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Lomography: A world of film and plastic cameras

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When you walk into the Lomography Gallery Store in West Hollywood, it's tough not to notice the variety of brightly colored film cameras and the thousands of photographs adorning the walls. It just shouts out photography everywhere you look.



The two-story shop boasts an open and airy feeling displaying an amazing array of colorful film cameras.

This certainly might raise the question: Why is a store selling mostly plastic style film cameras in a digital age? Everywhere you look you see digital point-and-shoot cameras, cellphone cameras and amazing DSLR cameras. At Lomography, you won't find the latest and greatest in high-tech state-of-the-art digital cameras. It's all about the film camera.

Of course there are no mobile contracts, messy megapixels or hard drive storage problems. (Although I'm guessing a majority of film shooters still scan their images from film.)

"Lomography is an analog camera company focused on creative snapshot photography," according to Lindsay Hutchens, manager of the Lomography Gallery Store Los Angeles. "It was started by Wolfgang [Stranzinger] and Matthias [Fiegl] and Sally [Bibawy]. Wolfgang and Matthias were on vacation in the Czech Republic and

came across the Lomo LC-A camera in a pawn shop, thrift type of place and they shot with it all during their vacation.

"When they got their film and photos back, they loved it. Originally it started as the Lomography Society, which was a fan club of the Lomo LC-A camera."

At the Lomography store, it starts with film — cameras from the past or re-creations of classic cameras from the past. It's sort of a revival of light leaks, cool, dark vignetting around the edges, a surrealistic soft look or those classic film sprocket holes.

You actually can get the real film sprocket holes and edges, no Photoshop necessary.

Did I mention the wild vibrant colors of some of these plastic cameras?

It's hard not to notice the colors of Sprocket Rocket cameras. These are not for the shy photographer. They're designed in bright blue, orange and green. If you're looking to attract attention, this may be the way to go. They do make one in the conventional black color that is certainly more subtle.

I did take the Sprocket Rocket for a test drive, and it was a breeze to operate. It was back to basics for me. Load the film, no auto-wind here. It's a simple twist of the knob to advance the film while watching for a little white dot to appear in a tiny window on the top of the camera. I definitely needed my reading glass for this operation. A double exposure was simple: Just press the shutter button again before winding. It produces a negative wide angle panorama that included the image in the area above and in between the sprocket holes.

It makes sense to use up all the real estate on your film. It shouted artistic flair to me with the sprocket hole embedded in my image.

For those looking for the subtle old-school approach, the Diana camera may be the way to go. This camera probably gives you lots of flexibility. The newer F+ models use interchangeable lenses and have a pinhole feature. Accessories include a telephoto and wide angle lens.

The plastic cameras are available in designer editions. The Diana comes in a variety of colors and sizes, including one designed by a rock star from the band White Stripes, the "Meg" Limited Edition Diana+ & Ringflash. Another choice from the same band is the "Jack" Limited Edition Holga camera design.



For those looking for something a little different, the Lomo cameras the Oktomat or SuperSampler might be good choices.

These cameras feature a variety of multiple images on film with one burst of the shutter button. It's your choice: four, eight or nine images, with flash or without.

Again, you're probably asking yourself, would you need eight images in one shot of your 35 mm film instead of one? That's a good question.

Are you aware of the film camera rules? The Lomography "Ten Golden Rules" from the store's website are pretty easy to follow whether you're shooting film or going digital.



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 part of it.
4. Try the shot from the hip.
5. Approach the objects of your Lomographic desire 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.

The Lomography Gallery Store is where art meets art, as the cameras cross over into art itself.

See also how Genaro Molina shoots celebrity portraits with toy cameras.

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Photos: (from top) The outside, and inside, of the Lomography Gallery Store L.A. Credits: Robert Lachman

The "Meg" Limited Edition Diana+ & Ringflash and the "Jack" Limited Edition Holga Camera. Credits: Robert Lachman

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