

Film is Dead.

By Donato (Danny) Pietrodangelo

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Film is dead, at least for consumers.

(If you want to see how and why, visit the Digital Artist Guild's exhibit "*Pixels*" which opens tonight at LeMoyne.)

For commercial photogs, black and white aficionados and film makers, I'd say at best, the condition is at best terminal and on life support.

I mean really, when was the last time you bought a roll of film.

Kodak – which ironically invented the consumer digital camera in 1976 -- killed the nice bright colors of Kodachrome slides in 2009, Ektachrome followed. Last year after it emerged from Chapter 11 last year, the company sold most of what was left of its film and digital camera business to a British company.

It's a good and bad thing, the demise of film.

There's the good: No more running out of film at the beach, no more bulky 35 mm

cameras, no more waiting for prints from the drug or camera store waiting to see if your photos came out.

And there's the bad. It takes a little joy out of life.

No more going to the drug store, getting the envelop and silently screaming, "they *did* came out." (Or walking away sullen when they didn't. Fewer chances to appreciate the full pallet of grays, blacks and whites, the heart and soul of a silver halide print. And, for the photographer, gone too is the magic of seeing an image appear on a piece of photo paper in a red-lit darkroom. I can still smell the hypo. (The chemical used to make the photo permanent.)

And in the end it does matter for two reasons: legacy and certainty..

Can and will we with digital photographs?

First, "Remembering The Moments of Our Lives" as Kodak sentimentally reminded us in 1977.



Will we?

You know what I mean, because we all have them. Notebooks with plastic or paper sleeves, painstakingly filled with pictures of our kids growing up, of memorable events,

of friends goofing around, extraordinary places we visited. They have faded group pictures of great-grandmothers and great uncles who had just passed through Ellis Island. Your father standing proudly in his Army uniform. Some of those hand-colored – frequently bizarrely – fashionable in the 30’s and 40’s.

Then there’s Photoshop. Sad but true, no longer can you take a picture as fact. In the digital darkroom you can alter reality: eliminate an ex from a family portrait, add a beautiful sunset to your shot at the beach, remove a blemish or two – shave a few pounds off of Melissa McCarthy. I do it.

Keep in mind though, photo manipulation is



They are something you can hold in your hand. Something you want to leave for your kids. Something -- especially, if you came age in the 60s, that’s hilarious or embarrassing or both. Also gone is the fun of mistakes – people making a faces at the camera; cutting off someone’s head.

Now those get deleted. Easy. Just press the garbage can icon. You shot a hundred more. You never needed to worry about running out of film – everything is saved on a little piece of plastic or your cell phone.

But what do you do with the keepers? Leave them in the camera or copy them to your computer when and if you get around to it.

Where’s the legacy? Where’s Uncle Harold’s slide show of his vacation?

Uploading or texting a new photo is a great way to instantly share. But what happens to that new photo when it becomes an old photo? “It’s somewhere on my hard drive.

We’re leaving holes in history.

as old as the medium. . Double exposures, solarization. Those hand-colored photographs – frequently bizarrely – fashionable in the 30’s and 40’s. And, the stuff of every adolescent boy’s dreams – calendar “girls” of the 50s and *Playboy* models -- you think they all had perfect skin and curves? Airbrushing helped. As it helped the Soviets “disappear” someone from a photograph who had fallen out of favor with the party.

Going back to the positives; and this is a big one: Digital has democratized photography.

Anyone and everyone can take pictures. Given, nine out of 10 people in the US have cell phones and most all of those cell phones have cameras, that’s a whole lot of picture taking. Given the law of averages, some of them will be great photos.

With digital, it’s not about the equipment; it’s about creativity and immediacy. Something newsworthy happens. You know about it in minutes. Grandparents see the



new arrival in an hour. Revolutions are advanced. Civil injustices instantly documented.

Photography's history has been evolutionary – from photos made on tin, copper and glass – to images created on paper and celluloid.

Evolution is a good thing. The digital artist guild exhibit at Lemoyne shows just how good it can be.

It gives them the means for to go beyond the confines of a latent image. It gives artists the ability to alter space, shift perspective, distort the real, twist and compress objects, create colorific scenes – all with creative intent..

Digital artists draw on extraordinarily rich palette which allows them create surreal landscapes and imaginary rivers of color, as well as insightful interpretations of the human condition.

And digital art is a demanding medium. Not only does it require photographers to see what it *is*, they must imagine what *it could be*.

Is this manipulating the viewer? Sure. As does all art.

Digital photos by Donato Pietrodangelo.

Donato (Danny) Pietrodangelo is a photographer, writer and member of the Digital Artist Guild. He studied the history of color photography at the George Eastman House, under a grant from the Florida Fine Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts.