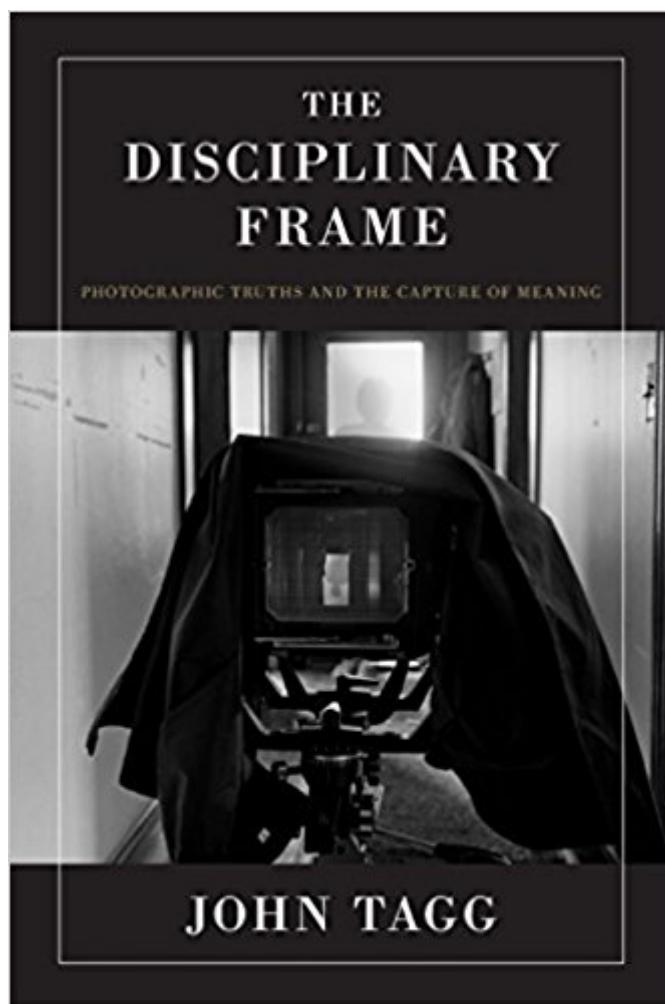


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The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths And The Capture Of Meaning



Synopsis

Photography can seem to capture reality and the eye like no other medium, commanding belief and wielding the power of proof. In some cases, a photograph itself is attributed the force of the real. How can a piece of chemically discolored paper have such potency? How does the meaning of a photograph become fixed? In *The Disciplinary Frame*, John Tagg claims that, to answer these questions, we must look at the ways in which all that frames photography—the discourse that surrounds it and the institutions that circulate it—determines what counts as truth. The meaning and power of photographs, Tagg asserts, are discursive effects of the regimens that produce them as official record, documentary image, historical evidence, or art. Teasing out the historical processes involved, he examines a series of revealing case studies from nineteenth-century European and American photographs to Depression-era works by Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Margaret Bourke-White to the conceptualist photography of John Baldessari. Central to this transformative work are questions of cultural strategy, the growth of the state, and broad issues of power and representation: how the discipline of the frame holds both photographic image and viewer in place, without erasing the possibility for evading, and even resisting, capture. Photographs, Tagg ultimately finds, are at once too big and too small for the frames in which they are enclosed—always saying more than is wanted and less than is desired.

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Customer Reviews

So good.

This is a challenging but masterfully crafted text on photographic theory and potentially one of the most important publications within this field during the last decade. 'The Disciplinary Frame' is not a text you sit down and read, exhausted after a long day. Its prose are dense but rewarding. Tagg has crafted an engaging examination of the photograph's documentary potential, examining the medium in terms of regimes of meaning. This text is aware of the methodological schism that exists between art historians and historians over their analysis of images, the former concentrating on what's inside the frame and the later looking (predominantly) at the publishing and historical context: 'frame' itself. Tagg in many ways aims to look at the 'frame' and the image as discursively connected; fused. It is a refreshing approach, ground in practical examples from both nineteenth and twentieth century photographic practice. This is an essential read for anyone working with images, academically, or anyone interested more generally in understanding how photography has been used in the public space to 'document' types of bodies and, thus, "call into place" identities.

The author may be an expert on the subject but due to his convoluted (if not incomprehensible) prose it is almost impossible to learn anything from this book. Capturing meaning (as the title suggests) may not be the problem with this book but releasing meaning is. Read the excerpt before you buy.

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