



Seeing America

Melissa A. McEuen

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In the 1920s and '30s photography transformed and dominated the U.S. cultural landscape. *Seeing America* examines the camera work of five women who contributed to the growing dependence of Americans upon visual images for information about the world around them. Together, these women visually articulated the essential ideas occupying the American consciousness in the years between the world wars.

This powerful generation of photographers who directed their visions toward influencing social policy and cultural theory included Doris Ulmann, who made portraits of celebrated artists in urban areas and lesser-known craftspeople in rural places; Dorothea Lange, who magnified human dignity in the midst of poverty and unemployment; Marion Post, a steadfast believer in collective strength as the antidote to social ills and the best defense against future challenges; Margaret Bourke-White, who applied avant-garde advertising techniques in her exploration of the human condition; and Berenice Abbott, a devoted observer of the continuous motion and chaotic energy that characterized the modern cityscape. *Seeing America* is the first work to assess their extraordinary impact as a group.

Combining feminist biography with analysis of visual texts, Melissa McEuen considers the various prisms through which each woman saw America, taking into account the force of personal agendas. What emerged in their photographs helped Americans mold perceptions of themselves and others who inhabited the nation's myriad regions.

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