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American Photography: A Critical History 1945 To Present



Synopsis

A history of modern American photography surveys major developments in photographic theory, trends, method, and style, as well as the works of noted American photographers, from 1945 to the present.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gollee, one big read of a book. Very exciting the text and challenging and provocative, and amusing, and full of good old American humor. The photos are illustrations, I mean, they are not the kind of photo reproduction in the expensive photo books, but hell, some stuff in the books you would never find in expensive photo books, so expect surprises. My book came in a nice strong box with some other stuff, so these folks in Austin shipped it right.

Starting with his work at MIT with Minor White, Jonathan Green was part of the massive cultural shift that saw photography move from the fringes of the art world to its core. *American Photography: A Critical History* represents his attempt to synthesize what he experienced first hand with the larger context of American culture. Less a history than a collection of historical essays, *American Photography* provides insights at every turn: especially memorable is "Aperture in the Fifties," which situates Minor White in the same Zen cultural underground that included the Beats and small presses. Spread across the center of the book, James Friedman's brilliant sequence of photographs goes beyond illustration to create its own significant meaning. The most inspiring theme of *American*

Photography is actually Green's passion for the medium, pursued through a long view of American life that is always generous, intelligent, and hopeful. By contemporary standards, American Photography: A Critical History is neither critical nor history, but it remains a vital--almost impervious--witness to the ambitions guiding mid-century American photographic culture and its various practitioners, Jonathan Green included.

I recently reviewed Peter Turner's: *American Images: Photography 1945-1980* and I mentioned that his and this book have been very useful to me as reference about photography since 1945. Green's book is in a different editorial format than Turner's because it is essentially a photographic narrative backed up with photos. 'American Images' is a visual reference to eighty-two photographers. Though Green's book was published in 1984 it is a thorough look back at trends and personalities that shaped this particular creative art. Nicely, he covers aspects of photography that tend to be ignored in more conventional overviews: there are chapters on the painter as photographer (Rauschenberg, Warhol, Ruscha etc) as printmaker (Michals, Misrach, Heinecken or Michael Lesy) writers on photography (Sontag and of course Szarkowski) and the MoMA Family of Man exhibit gets a chapter. The design of the book is a bit different from other photo histories. Here the images (332 in color and mono) referred to in the text all run across the middle of each spread, about the size of a playing card, so they are not presented as photos to savor like Turner's 'American Images'. The bibliography and index are as comprehensive as one would need. I've always enjoyed using this book and the impressively low prices for it on the net (new ones, too) make it a real bargain. ***SEE SOME INSIDE SPREADS by clicking 'customer images' under the cover.

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