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Lomography: Rediscovering Film

04/02/12 **Kastle Waserman** | specs+spaces Reporter, Dunn-Edwards Corporation

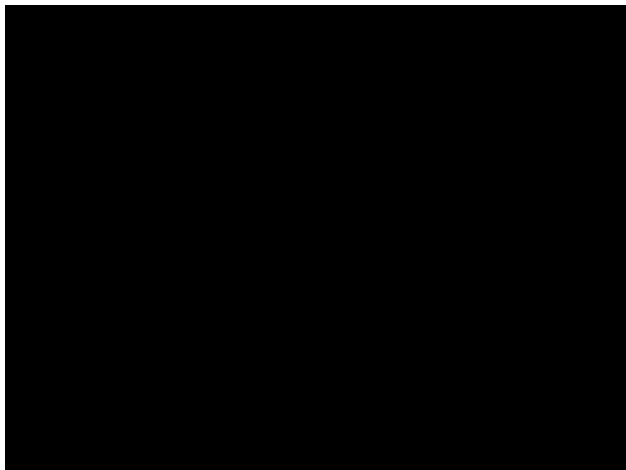
The first time I walked into a Lomography store was for a party – the night featured an Italian theme to launch a product called the La Sardina, which I discovered was a funny little [camera shaped like a can of sardines](#). When I entered the space, I couldn't help but notice a large table in the middle of the room covered in candy-colored cameras laid out buffet-style, beckoning me to pick one up and ask, "What are these?" Party guests and store workers swirled around me taking snaps with cameras of all shapes and sizes but you couldn't see the digital image instantly on the back, no, this was film. Film? Do people really use that anymore?



My questions weren't uncommon, neither was a party in a Lomography store, what better place to take pictures? It wasn't long before I went back and bought a bright pink Fisheye camera to try out. When I saw what it could do, I was hooked – images with unusual textures, blurred lighting, unexpected perspectives and sometimes out of focus, but somehow that made them even more interesting. These photos had personality. This is Lomography.

The concept of Lomography came about in the early '90s when some backpacking Austrian students stumbled upon an antique 35mm Russian LOMO LC-A camera in a thrift store. When they loaded it up with film and saw the photos that came out, they wanted to turn the world onto LOMO-graphers. They eventually obtained the rights to license the camera and began opening stores. Then came new designs and new models, each producing a unique photographic effect from the quirky circular image of the Fisheye, to square format dreamy look of the Diana Mini. The variety of options makes the cameras downright addictive, whether purchasing them to see what it does to the photos to purchasing them as collector's items because the camera's exterior designs are so innovative.

See a quick explanation:



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CATCHING LOMO FEVER

I sat down with the Melissa Chavez, store manager of Lomography LA (pictured above with store staffer Hana) and asked, "What it is about these cameras that's so irresistible?"

"As soon as you pull one out, it looks different. People instantly ask what it is and if it really works. They can't believe it's film. It really gets people talking. And the product is really creative right down to the packaging. In addition to what the cameras can do, it's really fun to collect something just based on esthetics. I have five Diana F+ cameras and each one is different and special to me."



INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Most of the designs are limited edition, so there really is a sense of urgency to get the latest model. The most popular cameras include the founding [LC-A](#), the [Diana F+](#) with its variety of options from film backs (120 and 35mm) to lenses (Regular, Fisheye, Super-Wide Lens, Wide-Angle Lens + Close-up, Telephoto), the [La Sardina](#) point and shoot with wide angle lens, and the [Lubitel](#) with its glass lens and manual settings. The most recent release is the [LomoKino](#), a breakthrough in Lomography that allows users to create 40-second silent films on 35mm film, which opens up moviemaking to all of the same wondrous looks of the Lomo cameras from leaky lighting effects to colorful cross-processing. Take a look:

The Lomography LomoKino from [Lomography](#) on Vimeo.

DON'T THINK, JUST SHOOT

Once you buy the cameras, there is a wealth of information and support to help you learn about this new way of looking at the world. The [Lomography store in Los Angeles](#) is a big loft-like space with an upstairs lounge where they offer workshops almost every Saturday to teach techniques and tips. "We don't just give you instructions and say good-luck. We go out and shoot." Attendees are given a loaner camera, accessories and a roll of film, then set out together at different locations around Los Angeles to snap at anything that grabs their attention. The instructor provides advice along the way, shouting out prompts like "Get really close to the subject! Try a double exposure!"



ENDLESS INSPIRATION

In addition to workshops, the store also hosts events such as film screenings of movies with a photography theme. And did I mention the parties? Regular festive celebrations take place to help launch a seemingly endless release-cycle of new camera editions. All of the events are intended to help build a community, encourage patrons to take pictures and help free-up would-be Lomographers into thinking in a new way. The motto is "Don't Think, Just Shoot." After all, this is analogue photography, it's not meant to be complicated. They also offer the [10 Golden Rules of](#)

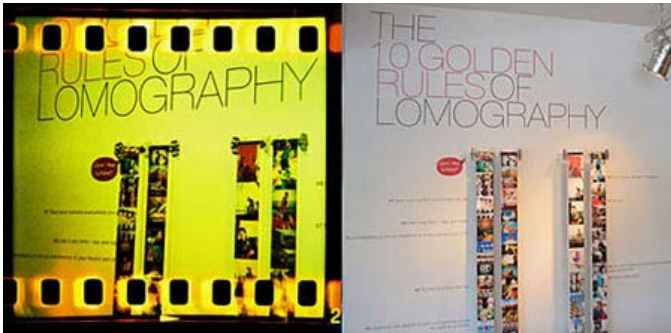
[Lomography](#) as a guideline which includes suggestions such as, "Take Your Camera Everywhere" and "Shoot from the Hip" to keep Lomographers chronicling their lives from unique angles in all kinds of ways.

COMMUNITY OF THE CREATIVE

And the Lomography community is ravenous for images, both their own and others. Everyone wants to see how their film comes out and the support extends beyond the store to the online world – Lomography.com is a place to not only learn about the camera and tips but a place where users can start their own LomoHome page to post their images for others to see and comment on. (All Lomography can be digitized during the processing for uploading onto the web, including the LomoKino short films.) They can also contribute "Tipsters" on things they've learned to do with the cameras and "LomoLocations" articles of places they've shot. Online Lomographers are quick to respond to newly uploaded images and are surprisingly supportive, as Michelle says, "because it's so cool to meet other people who are into these cameras like you are – and that person could be in a completely different country, but you connect based on your love of film."

LOMOGRAPHY VS. DIGITAL

So are Lomographers out to create an analogue revolution over film? "No," says Michelle. "We're not saying digital will ever go away but this just gives you another option."



Lomography image vs. digital image

And what about apps like Instagram that provide similar effects to digital photos? "It's funny, because that app is trying to recreate film and it actually brings more people in the store," says Michelle. "I heard someone once say, 'if you want the look of film, shoot film,' and that makes me laugh. A lot of professional photographers who shoot digital come in here and purchase these little cameras because they want something different. For people who are film purists, this is a safe haven for them, and for people who want to try it, we welcome them with open arms."

See examples of some Lomography

Photos by Kastle Waserman

For more on Lomography visit Lomography.com or one of their many stores around the world.

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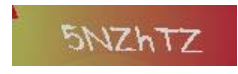
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