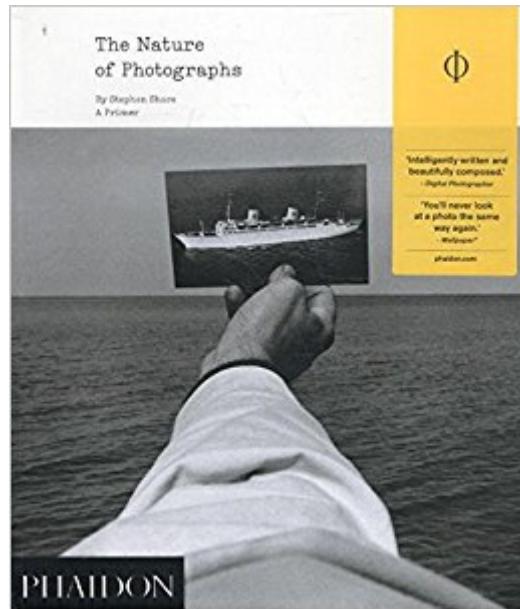


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The Nature Of Photographs: A Primer



Synopsis

An essential primer on how to look at and understand photographs, by one of the world's most influential photographers, Stephen Shore. He explores ways of understanding photographs from all periods and all types, from iconic images to found photographs, from negatives to digital files.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This book has the power to transform the way you view, and understand, photographic prints forever."-Black & White Photography "Intelligently written and beautifully composed... Insightful..."-Digital Photographer "A lucid, perceptive and thought-provoking book."-Exit "The Nature of Photographs is stuffed with gorgeous prints, from classic images to contemporary pieces."-Boston Phoenix "A beautiful art photography book that will be the last textbook you need on the subject."-Tokion

At the age of 17, Stephen Shore (b.1947) was a regular at Andy Warhol's Factory. By the age of 23 he became the first living photographer to have a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. An unrivalled pioneer in his field, his work has been exhibited in numerous museums worldwide and influenced generations of photographers. In 1982 he was appointed Director of the Photography Program at Bard College, New York where he is now the Susan Weber Soros Professor in the Arts.

There are a few books about photography that are so fundamental that every serious photographer should read them. These include books that discuss the underlying assumptions of photography that many photographers just take for granted. "The Nature of Photographs: a Primer" by Stephen Shore is such a book. The book is deceptively simple. Shore sets out to describe "the physical and formal attributes of a photographic print" (although, it seemed to me, the work applied equally to an image on a monitor) "that form the tools a photographer uses to define and interpret...content." For example he suggests that at the depictive level there are four separate ways the camera transforms the world into a photograph: flatness, frame, time and focus. Each of the discussion points is supported by great images from photographic history, taken by photographers as diverse as Timothy O'Sullivan and Paul Caponigro. The text is short, capable of being read in less than an hour. However a useful reading requires a lingering over the photographs presented. For example, in commenting upon a picture of a clear-cut hillside, Shore says that photographer Robert Adams could frame a picture so that a railroad track appearing in a corner could enhance the meaning of the image. When I first glanced at the picture, I looked for an obvious railroad right-of-way, but closer examination showed a single railroad track just appearing in the bottom corner. One might have thought it was unavoidably included, a mere accident. But realizing that Adams was not so casual gave a whole new level of meaning to the photograph. Moreover it suggested to me that important elements of a photograph need not be obviously highlighted, and that, just as creating a good photograph requires more time and thought than a hasty click of the shutter, exploring a photograph might require more than the usual three seconds of looking committed by the average viewer. Shore himself is a great photographer, appearing in the seminal 1997 "New Topographics" show, but the photographs he uses to illustrate his thesis cover the entire range of imagery. The book was originally published in 1998, but Phaidon has issued reprints regularly since 2007, and the book is now available in paper-back for an almost ridiculously low price, considering the value of the content. I'm certain many photographers will say "I know what a photograph is, and how it works." I challenge this assumption. Examine this book, its text and its images. If you can say it added nothing to your understanding of photographs, my hat is off to you.

One of the best photography texts, focused in its particular way (on visual properties of photographs, and to an extent their presence as objects). Its text is spare, to the point of being poetic, worth giving some real time to but not demanding of long hours of reading. That's a great balance that I appreciate. I assign this for studio photography classes and it's great for opening up various lines of thought without demanding a lot more reading than our focus can allow.

Be prepared. This is not an ordinary book on photography or teaching photography. Yet it is a very effective one. The author, a famous art photographer, explores the fundamental elements of the technique in a most basic way illustrating each point with photographic examples. It forces the student or experienced photographer to re-examine the fundamentals of the task. But be aware that you will not get any technical advice: no fstops, lens markings, hyperfocal distances, etc.

Stephen Shore give a lesson with each picture. A must in a photographer's library.

well written, well illustrated, clear explanations, lots to think about and explore. great text- used it as a text in a composition class, and the students and i both learned a lot from it.

One of the best photo books of all time! It shows photographs and explains visually why the photo works. A great teaching tool for all levels!

For class, I don't think i opened more than a few times!

This was a required text for school for fundamentals of photo I really was hard to find glad I got it here
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