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Polaroid 2.0. Photo-Objects and Analogue Instant Photography in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Abstract: The article focuses on the reconfiguration of analogue instant photography (Polaroid-like) in the digital age. Drawing on STS literature on the mutual shaping of users and technology, and on anthropology and the history of photography, it adopts the concept of "photo-object" to discuss how the digitalization of photography stimulated a change in the cultural significance of materiality in the context of aspirational amateur photography, thus showing how this triggered a redefinition of instant photography as a more authentic form of aspirational practice. The article is based on empirical data collected during a multi-sited ethnography conducted in Italy between 2014 and 2015. By focusing on Polaroid's "objectness" and its dialectical tension with the immateriality of digital photography, the paper highlights an increasingly common process of circulation between analogue and digital photographic environments and argues that this process of circulation can be conceived in terms of a "remediation" process between analogue and digital practices.

Keywords: Polaroid; photo-object; multi-sited ethnography; technological resistance; remediation.

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His instant photography hangs in numerous places around our office and home. Whenever there's an event or outing and Jonny is around you're sure to get a lasting memory... J: Instant photography is the most accessible medium to get

into! Anyone can do this. Whether your an amateur or a pro... that's what I love about it. Chances are you already have one of these laying around somewhere or your parents do or a friend has one on their shelf gathering dust. The reality is, most people I know can't afford that \$30,000 Phase One digital back you saw your favorite portrait photographer shoot. We all want the ease of digital now and it's nice, but there's so much more in the instant print. Think about what you want out of photography? I don't think instant is for everyone.

Meanwhile, Polaroid recently announced its onward march into the digitalised future by hiring the ubiquitous Lady Gaga as a "creative director". She has, in her own words, "been developing prototypes in the vein of fashion/technology/photography innovation, blending the iconic history of Polaroid and instant film with the digital era". What that means is anyone's guess but Gaga also posted a photograph of herself on Twitter holding up a Polaroid business card bearing her new title. Compositionally, it looked like an old-fashioned, swiftly taken

Polaroid self-portrait –