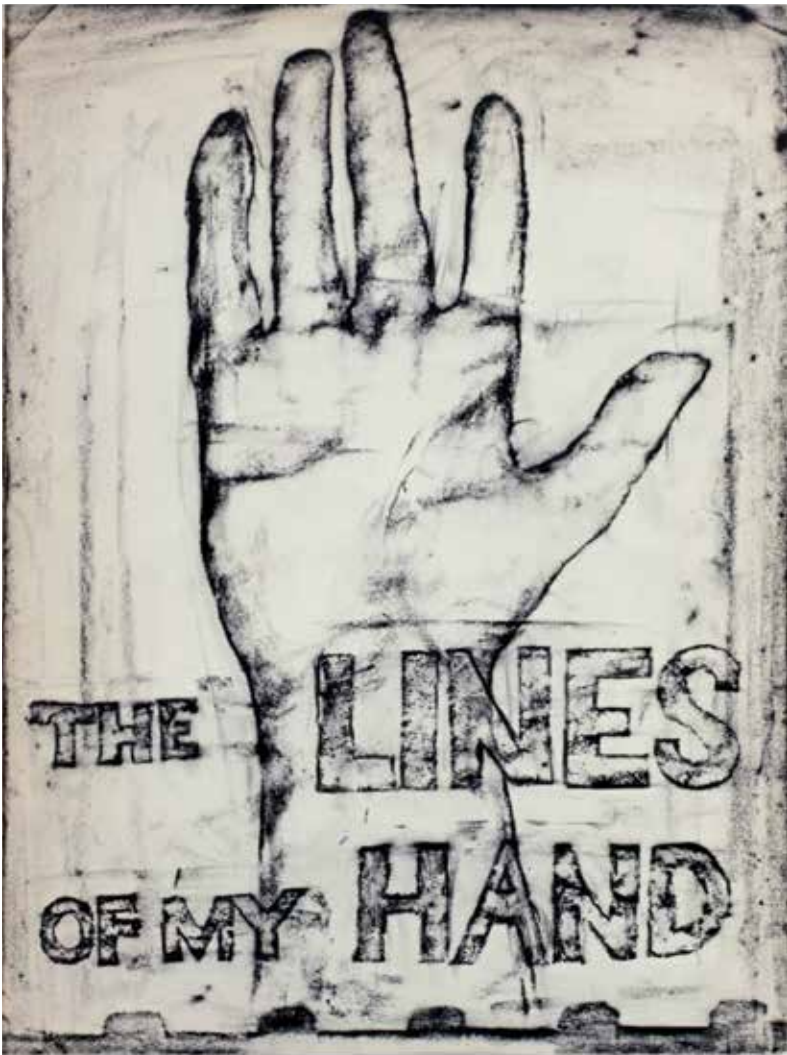


**From the Library:  
Photobooks after Frank**

**August 8, 2015 – February 7, 2016  
National Gallery of Art**





Robert Frank, detail from *The Americans* (1)

## From the Library: Photobooks after Frank

The term *photobook* was coined to describe a specific book format that uses photographs as a substantial part of the overall content. In recent years, interest in this method of presentation—as distinct from other photographic practices—has increased. Of course, books and photography have been linked almost since the moment of photography's invention. There have been many important and influential books of photographs, but Robert Frank's masterpiece *The Americans*, which appeared in the late 1950s, was particularly significant. The fluid, instantaneous aesthetic present in this work paved the way for social landscape photography and its practitioners, such as Garry Winogrand and Danny Lyon. Eventually other photographers like William Eggleston took this style further and began working in color, leading to color photography's transcendence of the commercial and advertising worlds to find acceptance in the fine-art world. Frank's stream-of-consciousness approach, a diary of subjective truth, helped both to expand the possibilities of photography beyond objective documentation—which had come to dominate the field in the 1930s and early 1940s—and also to further the acceptance of photography as an appropriate art form for personal expression. The serial presentation of photographs in a codex, while certainly not new, was so skillfully executed in *The Americans* that the volume became a handbook for following generations and elevated the monograph to the same level as the magazine photo-essay that had grown in popularity since the end of World War II.

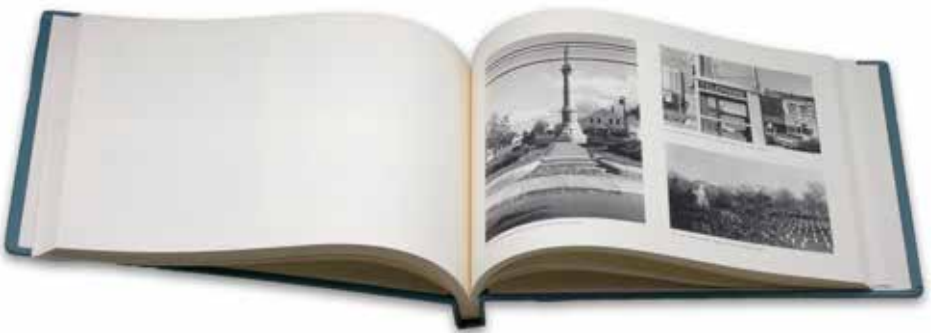
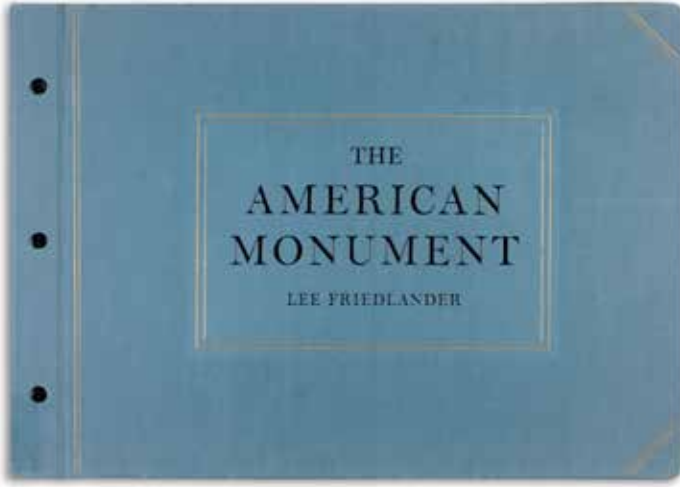
Drawn from the decades immediately following the appearance of Frank's work, the exhibition includes books from well-established publishers such as Aperture and Steidl, museum-backed projects, and works from smaller presses like Lustrum or the self-published works of Ed Ruscha that have, over time, become part of the canon. Due to space considerations and collection strength, nearly all the works included in this exhibition are of American origin. (For a broader selection of photobooks, please visit the main reading room of the National Gallery of Art Library during weekday hours. See page 27 for details.)

## The American Road

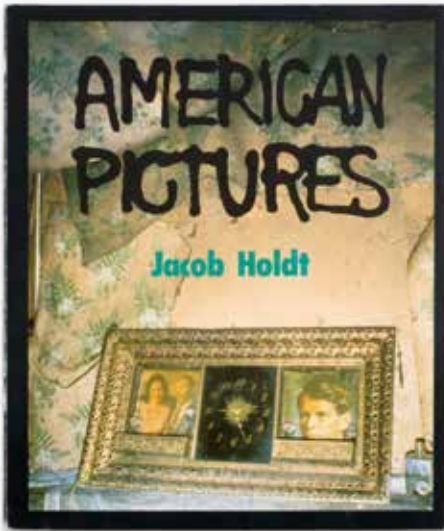
The section “The American Road” shows the different approaches taken by these photographers in their creation of surveys of the United States. Robert Frank was not the first artist to create a body of work based on his travels throughout the United States, but his particular approach, as a personal journey of exploration, resonated with other artists: many photographers, from Ed Ruscha to Lee Friedlander to Stephen Shore, have cited *The Americans* as an inspiration for their own projects. For example, Friedlander spent years traveling the country. He explored several themes in his work, one of which was a series on monuments, published in 1976 for the U.S. bicentennial and presented in the style of a nineteenth-century photo album. Far from a straight typology or catalog of landmarks, Friedlander’s work uses dense compositions to explore the ways in which historical monuments, once so significant, are gradually subsumed by the modern world—and, over time, are obscured, eclipsed, or ignored. Jacob Holdt used snapshot photography in combination with his own writings as a highly personal tool for direct social commentary, closer to the French edition of Frank’s book (*Les Américains*) published by Robert Delpire than to the American edition. Stephen Shore, on the other hand, takes the detached approach of the New Topographics photographers, presenting one large image per page. Perhaps more meditative than other works shown here, Shore’s work, especially when presented in book form, is no less personal and passionate an account of the America he encountered in his travels. Joel Sternfeld works in a similar formalist, documentary mode and continues to expand the use of color photography pioneered by Shore and William Eggleston, but Sternfeld adds a wry wit and suggestive narrative undercurrents. More recently, Doug Rickard has ambitiously used new technology—namely, Google Street View—to search for interesting compositions that he photographs directly from his computer screen.



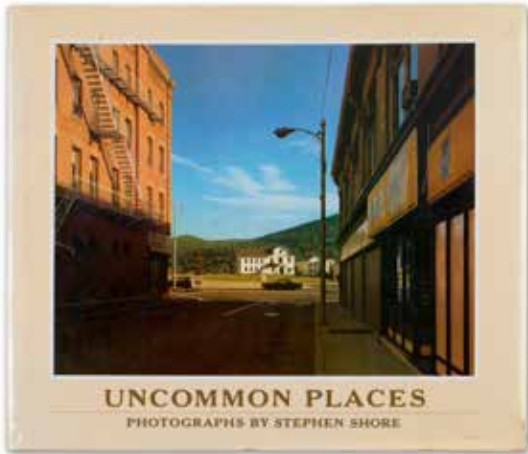
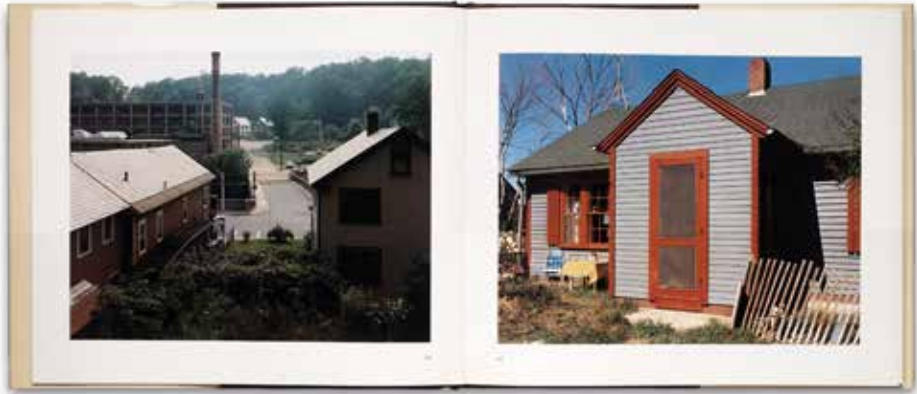
1 Robert Frank, b. 1924, *The Americans* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1958 Robert Delpire, Paris; introduction © 1959 Jack Kerouac



2 Lee Friedlander, b. 1934, *The American Monument* (New York: Eakins, 1976), David K.E. Bruce Fund. Photographs © 1976 Lee Friedlander; special contents © 1976 Eakins Press Foundation

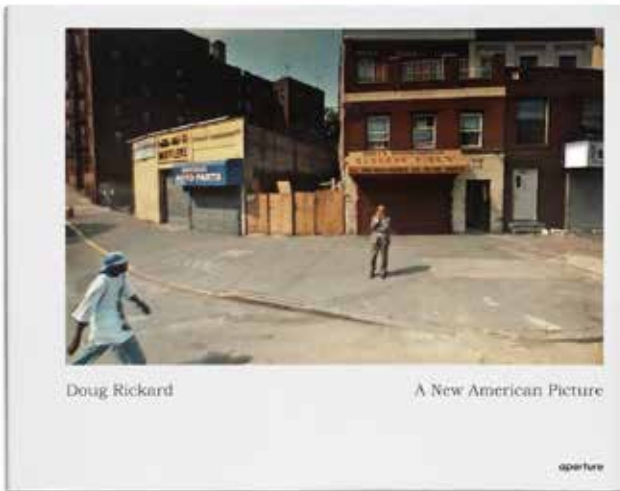
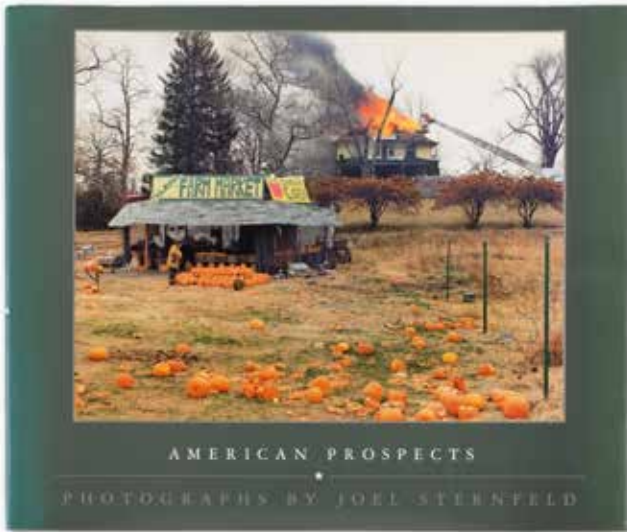


3 Jacob Holdt, b. 1947, *American Pictures: A Personal Journey through the American Underclass* (Copenhagen: American Pictures Foundation, 1985), Private Collection.  
© American Pictures Foundation



4 Stephen Shore, b. 1947, *Uncommon Places* (Millerton, New York: Aperture, 1982), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1982 Aperture, Inc.; photographs © 1982 Stephen Shore



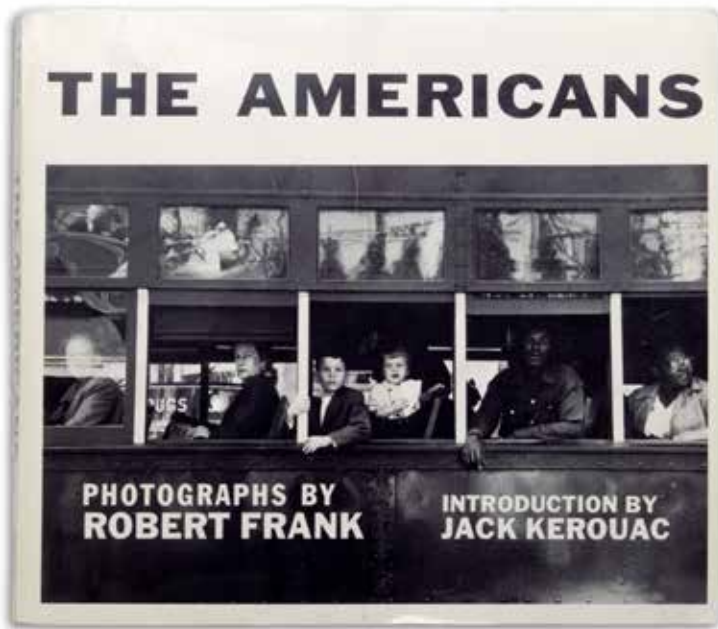


5 Joel Sternfeld, b. 1944, *American Prospects* (New York: Times Books in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1987), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1987 Joel Sternfeld; “The Itinerant Vision” © 1987 Andy Grundberg; “American Beauty in Atypical Places” © 1987 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

6 Doug Rickard, b. 1968, *A New American Picture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Aperture, 2012), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 2012 Doug Rickard; “In the Frame” © 2012 David Company; interview © 2012 Erin O’Toole and Doug Rickard

## On the Scene

“On the Scene” includes books linked to a specific place and time. *The Americans* found its way into the hands of a larger audience, particularly photographers, in the late 1960s when it was published in new editions by the Museum of Modern Art and Aperture. Unlike the gravures in the original editions, with their subtle tonalities, these new printings had more contrast and grain and contributed to the gritty aesthetic seen in the work of certain photographers coming of age in the 1970s. Whether with the biker gang in the book shown here, or in his work with prison inmates, Danny Lyon immerses himself in the world of his subjects. Similarly, Bill Owens uses photography to explore his own immediate community in the middle-class suburbs of San Francisco. In both cases, these artists attempt to present an unbiased, nonjudgmental view of their subjects by combining a documentary approach with the sympathy of an insider. Other photographers similarly worked from inside their own social groups but took a more personal approach, including photographs of themselves as active participants. Returning to his native Tulsa, Oklahoma, Larry Clark photographed the drug scene that he had been part of as a young man before moving to New York. Nan Goldin’s intimate photographs of her community, focused largely on her friends in New York City’s Greenwich Village, were first presented as a slideshow with music in rock clubs; these compelling images were only published as a book several years later, giving them a much wider influence. In contrast to “insider documentarians,” William Eggleston presents a work that appears at first glance to be mere snapshots but which, upon further examination, is actually far more complex, demonstrating the artist’s calculated use of color and formal composition to elevate the mundane to monumental status. Eggleston’s most famous photobook, with its pebbled, yearbook-style binding, was published by the Museum of Modern Art in conjunction with an exhibition there. Richard Avedon’s *In the American West* project, also produced in collaboration with a museum, maintains a cool distance from its subjects. In many ways, Alec Soth’s masterful first book—self-published in two editions of twenty-five before appearing as the commercial edition shown here—brings together the seemingly disparate approaches of personal, idiosyncratic view and objective sociological study. Soth shot his photographs in color, and the project has a specific regional and socioeconomic scope; with almost musical dexterity, documentation is balanced with a highly individual experience.

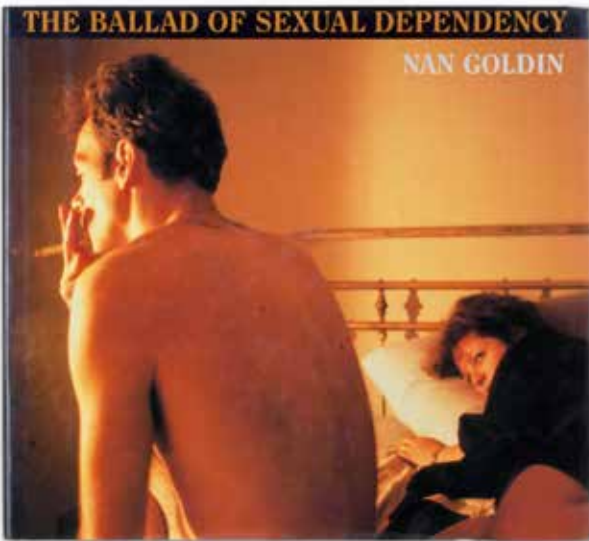
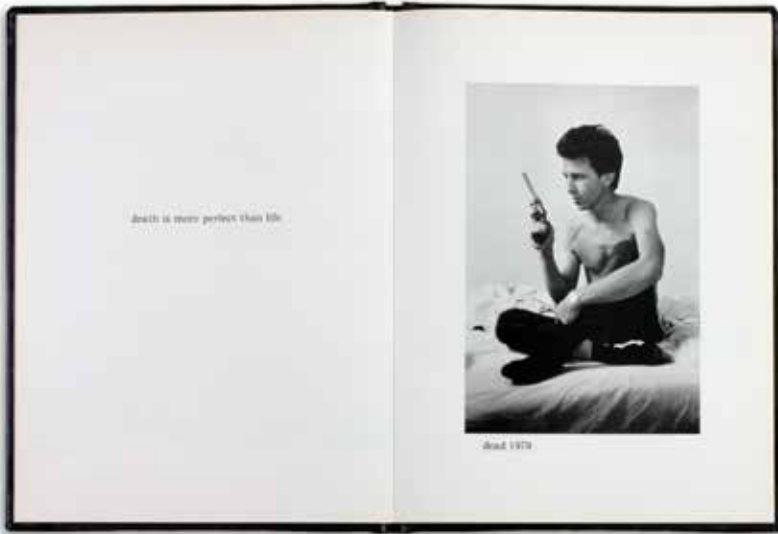


7 Robert Frank, b. 1924, *The Americans* (New York: Aperture, 1969), Gift of A. Szegedy-Masak. © 1969 Robert Frank; introduction © 1959 Jack Kerouac



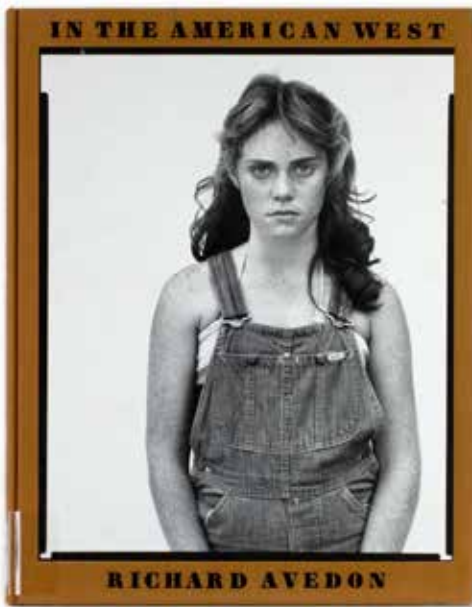
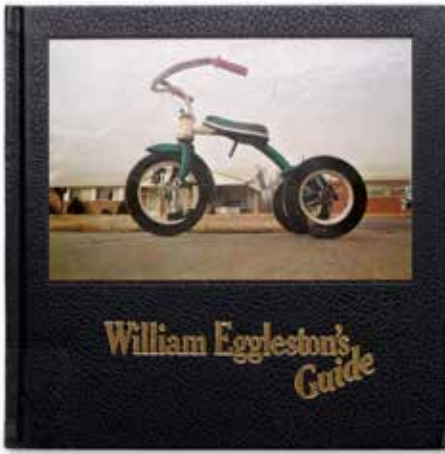
8 Danny Lyon, b. 1942, *The Bikeriders* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1968 Danny Lyon

9 Bill Owens, b. 1938, *Suburbia* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow, 1973), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1973 Bill Owens



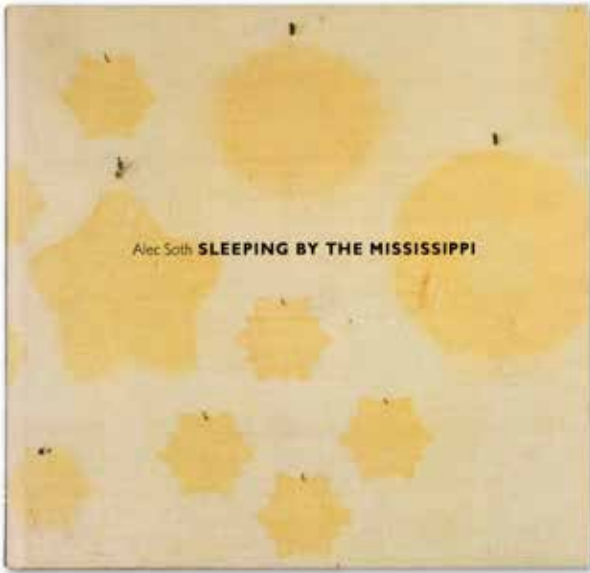
10 Larry Clark, b. 1943, *Tulsa* (New York: Lustrum, 1971), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1971 Larry Clark, Lustrum Press, New York

11 Nan Goldin, b. 1953, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (New York: Aperture, 1986), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1986 Aperture Foundation, Inc.; photographs and text © 1986 Nan Goldin



12 William Eggleston (b. 1939) and the Museum of Modern Art, *William Eggleston's Guide* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), David K. E. Bruce Fund. © 1976 Museum of Modern Art, New York

13 Richard Avedon (1923–2004) and the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, *Richard Avedon: In the American West* (New York: Abrams, 1985), David K. E. Bruce Fund. © 1985 Richard Avedon

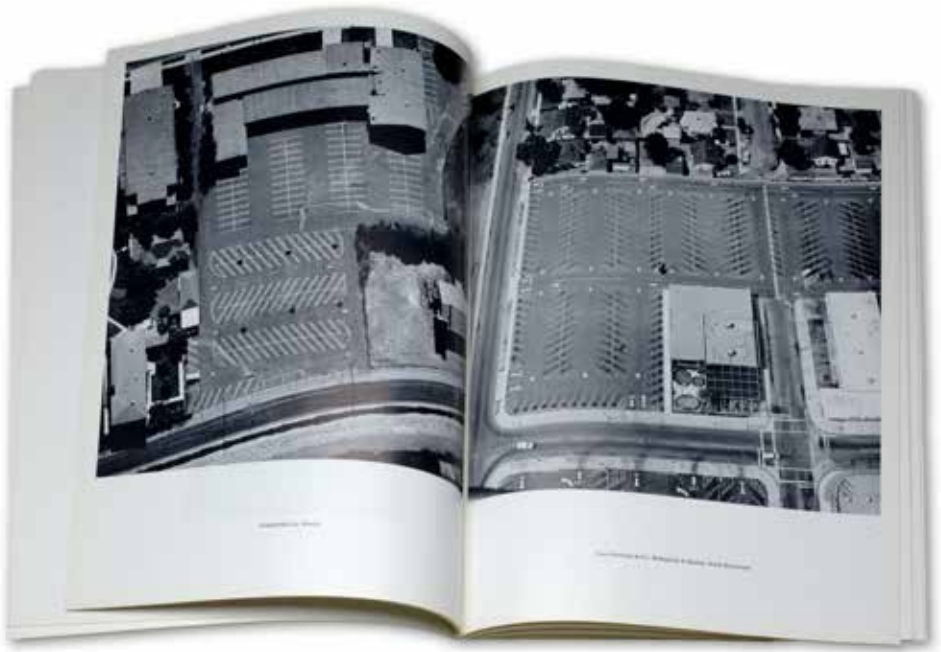


14 Alec Soth, b. 1969, *Sleeping by the Mississippi* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2004), David K.E. Bruce Fund. This edition © 2004 Steidl; photographs © 2004 Alec Soth; text © 2004 Patricia Hampl and Anne Wilkes Tucker

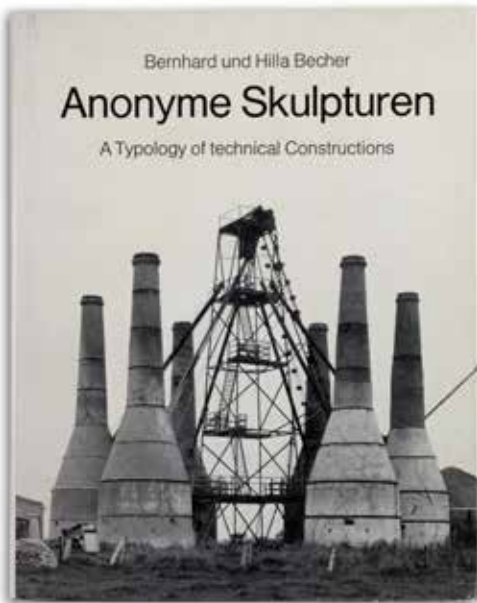
## Authorship, Appropriation, and Anonymity

Certainly, *The Americans* inspired many photographers, but it also spurred artists working in other media to explore the artistic possibilities of photography. To this point, the section “Authorship, Appropriation, and Anonymity” includes books that question photography’s ability to document and describe truthfully—as well as to manipulate photographs for the artists’ own means—thereby expanding what could be considered appropriate subject matter for the photographic artist. Ed Ruscha was a painter associated with pop art who began using photography in the early 1960s after seeing *The Americans* and made a series of small books using snapshots of seemingly mundane subjects such as gasoline stations, empty swimming pools, and parking lots. They were commercially produced and anti-aesthetic, meant to counter the perceived elitism of handcrafted artists’ books and to question the traditions of reportage and fine-art pictorialism. A decade later, Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel published a book comprising photographs taken from the archives of more than one hundred government and law-enforcement agencies, educational and research institutions, and corporations. Sultan and Mandel question the very idea of authorship, treating these photographs as found objects, changing context and creating new associations and ambiguity to transform these images once intended as literal documents. Bernhard and Hilla Becher of the Kunstacademie in Dusseldorf recorded industrial structures typologically, creating an archive, anonymous and utilitarian—yet also elevating the subjects as works of art through their formal treatment. Similarly, in the 1970s landscape photography underwent a radical shift as some photographers, including Robert Adams, became interested in recording humanity’s impact on the landscape. The New Topographics photographers took a formalist approach to their subject; yet beneath the seemingly objective veneer is a skeptic’s concern about human beings’ stewardship of the land, particularly the development of the American West. Between 1994 and 2011, Roni Horn took a different approach with a ten-volume series of books exploring her experience of Iceland. Two volumes, dedicated to photography, comprise a series of close-up portraits of an Icelandic friend submerged in a pool. The movement of the water on her skin creates subtle changes in expression from one page to the next—a meditation on how humans are formed by their surroundings.





15 Ed Ruscha, b. 1937, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (self-published, 1967), Gift of the Artist. © 1967 Edward Ruscha; photographs: Art Alanis



**16** Mike Mandel, dates unknown, and Larry Sultan, 1946–2009, *Evidence* (Greenbrae, California: Clatworthy Colorvues), 1977, David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1977 Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan

**17** Bernhard Becher, 1931–2007, and Hilla Becher, b. 1934, *Anonyme Skulpturen; A Typology of Technical Constructions* (New York: Wittenborn, 1970), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © Bernhard and Hilla Becher



18 Robert Adams, b. 1937, *The New West* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1974), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1974 Robert Adams

19 Roni Horn, b. 1955, *To place: Haraldsdóttir, Part Two* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 2011 *Haraldsdóttir, Part Two*, photographs and book: Roni Horn; © 2011 this first edition: Steidl Verlag and Roni Horn

## Internal Affairs

“Internal Affairs” brings together books that similarly exploit photography for artistic means—but instead of looking outwardly, they originate in the psyche of the artist, pushing the stream-of-consciousness mode into new territory. These photographers created personal documents to connect with viewers and bring them into the artist’s emotional world. In the first of three books published by the press he founded, *Lustrum*, Ralph Gibson uses ambiguity and surrealist imagery to explore ideas about the unconscious. *Lustrum* also published the reduced version of Robert Frank’s *The Lines of My Hand* in 1972. Equal parts retrospective and confessional, *The Lines of My Hand* marks Frank’s return to still photography after more than a decade making experimental films, reworking much of his earlier material to chart a new path, moving further from the documentary and closer to the expressive. Duane Michals creates staged photographs, presented in sequences and often with handwritten text to expand the possibilities of personal expression. Garry Winogrand’s encounters with the street are perhaps nowhere so poignant as in his first book, gleaned from visits to the Bronx Zoo and Coney Island Aquarium where he deftly analyzed and subverted the relationships between the caged beasts and their human admirers. One of the most influential photographic monographs of all time is that of Diane Arbus, first published in 1972 and continually in print to this day, compiled posthumously by Arbus’s friend Marvin Israel and daughter Doon Arbus in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. The body of portraiture that Arbus created works quite well as a book: the images are enhanced by cohesive sequencing and eloquent storytelling that describe American life in the turbulent 1960s, interpreted through the lens of Arbus’s own psyche. Following in her footsteps, Rineke Dijkstra’s first important series of portraits combines the technical process of photography with the biological process of adolescence to further explore the “gap between intention and effect.”



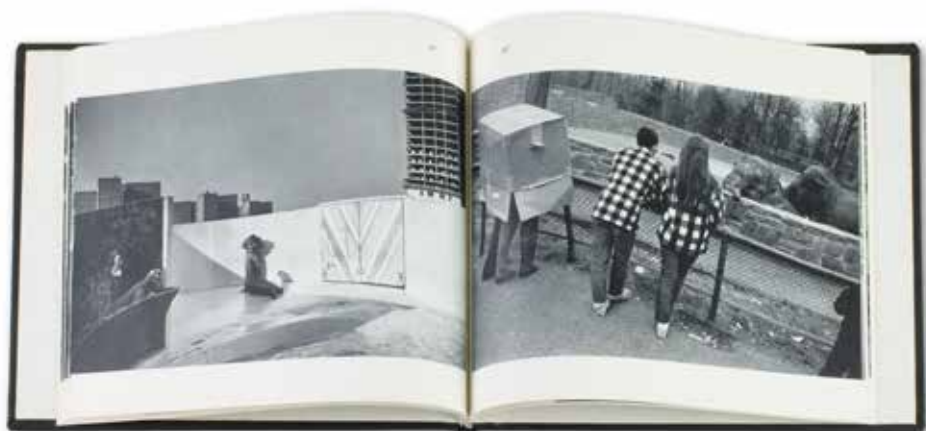
20 June Leaf, b. 1929, cover design for Robert Frank's *The Lines of My Hand* (New York: Lustrum, 1972), Private Collection. © 1972 Robert Frank, Lustrum Press



21 Ralph Gibson, b. 1939, *The Somnambulist: Photographs* (New York: Lustrum, 1973), Corcoran Collection. © 1973 Lustrum Press, New York



22 Duane Michals, b. 1932, *Real Dreams: Photostories* (Danbury, New Hampshire: Addison House, 1976), David K.E. Bruce Fund. © 1976 Duane Michals

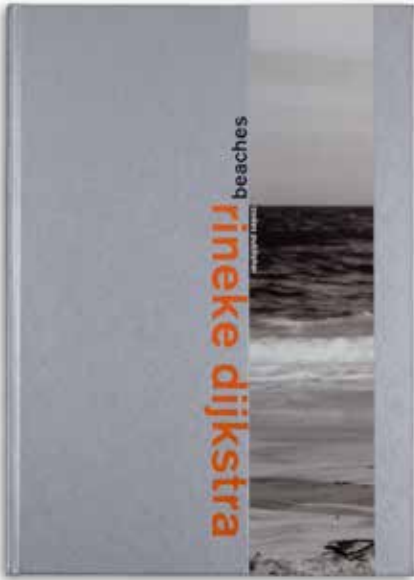


23 Garry Winogrand, 1928–1984, *The Animals* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, c. 1969), David K. E. Bruce Fund





24 Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel, *Diane Arbus* (1923–1971) (Millerton, New York: Aperture, 1972), Gift of Harvey S. Shipley Miller and J. Randall Plummer. © 1972 Doon Arbus and the Estate of Diane Arbus



25 Rineke Dijkstra, b. 1959, *Beaches* (Zurich: Codax, 1996), David K.E. Bruce Fund.  
© 1996 Codax, Zurich

## Further Reading

Di Bello, Patrizio, Colette Wilson, and Shamoon Zamir, eds. *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*. London, 2012.

Parr, Martin, and Gerry Badger. *The Photobook: A History*, volumes 1–3. London and New York, 2004–2014.

Roth, Andrew, ed. *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century*. New York, 2001.

Roth, Andrew, ed. *The Open Book: A History of the Photographic Book from 1878 to the Present*. Göteborg, Sweden, 2004.

Greenough, Sarah, Anne Tucker, Stuart Alexander, Martin Gasser, Jeff Rosenheim, Michel Frizot, Luc Sante, and Philip Brookman. *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans"*. Washington and Göttingen, 2009.

Philip Gafter. *Photography after Frank*. New York, c. 2009.

Mark Durden. *Photography Today*. London, 2014.

David Company. *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip*. New York, 2014.

Throughout the duration of the installation, these reference books are available in the library reading room along with a selection of additional photobooks from the National Gallery of Art Library collections. Reprints and alternate editions of several of the books in the installation are available, as well as other books by these photographers and books from photographers not represented in the installation, including Lewis Baltz, Bruce Davidson, Jim Goldberg, Michael Kenna, Les Krims, Mary Ellen Mark, Gilles Peress, Philip Brookman, Bill Burke, Nick Danziger, Emmet Gowin, Michael Lesy, Michael Levin, Joel Levinson, Sally Mann, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Martin Parr, Danny Seymour, Michael Snow, Bruce Weber, Terri Weifenbach, and others.

The reading room can be accessed in the East Building, Ground Floor, Study Center, Monday between noon and 4:00 pm and Tuesday through Friday between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. (Not open on weekends)

Checklist of the exhibition *From the Library: Photobooks after Frank*,  
August 8, 2015–February 7, 2016

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Written by Yuri Long.

The Gallery website features highlights from the exhibition and links  
to exhibition-related activities at [www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/  
exhibitions/2015/photobooks-after-frank.html](http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/exhibitions/2015/photobooks-after-frank.html).

