

Inside the fascinating archive of anonymous vintage photographic slides from 1930s to the 80s that a filmmaker bought on eBay. Do you recognize anybody?

- The Anonymous Project, a Paris-based nonprofit, collects and preserves vintage photographic slides
- British-born filmmaker Lee Shulman, 44, founded the organization in January 2017 after he bought a set of slides on a whim from eBay
- As he continued to buy more slides, he realized the importance of preserving the images and turning them into a collection, so he brought on his photo publisher friend Emmanuelle Halkin to help him
- Today, the project has more than 500,000 slides, though the curated collection only has about 8,000 images
- About 60 to 70% of the slides are from America, Shulman estimates, because that's where the technology was made
- In January, The Anonymous Project had its first physical exhibition in Paris, which they will be bringing to London in September
- The organization is also working on collaborative projects including a book and a documentary

By [ANN SCHMIDT FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)

PUBLISHED: 14:20 BST, 6 April 2018 | UPDATED: 17:42 BST, 6 April 2018

Though it is almost impossible to pick even a few favorites out of the more than half a million photographic slides owned by The Anonymous Project, founder Lee Shulman can think of a couple off the top of his head. One is a picture of a couple on roller skates in 1984, likely in [California](#). The woman, in an all-red aerobics outfit – crop top and all – even has red wrist guards. The man with her is wearing blue and white knee socks with short shorts and a pink headband. All in all, a pretty goofy picture.

'I don't know why,' Shulman tells DailyMail.com. 'It's not the prettiest picture and they're not the most beautiful people in the world, but they look like they're having the best time in the world. And it's their Sunday and it's total freedom and it's great. I love that photo. And I think that's one of the photos I loved the most.'

The Paris-based nonprofit, which was started just more than a year ago, is working on collecting and preserving photographic slides – which are positive images on a transparent base, meant to be shown using a slide projector – and the 'collective memory' that goes along with them. The Anonymous Project is run by Shulman and his friend Emmanuelle Halkin and has curated a collection out of the more than 500,000 images they have bought or received in the past year. The images in the collection – which today includes an estimated seven or 8,000, according to Shulman – are chosen for the narratives they tell, not their beauty or professionalism.

Named, according to the website, 'because the names of the people in the images as well as the names of those who provide them or those who took the pictures will never be known or shared', The Anonymous Project is also working on collaborative projects including a book and a documentary.

'We actually do have an important mission,' Shulman says. 'And it's a really important mission. And I think apart from all the fun moments of life, I saw that this was also something about the preservation of these images, which is very important to me, because color photography and technology used at the time was extraordinary. I mean, it was so ahead.... We realized that over time the color disappears. They haven't been preserved well and a lot of the slides we see, sometimes we get slides and the image has almost disappeared. I mean, it's almost not there. And it's very sad, obviously. You feel like some people are just disappeared into the ether.'



The Anonymous Project, a Paris-based nonprofit, collects and preserves vintage photographic slides. The organization was founded by British-born filmmaker Lee Shulman last January after he bought a set of vintage slides on eBay on a whim. Pictured is one of Shulman's favorites, a pair of roller skaters in the US in 1984



As he collected more slides for fun, Shulman realized it was important to preserve the images, which deteriorate and fade away over time, so he brought in his photo publisher friend Emmanuelle Halkin and they decided to create The Anonymous Project. Two women are pictured in a hair salon in the US in 1969



Shulman says: 'The reason we called it [anonymous] is 'cause we didn't really want people to focus on that,' he says. 'I think we like the idea [that] it wasn't about who the person was, but it's more about what they represented.' Three bodybuilders on Venice Beach, California are pictured in 1975

The project all started in January 2017 when Shulman was browsing on eBay. He saw a set of vintage slides up for sale and on a whim decided to buy them for about \$11 (10 Euros). The 44-year-old filmmaker from London says he's always loved looking at and projecting slides, even when he was a child, so it wasn't a completely out-of-the-blue purchase.

When the box arrived with the collection of images – from the mid-1950s, he remembers – he picked up the first slide and practically fell in love right away.

'It was amazing,' he says. 'The quality and the colors were amazing... Every time I started looking at them, I saw these little moments of life and I just kind of fell in love.'

'I started buying a couple of lots just out of interest and then I realized as I was looking at the images that there were a lot of similar images from different parts of the world. I was finding and somehow realized everyone has shared experiences and I sort of had this idea about creating this collection, which would be a collection of shared feelings and emotions... There was no defined idea at the beginning, to be honest. It kind of organically grew.'

He eventually called in his photo publisher friend Halkin and their collection grew. They bought more slides online and at flea markets and received donations from friends and other people from around the world who heard about their project through the press coverage they got. Shulman's initial interest had quickly 'snowballed' into **The Anonymous Project**.

'When I started looking, it really came from just this passion, this personal passion I had for slides and really just that format and that medium, which was so advanced of its time.'

Even with more than half a million slides in their possession, donations are still coming in every day. When Shulman speaks with DailyMail.com over the phone, he says 'two huge lots' have arrived that day.

'We need to get a bigger office,' he laughs.