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The Polaroid Years was published to accompany an exhibition of Polaroid works at Vassar College. In 2008 the Andy Warhol Foundation gave over 158 Polaroids to Vassar as well as hundreds of works to other colleges. This show at the Lehman Loeb Art Center included works in Vassar's collection but also from museums and private collections. The exhibition concentrated on images made between the year that the popular SX-70 camera came out, 1972, and 2010, when the Polaroid Collection was sold by Sotheby’s.

The emphasis of the book is on the beautiful reproductions of artworks rather than the text. Full-color, detailed reproductions of more than 170 Polaroid prints take up more than half the book. Whenever possible, works are reproduced at life size along with the iconic Polaroid frame. When a photograph of the frame is not shown, the book’s designers often substitute a light grey box with the proportions of the original frame. The writing and slight marks on the frames give the viewer a sense of scale and provide a connection to an artwork so small and private that it fits in the palm of a hand. The art covered ranges from Dash Snow’s mangled and burnt snapshots to Miranda Lichtenstein’s exquisite tableaux of vegetation, and from the works of famous artists such as Andy Warhol and Lucas Samaras to that of lesser known artists such as Ellen Carey and Robert Heinecken.

Two essays by Lehman Loeb Art Center curator Mary-Kay Lombino and by University of Salford professor Peter Buse explain the artistic impetus behind the works. A timeline covers major events in the history of the Polaroid Company and twelve of the thirty-nine artists represented have included brief "Artists' Statements" about their work with Polaroid.

There has been a rash of books on Polaroid published lately, in part because of the demise of Polaroid in 2008. The Polaroid Book, published in 2005, about the Polaroid Collection itself, and From Polaroid to Impossible, from 2011, about the Westlicht Polaroid collection, both replicate The Polaroid Years’ emphasis on the artwork and high quality reproductions, rather than text. However, very few of the images appear in more than one of the three books. This book makes a wonderful addition to any library serving fine art students or photographers.

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