

Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before - by: Michael Fried

A Review by: Rachel Wolfe

Whether the book is held in the hands of someone with ten years, ten days or even ten minutes interest in photography, Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* is an excellent foundation for the understanding, contemplation and critique of contemporary photography.

Fried carefully guides readers through his intensive thought processes while delving right into the influential roles and works of artists such as Jeff Wall, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Demand, Cindy Sherman, Luc Delahaye, Rindeke Dijkstra, Patrick Faigenbaum, Beat Streuli, Philip-Lora diCorcia, Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, James Wellings, Roland Fischer, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. The works of these artists, and more, play informative and integral roles in each of the ten chapters. Analyzing the accurate photographic reproductions, Fried highlights and explores, in exhaustive detail, the works themselves and provides an abundance of support by widely accepted art history references, quotations and conversations with the artists, excerpts from *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, and comparisons on Susan Sontag and several of Fried's earlier writings.

The book is a thoroughly detailed volume of information, offering a variety of audiences a new perspective on the history and development of contemporary photography. Fried's signature approach supports the development of a thorough knowledge base to those new to contemporary photography while feeding the minds of the more experienced with challenging new conclusions. The unarguable presentation of his positions provides the basis needed for a refreshing take on the direction of contemporary photography. Fried discusses the exploration of the everyday, the role of the viewer, analyzes theatricality, Jeff Wall's distinctive "near documentary" style, and the unending analysis of "bad" and "good" photography.

Whether Fried has proved *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* still has yet to be determined, but the book and Fried's conclusions will certainly be a necessary addition to the bookshelves and minds of contemporary criticism and comprehension for years to come.

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