Toy Camera + Polaroid Photography
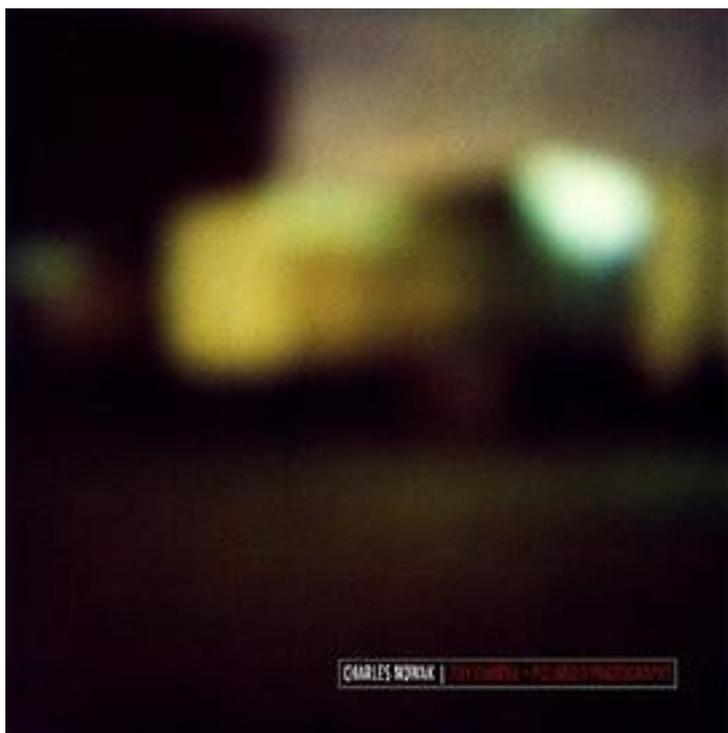

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著者:Charles Nowak

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  "Toy Camera + Polaroid Photography" from photographer Charles Nowak represents the largest self published book we've reviewed to date. Broken into three sections over 108 pages, Charles presents People, Places and a collection of color Polaroids. The opening chapter is a cross section of American life: drinks with friends, picnics in the park, and street photography from New York and Chicago. Nowak has an affinity for bands that comes across in his intimate portraits of musicians, and an instant rapport with people on the street shown in images like 'Toothpick Flag' (My personal favorite).

A fascination with old jails is something I have always had, and Nowak's images of the timeless Alcatraz prison open the second chapter of the book. 'Places' gives a look into the bleak Studebaker factory, now abandoned, and the surrounding neighborhoods of Detroit. Once a bustling blues district, it is now littered with garbage strewn condemned houses. The contrasty black and white of the Diana is a perfect medium for the documentary feel of these images.

The bright colors and warm feel of the 'Polaroids' brings a nice change of pace to the last chapter. Abstract, out of focus close up shots mixed with images of live music and a few portraits, they work cohesively as a group. 108 pages is quite a lot for a self-published book, but Nowak fills the pages with a graceful flow from start to finish. I could definitely see a series of books with images of Alcatraz, the Detroit streets or Polaroids in the future.

What made you choose the subject of your book?

The book is actually just a collection of images from the time leading up to its creation. I felt the randomness of the subject matter reflects the experience of using these cameras in general.

Why do you use Toy, or Plastic Cameras instead of newer Digital ones?

At the time I was obsessed with antiquated techniques in photography. I was studying early printing methods and digital was just not part of that equation. Pinhole and other early cameras were either too cumbersome or downright frustrating, so the plastic camera seemed the best option for me. Taking f-stops and shutter speeds out of the picture was an exciting rebellion to someone educated in the mechanics of "proper" photography. The instant "stylization" that the crappy lenses provide, force you to really think about a composition first. On the other side of that coin, not allowing preconception and just shooting from the hip often results in magnificent images as well. The duality of the camera had me hooked. That and the lack of maintenance required in keeping one. The plastic lenses seem to get better with wear. A little bit of time in a hot car in august does wonders for its character. I actually started by carrying my Diana around in my bag with my 6×6, and about 3 months later the Hasselblad was nowhere to be seen. The oversize bag was filled with paraphernalia for creating Toy Camera work.

How easy was the process of creating your book, and working Lulu to get the book printed?

The creation process was simple. I established the layout and bumped everything down to a continuous PDF and uploaded to lulu.com. A week or so later I had my proof copy.

How happy were you with the results of the book's printing?

Not particularly excited. lulu's print quality needs some improvement. Seems it's just a step above color laser, which does not render gradation in tone well at all.

After going thru the process of creating this book page by page, would you do it again for another series of images?

Absolutely. This time I'm working with blurb. Their quality is unmatched for Internet printing. A book I created for a series on the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico, was

produced through Blurb and I couldn't be happier.

作者介绍:

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