculties which separate us from the pig. The concept of social consensus is very important when considering anything as a movement, as Lomography is being considered in my project. It is through social consensus that the standard of art has been defined and the progression of technology has occurred, and it will be through social consensus that Lomography will triumph or fail as an artistic and/or socio-cultural movement. Mill also held that the greatest good came from benefitting the greatest number of people by the greatest degree; this goes hand in hand with the idea of social consensus in the photographic world. As digital photographic media and counterculture analogue movements such as Lomography contemporaneously grow in popularity, how long will it be until these fundamentally different philosophies inherent to each clash, or will they ever? Will one render the other obsolete because of its ability to “benefit” the greatest number of people by social consensus? Another duality of photography this impacts aside from analogue and digital is the fundamental purpose of photography as art or as a quotidian activity—which will triumph in years to come as the most popular type of photography, as determined by social consensus? There are many studies that compare and contrast digital and analogue photography, but I

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propose that future scholars pursue the topic of comparing digital and analogue photographers—what one's choice of medium says about him, and when referring to a group such as the Lomography community, our society as a whole.

Lastly the Stoicism school of thought also bears some relevance to my project. Around 50 CE a disabled slave named Epictetus founded the principles of Stoicism, which state that tranquility, serenity, and composure are the best way to live one's life. This school of thought emphasizes commanding one's desires rather than allowing them to rule oneself, which is essentially opposite of Hedonism. Those who partake in analogue photography are in a way actively practicing the Stoic philosophy. Assuming humans are of a Hedonistic nature, someone who willfully chooses to shoot a roll of film, which could take any amount of time to complete, then get it developed, which could take anywhere from an hour to several weeks, are either blissfully unaware of digital photography's existence or extremely patient and enamored with analogue photography. An interesting research project would be to study the underlying motives of one who indulges in analogue photography—do his reasons stem from a psychological state of nonconformity, a refusal to accept new technology, or something else? The fact that Lomography is somewhat archaic technologically, yet, continues to amass a cult following speaks volumes—but what is it saying about us as a human race? As individuals? As photographers? As consumers? A topic I would like to see pursued is the paradoxical rise in popularity of Lomography in a society increasingly busy and captivated by new technology.

To future scholars wishing to follow up on my project I would propose any one or any combination of the directions proposed in the previous pages. Lomography is not a well-documented topic; in my paper I was able to discuss it simply as a photographic movement and a branch of analogue photography. To future scholars I would recommend delving into the idea of

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Lomography as a social movement—motives for investing in an archaic technology and what it says about those who participate. Perhaps Lomography could be studied in conjunction with vinyl records as a look into media formats that have resurged in the present youth culture—the “hipster” movement. I would also suggest an inquiry into the specific aesthetic values to which we as humans are drawn. This is perhaps the area that needs the most research before many subsequent topics may be pursued, such as the artistic merits of Lomography that I touched upon briefly in my own project.

## Outcomes

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This project has undoubtedly been the most challenging part of my high school career. For me, the Global Scholars Program was intellectually satiating and fairly relaxed throughout junior year, and then struck with a vengeance senior year; however, I am pleased to say that the program has not only allowed me to become well acquainted with my shortcomings, but it has also been an enormous source of fulfillment, academic curiosity and confidence, and pride.

My greatest limitation of this project was myself. I have always been one to procrastinate and generally get away with it. I knew that would not work for this project; yet, I just could not motivate myself to begin work this year. When I chose my topic at the beginning of junior year, I was enthralled and quickly found many books and articles relating to my topic. I spent the summer in France and was unable to work, and when senior year started I had nothing except a bibliography. I did the majority of my research the week before the paper was due, while I was writing the paper. I truly wish I had begun much sooner than I did; once I started reading, I became excited by my topic again and I remembered why I had chosen it in the first place. If I had done my research earlier, I would have had time to do more research as I was writing the paper, and perhaps delved into my Findings section. I am still very proud of my project and I believe it to be of a high quality, but it is not my best work.

My writing has most definitely improved through this project. The more I wrote, the more natural my words and sentences flowed. My ability to think deeply about a topic also improved astronomically through this project. Some of my readings were of a very intellectual, philosophical nature, and I had much trouble understanding them at first; however, it soon became second nature to not only understand them, but think and write about them in the same manner.

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What I did right on this project and what I did wrong are ironically intertwined. I think my greatest strength was in organizing my paper logically to facilitate the best understanding by my audience. As mentioned earlier, my procrastination was my greatest vice on this project. When I sat down to write the paper, I believe I spent several days just turning ideas in my head on where to start and how to structure everything. So, to facilitate my procrastination and to ignore the work ahead of me, I busied myself with planning the true outline of the paper. I also believe I did a good job choosing a topic that sustained my interest; I could not imagine having to do this project on something I was anything less than passionate about. To an extent I saw this paper as my final opportunity to work with some of the humanities subjects that I love—art and philosophy—before college commands my free time to pursue such interests.

As long as I am a student I do not see myself eradicating procrastination from my life; however, perhaps the next time I have a project of this kind I will remember my enjoyment I had once I became immersed in the topic and get myself to that point sooner. Though this project has been a great source of pride for me, it has also embarrassed me by allowing my long-ignored faults to surface and eat away at my progress.

The fact that the project is over is bittersweet. I was the first person to condemn those who were writing sixty pages; yet, for every book I read there were two more pertaining to my topic, and if I had given myself ample research time, I'm sure I could have researched this topic to world's end. On the other hand I am completely relieved to be finished with this project, and I will gladly write future term papers knowing that they are an infinitesimal fraction of the work involved with the Global Scholars project. The project was most definitely a struggle, but I have succeeded, and for that I am extremely happy and extremely proud.

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