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The Photograph As Contemporary Art (World Of Art)



Synopsis

• Essential reading for anyone who wishes to make sense of the complex . . . world of contemporary art photography. • Picture Professional In the 21st century photography has come of age as a contemporary art form. Nearly two centuries after photographic technology was first invented, the art world has fully embraced it as a legitimate medium, equal in status to painting and sculpture. This book provides an introduction to contemporary art-photography, identifying its most important features and themes and celebrating its exciting pluralism through an overview of its most important and innovative practitioners. The work of nearly 250 photographers is reproduced, from established artists such as Isa Genzken, Jeff Wall, Sophie Calle, Thomas Demand, Nan Goldin, and Sherrie Levine to emerging talents such as Walead Beshty, Jason Evans, Lucas Blalock, Sara VanDerBeek, and Viviane Sassen. This new edition brings the story of contemporary art photography up to date with a revised introduction outlining the evolution of photography from documentary tool to art form, and an updated final chapter focusing on the younger generation of artists who emphasize the technical and material properties of photography, employ it as part of a wider pan-media practice, or respond to evolving new modes of dissemination in the digital age. 249 illustrations, 212 in color

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

UPDATE JANUARY 2010: My review of the first (2004) edition is given verbatim below. In the next

paragraph I compare the first edition and the second (2009) edition. The first 217 pages of the 2nd ed. are different in only minor ways from the first 217 pages of the 1st ed.* However, pages 218-241 in the 2nd ed. contain a new final chapter 8, "Physical and Mental," discussing photographic works for which "the very nature of the medium is part of the narrative of the work." Among other topics, chapter 8 covers appropriation (e.g., rephotographing photographs); analog versus digital photography; and photographs in sculptures, collages, multimedia installations, books, and Web sites. Artists discussed in this chapter include James Welling, Isa Genzken, Walead Beshty, Zoe Leonard, An-My Le, Ed Ruscha, Rinko Kawauchi, and others. The writing style is similar to the first seven chapters, and is again of high quality. The "Further Reading" list on pages 242-243 in the 2nd ed. has references as recent as 2009. In conclusion, if you own the 1st ed., you MAY wish to replace it with the 2nd ed., but it's not an absolute must.* In specific, p.10 has a new paragraph summarizing the new final chapter, material on Sherrie Levine has been moved from p.214 to the new final chapter, and the paragraph on Vibeke Tandberg on p.217 is slightly reworded.

I am a photographer. I also live in New York City where I wander through art galleries displaying photographs with which I have a hard time coming to grips. Charlotte Cotton's book seemed to be aimed right at me. What distinguishes a contemporary art photograph from other beautiful photographs is not always clear, but like Supreme Court Justice Stewart, I know it when I see it. From what the author suggests, it may be that contemporary art photography is less concerned with the form and more with the content, and that viewers are meant to be semiologists decoding what a photograph stands for. Cotton begins her book with an introduction that includes a taxonomy of contemporary art photography, and to the extent that classifying an object helps us to know and understand it, the introduction alone justifies the book. Surprisingly, rather than look at style or subject matter, she organizes the book based upon the photographers' motivations and working practices. For example one of the classes is pictures of events that have been specifically organized to be photographed while another is pictures that aim to reproduce or refer back to something in the history of photography and other arts. Each of the classes is allocated a chapter, and allocates a paragraph each to the work several artists, along with a representative photograph. Cotton explains how the photograph fits into the genre and explains something of the meaning of the work. Most of the photographs are just large enough to provide some appreciation of the work and the explanations are as concise as possible. The book is meant to be a survey and so is more useful for providing a framework for understanding the overall categories than appreciating any individual picture.

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