

# THE CUT

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## Before There Were Instagram Filters, There Was Kodachrome

By Anne Cruz



Photo: Courtesy of Taschen

In one memorable *Mad Men* scene, Don Draper pitches Kodak's new color slide projector wheel as "not a spaceship, but a time machine." He clicks through his own family photos, explaining how the projector would let users experience sustained nostalgia, brought on by the moments captured on the slides.

What happened to all that 35mm film, to all those millions of slides that were so ubiquitous in the 1960s, but fell out of favor after the arrival of instant cameras? Many were forgotten for decades, only to be unearthed when elderly relatives passed or moved away. A picture lasts long, but not forever — saturated colors on the slides eventually fade away and

disappear if they're not preserved and scanned.

Thankfully, the Anonymous Project does just that. Most recently, founder Lee Shulman and photo publisher Emmanuelle Halkin sifted through 700,000 slides to create a collection of 10,000 preserved photos, more than 200 of which are featured in *Midcentury Memories*. The context of time and place are removed — there are no captions — so that the reader can imagine for themselves the stories each tells. Flipping through, you may find yourself yearning for a past you never experienced.

"It is significant and fascinating that in virtually every image here, photographer and subject seem to know one another," Richard B. Woodward wrote in the book's introduction. "In this embracing album of humanity, no one exists in isolation. There are no strangers here."

Woodward also notes the collection's overwhelming whiteness, suggesting that costly projectors and film might have been a barrier for those who weren't members of white, middle-class suburbia, but that the images speak to nostalgia that doesn't require shared experience.

"Knowing nothing for sure about these people, viewers aren't confined too narrowly to the facts of a situation and can fantasize to their heart's content," Woodward writes. "Storytelling can be yet another act of restoration, which is the central mission of the Anonymous Project."

Below, select images from *Midcentury Memories*, out now from Taschen.



Photo: Courtesy of Taschen



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