



Photography and Archaeology (Exposures)

By Frederick N. Bohrer

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Photography and Archaeology (Exposures) By Frederick N. Bohrer

Photography and Archaeology presents archaeological photography as a product of archaeological thought, and of our hopes and fears about our past and present. The first ever book-length study of its topic, it examines some of history's most famous archaeological excavations, as well as lesser-known and even unpublished finds, from the Mediterranean and Middle East, as well as Asia, Europe and the Americas. Spanning the dual histories of both fields from the early nineteenth century to the present, it makes evident how *what* we know of the archaeological past has always been related to *how* it has been photographically represented and circulated: in scholarly folios, popular accounts, scientific archives, museums, manuals and numerous other formats. Photography in particular has allowed archaeology to circulate widely and take on the varied assumptions made by different audiences about the material traces of the past and their meaning and use in the present.

Photography and Archaeology surveys the thought of archaeologists, critics, historians, photographers, artists and theorists, in describing how its images are caught between two opposite, if not contradictory, tendencies. While photography has served archaeology as a guarantor of documentary objectivity, it has come into its role not by just recording but also fundamentally remaking the archaeological object, not least through underwriting a vision of archaeological artifacts as distinct works of art. Beautifully illustrated with archaeological images, many published here for the first time, it discusses archaeological examples and images by renowned photographers including Maxime du Camp, Francis Frith, Auguste Salzmann and Ernst Herzfeld, as well as contemporary photographers and artists such as Aaron Levin, Jeff Wall, Patrick Nagatani and Marilyn Bridges.

Photography and Archaeology will be of interest to archaeologists, art historians and photographers as well as anyone captivated by archaeology's ongoing engagement with the past. Frederick N. Bohrer is an art historian who has spent nearly two decades studying the modern uses of the image of the ancient past.

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Editorial Review

Review

“This brief but unique examination of the relationship between photography and archaeology addresses the many interesting facets of their long, intertwined history.”

(Choice)

“This is a beautiful book containing many gorgeous photographs and it is a delight to handle. It covers a broad range of material and will widen the horizons of readers familiar with standard histories of photography. The reader will be encouraged to dig more deeply into the archaeological publications of the past to discover more photographic delights.”

(Cassone Art Review)

“Photography’s unreliability may seem like a well-worn subject. Yet the long history of archaeology’s attempts to bend photography to its will allows this book—part of Reaktion’s excellently-produced Exposures series—to unearth numerous photographic curiosities and provide some fresh insights into an issue on which you might have thought there was little new to say.”

(Source)

“*Photography and Archaeology* is another worthy entry in Reaktion Books’ series on photography and history, culture, and social sciences. . . . [It] surveys the history of photography in archaeology, raising pointed questions about the past and our capacity to ‘see,’ ‘know,’ and represent it.”

(Anthropology Review Database)

“This book explores the close ties between the rise of scientific archaeology and the spread of the new medium of photography from the mid-nineteenth century through to the present day. While many of us are aware that early archaeology’s popularity was facilitated largely by means of photographic images, Bohrer demonstrates that, in their quest for the objective documentation of the past, archaeologists and scholars of antiquity were also directly involved in the invention of the new photographic technologies. This beautifully illustrated book will be welcomed by archaeologists and photography historians alike.”

(Zainab Bahrani, Columbia University)

About the Author

Frederick N. Bohrer is professor of art at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. He has long written about what we know of the past and how we know it. He has paid special attention to the peoples and cultures of the Middle East, and is still amazed how the then-obscure places he first got to know as a scholar of 19th century archaeology ended up in common parlance after the war in Iraq. That's something to write about in itself. He has written widely on art, photography and antiquities, and is now looking into works by contemporary artists that address global circulation and cultural identity.

He is the author of *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* and organized the exhibit *Sevruguin and the Persian Image* for the A.M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution.

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