

Our Tenth Anniversary

“From analog to digital photography : a decade”



Ken Merfeld by Pedro Meyer © 2003

During this past decade our theme at ZoneZero has been “from analog to digital”.

No work that we have brought to our pages during this period could better epitomize this idea, than the work of Ken Merfeld. His wonderful imagery made on glass plates, through the process of wet collodion which in the end would migrate to the digital domain, would therefore allow us to bring you his work over the internet. No other photographer that we have published would span such a spread in technologies while still remaining true to his own style.

We hope to bring a degree of clarity through **Ken Merfeld’s** work, to an issue that all too often has been a source of total confusion, in that digital photography is not a specific style of photography but only a technology with which you can produce any style that you wish. In this particular case it has been from wet collodion to digital portraits.

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To my dismay I have seen contests sponsored by some of the better known photographic brands which requested images for categories such as “digital photography”, as if they were a specific style of photography, thus only creating the present confusion. Some have imagined then that digital photography has to do solely with images that use every filter in the tool chest to produce a sort of “lava lamp” effect, in order to become digital. Well, if you enjoy doing those kind of images, fine, but know that this is only one of the many styles that can be produced digitally. In fact, any style can be produced by digital means.

During the first years of Zone-Zero’s existence, we had to struggle to convince our photographer colleagues to trust us, that nothing terrible would happen to their work if we published it over the internet.

Fortunately we can say that it all went well and we all benefited from this experience in a positive way. We certainly thank all the photographers who gave us their valuable work, without their contribution this site would not be possible.

Digital technologies certainly have evolved during this decade, both at the level of software and hardware. What we can do over the internet today, only a few years ago was only a dream. The quality and speed of cameras has improved so much and so fast, that we tend to forget what it was only yesterday. When things change so fast, it is hard to have a sense of history of where we were just a few days ago.

I would venture to say that over this coming decade, one of the big transformations for the photographic image is going to be the addition of sound. As photographers become more familiar with sound and the tools become more effortless to use, the presence of sound, either voice or music, or both, is going to become an ever more integral part of the image. Also the delivery mechanisms are easier with each passing day, so that it will become a much smoother structure to deal with.

As I was leaving Madrid this past summer, one of the students from my work shop, did something quite astonishing, at least to my eyes. She handed me a CD ROM, and told me, “I did not know what to give you as a good-by present, so I just went to my computer and copied you all my pictures I had there”. I took the CD ROM with me, and opened it later on the plane going home, and found the most compelling array of imagery, there were pictures of babies being cleaned of their poop, or being bathed, or fed, or crying, picnics with friends, dancing

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in nightclubs, trips, close ups of objects, landscapes, portraits, snapshots, in short, all the most tender imagery one would find in any family album, even a lot of small videos. What she had given me, was for practical purposes, a copy of her family album. Something that no one could have done before. After all our family albums have always been unique pieces that were not even possible to reproduce to share among siblings, let alone with strangers. Begoña had created something that was in my experience quite unique, she had literally reproduced her personal family album, and decided to share it as a gesture of her good will.

The coming decade, is obviously going to bring us untold new possibilities both in creating the images as well as in sharing them, I am sure that the excitement is only going to increase as the technologies become both more accessible and flexible. Still one thing will remain constant, the stories being told will be the same ones that have captivated our imagination over the ages, there will be stories of love, of passions, wars, fears, joy, sorrow, aging, mortality, birth, health, pain, in short all that makes us human. The stories are the same, only that they will be re told in different new ways.

Pedro Meyer
Coyoacan, August, 2003.