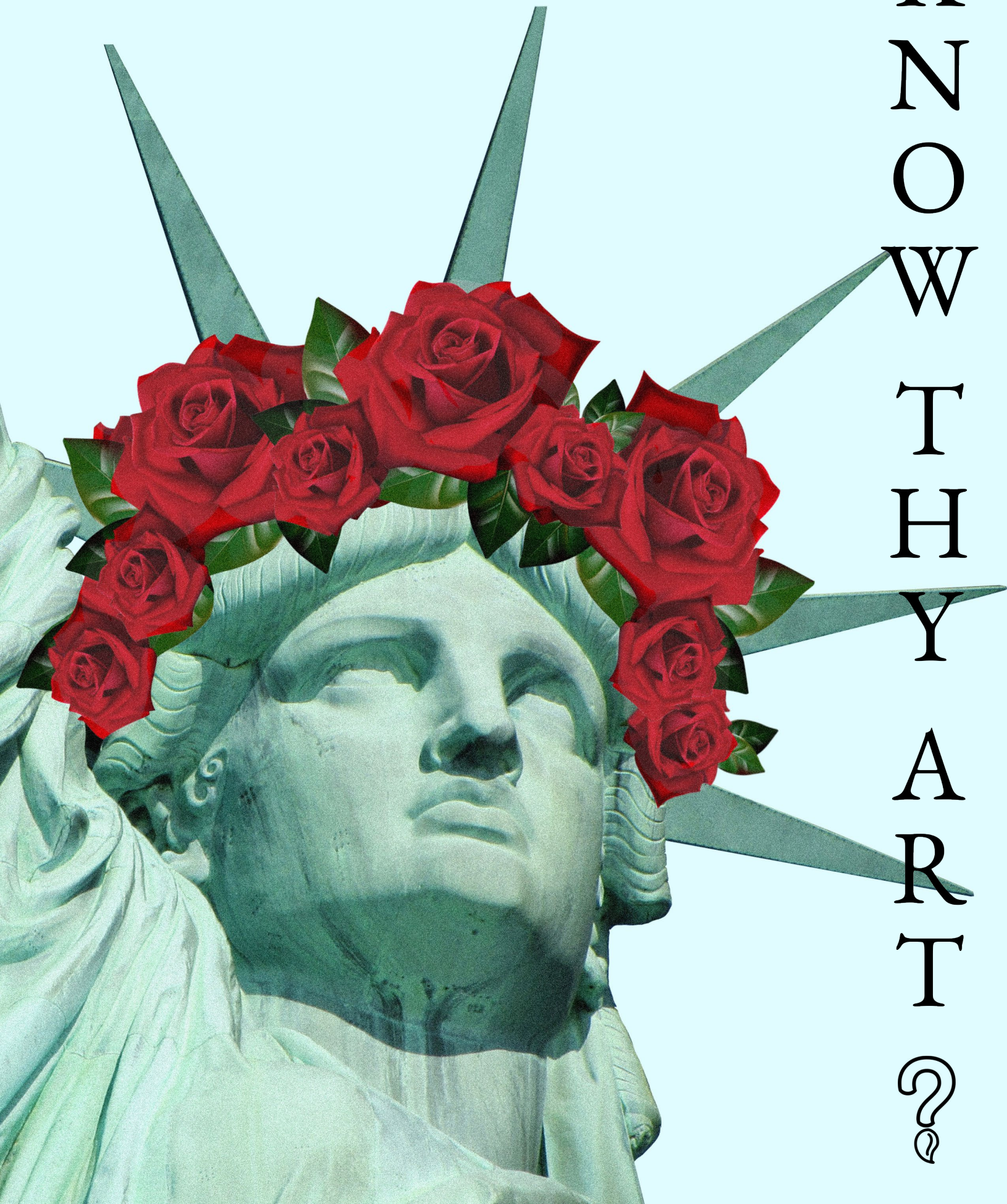


THE FILTER ISSUE - May, 2024



KNOW  
THY  
ART  
?



# THE FILTER ISSUE

Colours, or the lack of it, have a major role to play in photography. Colour correction, saturation, LUTs and now, readymade filters, give photographs a “mood.”

The subjects become more evocative and the photographs get more character. From sepia tones to the famous Snapchat puppy nose, we discuss photograph filters in this issue of Know Thy Art magazine.

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# THE HISTORY OF PHOTO FILTERS

Optical glass on a ring frame were fitted on to camera lenses to filter the light. This is where the photograph filter gets its name. While filters are a physical component of the professional camera, the filters you have on Instagram and Snapchat are the result of AR and digital manipulation.

Incidentally, it was the physical camera filter that was responsible for giving the world the very first coloured photograph. James Clerk Maxwell used the three-colour method with red, blue and green filters to achieve a colour image. True to his heritage, this Scottish physicist clicked a photo of a tartan ribbon as a sample of his light experiment, making it the world's first coloured photograph. But Maxwell's contraption was meant to explore magnetism and light, it was not meant for use in photography.

Bryce Bayer, a Kodak employee at the time, invented the filter in 1974. If it wasn't for this invention, we'd probably still have black-and-white photos. The Bayer filter was patented in 1976.

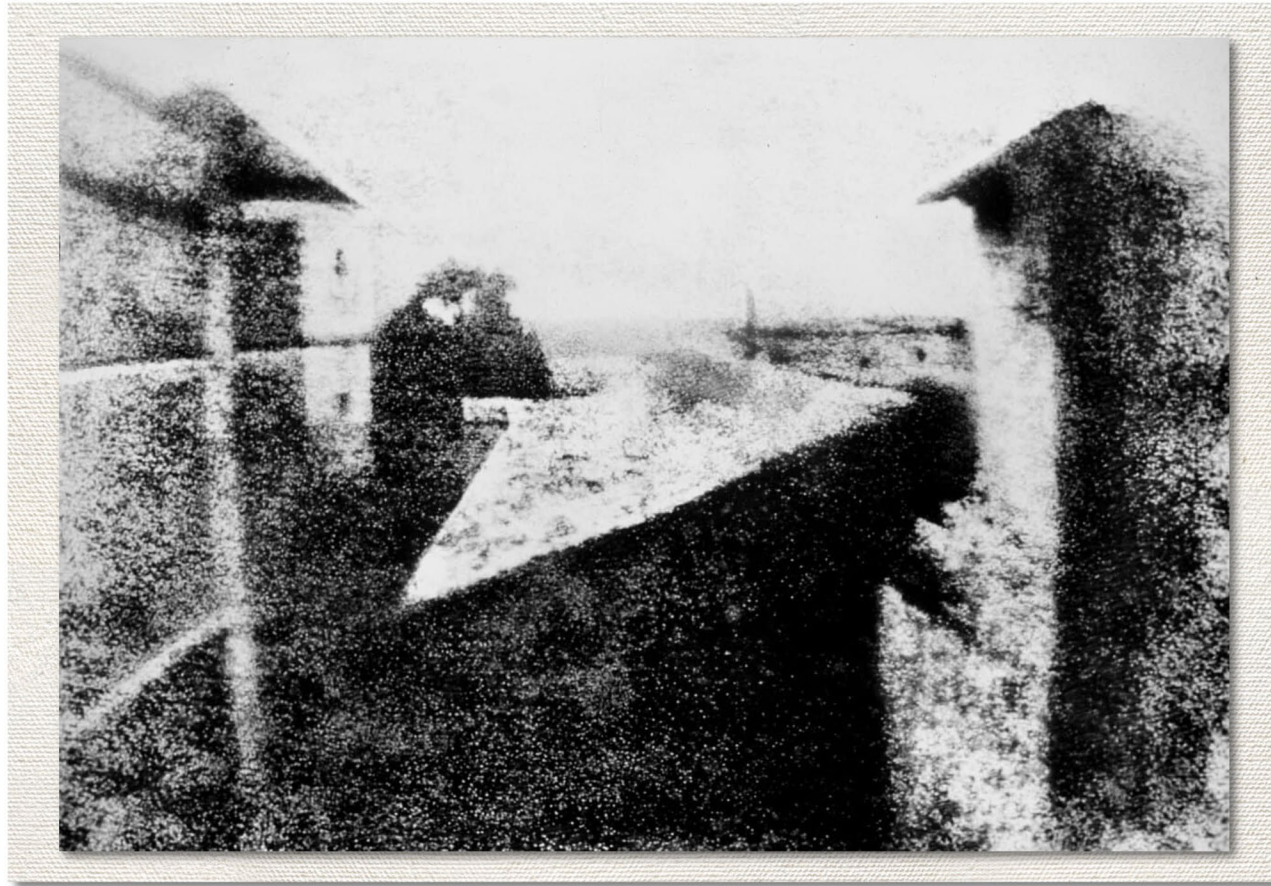
Professional photographers loved using these lens filters especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the commonly used camera filters are listed below:

- **Polariser** - Eliminated unwanted reflections without affecting colour
- **UV Filters** - Eliminated Ultra Violet light and made colours warmer with increased contrast, colour conversion and colour enhancement
- **Colour Subtraction Filters** - Corrects colour balance
- **Cross-Screen Filter** - Makes a star-shine pattern on highlight areas.
- **Diffuser** - Diffuses light to give it soft edges, causing a dreamy blur effect.

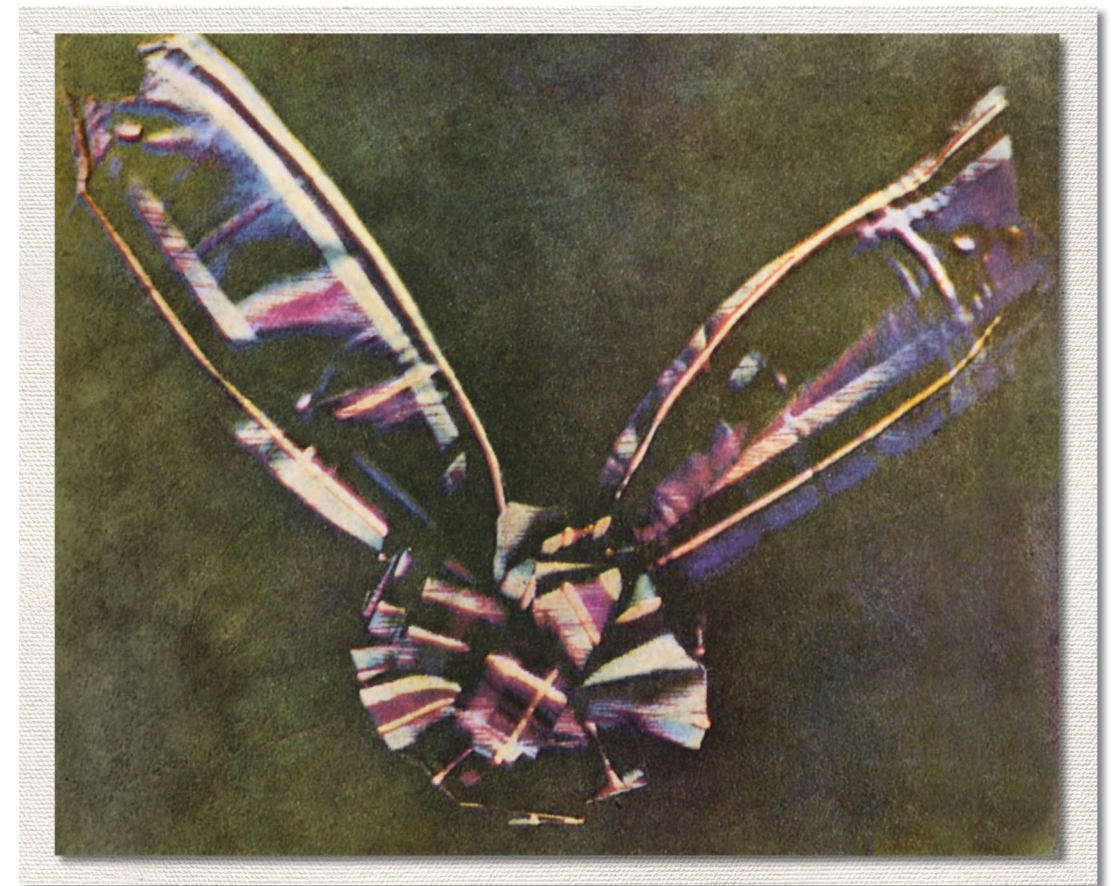
Today, most of these filters are directly built into the main lens or easily achieved through digital editing software like Adobe Lightroom.







The first known photograph: *View from the Window at Le Gras*  
 Photograph by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce - 1826



The first colour photograph: *Tartan Ribbon*  
 Photograph by James Clerk Maxwell - 1861





# ***FILTERS TODAY***

There was a time when Snapchat puppy filters or flower crown filters were all the rage among teenagers. While this might have been a mere pastime, there is no denying that filter technology has now become smarter.

The little infrared lights that can't be seen by the human eye can detect facial features and place a bunny nose with accuracy on your nose. These AR (Augmented Reality) filters have made notorious tech like "deep-fakes" possible. These digital filters were no longer about achieving the best light and colours in a photo. Filters became intentional and even targeted. Aside from the AR filters, photo filters are still popular in photography.

Today, a seamless way to achieve uniform colour grading and efficient colour correction in photography and videography is through a "Look Up Table" or LUT. An LUT essentially assigns a mathematical value to each colour. Seeing colours made calculable and editable through numbers, makes it easier for editing software to seamlessly apply colour grading to an entire film, short video or photograph.

When a film must have consistent colour grading, an LUT is made and applied across the film. This makes a Batman film darker or a Disney movie brighter. Such innovations in digital filters makes it easier for editors to keep the look of the images consistent with the mood of the story.

LUTs are available for Adobe Photoshop too. You can even make your own. Also, Lightroom filters are all the rage. With a little playing and practice, you can get your beach trip photos to look exactly like a teal and orange poster.

Cameras through the 90s came with a reel of just about 35 negatives. This means you had just 35 chances to click photos. Because of this, people posed properly, said cheese, stood in good light and smiled just right. But with digital memory cards, you could click thousands of photos, stick your tongue out and have fun. People were no longer bound by just 35 chances to capture perfect-looking memories. If photos could be fun, why would filters need to be serious?



# ***FILTERS OF THE FUTURE***

LUTs and AR based photo filters are now made and even polished with the help of Artificial Intelligence. Every major photo editing software company is now racing to incorporate AI in their apps. To some extent, this will give editors even more control over colour variations. Light, tones and colour alterations will likely be even more precise.

It is very likely that the trends in photo editing and digital filters will come from viral content and social media trends. This might sound strange but experts like Kodak and Leica might have to turn to content sharing platforms to find the next big innovation in editing and camera filters.



## ***SENSEI SPEAKS***

One very important difference  
between colour and monochromatic  
photography is this:  
in black and white you suggest;  
in colour you state.  
Much can be implied by suggestion,  
but statement demands certainty...  
absolute certainty.

## ***PAUL OUTERBRIDGE***



# DID YOU KNOW?

- In July 2011, Evan Spiegel released an app called “Picaboo” from his father’s house. Today, we know this popular filter app as “Snapchat.”
- Clarendon, Juno, Gingham, Lark, Sierra and Ludwig were some of the first filters on Instagram when the app was released. Today, there are millions of novelty filters on the app.
- For cameras, the UV filter is one of the most popular ones. While it helps correct light in the photograph, it also protects the lens from ultraviolet damage.
- American photographer Cole Rise made filters like Sierra, Mayfair, Sutro, Amaro and Willow for Instagram in 2010.





