



Why it Does Not Have to be in Focus: Modern Photography Explained

Jackie Higgins

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Why take a self-portrait but obscure your face with a lightbulb (Lee Friedlander, Provincetown, Cape Cod, Massachusetts (1968)? Or deliberately underexpose an image (Vera Lutter, Battersea Power Station, XI: July 13, 2004)? And why photograph a ceiling (William Eggleston, Red Ceiling, 1973)? In *Why It Does Not Have To Be In Focus*, Jackie Higgins offers a lively, informed defence of modern photography. Choosing 100 key photographs with particular emphasis on the last twenty years she examines what inspired each photographer in the first place, and traces how the piece was executed. In doing so, she brings to light the layers of meaning and artifice behind these singular works, some of which were initially dismissed out of hand for being blurred, overexposed or badly composed. The often controversial works discussed in this book play with our expectations of a photograph, our ingrained tendency to believe that it is telling us the unadorned truth. Jackie Higgins's book proves once and for all that there's much more to the art of photography than just pointing and clicking.

Why it Does Not Have to be in Focus: Modern Photography Explained Details

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João Lamas says

A fresh set of ideias. :)

Mehmet says

Her foto?rafa meraklı? insan için gerekli bilgilerle dolu, ufuk aç?c? örneklerle dolu güzel bir kitap. Çok ?ey ö?rendim.

Not: Kitab?n Türkçe versiyonu o kadar iyi de?il: Türkçe oldu?u halde tam olarak ne anlat?lmak istendi?ini anlayamad???m?z cümlelere, de'lerin da'lar?n ay?r?lmad???na, kimi cümlelerin yar?da kalm?? oldu?una bakarak kitab?n çevirisinin gözden geçirilmemi? oldu?u görülüyor.

Jonathan says

great!

Jenny says

I enjoyed this one. I liked the chapters landscape/look and abstracts/dissolve best. The short, snappy (pardon the pun) text makes it easy to read and there is plenty of food for thought here.

Sophie says

Why It Does Not Have To Be In Focus', written by Jackie Higgins, was given to me by artist uncle, Chris Bucklow (who is actually featured in this book). In the inscription, he writes "This book is about the art of modern photography and it includes the people who are thought to be the best from around the world today."

And that's exactly what this is. It's modern photography explained; broken down if you will so that you can sift through what seems like an endless sea of creatives and get to the core. Choosing 100 key photographs with particular emphasis on the last twenty years Higgins examines what inspired each photographer in the first place, and traces how the piece was executed. In doing so, she brings to light the layers of meaning and artifice behind these singular works, some of which were initially dismissed out of hand for being blurred, overexposed or badly composed. The often controversial works discussed in this book play with our expectations of a photograph, our ingrained tendency to believe that it is telling us the unadorned truth. Jackie Higgins' book proves once and for all that there's much more to the art of photography than just pointing and clicking.

With all art, it is of course subjective. But Higgins provides an insightful breadth of what is out there, in a way that is both engaging and perspicacious. The layout of the book makes it perfect to pick up at intervals, to flip through the pages or a specific read - a perfect coffee-table book. The six chapters group the works into portraits, document, still lifes, narrative, landscapes, and abstract.

The best aspect of this book is the range of artists and techniques on show. Sometimes the subject of the photograph is subverted or experimented with (as in the chapter on portraits and narrative); other times technique comes to the fore. For example, Michael Wesely's years-long camera exposures, Gerhard Richter's doctoring of snapshots with lush smears of paint, or the many instances of cameraless photography. These are works that can be returned to again and again and they are a good starting point for further reading.

That said it does suffer from one fatal flaw and that is its compact size. The majority of photographs fall on the fold, and as a result, I was constantly frustrated by images being intersected by the angle of the inside of the spine of the book. This seems fairly minor, but for a book that relies heavily on the images, seems like a rather rookie mistake.

That said, this doesn't detract from the fact that this is a must-read; whether you're an art fan or not.

Prima Seadiva says

Library book. 2.5 stars

As an artist and photographer I don't really feel the need for someone to tell me why it does or does not have to be in focus or be conventional (whatever that is) but I read it anyway.

Ho hum. I know I've always been a bit on the outside but I must be getting too old and grouchy as I can't stand pretentious writing or art. Some good photographers, some well known and some newcomers, glad to see more women presented but many shots chosen by the author and the explanations did not engage me.

One example: I liked Gillian Wearing's self portrait a la photo booth style but really, spending \$15,000 to get the right "artless" shot just makes me laugh.

Another that comes to my mind is the Eggleston. Of all of his groundbreaking color work, it is not one I would have chosen to squeeze on a tiny page to demonstrate dye transfer.

I did not care for the coded and segmented layout. The photos are too small often broken by the page (no surprise though, it is a smaller size trade paperback). The picture credits and index in the back need a magnifying glass to read. Fortunately the contents are larger.

The book was useful make a note of people whose work I'd like to see more of, Christian Marclay, Andrea Gursky, Sharon Core, Uta Barth.

You may find it more revelatory than I.

Anh Nguyen says

If you are wondering about how we considerate photography is one form of art and why there is so weird blurry photos was make, this is for you. Like the really simple explanation about how the REAL PHOTOS

DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT ON PIXELS OR DIGITAL.

O says

A fairly quick read, this book is great for people interested in photography but unsure of where to start, Higgin's books is more of a landing base: briefly discussing various contemporary photographers and one of their pieces; I would have enjoyed a more detailed book or perhaps a recommendation section at the end.

Annie says

I bought this in a little, artsy bookshop in Brussels, Belgium for no particular reason other than the fact that I wanted a memento and I love books. I have read plenty of books on art, but not nearly enough on photography specifically. I admit that this medium is a bit lost on me, but I am more than willing to try to rectify the situation. To that (rectifying) end, I bought this book, and just recently finished it; I quite enjoyed it for what it is: a little pocket guide through the history of modern photography.

Özgür Tekin says

Sanat?n herhangi bir alan?na merak duyan herkesin okumas? gereken ba?ar?l? bir kitap.

Celal says

Bir kitap için bir yıldız vermek çok üzücü ama hakikaten, ciddi vaktimi çaldı mı? düşünüyorum.

Adam says

A page by page examination of modern photography split by themes such as Portrait, Landscape, Narrative etc. A good introduction, but the images captured could have been better displayed with a larger format book.
