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Why It Does Not Have To Be In Focus: Modern Photography Explained



Synopsis

This lively, informed defense of modern photography focuses on not focusing--and other unconventional methods that have been successfully employed by acclaimed photographers. In an age where anyone with a camera can call him- or herself a photographer, an apparent lack of technique might be mistaken for a lack of artistic sophistication. In this delightful follow-up to *Why Your Five-Year-Old Could Not Have Done That*, Jackie Higgins offers superb examples to counter that assumption, such as Hiroshi Sugimoto's anachronistic use of a 19th-century large-format camera to produce intentionally fuzzy pictures, and Richard Prince's controversial technique of "re-photographing" photos, which unleashed a barrage of criticism that he was profiting from others' work. From portraits to documentary images and from abstractions to landscapes, the author identifies 100 important images that are emblematic of innovation in modern photography, revealing the frequently complex processes involved in their composition. In so doing, she offers a provocative reminder of what makes a great photograph.

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Customer Reviews

Higgins brings together a plethora of photographers who shoot outside the box or with innovation so that you can put aside all the photography books that explain how to do it and reach for what another has successfully tried that has resulted in an image you might not ever have considered before.

It would be possible to be slightly misled by the subtitle of this book - it's more about modern "photographs" explained rather than modern "photography". This book will not help with your technique although you might get some ideas about subject matter. Cynics might also suggest that it might make you more critical about deleting images you regard as failures! Such is the world of modern art - and this is really more about appreciation and understanding of modern art in the form of photographs. It does this by looking at about 100 images from different artist/photographers grouped into several themes: portraits, documents, still life, action, landscape, abstract. For each image Higgins looks at why it is considered a "work of art", the approach of the artist, where this fits in the development of photographic art in general, comments by the artist and other ephemera as well as similar images by the artist and sometimes notes on the equipment used although less on the post image manipulation techniques that may have been employed. The structure of the book works well and it's good to either read through or to dip into. In a world that's awash with photographs, through Flickr, Instagram et al, it is highly moot what makes these images so "artistic". To some extent this is true of all modern art. And as with other aspects of modern art, there are times when I feel that, like a good joke, if art needs an explanation then it wasn't that successful in the first place. It's very much a visual book - as you might expect - with explanations of the artists' intentions etc. However, this means that it fails to address what makes any given image art rather than a good or bad photograph. However, if you are into the modern art aspect of photography, this is a more interesting book than if you come at it with a photographer's hat on.

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