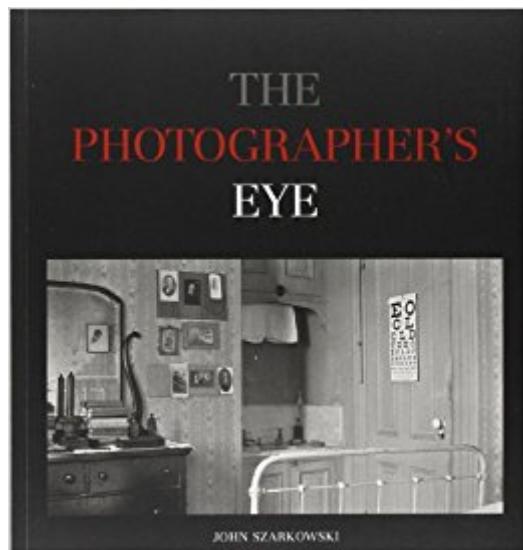


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The Photographer's Eye



Synopsis

The Photographer's Eye by John Szarkowski is a twentieth-century classic--an indispensable introduction to the visual language of photography. Based on a landmark exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in 1964, and originally published in 1966, the book has long been out of print. It is now available again to a new generation of photographers and lovers of photography in this duotone printing that closely follows the original. Szarkowski's compact text eloquently complements skillfully selected and sequenced groupings of 172 photographs drawn from the entire history and range of the medium. Celebrated works by such masters as Cartier-Bresson, Evans, Steichen, Strand, and Weston are juxtaposed with vernacular documents and even amateur snapshots to analyze the fundamental challenges and opportunities that all photographers have faced. Szarkowski, the legendary curator who worked at the Museum from 1962 to 1991, has published many influential books. But none more radically and succinctly demonstrates why--as U.S. News & World Report put it in 1990--"whether Americans know it or not," his thinking about photography "has become our thinking about photography."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Szarkowski is Director Emeritus of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art. He was Director of the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art for twenty-nine years, from 1962 to 1991. His thinking about photography, US News & World Report said in 1990, 'whether Americans know it or not, has become our thinking about photography.' In addition to The

Photographer's Eye, Szarkowski is the author of numerous books about the medium, including Looking at Photographs (1974), still required reading for photography students.

This, combined with Stephen Shore's similar-but-complimentary *The Nature of Photographs* would be a good bibliography for a beginner's class on photography - in which the students must use a fully-automatic camera - maybe a smartphone? These two books complement each other - makes sense, IIRC Szarkowski was some kind of mentor to Shore. Also they complement the approximately 100% of how-to books on photography that never mention how to do photography. Most photography books exclusively cover technical stuff that in 2016 anyone can easily master in an afternoon. Of course there is a surfeit of writing about *about* photography, but IMHO those are for the second semester of the course of study I'm proposing. Maybe Sontag and Barthes would be the texts for that class. I think it's good for a photographer to limit that kind of reading, anyway - too much photography nowadays has photography as its subject. When I became deeply interested in photography as a hobby, I tore through lots of books and videos, and I always had a sense like, "Yeah, but that doesn't explain what _____ is doing," (whoever was my favorite photographer that week). I don't know where I got that sense, but I also sense that many photographers are missing that sense. This book would instill that sense in anyone, I think. I found Shore's book early on - I wish I had found *The Photographer's Eye* at the same time. I think I would have developed much faster into a photographer with direction and purpose.

I was excited to receive this collection of photographs assembled by MOMA curator John Szarkowski. At first, I was a little disappointed because I was expecting more commentary on the images- I imagined a publication where Szarkowski would deconstruct the images, point out observations and relate them to photo theory. I looked forward to getting in the mind of the master. Once I got over this disappointment, I picked the book up again and realized what an idiot I had been for wanting that to begin with. "The Photographer's Eye" is the perfect title for this book- It doesn't overwhelm you with essays explaining how to see, how to think and what each image "means". Instead, it presents 5 expertly curated collections of photographs (The Thing Itself, The Detail, The Frame, Time, and Vantage Point) and it gives the viewer just a tiny bit of written information to consider regarding that collection. The viewer is then forced to visually consider and decipher each image (as well as the collection as a whole) and make those wonderful little discoveries on their own. In effect, to see and understand using the photographer's eye rather than the writer's word. Man, Szarkowski was a genius. I can't recommend it highly enough. Beautiful

images, beautiful sequence, beautifully curated.

Wonderful book! This is not a 'how to' in any way, shape or form, but it is a book that will make you think about what goes into your images. The author breaks photographs into 5 sections and writes a little about each section, then provides a number of amazing, historical examples. This is a book that I've already read through 3 times shortly after I bought it, and I'm sure that I will return to it over and over for inspiration. I've been a photographer since the late 70's but this book brought me new insight.

John writes well so it is as fun to read his descriptions as it is fun to look through the photographs. Photographs aren't possible to describe so the text is brief, but it is invaluable in understanding them. For an art student, this has what you need to work towards bettering. Also look at John's other books; I keep my collection of them together.

A number of reviews have focused on the lack of narrative in this book. This assessment is correct. However, the book is a major chronology of the power and influence of photography, and is a visual treat. The quality of reproduction reflects its price and heritage, nevertheless, it contains, in a structured way, many powerful images. This is a very important book, but its style and contents are not for everyone. In particular, it contrasts significantly in style and tempo, with Szarkowski's other well known work - "Looking at Photographs - 100 Pictures from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art".

This is a book with many images and a few words. But the small text is of seminal importance for the understanding and the future of photography. Firstly, John Szarkowski draws a parallel between the art that forged photography - painting - and photography in itself. A comparison between the inclusion of a painting canvas and the exclusion of a camera viewfinder. He does not dismiss the photograph as something lost in the space and time, but as something in motion, even if only for 1/30 of a second. A Cartier Bresson's "decisive moment", not in the sense that is commonly accepted by most (a dramatic climax), but a visual one. The author emphasizes that this is a new art and needs to be still discovered in many senses. The photographers need to discover new meanings and ways to express themselves in new images. John Szarkowski was the curator of photography of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York for many years. In the exhibits he put into action his thoughts, inclusively promoting color photography. As a photographer, I have learned

a lot in those few pages. One of the conclusions that I draw is that the film and digital controversy is innocuous. Whatever image you capture through the viewfiender is photography.

I am an artist, educator and historian of photography. When this edition arrived I was amazed at how great the print quality was and the images were stunning. It's like my eyes were hungry for each image and I devoured it front to back and again and again. The essays by Szarkowski are not to be missed, but take up a smaller portion of the book. Would be great for making slides to teach photo history because the prints are so good.

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