



**MIT Museum Presents Major Polaroid Exhibition**  
***The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology***  
October 11, 2019 - June 21, 2020



CAMBRIDGE, MA, June 25, 2019 – The MIT Museum presents *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology* (October 11, 2019 – June 21, 2020), the fascinating story of the Polaroid company told through the MIT’s unique Polaroid Collection and an array of stunning Polaroid photographs. After traveling around the world, this extensive exhibition of more than 300 objects will make a stop at the MIT Museum, approximately one block from where instant film was first invented. The exhibition will provide a glimpse at rarely seen works, and include objects from the Museum’s own Polaroid collection that have not been on view at previous venues.

“Mention Polaroid and instantly it stirs up memories,” said John Durant, The Mark R. Epstein (Class of 1963) Director of the MIT Museum. “From former Polaroid employees and their families, to the young artists who have caused a resurgence in Polaroid as a medium, we are excited to provide a venue to collect and share those cross-generational stories.”

The exhibition explores various dimensions of the art-technology relationship, and features over 200 original works by 120 artists, along with the tools, materials and related artifacts that made their artworks possible.

Artists include Ansel Adams, Guy Bourdin, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Chuck Close, Barbara Crane, Harold Edgerton, Walker Evans, Hans Hansen, David Hockney, Dennis Hopper, Gyorgy Kepes, Robert Mapplethorpe, Olivia Parker, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, William Wegman, and Rosamond Wolff Purcell.

The exhibition also showcases more than 100 artifacts, including cameras, prototypes, experimental films and other technical materials from the Museum’s own historic Polaroid collection of close to 10,000 objects.

“The MIT Museum is proud to have been a collaborator on this exhibition, the first to deeply examine the impact that artists and photographers had on the development of Polaroid’s technology and *vice versa*,” said Deborah Douglas, Director of Collections & Curator, Science and Technology of the MIT Museum. “Additionally, we look forward to sharing important objects from our extensive Polaroid collection that were too large or fragile to travel to other venues, but will now be on view as part of the exhibition at the MIT Museum.”

Examples of such large and rarely seen important objects include Edwin Land’s personal 20x24 camera, the 238 lb. behemoth that could take pictures 20x24 inches, and extremely rare test prints that document the invention of instant film. An art display from an invited list of local contemporary artists will be digitally displayed and a robust line-up of programs will accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition is curated by William A. Ewing, Curator, Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography and Foundation Carène, Switzerland; Deborah Douglas, Director of Collections & Curator, Science and Technology, MIT Museum; Barbara Hitchcock, Polaroid’s former Director of Cultural Affairs; Rebecca Reuter, Chief Curator Westlight Museum of Photography and the OstLight Gallery for Photography, Vienna; and Gary Van Zante, Curator, Architecture and Design, MIT Museum.

Due to the sensitivity of the photographs, the exhibition will be shown in two parts, with a complete re-installation mid-way through. Part I will be shown October 10, 2019 - February 23, 2020; the exhibition will close February 24 - March 8, 2020; followed by Part II March 9 - June 21, 2020. For a list of artists represented in each section, please visit [mitmuseum.mit.edu/polaroidartists](http://mitmuseum.mit.edu/polaroidartists).

### **Polaroid and Innovation**

Despite its demise in the early years of this century, Polaroid remains a highly respected brand, evoking innovation, utility, creativity and quality. Polaroid created a complex phenomenon that was, and remains vital to our image-saturated, instant culture. Its products stood proudly at the forefront of the photographic image-making in the Western post-war world which believed that *easier* and *faster* meant *better*. The corporation's charismatic founder, Edwin H. Land anticipated that his invention would serve society in myriad ways, in work and in leisure, in the arts and in the sciences.

What Polaroid promised and delivered, was easier, faster, accessible photography. Art could be made anytime, anywhere, by anyone. In its heyday during the second half of the twentieth century, the Polaroid company's cameras and films were purchased by millions of amateurs and countless professionals in diverse fields. While families recorded their anniversaries and graduation parties, filmmakers and fashion photographers made test shots, scientists recorded their observations, police documented crime scenes, and artists embraced the new medium for its unique and striking qualities. And with Polaroid's instant range, photographer and subjects could watch together as the image appeared before their eyes.

Central to the exhibition is the interplay of art, science, technology and culture. The creativity of photographers and artists will be juxtaposed with the creativity of scientists, engineers and technicians, evident in Polaroid's laboratories, shops and workbenches.

"Edwin Land believed that artists would help shape the improvement of Polaroid cameras and film through critical exploration," said Barbara Hitchcock, Polaroid's former Director of Cultural Affairs and Curator, *The Polaroid Project*. "Artists, fascinated by instant technology and its edifying effect on their artistic development, shared their findings with company scientists who learned from artistic inquiry. It was a wonderful win/win relationship between a company and, ultimately, photographers worldwide."

### **Publication**

Accompanying the exhibition is *ThePolaroidProject: At the Intersection of Art and Technology*, a richly designed volume with over 300 illustrations published by the University of California Press and FEP Editions.

### **Organizers**

This exhibition, with generous support from the Land Trust, has been organized by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, Minneapolis/New York/Paris/Lausanne, in collaboration with MIT Museum, Cambridge, and Westlicht, Museum for Photography, Vienna.

It has traveled to Fort Worth, Texas, Vienna, Hamburg, Berlin, Singapore, and Montreal, before travelling to the MIT Museum.



### **About the MIT Museum**

The MIT Museum's mission is to engage the wider community with MIT's science, technology and other areas of scholarship in ways that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century. The Museum features two floors filled with ongoing and changing exhibitions. The Museum presents a wide range of programs that appeal to audiences ranging from middle school students to adults, including the annual Cambridge Science Festival in late April. For more information, visit [mitmuseum.mit.edu](http://mitmuseum.mit.edu)

### **Visitor Information**

MIT Museum

265 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02139 USA

Phone: 617-253-5927

<https://mitmuseum.mit.edu/>

Open daily 10 a.m.– 5 p.m.

Closed major holidays.

General admission to the Museum only: \$10.00 for adults; \$5.00 for youth under 18, students, seniors; free admission for MIT cardholders and alumni. Discounts are listed online. Some special exhibitions may have different pricing.

Parking: Metered street parking and area lots

Public Transportation: Red Line "T" to Central Square or #1 bus

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