



Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids

Andrei Tarkovsky (Editor), Giovanni Chiaramonte (Editor)

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*"Tarkovsky often reflected on the way that time flies and wanted to stop it, even with these quick Polaroid shots. The melancholy of seeing things for the last time is the highly mysterious and poetic essence that these images leave with us. It is as though Andrei wanted to transmit his own enjoyment quickly to others. And they feel like a fond farewell."*Tonino Guerra, from the Introduction

This beautifully produced book comprises sixty Polaroid photographs of Andrei Tarkovsky's friends and family, taken between 1979 and 1984 in his native Russia and in Italy, where he spent time in political exile. The size of the Polaroids is exactly as presented in the book, including the frame. The book may therefore be viewed as a facsimile edition. 60 color illustrations.

Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids Details

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Author : Andrei Tarkovsky (Editor) , Giovanni Chiaramonte (Editor)

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Rebeccasmile says

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H.d. says

Brilhante edição da série de polaroids feitas pelo cineasta entre o fim dos anos 70 e início dos 80, os ensaios são preciosos para entender o contexto no qual essas fotos foram tiradas. É impressionante como em um nível o olhar do cineasta claramente está lá, nas composições e na observação da beleza da luz natural. Mas se olharmos um outro nível de significado encontramos o que une boa parte das pessoas no século XX: fotos de família, íntimas e com a mesma banalidade presente nos velhos álbuns dos nossos pais. Lindo livro.

Philippe says

Recently I spent an afternoon with three books: *A Feeling of History*, a conversation between Swiss architect Peter Zumthor and historian Mari Lending; *Instant Light*, a photo book that collects the polaroids of the Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky, and *Huishoudkunde* ('Domestic Science'), a poetry collection by Flemish author Max Temmerman. Delightful how these books, completely unexpectedly, resonated with each other.

The Zumthor book deals primarily with two Norwegian projects conceived around an explicitly historical datum: the Allmanajuvet Zinc Mine Museum and the Steilneset Memorial (in memory of those perished as a result of 17th century witchcraft trials). There are also more peripheral reflections on the never-executed design for the Berlin-based Topographie des Terrors, the Kolumba Museum in Cologne and on the projected Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). With his buildings and installations, Zumthor wants to spur visitors' capacity for 'emotional learning', to bring back feelings of a lost time, to entice them to not just look at a place but into it. "*I believe it is more about creating a feeling for things that are absent than about creating a feeling of presence for things lost.*"

Cut to the Temmerman's poetry collection that revolves around mysterious and mundane images of domesticity and how they connect us back to historical presences. One of the poems - Constellations of proximity - runs as follows (in my own translation):

*The surface of happiness seems
a darkened room full of glowing lamplets.
The dumb devices
consolidate constellations of presence.
The remote controls, laptops and printers,
the washing machines and televisions
form galaxies of protection,
an electronic labyrinth that soothes.
A past glimmers in proximity.
Someone was here before.
I can read his traces.*

Back to Zumthor who describes one of the buildings that are part of the Allmanajuvet project as a more traditional museum: *“The gallery shows objects found in the mine, such as buckets, cubes of dynamite, and mining tools. The display is reminiscent of a nineteenth-century museum with small glass showcases - a kind of history museum in situ. The objects are illuminated by the daylight that trickles into the black boxes through narrow shafts from above. It is the light that once fell on this modest mining equipment.”*

So lovely to find architect and poet to stumble into one another, searching for the reassuring traces of departed others, in a room in which the darkness is punctuated by tiny islands of illuminated peace.

Onwards to Tarkovsky, who later in life was a great amateur of the Polaroid instant camera. The pictures are gorgeous, evanescent, chimerical, saturated with pronounced greenish, blueish and yellowish casts.

Also Tarkovsky sees himself as a successor, as someone who belongs to and sustains a particular tradition. The act of remembrance then becomes an essential part of the creative act. It ties a potentially painful past to the fundamental affirmation that is embedded in an artistic image. For Tarkovsky, *“remembering is a choice of love and mercy, a gamble of faith and hope that liberates the heart from the pain of events that are now over, dead and finished, towards the openness of a new and different way of life that is still connected to the present.”*

I am leaning back into Temmerman’s universe with his poem ‘The nobility of generations’:

*Our garden hosts the trees of yore.
In my bedroom slept the fathers
of my father. Phrases that I never
would utter, roll with foolish aplomb
over my lips as if from the mouth
of a ventriloquist. When high summer
and the hours linger, then this question
rises straight into heaven: whose lives are we living?
In winter there is no time for these concerns.
During the days of cold confined we think
hopefully like a patient about what has been
prescribed to us. Nothing is ever finished*

*and so we move on, with the
resignation of a typesetter. From generation to generation
to generation: we pass on knowledge, and on.*

Tarkovsky: *“The true artist always serves immortality, striving to immortalize the world and man within the world.”*

Zumthor: *“Essential to the notion of emotional reconstruction, as I use the term, is that it has the quality of a shared experience. I can compose a piece of architecture with materials, light, shadow and sound, and give it a presence most people would be able to associate with something in their personal landscape of emotions. We are all come from somewhere, we are all full of highly personal images that are dear to us; we are all full of history.”*

And so we find three artists working in different media - the still and moving image, the written word, space materialised - to establish bridges between the past and the present and the future, between the idiosyncratic and the universal, between protection and exposure, fate and contingency.

I'm giving the final word to Max:

Futurism

*There's poetry involved, rectilinear
and inflexible as a schema.*

But there is also a small sorrow, almost invisible.

Barely larger than the word.

*And we keep on careening. Nothing will be
as it never was.*

It starts now. And now. And now.

Everyone is a remembrance.

And every remembrance

is a landscape within a landscape.

Note: I posted an identical review for each of the three books mentioned. Some specific comments about the Tarkovsky book. A lovely concept with a short introduction by screenwriter Tonino Guerra, a generous selection of polaroids, supplemented with notes from Tarkovsky's diaries and other publications, and a compact, thoughtful concluding essay by Giovanni Chiaramonte (who co-edited the pictures together with Tarkovsky). The images are nicely printed, one polaroid per page. A layer of spot varnish lifts the images nicely from the page. However, the paper quality is rather poor. The paperback version was published in 2006 but already page edges are yellowing, and so are some of the blank, unprinted areas on the backside of pages with images.

Jeff says

This a surprisingly insightful addendum to the shelf of books by and about Tarkovsky, combining a collection of his Polaroid photographs with (translated) original writings from various sources. While the overall concept might seem to be a bit light, it makes for a interesting read, and the simple color shots are quite in keeping with other aspects of Tarkovsky's art. Worthwhile for anyone who is as obsessed with

Tarkovsky as I am!

Michael Vagnetti says

You may be mindful of different kinds of light, or you may be tired. Touching, really, to make these images of almost nothing, and cause them to appear to be sprinkled with magical dust, a subliminal filter, an anti-shadow. It is not nostalgia, but might have something to do with life and death. These are images that encroach so tepidly, but with a meaning that resurfaces later, a kind of tracer, a pathway in the mind once travelled. Maybe you can transpose this kind of meaning to what you see, or maybe not.

Seamus Thompson says

A beautiful collection of Polaroid photographs (portraits and landscapes) taken in Russia and Italy in the late 1970s, early 1980s by the great Russian filmmaker. Many images suggest Tarkovsky's films -- especially *Mirror* and *Nostalgia*. All of them are beautiful in their own right. The quotations selected from Tarkovsky's artistic credo, *Sculpting in Time*, and his diaries (*Time Within Time*) work perfectly here to complement the Polaroids. The Introduction by Tonino Guerra, poet and Tarkovsky's friend and collaborator, is touching and insightful..

Leilani says

An incredibly beautiful book, it gives me the feel of the images so much that I can almost breathe in and smell the settings that are so perfectly captured.

There's a magic to polaroids in general, perhaps because they are one off photographs, no negatives, no digital backup, and also because of that unique instant way they form before your eyes. These are exceptional pictures aside from that and show, I think, the wonderful director's eye Tarkovsky had for telling a story through image. I love this book, I keep it to hand and look at it often.

Lila says

Stunning photographs (polaroids!) from one of our century's most perceptive eyes. The photos, taken by Andrei Tarkovsky in the Russian countryside and in Italy while shooting *Nostalgia* (just prior to his permanent exile to that country), are themselves exquisite. He's conveyed the essence of the dacha in a way I myself have persistently strived to do, despite my consistent failings. The impression is very misty, very much outside of time: the sense of 'exile' is perhaps just as resounding in his Russia stills as in the Italian section of the collection. The polaroids are paired with excerpts from his diary: thoughts on aesthetic theory, on icons, the spirit, and more concrete longings for his family. Pared down to polaroids and notebook jottings, Tarkovsky is still sublime, but probably more accessible than elsewhere.

Not quite a 'coffee-table book,' but surely not text-heavy enough to be a 'real book,' *Instant Light* falls somewhere in between, in the realm of spiritual musings and pure aesthetics.

Jamie Dougherty says

I'm gonna have to think about, "We are crucified on one plane, while the world is many-dimensional" some more.

Hassan D. says

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l. says

"An image is a grain, a self-evolving retroactive organism. it is a symbol of actual life, as opposed to life itself. Life contains death. An image of life, by contrast, excludes it, or else sees in it a unique potential of the affirmation of life. Whatever it expresses – even destruction and ruin – the artistic image is by definition an embodiment of hope, it is inspired by faith. Artistic creation is by definition a denial of death. Therefore it is optimistic, even if in an ultimate sense the artist is tragic. And so there can never be optimistic artists and pessimistic artists. There can only be talent and mediocrity."

"We are crucified on one plane, while the world is many-dimensional. We are aware of that and are tormented by our inability to know the truth. But there is no need to know it. We need to know love and to believe. Faith is knowledge with the help of love."

Ahmad Bozorgmehr says

When a very good friend of mine gave the book to me as a birthday present, I couldn't feel more delighted. The first look at the cover assured me that I'm going to enter a world of beauty. For me, Tarkovsky's Polaroids, really are the expression of his infinite soul. The light in them is a miracle and his artistic works are full of miracles.

karo librogénica says

Historia envuelta en polaroid. Bordada con luz. Empaquetada en Amor.

Ray Dunsmore says

A rather interesting book with a selection of gorgeous images all too frequently marred by very poor reproduction (take the odd sharp contrast that overtakes the images on pages 25 and 31, not to mention the fact that these are not actual reproductions of the Polaroids, but simply scans of the images set into a basic, unchanging frame to make them look like actual Polaroids - note that each one has the exact same texture on the borders).

To be honest, I expected more from the man who made *Solaris* and *Stalker*, but what I got was pleasant nonetheless.

Aleks says

Parade, San Gregorio, Italy, 1984, June:

<https://theartstack.com/artist/andrei...>

<http://alleshater.tumblr.com/post/160...>

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