



“I would love a digital detox,” says Jayson Brinkler, a photographer in his forties with an exhibition in Paris and pictures in the archive of the National Portrait Gallery.

Given he has a shade under 70,000 followers on Instagram, Brinkler is a surprising advocate for being less connected, as well as being a passionate advocate of film photography. “Film is a dying art,” he tells me. “Kodak went into liquidation, Agfa went, Polaroid went, all the big institutions that we know in photography that kept the industry going have disappeared.” In its place, disposable digital images, samey Instagram feeds and a constant demand to upload more. “It is exhausting,” said Brinkler.

We are freezing and standing in the ruins of St Dunstan-in-the-East, a 12th century church near the Tower of London, which would be sheltering six chilly photographers if it had a roof. We’re on a bi-monthly photowalk organised by Abdul Hye, a dental nurse in his mid-30s. The catch? There’s not a single SD card or CMOS sensor in the cameras draped from each photographer’s neck: the London Film Photography collective is strictly film.

Except Brinkler, that is. “I was half expecting to be lynched today,” he tells me, for only bringing his iPhone, albeit with a handsome Zeiss lens strapped to its rear camera.

Our photographers aren’t alone either. A survey released in February 2018 listed the top five things people missed that had been replaced or killed entirely by technology: while creating mix tapes topped the list, photography was writ large. Putting photos in albums, hanging printed photos, and the thrill of opening a pack of newly-developed photographs made up three of the remaining four slots.

But in the face of the technological onslaught, groups across London are resisting the march of time. Film photographers are the thin end of the

wedge: there are those who swear not only by the design and tactile appeal of their leather-bound planners but also by their efficiency benefits, and those who would rather push pieces around a board than dispatch Nazis in *Call of Duty*.

There are hints of a trend: in 2017 Facebook revealed it had lost 700,000 daily users, while the amount of time spent on the site dropped by 50 million hours per day. And, with a 2017 study reporting that heavy users of social media reported worse mental health, the loss of analogue pursuits could be to everyone’s detriment.

Bulldozed by tech

Alex Batterbee tells me he feels “bulldozed” by the constant demands of digital. He breaks off to concentrate on the Indonesian coast, where one of his warships has been abruptly sunk by the Chinese navy. Alex is one of the organisers of London on Board, a community of more than 11,000 users who meet in pubs across London to indulge in the apparently simple, old-school joys of board games.

Alex and five others are around a table on the mezzanine floor of a hotel in Camden, where they and around 50 other gamers have met to peruse a huge selection of board games that allow them to colonise Mars (Terraforming), pit the forces of good against evil in the middle ages (Avalon) or, in the case of Alex and his group, set a nation on course for world domination (Imperial 2030). The game is so bewilderingly complex that I watch it for an hour and manage to leave knowing less than when I arrived. “This board is kind of dry,” admits Andy Wingrave, looking up from a byzantine set of rules. “But it’s just really fun to play because of the interactions with everybody.”

The idea that analogue pursuits are the preserve of Luddites and the left-behind are quickly dispelled by the “boardies”. In between outbreaks of internecine warfare and complex tax negotiations, it turns out virtually all of the group are enthusiastic

“There are those who would rather push pieces around a board than dispatch Nazis in *Call of Duty*”

ABOVE Maria Gillies, Andy Wingrave, Felix Godfree and Anne Learoyd play Imperial 2030

RIGHT Abdul Hye using a 35mm Olympus film camera to take a photo in London

