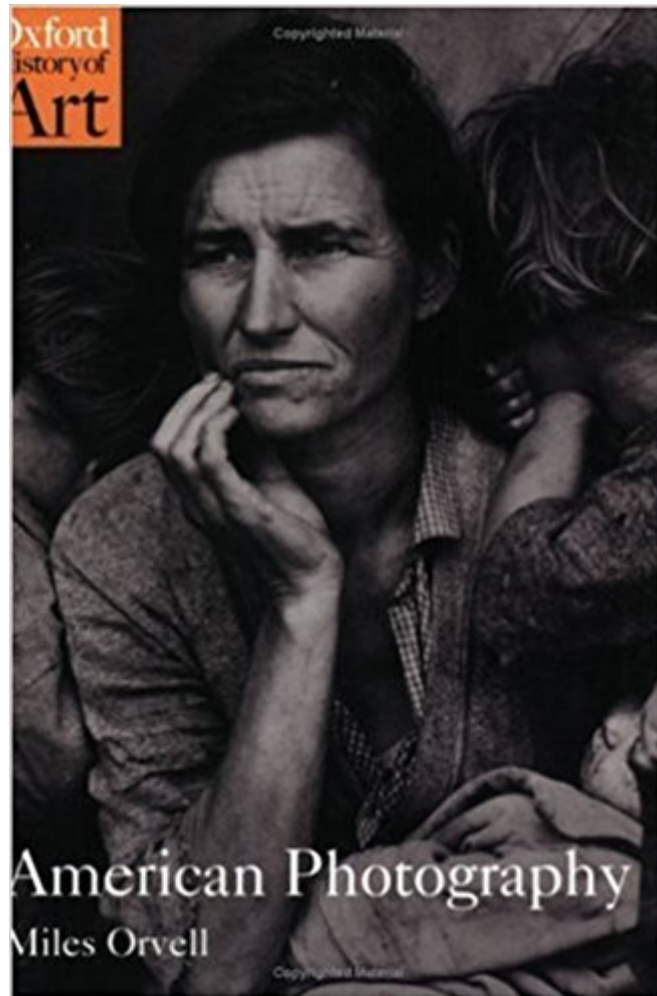




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# American Photography (Oxford History Of Art)



## Synopsis

150 years of American photography come alive in this exciting new book, placing it in its cultural context for the first time. Orvell examines this fascinating subject through a wide range of well known and less-well known images. He ranges from portraiture and landscape photography, family albums and memory, and analyses the particularly 'American' way in which American photographers have viewed the world around them. Orvell combines a clear overview of the changing nature of photographic thinking and practice in this period with an exploration of key concepts. The result is the first coherent history of American photography, which examines issues such as the nature of photographic exploitation, experimental techniques, the power of the photograph to shock, and whether we should subscribe to the notion of a visual history. ""What a terrific book!...Rich references to literature, history, art, and popular culture make this story come alive.""--Mary Panzer, Author of *Matthew Brady and the Image of History*, and former curator of photographs for the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found the book to be impressive in its breadth and depth of content. However, I consider a book, especially of this size and scope, that has a poor or nonexistent index to be inexcusable and of limited value. While this book has an "index", i.e., a list of index entries, there are no page numbers or other links into the text. In short, it was useless! I couldn't believe any respectable publisher would ever allow that -- really bush league.

Excellent read! Truly demonstrates the influence photography had, and STILL has, on shaping American culture.

A great reference for any photographer looking for some inspiration, has a lot of info on great photographers throughout history.

I got this is a textbook for a photography class and thought it was an interesting read. That said, it was not something I would choose to read on my own time, and would have preferred to have a book with more information on techniques.

Still searching for a good book on photography. I just came across with books that were either too boring, too abstruse, or too mean in providing illustrations. In any case, I couldn't help flip through the pages hastily when halfway in.

I wish I hadn't purchased this. It is a photography version of what a friend of mine used to call "suicide music"--so dark and depressing that it makes you want to kill yourself. The photographers and the images selected come from a strain of American culture that is nihilistic and self-loathing. Robert Frank's work, although certainly very influential and quite interesting in terms of composition, focus on ordinary life, etc., is of this strain. My problem with it is perhaps exemplified by the person of Jack Kerouac, who wrote the text for Frank's *The Americans*. Kerouac drank himself to death at the age of 47. I am not sure that someone whose life is lived like that has an understanding or a view of life that can inform me or that I need to study, and that is how I feel about most of the photographers who are focused on in this book. Joel Peter Witkins' photographs of a severed, autopsied head split in two, the two sides facing each other? Really? I don't think anyone reads Kerouac any more, and I don't think that many of the 20th century photographers focused on here have worn well over even a short period of time. Looking at their pictures makes me less of a human being and darkens my view of human possibility. There are many other American

photographers and photographs that are given short shrift here and whose view of life would have balanced the emotional and psychological emptiness of this book. A final note and a fellow reader's concurring review. The copy I had was a used copy that had been owned by a student in a course. The book had obviously been dutifully read because it was highlighted throughout. On one page the student had written in pencil his or her own review: "I hate this sh\*t". I know how she or he felt.

I needed this book for a history of photography class. It's a good book, easy to read, simply stated and the photos of course are pretty spectacular.

Very informative, especially regarding photography's role in documenting the social issues of America throughout her history. Without photography the development of America would have been completely different; Americans view, and understanding, of their own country and the events unfolding in their history was enhanced by the work of the work of these dedicated and imaginative people.

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