

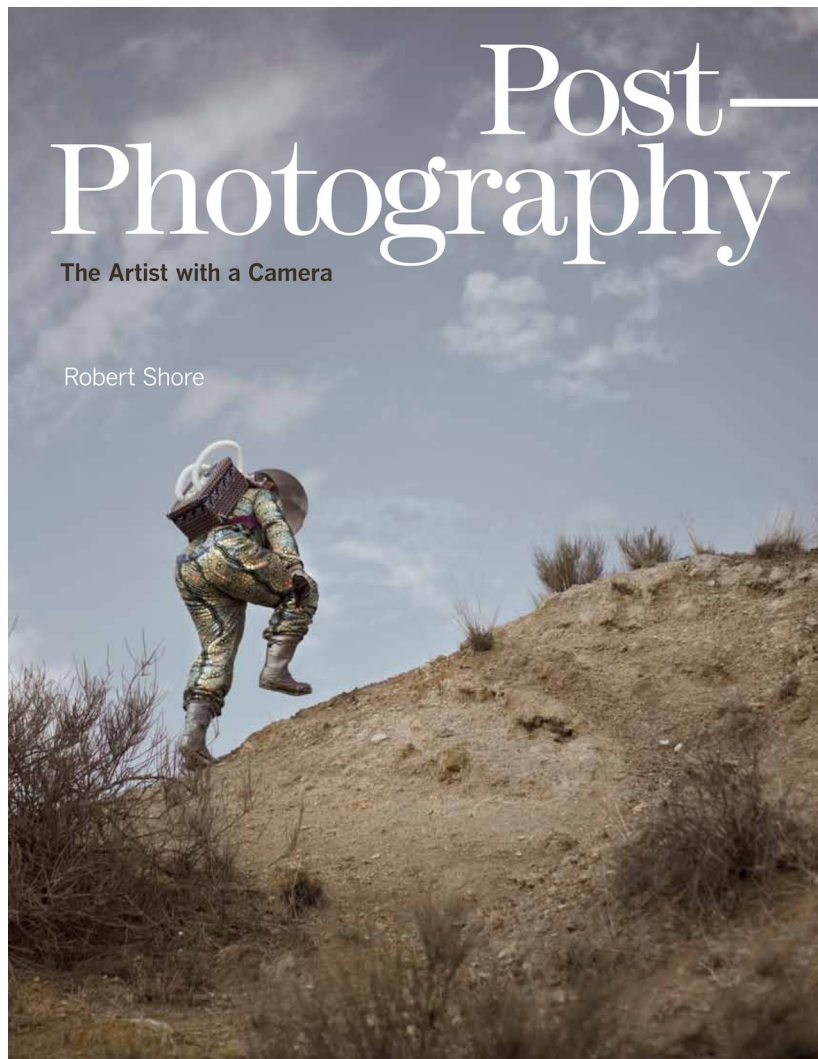
The Camera as an Afterthought: Defining Post-Photography

by Allison Meier on October 7, 2014



Christy Lee Rogers, "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter" (2012), from "Reckless Unbound" (all images courtesy Laurence King Publishing)

Photography as medium is not dead, but you can argue it is in a contemporary state of flux. In his new book *Post-Photography: The Artist with a Camera*, released last month by Laurence King Publishing, Robert Shore amasses 300 works by artists who are using photography in an altered state, whether it's staged, found imagery, or claiming the digital as their own.



Cover of “Post-Photography: The Artist with a Camera” (courtesy Laurence King Publishing)

“Post-photography is a moment, not a movement,” Shore writes. The book claims to be the first publication to look specifically at these artists who are now experimenting intensely with the found and distorted in the visuals of photography. Shore sets the current scene in an introductory essay:

Given the abundance of pre-existing visual material in our hyper-documented world, it’s unsurprising that an increasing amount of photographic art begins with someone else’s pictures. There’s nothing new about appropriating found imagery for fine-art purposes. But the sources, methods, and goals are fast-evolving. If digital culture has transformed photographic practice — that is, how pictures are taken and displayed — it has had no less profound an impact on how found materials are sought and then manipulated.

Each artist in the large book with its cardboard cover is given space to discuss how and why they work in a “post-photography” mode. There’s Julia Borissova delicately collaging petals on vintage photographs from the St. Petersburg flea market, along with

Steffi Klenz concocting volatile chemicals on negatives of furniture she stacks on the verge of collapse. Others create their own bridges between fiction and reality, like Cristina de Middel documenting the 1960s Zambian plan to send astronauts to the moon, giving imagery to a story that lacks it. The augmentation of reality by digital means is on heavy view, especially in appropriation like Clement Valla's *Postcards from Google Earth* that show highways bending at unnatural angles, revealing how the layered system of topography and aerial imagery actually works.



Photographs of paintings with their museum glares by Jorma Puranen (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Cristina De Middel, "Iko Iko" from "The Afronauts" (2011)



Cristina De Middel, "Bongo" from "The Afronauts" (2011)

Yet there are all also artists actively working outside of digital manipulation, such as

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Christy Lee Rogers whose photographs in the water at night of people swirled in colored clothes resemble Old Masters paintings. “My intention is to create something magical that could exist, not something that I feel people will think is fake or false,” she explains.

Back in 2011, as Shore points out in *Post-Photography*, the World Press Photo awards caused quite a stir when Michael Wolf got an honorable mention for his *A Series of Unfortunate Events* Google Street View photographs. The continued break down and manipulation of photography as it stretches beyond its definitions is likely just beginning its cascade as more and more we view the world through the digital.



Work by Brendan Flower in “Post-Photography” (photograph of the book by the author for Hyperallergic)



Nicole Belle, "Untitled," from "Rev Sanchez" (2008)



Michael Wolf, "Tokyo Compression 17" (2010), a series on commuters on the train



Richard Mosse, "Rebel Rebel" (2010), from "Infra," taken with Aerochrome infrared film



Benjamin Lowy, "Perspectives II: Nightvision" (2003-08), from "Iraq" taken with night-vision goggles issued by the US military