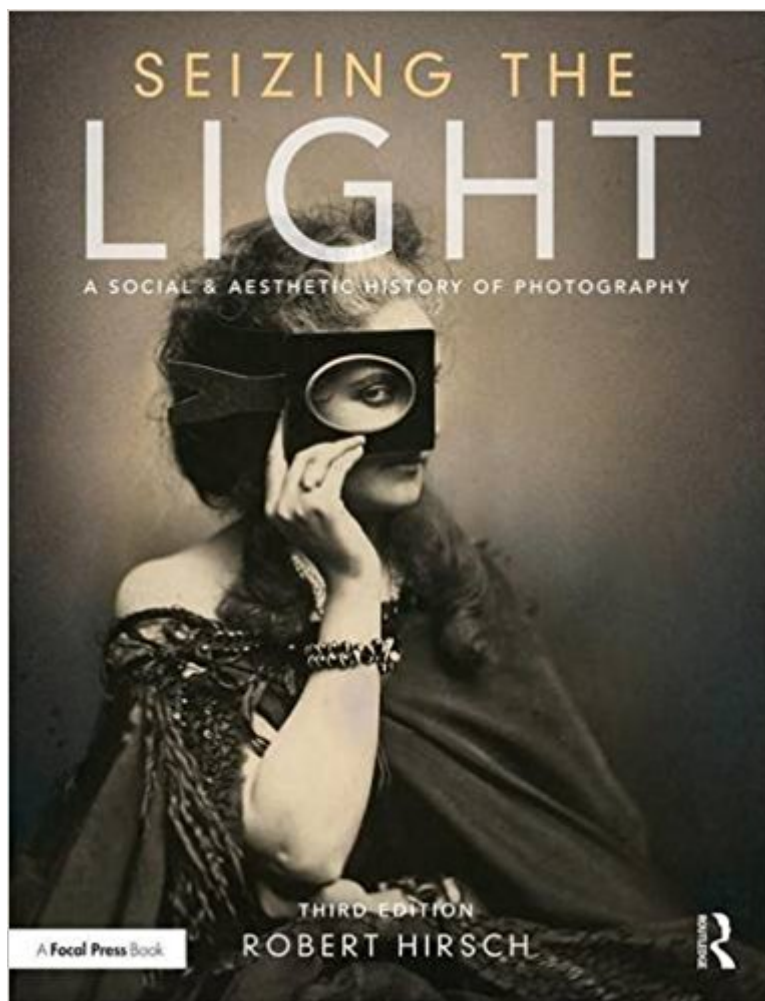


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# Seizing The Light: A Social & Aesthetic History Of Photography



## Synopsis

The definitive history of photography book, *Seizing the Light: A Social & Aesthetic History of Photography* delivers the fascinating story of how photography as an art form came into being, and its continued development, maturity, and transformation. Covering the major events, practitioners, works, and social effects of photographic practice, Robert Hirsch provides a concise and discerning chronological account of Western photography. This fundamental starting place shows the diversity of makers, inventors, issues, and applications, exploring the artistic, critical, and social aspects of the creative process. The third edition includes up-to-date information about contemporary photographers like Cindy Sherman and Yang Yongliang, and comprehensive coverage of the digital revolution, including the rise of mobile photography, the citizen as journalist, and the role of social media. Highly illustrated with full-color images and contributions from hundreds of artists around the world, *Seizing the Light* serves as a gateway to the history of photography. Written in an accessible style, it is perfect for students newly engaging with the practice of photography and for experienced photographers wanting to contextualize their own work.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Hirsch is a photographic imagemaker, curator, historian, and writer. Former executive director of CEPA Gallery and now director of Light Research in Buffalo, NY, he has published scores of articles about visual culture and interviewed numerous significant members in the photographic arts. His other books include *Exploring Color Photography: From Film to Pixels*; *Light*

and Lens: Photography in the Digital Age; Photographic Possibilities: The Expressive Use of Concepts, Equipment, Materials, and Processes; and Transformational Imagemaking: Handmade Photography from 1960 to Now. A former associate editor for Digital Camera and Photovision, Hirsch has also written for Afterimage, Exposure, History of Photography, The Photo Review, Photo Technique, and World Book Encyclopedia, among others. He has curated over 200 exhibitions and has had many one-person and group shows of his own work. For details visit [www.lightresearch.net](http://www.lightresearch.net).

It's a really nice book and came well packaged. Recommended!

Mark's STL3 Review One normally doesn't expect to be excited over the publication of a book on the history of photography. While the field is far from crowded, most photo history books—even the newer ones—tend to be based on works that are at least 50 years old. Many of the newer books tend to end their discussions with a nod to work produced in the late 1960s. A few of them may mention the rise of color photography and possibly the digital revolution, but supplant context with an incomplete list of names. It is rare for an author to completely rethink the idea of presenting the history of photography in textbook form and still rarer, indeed unique, to have published such a work. Thus we are fortunate that Robert Hirsch has published *Seizing the Light. A Social & Aesthetic History of Photography, Third Edition*, (Routledge, 2017). First, a word about this being a third edition. Most authors of newer editions tend to add text to their previous editions while making corrections or clarifications to existing text. This decidedly did not occur here. Rather, the author has completely rethought his two previous editions, so much so that this edition should rightfully be seen as a completely new work that only shares a title with those previous editions. Not only has the text been enlarged with latest research into the field, but it has added bonus value in the quality and selection of images. This is, without doubt, the finest print quality one is likely to find in any survey book on the history of photography. That fact should not go unremarked for when poor print quality is the norm, students, researchers, and of course the artists themselves are done a great disservice. *Seizing the Light* is divided into 20 chapters including: 1. Advancing Towards Photography: The Rise of the Reproduction 2. The Daguerreotype: Image and Object 3. Calotype Rising: The Arrival of Photography 4. Pictures on Glass: The Wet Plate Process 5. World News - Current Events: Picturing Tragedy 6. A New Medium of Communication 7. Standardizing the Practice: A Transparent Truth 8. New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space 9. Suggesting the Subject: The Evolution of Pictorialism 10. Modernism's Innovations 11. The New Culture of Light 12. Social Documents 13. Catching Time 14. From Halftones to Bytes 15. The Atomic

Age 16. New Frontiers: Expanding Boundaries 17. Changing Realities 18. Thinking About Photography 19. The Politics of Representation 20. Photography Becomes Digital Imaging

It is not possible in a review such as this to summarize each chapter. However, to illustrate just how the latest research in the field has been incorporated into this edition, consider that in the very first chapter a detailed explanation of the contribution of the ignored Antoine Hercules Romuald Florence to the invention of photography is included. In Chapter 8, Hirsch has unearthed a new digital reconstruction of the world's first color photograph by James Clerk Maxwell instead of relying on the 1930's reproduction of the tartan ribbon that is found in nearly every other history of photography text. The book also incorporates the latest research into the maligned Levi Hill and his Hillotype process. Chapter 9 on "The Evolution of Pictorialism" is perhaps the best summation of the movement one is likely to encounter. The former Chapter 18 was split from the previous edition and expanded to include a new chapter "The Politics of Representation." Chapter 20 recognizes how digital has transformed both the photographic notion of Truth while eliminating the analog constraints of making images. Thus, rather than simply being an add-on or after-thought, Hirsch has fully engaged the reader into current photographic history and practice. This is no doubt due to Hirsch's own intimate knowledge of contemporary imagemakers as both a photographer himself as well as a well-known curator and author. Indeed, it might be said that one of the strengths of this book is its coverage of photography from the 1960's to the present. This strength is exactly the period of time that most other photographic history books are weakest. Finally, it should be noted that this book is highly accessible to both the specialist, and more importantly, the non-specialist. Unfortunately, too many photo history books are the end products that started life off as Ph.D. dissertation. They tend to suffer from an over-reliance on theory coupled with a sentence structure and jargon that obscures rather than clarifies thought. Hirsch's aim is readability coupled with research. He has produced a book, a tome really, which while scholarly, is nevertheless perfect for those students wishing to learn more about the history of photography as well those who already have been initiated into the field.

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