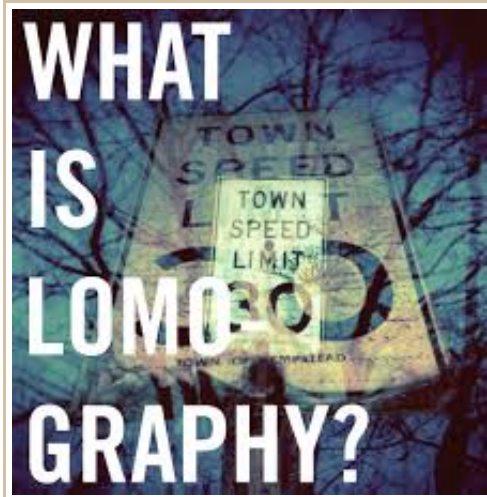


Lomography: the work of (photographic) art in the age of mechanical reproduction



In the 1936, the critic and philosopher [Walter Benjamin](#) wrote the essay “[The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction](#)” about the consequences on our culture and perception caused by new media and technologies of his times.

How can an essay wrote almost 80 years ago help us understanding a contemporary and successful brand as [Lomography](#)?



Lomography is a brand, a community and a peculiar way to think about photography in the 21th century. The [myth](#) of this brand start in the 90s, when a group a student from Vienna stumbled upon the Lomo Kompakt Automat – a small, enigmatic Russian camera. They started taking pictures and, when they developed the film, they were amazed from the colours, the textures and the quality of the photos. From that moment the group decided to use that camera to create a different way to think about photography, giving birth to Lomographic Society International (LSI) based on 10 easy rules:

1. Take your camera everywhere you go
2. Use it any time, day and night
3. Lomography is not an interference in your life, but a part of it
4. Try the shot from the hip
5. Approach the object as close as possible
6. Don't think
7. Be fast
8. You don't have to know beforehand what you captured on film
9. Afterwards either
10. Don't worry about any rules.

From the 2001, already in the digital camera era, this brand opened several stores, proposing a return to analogue through the reproduction of famous cameras as Lc-A, Diana, Holga and Lubitec+. On the strength of their success, in 2008 the were able to affirm that “The future is analogue”.

But Lomography is not just a brand, is a community of people sharing the same taste for roll films and for peculiar graphic effect, while the mainstream is focused on digital photos and photo editing. That is why it is important to see some of the “unofficial” campaigns realised by Lomography fan designers and some agency-made adverts:



by Bates141 Jakarta



by Dan Rigdway



However, why did we say that to understand a part of this brand success we can consider Benjamin's position?

Briefly, the main thesis of Benjamin's essay consist in the idea pursuant to with the (potentially unlimited) reproduction of a photographic work we loose its aura, the *hic et nunc* of an art work, its unique and unrepeatable existence in the place where it stands. The term "aura" summarises the authenticity and the authority of a work, that is its skill to be a historical statement, which can exist just in the spatial and temporal uniqueness. The end of the "aura" means the finish of the relation among distance, uniqueness and duration which were our way to front to the traditional art works, and the starting of a fruition of art based on a fleeting and repeatable observation of reproductions.

However Benjamin was speaking in a time when photography could exist only as analogue. What happened when the digital came?

Digital photography releases users from the costs of development (aside the cost of camera and laptop), from the "mistakes" in our everyday photos trough the possibility to check immediately if we like it, from the reality of the subjects through the photo manipulation. We use to have hundreds of photos of the same subject, to think about the possible modifications with Photoshop while we are shooting. With the Internet and the Social Networks the reproduction is potentially unlimited.

And here comes Lomography. In our contemporary society, analogue can almost be considered as the lowest level of reproduction, a developed photo as something unique, impossible to recreate with its texture and its physicality. After the digital, the idea to reprint the negatives looks like something weird: why to save the negatives, to have to pay again the development and have to to send the photos by post or personally, while we can have and share the same photo unlimited times with our laptop and for free?

In this way, back to analogue means back to something unique, something from the origin, something true. You can add effects to your shoots, but you have to prepare them before, there is no post-production. In this way, the rules 8 and 9 become the most important in the opposition with the biggest enemy of the brand. Go back to analogue means to go back to unique moments, unique shoots. It doesn't mean that analogue works have gained their "aura" again, but that, in relation with the digital, they look like with more "aura". That is why some fans are speaking about "originality", "authenticity", "eternity", "uniqueness" as in the advertising we have shown before.

However it is impossible for a brand be totally outside from the cultural trends of a society and that is why Lomography has found a middle point between the pure analogue and the digital: when you develop your rolls in Lomography's shops, you can choose to have a digital version of your pics too. In this way you can continue to share them on the social networks (and one is created by the own brand) or send them to your friends. However this digital versions of analogue pics are only copies with something missed, are not able to reproduce the same feelings of the original ones, made in peculiar ways with special textures and colours, as well the printed photos are just copies of digital texts.

We don't know if the future is analogue, but we are sure it will be bright for Lomography.

Here some pics shot with a Lomography camera (and digitalised):



Taken by ihave2pillows with a Canon EOS Series loaded with Lomography X Tungsten film



Taken by tiano with a Lomo LC-A+ loaded with Lomography X Tungsten film in Podersdorf, Austria.



Taken by hodachrome with a Holga 120 GN loaded with Kodak Portra800 film in Aichi, Japan



Taken by kylethefrench with a Vivitar Ultra Wide & Slim loaded with fuji superia film in Connecticut, United States



Taken by jeabzz with a Lomo LC-A+ loaded with Agfa CT Precisa film) in San Francisco, United States.



Taken by hanshendley with a Lomo LC-A+ loaded with Lomography X-Pro Chrome 100 (35mm) film in United States.



Taken by hanshendley with a Lomo LC-A+ loaded with Lomography X-Pro Chrome 100 (35mm) film in United States.



Taken by undiscovered with a Lomography Sprocket Rocket loaded with Lomography X-Pro Slide 200 ISO (35mm) film in Ghent, Belgium.



Taken by zwensen with a Lomography Sprocket Rocket loaded with DM Paradies Dia 100 film in Germany.



Taken by mune316 with a Lomography Sprocket Rocket loaded with Lomography RedScale film in putra jaya, Malaysia.

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