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At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen

Shawn Michelle Smith

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Shawn Michelle Smith : At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen:

The advent of photography revolutionized perception, making visible what was once impossible to see with the human eye. In *At the Edge of Sight*, Shawn Michelle Smith engages these dynamics of seeing and not seeing, focusing attention as much on absence as presence, on the invisible as the visible. Exploring the limits of photography and

vision, she asks: What fails to register photographically, and what remains beyond the frame? What is hidden by design, and what is obscured by cultural blindness? Smith studies manifestations of photography's brush with the unseen in her own photographic work and across the wide-ranging images of early American photographers, including F. Holland Day, Eadweard Muybridge, Andrew J. Russell, Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, and Augustus Washington. She concludes by showing how concerns raised in the nineteenth century remain pertinent today in the photographs of Abu Ghraib. Ultimately, Smith explores the capacity of photography to reveal what remains beyond the edge of sight.

"A beautifully written and deeply original book, *At the Edge of Sight* integrates historical and theoretical sophistication with the author's distinguished practice of photography in very new ways. Shawn Michelle Smith investigates the medium's patterns of blindness. This negative potential—learning to observe what one is not seeing—is revolutionary, and its profound, peculiar, uncanny force is beautifully invoked throughout."—Laura Wexler, author of *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*