



FLORIAN KAPS

POLAROID
THE MAGIC MATERIAL

ART

Despite the questionable financial success of our gallery project Polanoir, I still believe that Polaroids should be among the most valuable treasures on the art market, not only because of their magic but because they are the only photographs that are not reprints but originals. Here are some favourite images from artists who started to discover Polaroid at about the same time that I did. (Left) Spittocco.

A new generation of artists were discovering Polaroid material. This time they were not searching for perfection or using Polaroids for fast test shots. This time it was all about the chemical adventures, reinterpreted in a digital world. Painting with light, never in control of the medium, diving deep into the real soul of Polaroid. I can hardly describe how good it felt for me to look at these images and to sense that for the very first time Polaroid was finally accepted the way it has always been.

For me, one of the leading roles in this new movement was taken by Stefanie Schneider, a German photographer and friend who has my true respect and admiration for starting an intense relationship with expired Polaroid film. She inhaled and almost melted into this unpredictable material, creating a whole world painted in its warm pastel colours and flaring artefacts. This world is centred on the desert town of Palm Springs and even now, many years after she started on her road trip, her images have not lost any of their urgency. Her worldwide success was a big support on my mission to fight against the fading of Polaroid's magic.

Annika von Taube brilliantly described Schneider's work in her article 'Memory Overexposed':

Photographer Stefanie Schneider takes our memories into the light. Bleached out colours slyly seduce, overexposures disguise, and blurred outlines arouse the impression that these Polaroid images have been uncovered in a dusty photo album on the attic floor – our own . . . The pictures retrieve memories – of hot sand under your feet, of untroubled happy moments of doing nothing at all . . . Memory is imperfect. It has gaps and tears. It's exactly the same for the film material used for these photos, which appear so immediate but are actually carefully staged. Polaroid film is used and its expiration date is so far gone that chemical reactions bring out visible damage to the material in its printing. Thus the Polaroid film's ageing progress and its expiration go from being the epitome of holding onto fleeting moments to an image of our memory. It's not a reference to that which we remember, but rather to how we remember – it becomes an illumination of memory.



Stefanie Schneider.

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