



Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before

By Michael Fried

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From the late 1970s onward, serious art photography began to be made at large scale and for the wall. Michael Fried argues that this immediately compelled photographers to grapple with issues centering on the relationship between the photograph and the viewer standing before it that until then had been the province only of painting. Fried further demonstrates that certain philosophically deep problems—associated with notions of theatricality, literalness, and objecthood, and touching on the role of original intention in artistic production, first discussed in his controversial essay “Art and Objecthood” (1967)—have come to the fore once again in recent photography. This means that the photographic “ghetto” no longer exists; instead photography is at the cutting edge of contemporary art as never before.

Among the photographers and video-makers whose work receives serious attention in this powerfully argued book are Jeff Wall, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Cindy Sherman, Thomas Struth, Thomas Ruff, Andreas Gursky, Luc Delahaye, Rineke Dijkstra, Patrick Faigenbaum, Roland Fischer, Thomas Demand, Candida Höfer, Beat Streuli, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, James Welling, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. Future discussions of the new art photography will have no choice but to take a stand for or against Fried’s conclusions.

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Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before By Michael Fried Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #850142 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2008-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.10" h x 1.32" w x 8.68" l, 4.67 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 410 pages

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Review

"Fried . . . selects particular pictures to address and teases out the ways in which their meanings are created and transmitted. In these cases his writing is engaging, intriguing, and often delightfully paradoxical."—Andy Grundberg, *American Scholar*
(Andy Grundberg *American Scholar* 2008-12-01)

"Fried's book—more than any other I have read—challenges its readers to interpret more cogently the resurgence of the tableau in photographic form. The gauntlet has been tossed."—Robin Kelsey, *Artforum*
(Robin Kelsey *Artforum* 2009-01-01)

"A powerfully argued book, this is the new benchmark against which future discussions of photography must stand."—*Ottawa XPress*
(*Ottawa XPress*)

Chosen as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2009 by *Choice Magazine*
(*Choice* 2010-01-01)

About the Author

Michael Fried is J.R. Herbert Boone Professor of Humanities and the History of Art at The Johns Hopkins University.

Users Review

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