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# Photography Changes Everything



## Synopsis

Photography Changes Everything offers a provocative rethinking of photography's impact on our culture and our daily lives. Compiling hundreds of images and responses from leading authorities on photography, it offers a brilliant, reader-friendly exploration of the many ways in which photographs package information and values, demand and hold attention, and shape our knowledge of and experience in the world. The volume draws on the extraordinary visual assets of the Smithsonian Institution's museums, science centers and archives to launch an unprecedented interdisciplinary dialogue on photography's capacity to shape and change our experience of the world. Photography Changes Everything features over 300 images and nearly 100 engaging short texts commissioned from experts, writers, inventors, public figures and others— from Hugh Hefner to John Baldessari, John Waters, Robert Adams, Sandra Phillips and many others. Each story responds to images selected by project contributors. Together they engage readers in a timely exploration of the extent to which our lives have been transformed through our interactions with photographic imagery. Edited by leading photography curator and author Marvin Heiferman, Photography Changes Everything provides a unique opportunity to better understand the history, practice and power of photography at this transitional moment in visual culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Curator and writer Marvin Heiferman has focused on the influence of photographic images on culture and history in projects such as *Fame After Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art, New

York (1999) and *Image World: Art and Media Culture* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1989). A contributing editor to *Art in America*, he serves on the faculty of both the International Center of Photography/Bard College and the School of Visual Art's MFA programs in photography. He was creative consultant to the Smithsonian Photography Initiative from 2005 to 2011, during which time he conceptualized and curated *click! photography changes everything* ([click.si.edu](http://click.si.edu)). Art historian and author of numerous essays and articles on American art and photography, Merry A. Foresta, was the founding director of the Smithsonian Photography Initiative from 2000 to 2010. Prior to that, she was senior curator for photography at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Her publications include *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray* (1998), *Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography* (1992), *Secrets of the Dark Chamber: The Art of the American Daguerreotype* (1995), and *At First Sight: Photography and the Smithsonian* (2004).

As an instructor of documentary photography, I found this book to be easy to read with a great wealth of information. As we move through this next century, we do need to examine what it means to read a photograph, to understand how photographs change the way we behave, look at the world, and most importantly, treat other human beings. Hurray for Aperture and the Smithsonian- two of my favorite publishers - for coming together and making such an important contribution with various writers, teachers, thinkers, and photographers all sharing with us how photography makes a difference. I am currently using this as a textbook for my class, and it is an excellent way to begin conversations, promote deeper thinking, and be awed by the far reaches of how imagery shapes our lives.

One of the most original and useful books on photography I have encountered since I started working on photograph interpretation in 1998. It explains how photographs have changed our view on matters through photography specifically and in a huge variety of areas. I came across it by accident, like one often does, when doing a Coursera course just to brush up my skills. I think I've failed the course but I've discovered this book.

A superb book on the impact of photography in every facet of our lives.

This well edited selection surprises. One would expect lengthy explanations about art and photography. Yet none of this. The practical and the artsy, the documentary, the historical and the

mundane. How photography changed much in our life, in science, in discovery in learning is very well covered here and has many corners and twists that surprises even "the well informed". The only criticism I'd have is the stale print quality of the photos and, much more, that the texts mention prominently some photos but then they are not shown. But these are minor downsides of a great collection that is also a very easy and entertaining read apart from being highly informative. I was most impressed by #Jeremy Wolfe's convincing essay of how powerful our photographic memory is and I really loved the text of the youngest contributor, Tien Nguyen, for its blunt and beautiful honesty and introspective

This review also appears on <http://wp.me/p1ZU6J-aq> How the advent of photography and our burgeoning, and now ubiquitous, use of the medium has changed, well, everything, is the theme of essays in *Photography Changes Everything* recently published by the Smithsonian Institution. A photographer finds it gratifying to read such sentiments, which make photography sound as consequential as did Michael Fried's title *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*. But "*Changes Everything*"? Doesn't that give too much credit to a medium over its operators? That is a question best asked of an institution with the vision, and the time and money, to team up with Aperture Foundation, and open its archives to the 10-year Photography Initiative (2000-2010), at the instigation of Merry A. Foresta, senior photography curator. The scope of the project was as large as the Smithsonian itself. The "*Everything*" is credible because unlike other collecting institutions, the Smithsonian does not collect photography for the sake of Photography. Consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park and nine research facilities, it claims to be "The world's largest museum and research complex", housing 'everything', or records of 'everything', from anthropology to zoology. Several of its collections do concentrate historical and contemporary American, Asian and African art, but its mission statement is that of a research facility. Photographs from all of its museums appear in this book, not necessarily as art, but purely as photographs. As the late Dr. John Cato, my lecturer, would shockingly announce to his students; "Photography is not art..." (gasp!), then say "...just some photographs are.". It is the drawing together of photographs previously separated into a pantheon of disciplines that challenges our ideas about the medium and represents the ambitiousness of this considerable and lengthy project. In the introduction Foresta gives her account of the reason one of the earliest photographs in the collection was made; it is a charming daguerrotype of the architect James Renwick's model of the proposed museum. This story is a key to this intriguing book. Geoffrey Batchen, quoted by editor Marvin Heiferman, says; "Photographs never have a single meaning; neither [...] does photography as a whole".

Photographs are open questions, prompting us to ask what, where or why they are, to tell ourselves stories that account for their appearance. This was the scheme of 'Phiction' which I curated for the Horsham Regional Arts Gallery, which matched passages from Australian literature with photographs from their collection in order to provoke the audience's own telling. However this book draws on an array of subjects from a vast, encyclopaedic archive and not only art photography or photojournalism. The commentators, 79 of them, including several whose careers would seem to only obliquely intersect with some manifestation of the medium, present an array of perspectives. You'll recognise prominent names from other books on photography; Robert Adams, Wendy Ewald, John Baldessari, Andy Grundberg, Carol Squires; art practitioners and commentators whose comments we'd expect to see here. But other essays come from experts on shopping behaviour, aeronautical history, archeology, a curator of giant pandas, an online dating portraitist, a genealogist, astronomers, the inventor of the camera phone, an actor, a poet who is also a photographer's model, an eighth grade student, and even Playboy's founder Hugh Hefner. Such a range, and so many surprising commentaries, interpretations and stories, the factual as well as the fanciful, makes this a very dip-able book. The essays are short, rarely more than two pages and each concentrates our attention on a couple of carefully selected examples. The book is divided into sections: Photography Changes...What We Want; ...What We See; ...Who We Are; ...What We Do; ...Where We Go; ...What We Remember. Under these categories, the combinations of images, or the title of each essay, or both, work magnetically; it is not long before you begin to make illuminating comparisons between themes and ideas for yourself. Of course no book is exhaustive. I am still left to wonder how Photography Changes How We See.

If you like photography, and you want to go farther than just merely looking at beautiful photographs, you should acquire this book. If you are a teacher, a student, or just a person with little or a lot of curiosity about photography, you should acquire this book. If you want to know better what makes a photo work and want to know the importance of photography, specially in these days, you should acquire this book. I have read a lot of books about photography, and this one, no doubt, goes in the top five. Don't expect to receive a classical photo book with outstanding paper quality. But do expect to receive a book to be read, to be analyzed, and from which you, either amateur or professional, will learn a lot. And this book will change (and complete) your knowledge about the importance and the beutifulness of photography and the visual arts. This is the kind of book which really makes you think.

I was not sure what I was going to get out this book but I am really enjoying reading it. I am not done with it yet but like it so much I simply had to get the word out and present my five star recommendation. Photography is so accessible now with digital camera's and camera's being included in cell phones, toys, and many other devices at an amazing rate. This book really captures these changes over time and provides the reader with a wealth of information to help witness this rapid change. This book has really expanded my knowledge on a subject that I already consider myself an expert in. If photography is a passion of yours this book should be in your printed collection.

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