



The Polaroid Book

(Taschen)

You'd have thought that with the onslaught of the digital revolution where every phone, fridge and blender seems to have a camera built into them, that the bygone age of the instant Polaroid image was well and truly buried. This book not only begs to differ but glasses that idea and then delivers a swift crotch-bound knee.

While many believe that the essence of Polaroid is yanking the photo out of the camera and giddily waving it about, waiting for the ghostly images to emerge from the white-bordered fog, there is a slew of artists that would tut that notion. Edwin H Land founded the Polaroid Corporation shortly after the Second World War and after inventing instant photography, spent the rest of his life perfecting it. The obvious way was through trial within the photographic realm but it was through artistic inquiry that the product began to really push the envelope. From early on the corporation saw the benefit of given hyper-imaginative artists their products to experiment with as there were an obvious lure of the product for artists – instant results. Thus began the Polaroid collection and this book contains 287 of those photographs.

Warhol, Mapplethorpe and Hockney all get a look in here with self-portraits, topless fellas and a collage, I think you can guess who did what. Obviously instant imaging removes any potentially awkward moments at the chemist's counter, so there is a number of nudes and self-portraits, but the really alluring images are the heavily worked ones. Manipulating the emulsion and chemicals to produce ethereal abstract moments, taking advantage of the chemical potential when presented on a slab of plastic, these are the moments that create images that leave you staring.

Another stand out moments is Bruno Bourel's study of, what appears to be bus livery. The simple bold geometric thrusts of the graphics sit perfectly in a grid of nine, all daring each other on, all speedy optimism and colourful angles. While Mark Klett's textural ice caves and Ansel Adams' waterfall reflect a purer photography of delicately constructed natural landscapes executed sublimely in black and white.

While rather a haphazard collection of images it stands testament to artistic experimentation granted by the revolutionary product's attributes, a product so successful it finds itself among the few branded names to enter the English language.

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