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R. H. Cravens

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PHOTOGRAPHY PAST FORWARD

APERTURE AT 50



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R. H. Cravens : Photography Past/Forward: Aperture at Fifty before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Photography Past/Forward: Aperture at Fifty:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Jane S.All Good0 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Too many photo's in very poor tasteBy William D. ThomasThe photo's are mostly a poor selection, although there are a few fine photographs included. The poor taste represented in some of the photographs make this the only book I have ever put directly into the trash. I have a large bookshelf of books on photography, so I can let anyone know who is looking that there are many fine books to select from - this is not one of them!2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Essay and gallery commemorating 50 years of ApertureBy John ArmstrongAperture published this book in 2002 to accompany the exhibition that it put together to celebrate its first fifty years as an organization and publisher, 1952-2001.The book consists of two parts that are only loosely tied together: an extended essay by R. H. Cravens entitled Visions Voices: A celebration of genius in Photography (36 pages in all), and a large gallery of photographs intermixed with quotes from Aperture writers ranging in length from single lines to whole pages (194 pages in all). Most of the items are marked with the volume of Aperture where they appear. The rest

constitute "additional material" assembled for the event. Though not noted as such, some have also appeared in other Aperture publications, but probably not all. I assume that the gallery - the photographs if not also the quotes - corresponds fairly closely with the exhibition. If you crack the book open and start leafing through it you may not see the clear two part structure. This is for two reasons. First, the essay has illustrations of its own - mostly smallish pictures of pages or double pages from various issues of Aperture but also some photos of the people involved including the founders and the editors. And second, the two parts are not presented as single pieces but are rather interleaved: four chapters of the essay each followed by about a quarter of the gallery photographs and quotes. It's actually easy to tell the two kinds of content apart once you notice that the pages of the essay have Visions Voices next to the page numbers whereas the pages of the gallery do not. The organization of the essay is basically chronological and traces the history of Aperture from its founding to today (or rather to seven years ago). Cravens bases it on interviews with the insiders and offers an insider's view. He talks a lot about the beliefs and goals of the principals as well as their concrete accomplishments and frustrations (especially in the area of money). He portrays the people with charity and circumspection, and even though he notes a surprisingly large number of unfortunate developments including divorce, alcoholism, disability and death, he barely hints at the personal animosities and conflicts that must have been part and parcel of an enterprise such as Aperture. He focuses on the chief editors, first Minor White and later Michael Hoffman along with for a few crucial years Carole Kismaric. He mentions many photographers in passing but says little about most of them. Exceptions are Paul Strand, who receives the most treatment of all (more than Minor White in his capacity as photographer as opposed to editor), and Frederick Sommer, who figures in one of the very few controversies that is noted in the essay, the publication of some photographs of his in the pages of Aperture that evoked angry responses from a segment of the journal's readership. The sequencing of the gallery is loosely chronological but relates more to the artistic trends that could be tracked in the pages of Aperture over the years. The progression is, very roughly, from straight to experimental photography, seen against the background of the eternal tensions between aestheticism and social conscience, realism and artifice, safety and shock. Those familiar with the individual photographers will probably recognize the works selected for the collection, but those whose knowledge of 20th century photography is limited (as mine is), will find much that is new. Photographs are identified by photographer, title, date (but not size or original print type), and, where applicable, appearance in Aperture, but there is no commentary other than the interleaved quotes. Those who want to read need to read the language of the photographs themselves. I would give the essay by itself four stars and the gallery by itself five stars. I really like the book as a whole and give it five stars overall. BTW the account of the Sommer controversy in the essay appears on p. 15. The photograph at the middle of it, Untitled (amputated foot), 1939, is included in the gallery on p. 225.

In October of 2002, Aperture released a 240-page golden-anniversary hardcover book that comprises, in effect, the pictorial history of the second half of the twentieth century. The book features 250 images by photographers published by Aperture magazine over the past fifty years--from the masters of the twentieth century to today's emerging innovators. More than forty images in the book have never before been published. The book traces Aperture's fascinating history as well as the currents in photography that have brought the medium to its present status as one of the most important art forms. It demonstrates how Aperture has shaped this evolution while expanding the international audience for photography and the visual arts.

From Library Journal Founded in 1952 by Minor White, Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, and other kindred spirits, Aperture magazine has been documenting the art of photography and encouraging its growth for 50 years. This anniversary book project was begun before the November 2001 death of the organization's longtime director, Michael E. Hoffman, but was brought to completion by the magazine's editor and other Aperture staff. The story of Aperture--which is now also the publisher of hundreds of books--is virtually a history of photography in America, as evidenced by the four-part, anecdotal account written by frequent Aperture contributor R.H. Cravens. The volume contains 250 color and black-and-white images from Diane Arbus, Paul Strand, William Eggleston, and dozens of others, chosen from issues of the magazine, as well as 40 previously unpublished photographs. Its arrangement is based on a curator's eye rather than on chronology, creating both haunting juxtapositions and delightful serendipity. Original page spreads from the magazine and documentary photographs of the artists add interest to this already inspiring and impressive book. Required for all photography collections both as a historical text and as a powerful compilation of images. Carolyn Kuebler, "Library Journal" Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Its arrangement is based on a curator's eye rather than on chronology, creating both haunting juxtapositions and delightful serendipity. Original page spreads from the magazine and commentary photographs of the artists add interest to this already inspiring and impressive book." -- Carolyn Kuebler -- Library Journal About the Author R.H. Cravens--longtime contributor to many Aperture books and articles--provides an in-depth anecdotal chronicle of Aperture's evolution based largely on the magazine issues themselves and interviews with Michael E. Hoffman, Publisher and Executive Director from 1964 through 2001, whose comprehensive vision and voice unearths a history as rife with innovation as the history of

photography itself.