



How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More

By Nicholas Mirzoeff

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Every two minutes, Americans alone take more photographs than were printed in the entire nineteenth century; every minute, people from around the world upload over 300 hours of video to YouTube; and in 2014, we took over one trillion photographs. From the funny memes that we send to our friends to the disturbing photographs we see in the news, we are consuming and producing images in quantities and ways that could never have been anticipated. In the process, we are producing a new worldview powered by changing demographics—one where the majority of people are young, urban, and globally connected.

In *How to See the World*, visual culture expert Nicholas Mirzoeff offers a sweeping look at history's most famous images—from Velázquez's *Las Meninas* to the iconic “Blue Marble”—to contextualize and make sense of today's visual world. Drawing on art history, sociology, semiotics, and everyday experience, he teaches us how to close read everything from astronaut selfies to Impressionist self-portraits, from Hitchcock films to videos taken by drones. Mirzoeff takes us on a journey through visual revolutions in the arts and sciences, from new mapping techniques in the seventeenth century to new painting styles in the eighteenth and the creation of film, photography, and x-rays in the nineteenth century. In today's networked world, mobile technology and social media enable us to exercise “visual activism”—the practice of producing and circulating images to drive political and social change. Whether we are looking at pictures showing the effects of climate change on natural and urban landscapes or an fMRI scan demonstrating neurological addiction, Mirzoeff helps us to find meaning in what we see.

A powerful and accessible introduction to this new visual culture, *How to See the World* reveals how images shape our lives, how we can harness their power for good, and why they matter to us all.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A lucid and accessible introduction to how images shape our lives and effect change, political and social... [How to See the World] offers numerous insights into ‘reading’ the significance of images in the world today and is filled with intriguing, insightful nuggets. A challenging and provocative inquiry into how we see the world.”

—**Kirkus Reviews**

“In a wide-ranging exploration of our new visual landscapes, Nick Mirzoeff shows us how to think about what we see, from selfies to self-documenting social movements.”

—**Clay Shirky, Associate Professor, NYU Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute and author of *Here Comes Everybody***

"A vivid demonstration of the power of visual studies to clarify and comprehend a wide variety of cultural and technical phenomena, from selfies to drone warfare. Magisterial in scope and perspicuous in style, this book is full of revelations for both specialists and general readers about the way we live now, and the new ways that we look at things. A worthy sequel to Mirzoeff's many notable contributions to visual studies, it is essential reading for anyone interested in media, technology, and the everyday practices of seeing."

—**W. J. T. Mitchell, Professor of English and Art History, University of Chicago and author of *What Do Pictures Want?***

“Nicholas Mirzoeff's new book solidifies his reputation as a rangy, innovative theorist of visual culture. Paying careful attention to the history of the image alongside engaging accounts of technology, embodiment, neuroscience, war and space, Mirzoeff narrates multiple shifts and changes in how we see the world. Traveling to the moon and back, across continents and between eras, Mirzoeff nimbly and effectively narrates the visual regimes that regulate what we see, how we see, and what remains completely hidden from view. *How To See the World* is indispensable reading for the twenty-first century.”

—**Jack Halberstam, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, Gender Studies, and Comparative Literature, University of Southern California and author of *The Queer Art of Failure* and *Gaga Feminism***

“Nicholas Mirzoeff's wonderful new book traces the ways that sight—and seeing—transform the ways we understand and help change the world. Beautifully written, with a broad sweep of examples that speak to the power of images and encourage us to see and think in new ways, this is the go-to book for scholars and students in fields ranging from political science and anthropology to art history.”

—**Suzanne Blier, Allen Whitehill Clowes Chair of Fine Arts and of African and African American Studies, Harvard University**

“This book will transform the way you see the world—and how you want to change it. Eloquently written, it offers new insights on everything from selfies as a new global art form to impressionist art as evidence of global climate change. It is simply brilliant.”

—**Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Professor and Chair, Modern Culture and Media, Brown University**

“This book is a gem—clear, astute, and astonishingly insightful. Mirzoeff demonstrates virtuoso skills in making connections between images and visibility across global and social contexts, charting the histories of the self in art history to the selfie, showing us the meanings of sight itself, looking at how war is visualized and visually perpetrated, analyzing the visual domain of cities and climate, and making a powerful case for visual activism. Read this book and the field of visual culture will be yours.”

—**Marita Sturken, Co-author of *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture***

PRAISE FOR *HOW TO SEE THE WORLD*

“In our fluid world, we need reminding how strange our visual culture has become. Artist John Berger did that job for the 1970s with his classic book *Ways of Seeing*; now Nicholas Mirzoeff teaches us how to ‘read’ an astronaut’s 2012 space-walk selfie – and how to decode military photos smothered with labels that claim to show weapons we cannot in fact see... Tracing the political, social and environmental implications of our visual culture, in words and black and white images, is a job of work. Mirzoeff succeeds: this is a dizzying and delightful book.”

—***New Scientist*, Best Reads from 2015**

“Deploying a blend of semiotics, sociology, and art history, Mirzoeff shows us how to interpret everything from old masters to selfies, from Rashomon to a map of the Mississippi.... He also persuasively makes the case that visual culture is changing rapidly, thanks to the advent of the internet. Mirzoeff draws on theorists such as Benjamin, Foucault, and Deleuze, but thankfully is much clearer and easier to read than any of those writers.

—***The Independent* (UK)**

About the Author

Nicholas Mirzoeff is a professor of media, culture, and communication at New York University and is deputy director of the International Association for Visual Culture. His work has appeared in the *Guardian*, *New Republic*, and *Time*. He lives in New York City.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maria Gray:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray an individual, why because this *How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More* reserve written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book which can be understand by anyone who have read the book. Written within good manner for you, leaking every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your personal hunger then you still doubt *How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More* as good book not just by the cover but also from the content. This is one guide that can break don't evaluate book by its handle, so do you still needing an additional sixth sense to pick this specific!? Oh come on your studying sixth sense already said so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

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