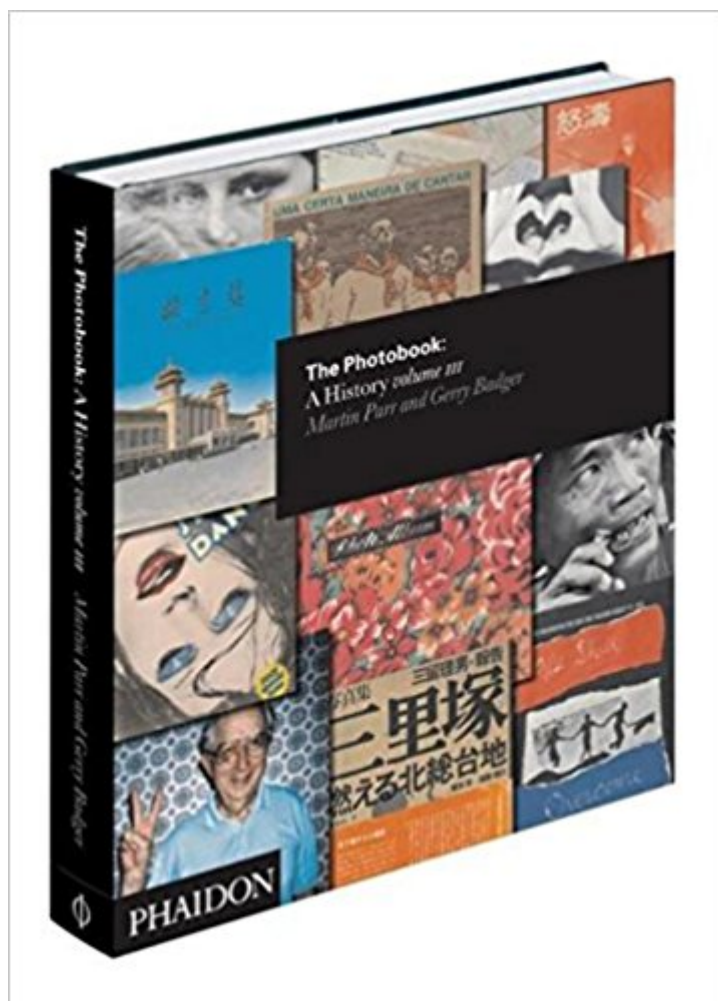


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The Photobook: A History Volume III



Synopsis

The third volume in an authoritative and comprehensive series, *The Photobook: A History* volume III provides a unique perspective on the story of contemporary photography through the genre of the photobook. Continuing in the vein of the first two volumes, Volume III is a study of the major trends and movements that have shaped the photobook genre globally since the birth of photography in the early nineteenth century. Volume III pays particular attention to photobooks published after World War II, covering contemporary themes of modern life, from diaristic photography of place and people to twentieth-century propaganda books and some of the finest works to emerge from the recent self-publishing boom. The *Photobook* volumes represent a valuable catalogue of rare and important photobooks, and since Phaidon published Volume I in 2004, are now regarded by academics, students and photobook bibliophiles as the definitive works on this subject.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"For those who have enjoyed volumes I and II, volume III comes as a delightful, and unexpected surprise. Highly readable and entertaining, an historical resource. An absolute must for anyone interested in *Photobooks* or anyone intending making *Photobooks*.
Black and White Photography"

Gerry Badger is a critic, architect, curator and photographer. His published books include *Collecting*

Photography (2003) and John Gossage: Berlin in the Time of the Wall (2005), as well as Phaidon's 55s on Chris Killip (2001) and Eugene Atget (2001). In 2007, he published The Genius of Photography, the book of the BBC Television series of the same name, and The Pleasures of Good Photographs (2010), an anthology of his essays on photography, which was awarded the 2011 Infinity Writers' Award from the International Center of Photography, New York. The work of Martin Parr bridges the divide between art and documentary photography. His studies of the idiosyncrasies of mass culture and consumerism around the world, his innovative imagery and his prolific output have placed him firmly at the forefront of contemporary art. A member of the international photo agency Magnum, Parr is an avid collector of books and a world authority on the photobook.

I loved the first of the series, a great introduction to the Photobook history. Addicted to photobooks, I found it an important addition to my library. I was delighted to find a second issue that followed up on the first, and now the final third. If you love photobooks, this is for you, if you find them boring, look elsewhere. Books like this are for people who love the printed page, the printed image, the personal library that allows one to touch, think about, and smell the pages of books.

A welcome addition to Parr and Badger's two previous photobook histories that looked at 472 titles from 1843 up to the end of the last century. Most of them came from the established publishing industry unlike many books in this third edition which are self-published in limited editions, issued since the end of the second World War. The nine chapters look at: propaganda; protest; desire; society; place; conflict; identity; memory and photography as a medium. Like volumes one and two the coverage is very wide ranging, from the five color photos and mono collages in the 'We shall overcome: March on Washington' (1963) to the fifty-three color photos in the 'Catalogue of meat products, conserves and lard' (1973) issued by a Prague food company to the seventy-five in 'Kim Jong Il looking at things' (2012) published by Jean Boite Editions, Paris. Some are just a few pages: twenty in the 2012 'Thank you for travelling with Northern Rail' with twelve photos to 664 page 'The J Street project' (2005) with 303 color photos. An odd inclusion is 'America's favorites' published in 1980 by Putnam, a mass market book with seventy-five pack shots of popular food brands, I thought it seemed slightly out of place with dozens of subjective creative books throughout these pages. Each spread mostly has two or three photobooks featured, occasionally one book gets a whole spread. As so many of these fascinating titles will never be seen by the reader I thought it was rather unfortunate that the common format is to show the cover and two inside spreads but

there is usually enough white space on each spread to accommodate three spreads from each book, this was also a criticism I had of volumes one and two. All the photobooks featured have a technical caption (author, publisher, date, pages, dimensions, copies printed) and an extended one to two hundred word mini essay. Nicely some of these have wonderfully wry comments about the subject matter in the photos. As with the previous books this one uses a matt art paper for the two hundred screen printing. Anyone who loves photobooks will need to get this latest edition of visual storytelling.

I have not read all three in the series, but I come away convinced that many of these books need not have been published. The authors have shown great imagination in throwing their net wide in selecting all possible of variety of photo books. But many selections appear to be no more than vanity projects. Although the short summaries are intelligently written what I find more interesting is the struggle to illustrate a whole book with very few actual photos. An impossible project. A warning for those looking to make their own book : there is very little practical advice except to assure you that someone somewhere has made a book more unlikely than yours.

Arbitrary judgments. Incomprehensible that these books are given so much respect.

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