

## **The Impossible Project: reason and sentiment!**

**February 21st, 1947: a date that marks a radical change in the world of photography. On that day, Edwin Land – founder of Polaroid – announced the birth of one of the most exceptional inventions in the history of man having to do with the use of images and memories, illustrating to the world the first instant photograph.**

Paola Pellegrini

Two years ago, in the summer of 2008, the American Company decided to stop production of instant film known to everyone simply by the name of “Polaroid”, and to do away with the technology of the production facilities in Mexico and the Netherlands, definitively putting an end to the analog era and exclusively riding the digital wave.

In October of that same year, Florian Kaps (CMO), Austrian entrepreneur and instant film enthusiast, together with André Bosman (COO), former Polaroid employee (almost 30 years of work in the Netherlands facilities at Enschede), Marwan Saba (CFO) and a selected team of integral film experts (all former Polaroid employees), decide to halt the operation. Kaps and Bosman intend to keep the machinery and preserve the technology in order to be able to continue production of the legendary film. In the course of the next few months, they begin strenuous negotiations with the American Company and, backed by private investors, sign a 10-year lease agreement for the use of the Netherlands factory with the concrete aim of restarting production by re-inventing a brand new instant film.

**“IT IS NOT FOR NOTHING THAT ALEXANDER WAS CALLED THE GREAT, IVAN THE TERRIBLE, AND OUR PROJECT THE IMPOSSIBLE...”**. Kaps, Bosman, Saba and the whole team met this challenge with enthusiasm and courage. “The Impossible Project” – this is the name used to pursue this hard-won initiative – on March 22nd, 2010 (63 years, 1 month and 1 day after that memorable date in 1947) announced to the world the “possible” future of instant photography. The Impossible Project saved the film from extinction, giving new life to the cameras that we know and love, making the Impossible possible.

**A CHALLENGE GUIDED BY SENTIMENT.** Polaroid did not want to believe in the future of a product that she herself created and, in the opinion of The Impossible Project, she missed a big opportunity. There are numerous fans of Polaroids worldwide, and millions of instant photo enthusiasts risked remaining without film for their cameras. 20,000 members in the Polaroid web community and then clubs, stores, virtual and actual galleries, an army of photo lovers, fans, people curious about or who just simply like to experiment with instant photos. A huge number of people that grows every day and is comprised of artists, people with a knack for creativity, professional and amateur photographers – a target for whom the emotional aspect is by far more important than the “technological” one. And it’s true. To understand how emotion can play such a primary role in the choice of instant photography, suffice it to say that Polaroid cameras have certainly never constituted an optimal quality product, nor a very economical one. A small and often very expensive format, distorted colors, blurring, variable effects due to temperature. With this film, one photo was never the same as or even similar to the next; the result was always unpredictable. The photo had to be “reasoned out”, thought about and constructed in a desperate try at eliminating failures. But even though queen of defects, what mattered was that you could actually hold the image in your hands immediately! Today, digital technology can render practically perfect images, annihilating even the time variable – a factor that could have justified the success of the instant photo which now seems to constitute an anachronistic solution to which we are forced to give way. But it is actually this “feeling” of imperfection that makes it unique, magical and hence a winner. Also, a strong surprise factor remains, accompanied by a stimulus of curiosity due to the – albeit minimal – pause needed to see the final result. A playful and irrational dimension dominates the entire process, too. These are certainly important emotional characteristics!

**ONCE THE PRESENCE OF A TARGET – EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SPEAKING OF A NICHE – WAS ASCERTAINED, TOGETHER WITH THE EXISTENCE OF REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS, ALL COMBINED WITH A FAITHFUL, CONSISTENT AND ENGROSSED PUBLIC,** it was not difficult to convince investors to participate in the project. And, indeed, exclusive rights served

to cache any nostalgic aspect that wafted around this business, highlighting the more “rational” side tied to the production monopoly that would have characterized it, ensuring its success. Thousands and thousands of people own these cameras; the only thing missing was the film. Polaroid itself, inspired by this initiative, will launch a new camera on the market and it will, of course, need film! “... As the last quantities of the carefully stored original Polaroid film are melting like snow under the sun, time has come to start shifting our focus to a new chapter of analog Instant Photography. Please accept our invitation to make yourself comfortable at our new Impossible e-shop...”. For a few months now, on-line and at selected partner retail shops, Impossible monochrome films are available (PX 100 and PX 600 Silver Shade) introduced with the Limited First Flush edition; before the end of the year, the color PX and at least 6 new types of Instant Film in different formats will follow. A business totaling 900 million euro is estimated for the next 5 years, with a production of 1 million films for 2010 – a figure which would reach 3 million in 2011. Ambitious targets for a company presently comprised of 18 people and that will increase its staff up to a maximum of 40 employees.

**THE IMPOSSIBLE PROJECT, THE UNION BETWEEN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**, the perfect mix of rare memories and tangible images, the meeting point between sentiment and reason, has undertaken a journey towards the future starting from the nostalgia for that which existed and which risked disappearing. The latest-generation film: same look, same size, same shiny surface as its ancestors, but developed using new technology and new chemical ingredients that also take contemporary issues into account, such as the ecological aspect. The intent is to develop a new product, optimized and modern, an analog material that is innovative and fresh, with its colorful and elegant packaging, together with a new brand name (IMPOSSIBLE) capable of re-positioning film, cameras and an actual new way of “taking pictures” on a worldwide scale. Initially driven by passion, joined later by the consciousness of a product and its respective target, Impossible will be the answer for fans of vintage Polaroid products and, thanks to the modern analog camera – cousin of its SX-70 ancestor – that will be presented to the public at the end of 2010, it could reposition the concept of instant photography by 360°.

**THERE'S STILL A LOT TO BE DONE BY THE IMPOSSIBLE PROJECT** but in the Netherlands facilities, people have been working for almost two years with the aim of leaving the market speechless and conquering both veteran and novice customers.

The Impossible generation seems to be ready for nostalgic fans and creative artists of the entire world: “Be prepared for many surprises and dust off that old Polaroid camera because our new film will be Impossible to resist!”•