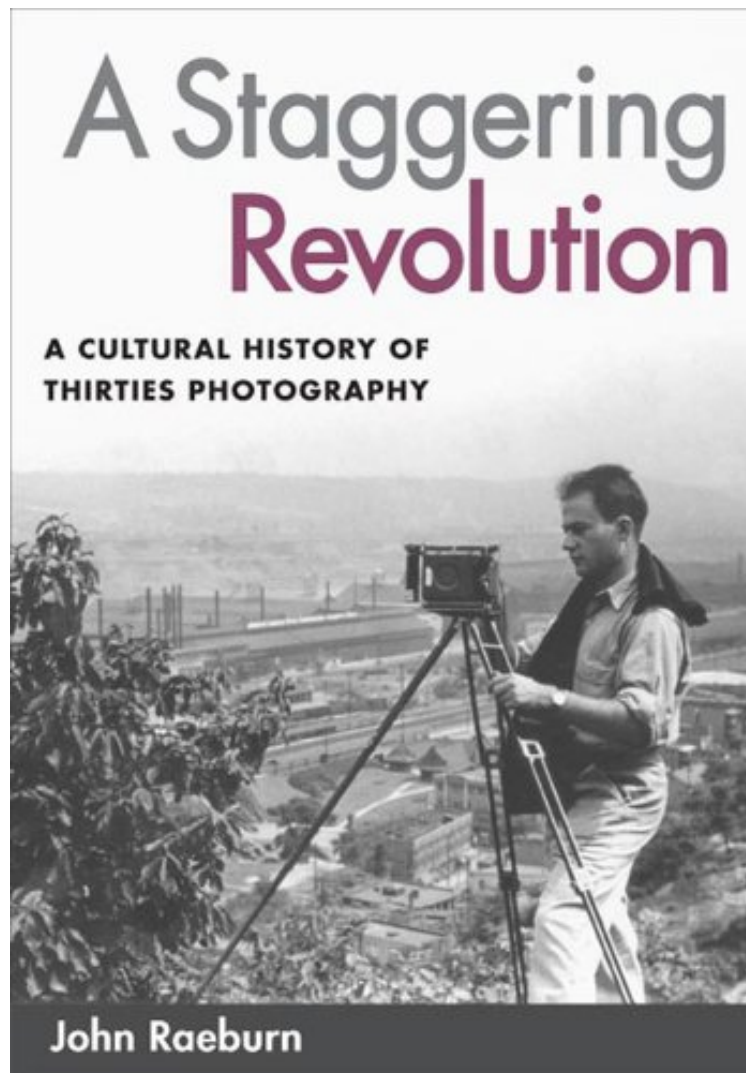



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A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography

John Raeburn

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John Raeburn : A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommendedBy CustomerVery well written overview of the 1930s and the tremendous variety of photography all the way from social documentary to high fashion. Discusses the influence of magazines and museums in the dissemination of the photographic art form1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Quality research makes this thesis an enjoyable read.By Russ AndersonA superb, well researched, cultural and historical review, this thesis ads significantlyto the canon of art history as it relates to both

photography and social evolution. The book suffers from too few photographs and those that have been included are, for most part, predictable. Nevertheless, Raeburn's fact-filled narration is bright and engaging, offering strong and insightful points of view regarding the interplay between the social culture of the 1930s and the photography of the decade. The underlying stories of the photographers themselves and how they struggled, worked and interacted with their collaborators are surprisingly illuminating. Though many of the historical facts have been known to us for some time, Raeburn brings significant new information to the table, facts and events which are a delight to know and which round out the character of the artistic milieu of the era. Raeburn's enthusiasm for the subject is infectious. This is an essential work for any student of photographic history. Informative and highly readable, the notes alone are worth the price of the volume. Russ Anderson

During the 1930s, the world of photography was unsettled, exciting, and boisterous. John Raeburn's *A Staggering Revolution* recreates the energy of the era by surveying photography's rich variety of innovation, exploring the aesthetic and cultural achievements of its leading figures, and mapping the paths their pictures blazed public's imagination. While other studies of thirties photography have concentrated on the documentary work of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), no previous book has considered it alongside so many of the decade's other important photographic projects. *A Staggering Revolution* includes individual chapters on Edward Steichen's celebrity portraiture; Berenice Abbott's Changing New York project; the Photo League's ethnography of Harlem; and Edward Weston's western landscapes, made under the auspices of the first Guggenheim Fellowship awarded to a photographer. It also examines Margaret Bourke-White's industrial and documentary pictures, the collective undertakings by California's Group f.64, and the fashion magazine specialists, as well as the activities of the FSA and the Photo League. Raeburn's expansive study explains how the democratic atmosphere of thirties photography nourished innovation and encouraged new heights of artistic achievement. It also produced the circumstances that permitted artful photography to become such a thriving public enterprise during the decade. *A Staggering Revolution* offers an illuminating analysis of the sociology of photography's art world and its galleries and exhibitions, but also demonstrates the importance of the novel venues created by impresarios and others that proved essential to photography's extraordinary dissemination. These new channels, including camera magazines and annuals, volumes of pictures enhanced by text, and omnibus exhibitions in unconventional spaces, greatly expanded photography's cultural visibility. They also made its enthusiastic audience larger and more heterogeneous than ever before - or since.

"Raeburn skillfully treats the role of the FSA photography project in the contexts of art. In the process he offers the most nuanced, perceptive discussion of the much-misunderstood role of FSA project chief Roy Emerson Stryker that I have ever read. Even for those of us well-schooled in the history and practices of the FSA, these chapters offer something new and valuable. . . . Raeburn challenges readers to look beyond received wisdom about the visual culture of the 1930s and explore it anew for themselves."--*American Historical*