

A Magical Gift That Puts Photography in a New Light

By Susan E L Lake

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I've not written any blogs lately because I've been distracted. Not from the pandemic and other fretful things – but with a gift I got recently. This gift has changed completely how I am choosing my photographs and even taking them. It's a gift that has made a huge difference in my life. "Oh my," you ask, "what did you get that could do such a thing?" First of all, I assure you I have no contact with the company that produced this gift and get nothing in return for this posting. It's just that I'm so thrilled by what I have that I want to share.

"Okay. Okay. So tell us what it is!" **It's a digital frame.** "Ho hum," you say, "I've had those for years on my desk to show off my kids and grands or pets. That's no big deal." And you would be correct. I too have had those and while I liked looking at mine and others, they hardly excited me. My [Meural Canvas](#) is different.

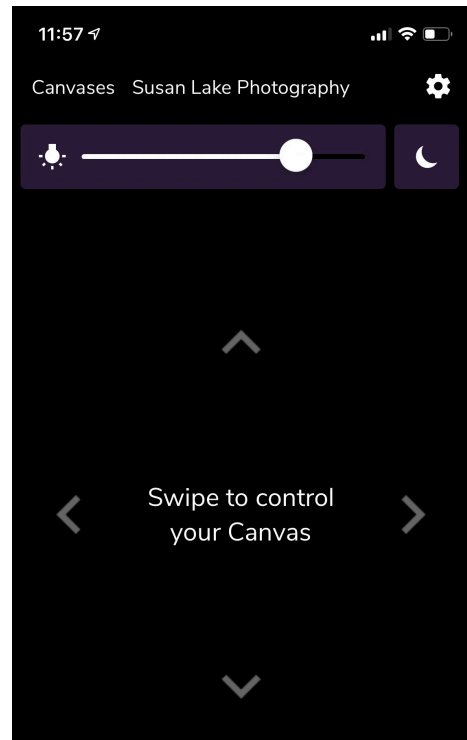
To begin with it's big enough to effectively display an image from a distance at 19X29 inches (although that's the exterior size which includes the frame – the image size is about 13X23). According to the company, the device uses "patented TrueArt technology to deliver lifelike art at virtually every angle with a specialized anti-glare matte display and ambient light sensor to ensure that 16.7 million colors from true blacks to rich hues are displayed properly." It's so true. The display is astonishing and heart stopping. Photographs that were taken with an emphasis on light are particularly striking. I find myself going through photographs I've taken over the years looking for those that will benefit from this display.

It is wifi connected to my home Internet which allows me to upload 20 GB worth of my images rather effortlessly. I can arrange them into playlists which can then be "turned on" according to a schedule or by selecting from the app I have on both my iPhone and iPad. With that app, I can move around the order of pics. I can even do a bit of editing with it. Since the image is projected in a 16X9 ratio, photographs must be adjusted to "fit" the screen or be projected as is with black bars to fill in the unused area (Remember those messages on your DVDs that say "edited to fit the screen." It's that same issue.)

I can also use a hand wave across the bottom of the screen to change the images, but I have to say it's pretty awkward. Kind of a nice "parlor trick" that I only use to



My magical gift: a Meural digital frame marketed by Netgear.



The Meural app lets me control my canvas sitting across the room in my chair or wherever I have Internet access.

show off. I use the app far more frequently. I just wish they had an app for my watch so I could do it that way too. Maybe in the future.

Looking to the past and future of this frame interested me. It was developed by two university students and then acquired by the router company Netgear. I'm hoping that means this device will be upgraded regularly – particularly the app.

I haven't mentioned the second lovely use for this device. My gift included the subscription to a huge art library of well-regarded artists. I find myself engaging in art appreciation by selecting a particular artist each day to upload. It's a great way to improve my photographic eye plus I'm learning about artists I've never heard of.

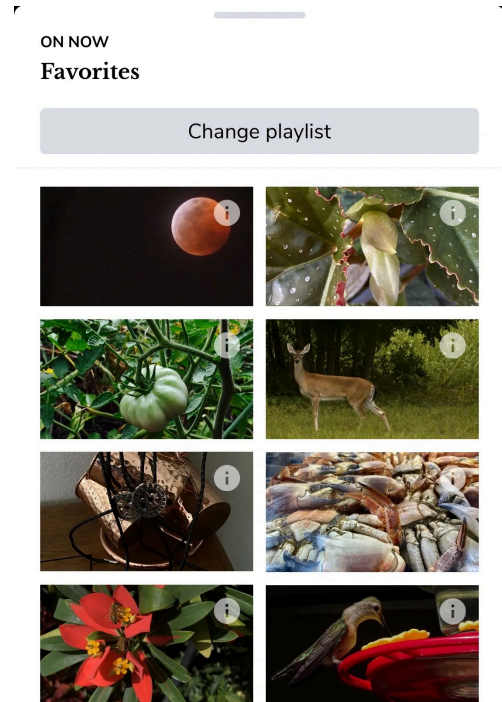
But what's it's done for my photographic work is what really makes this a wonderful device. Simply put it lets me see my images throughout each day. I've written before about trying to decide what's a good shot and what's not. I've subjected my work to scrutiny by others. I've printed my photos and hung them on my wall. Uploading a group of shots and then "seeing" them on different days under different lighting conditions or even time of day has given me surprising insight. Some images that I loved on first look, I continue to love, but others not so much. Some that I was merely playing with never intending to print or even post on social media I have found enchanting.

The ability to create playlists allows me to sort my images into groups to display as I like.

As a result of this new digital frame, I'm spending far more time than before looking at previous pics selecting those to display. I have created playlists of experimental images, travel images, nature pics, and even a cat collection. I also have that all important playlist for those I truly like a LOT. I delete those that just don't survive the day to day watching and upload others to try out. This frame has become a major evaluation tool. Since others can see it, I also watch for their response to a particular photograph. It's as if I have my own in house gallery letting me share my best work, but with wonderful flexibility since I can remove with ease any I decide against and have wasted no money printing ones I eventually don't much like.

With my new focus on displaying my photos on this device, I've even gone so far as to set my cameras to shoot 16X9 just so I don't have to decide what to cut off later. One issue for me is that while you can display your work in horizontal or vertical mode (and I do have a swivel behind it to allow to do that), I prefer to leave the frame in a horizontal position. What I really need (hint hint to my family) is a second one to mount vertically so I can have that option. However, this piece of wonder was an expensive gift. It's not an impulse buy, but I will say it's worth every penny my children spent if one counts the hours of delight it has given me.

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