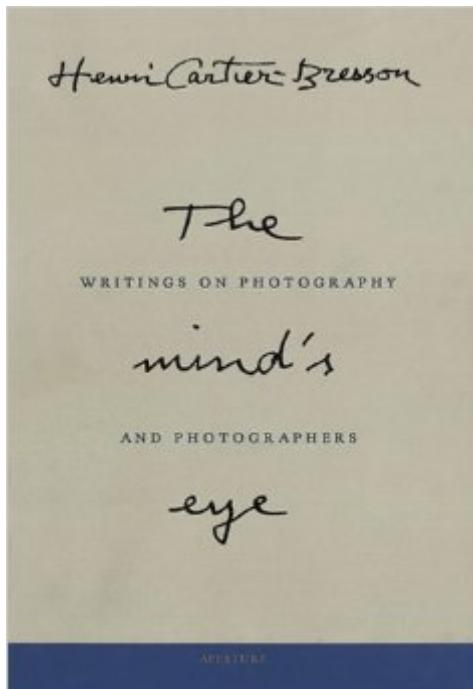


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Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Mind's Eye: Writings On Photography And Photographers



Synopsis

Henri Cartier-Bresson's writings on photography and photographers have been published sporadically over the past 45 years. His essays--several of which have never before been translated into English--are collected here for the first time. The Mind's Eye features Cartier-Bresson's famous text on the decisive moment as well as his observations on Moscow, Cuba and China during turbulent times. These essays ring with the same immediacy and visual intensity that characterize his photography.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the nicest book I've ever read on photography. Bresson explains his art in a very comprehensive way and invites us to think about the photography. He also reminds us one thing that we are usually keen to forget about it: The photograph is nothing without its content; The content must be the reflection of our life.. It was a real pleasure for me to read this great master's well filtered thoughts (over 90 years!) on photography. For those who think photograph really does matters

Yes, this is a small book, and, possibly too much of it is taken up in verbal bouquets tossed to old friends, tourist information about side-trips to various countries, and practical advice to would-be photojournalists. But those asides aren't the guts of this wonderful book. The important message from this man, who without question was the most influential photographer of the twentieth century,

is that if you want to make good photographs you need to look, and you need to internalize a kind of respect for subject, context and geometry that allows you to SEE when you look, without resorting to arbitrary crutches like the "rule of thirds." Probably the most important words in the book are these: "To take photographs means to recognize -- simultaneously and within a fraction of a second -- both the fact itself and the rigorous organization of visually perceived forms that give it meaning." That's what the book is really about. Anyone who hopes to become a competent photographer needs to internalize that message.

This book is certainly looks interesting for anybody wanting to learn a bit more about the art and thinking of Cartier-Bresson, and indeed it is beautifully designed and produced. Unfortunately the little scraps of information that it contains seem as if they have been published just because they have indeed come from the great master's mouth. I mean it's all kind of throw away stuff obviously never intended to be published with perhaps a couple of interesting paragraphs -but you probably knew those ones anyway-. So if you really want to study his work get "the artless art" if you want to learn from his experience, look at his pictures, you won't get much from this one.

I got HCB's book from the library this week and couldn't stop reading it since I started. Mind you this book has its pluses and minuses: Pluses: It gives good insight into HCB's style of thinking and in general photography in his own words. He talks about his little experiences in China, Cuba, Russia and also about his friends. Minuses: The book is very brief and you yearn for more of his stories and experience. It has very few photographs, so if you are looking for that you might get disappointed. With all that said, I would definitely recommend all of you Photography fans to read it at least once if your local library carries it.

The Mind's Eye: Writing on Photography and Photographers is a mildly interesting compilation of writings by Henri Cartier-Bresson. It's not really what I expected: the book is filled with short written pieces that do not seem to have been intended for publication. For the most part, it is a lot of musing and reads almost like a journal. Some of it is quite nice, such as Cartier-Bresson's discussion of photography and its formal elements. I'm not much of a photographer, but I find his thoughts on composition and process to be enlightening and helpful. Utility is not the main focus of the book though, and it jumps from discussion of photography to Cartier-Bresson's world travels. The only striking travel entry is a story about Cuba, in which he meets Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. In comparison, the tales of Moscow and China are uneventful and do not carry the flash of historical

insight that illuminates "Cuba." The final section of *The Mind's Eye* is the least engaging: a few pages about several of Cartier-Bresson's famous photographer and artist friends. The content is thin throughout. Although he writes about unusual, talented individuals, none of the writing is compelling and instead feels a little drawn out. Cartier-Bresson puts it best in his words on Giacometti: "But enough: he's my friend." I was disappointed that there is no discussion of Henri Cartier-Bresson's own work. I was hoping to read his thoughts on his photographs and maybe a little about his life. The closest this book gets to Cartier-Bresson's work is a handful of his photographs scattered throughout. It's unfair to say that there is something faulty with a person's thoughts, but as for the book itself, it simply isn't what it appears to be.

It is a book of Cartier-Bresson's philosophy toward photography and art in general. I expected to read detailed approaches to photography that would make me a better photographer. I decided to read it again (it's only a 100 pages long) and found that I appreciated it better the second time, and just let my 'artistic mind' wander with the author.

I think it would have been a tall order for Henri to write down the information you would need to reach his level of photography. There are some exceptional documentaries on YouTube for free that you could take advantage of by watching to get some insight from him in his own spoken words and examples. This short read is his collection of writings that brings to a point photography of the day as it was for him. When he mocks the idea of the golden rule being etched onto a lens I sort of grin at the thought of grid lines appearing in modern DSLR cameras to guide in the use of rule of thirds. All this being said - in written words Henri conveys what he's thinking in some of the more general senses of his time with photography where the camera is his sketchbook and where you can try to find another 1000 words in the photos themselves ;) Color photography has come a long long way in the digital world so at a first read you might wonder why he avoided the use of it and made a point to write about it. Therefore, you have to read his writings with the respect he is due for his total mastery of photography. Make no mistake - he was a master. He didn't take the time back then to write about the formula it takes for him and how you can use this formula to get the same results with any camera. He gives you something more intimate in fact - his raw emotions of the world he lived in and how the camera reached out into the world as an extension of himself. Each person has his or her own art inside them and if you understand and appreciate the very fundamentals of photography then you have taken one more step in trying to reach your goals of an artist perhaps. If you read this book with these things in mind you will take something away from it :)

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