

Polaroid Moments

Date : February 24, 2010



A recent article in The Nation magazine (Feb. 11/18) by Barry Schwabsky called ["How Soon Was Now?"](#) called my attention to current interest in the fate of the Polaroid (the last batch of the famous instant film expired on October 9, 2009). Schwabsky reviews two recent London gallery exhibits--at the [Pump House Gallery](#) and at [Atlas Gallery](#)--that showcased the art world's uptake of the

vernacular medium. He has insightful things to say about the unique materiality of Polaroids, which returned photography to its pre-negative roots through the creation of singular, one-off objects. No doubt the current, somewhat nostalgic interest in the format stems in part from the ease of multiplying digital images, which also provide the satisfaction of instant photographic gratification but not the tactile qualities of the Polaroid (with its just-below-the-surface squish of chemical emulsion).

Although there are indications that an independent group may be trying to revive the technology in a former Polaroid factory in Holland, a separate channel of interest survives among casual collectors of found images/objects (who have their own web presence at sites like [Found Magazine](#) , where users can upload, share, and tag their street-side instamatic finds, and which published a book of found Polaroids a few years back--the cover of which is above).

And now, in the wake of bankruptcy brought on by a Ponzi scheme, the defunct Polaroid Corporation is being forced to auction off a major portion of its historic collection of prints through Sotheby's in New York this June (see the recent [New York Times](#) article).

Like the resurgent interest in vinyl, these developments remind us of the limits of the digital and to never count out passé media.