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After Photography

"A supple, politically astute, and fascinating account of the dizzying impact of the digital revolution on the trajectory of the photographic image." - PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

FRED RITCHIN



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Synopsis

In the tradition of John Berger and Susan Sontag, Fred Ritchin analyzes photography's failings and reveals untapped potentials for this evolving medium. One of our most influential commentators on photography investigates the future of visual media as the digital revolution transforms images, changing the way we conceptualize the world. From photos of news events taken on cell phones to the widespread use of image surveillance, digital media has fundamentally altered the way we receive visual information. Simultaneously, the increased manipulation of photographs has made photography suspect as reliable documentation, raising questions about its role in recounting personal and public histories. In a world beset by critical problems and ambiguous boundaries, Ritchin argues that it is time to begin energetically exploring possibilities created by technological innovations, and to use them to better understand our rapidly changing world. 50 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

Photographers certainly know how to simplify their subjects and how to put a frame around a portion of the world so that nothing impinges on their image. However, perhaps because they look at the world through a viewfinder, they sometimes seem to miss not only the larger world around them but the place of their photography in that larger world. Fred Ritchin, who teaches photography at N.Y.U., believes that the method of capturing images changes the world and that the world changes the method of capturing images. In a some times rambling essay, the author looks at various aspects of photography, with an emphasis on the changes wrought by the digital world. On the one hand he

decries the easy malleability of the digital image, and on the other sees opportunity for greater understanding through the digital photograph. He explores possible uses of digital media in the future in ways that reminded me of the world of Neal Stephenson's 1992 science fiction novel "Snow Crash (Bantam Spectra Book)". (The Wall Street Journal recommended reading "Snow Crash" for a view of the future; better hurry up before that book is overtaken by events.)Ritchin complains about the uses of digital media as a means of invading privacy and at the same time suggests that its use can aid humanitarian causes. Although he sees the possibility of either, or both, great benefits and great costs, he does not suggest what photographers can do to direct digital media toward the benefits.

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