

A New History of Photography

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One can only imagine the amazement felt by L.J.M. Daguerre, when, in the summer of 1839, he gazed upon the first photograph ever made. An image of the view from his Paris apartment of the bustling Boulevard du Temple, it was remarkably detailed yet mysteriously vacant, save for a single man in the distance who appeared to be having his boots polished; the rest of the passersby evaded capture due to the necessarily long exposure. And thus began the world-shaking practice of photography. A New History of Photography was created after the French Ministry of Culture observed that there were no books produced in France that addressed the history of the art form. Rather than present the standard chronological survey, this book's creators chose to produce a volume that would encompass photography's historical evolution as well as its role in society.

Editor Michel Frizot writes a substantial portion of the text, along with 29 additional authors who offer a plethora of analytical information and a wide variety of points of view. Periods, social practice, contextual analysis, historical questions, influential innovations, and aesthetic turning points are explored around themes ranging from chemistry to the snapshot, ethnography to color printing, evidence to advertising, and much, much more. This ambitious book includes many images not familiar to an American audience, offering a fascinating visual smorgasbord that demonstrates the breadth of applications and interpretations that photography has seen from its very inception. Put simply, it is a book about why people take photographs and what photographs can do. At a whopping 776 pages, this weighty volume has something for everyone. --A.C. Smith

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