



The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers

Henri Cartier-Bresson

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Henri Cartier-Bresson's writings on photography and photographers have been published sporadically over the past 45 years. His essays--several of which have never before been translated into English--are collected here for the first time. *The Mind's Eye* features Cartier-Bresson's famous text on "the decisive moment" as well as his observations on Moscow, Cuba and China during turbulent times. These essays ring with the same immediacy and visual intensity that characterize his photography.

The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers Details

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From Reader Review The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers for online ebook

Maura says

A reminder to pick your head up, stop checking your messages and observe the tiny, funny, everyday moments. A great annual read from an all-time favorite photographer.

Nicolas Chinardet says

This is an odd little volume. The first section mostly expounds Cartier-Bresson's theories on photography. This is followed by a few short pieces of travel writing and finishes with scraps of texts about artists, HCB has known. A sprinkling of photographs, sketches and handwritten notes completes this heteroclite collection.

In a way this works like a photo album, gathering together disparate snapshots (visual and mostly written) without much context, and in the end little meaning.

The theoretical writings at the beginning are couched in rather obtuse language (this may be due to the the translation) which doesn't help shining a little on HCB's thinking. The rest is more explicit and more pleasant to read, particularly the travelogues.

Esra Bestel says

Great photographer and great writer...

"In a World that is buckling under the weight of profit-making, that is overrun by the destructive sirens of techno-science and the power-hunger of globalization - that new brand of slavery - beyond all that, friendship exists, love exists."

Bresson 1998

Patrick Hanlon says

The photographic master sums up his craft, his approach and his ethic in so many ways. My favorite quote: "people think far too much about techniques and not enough about seeing," articulates much about photography. A generous look behind the curtain.

Owlseyes says

Structure...d...

...black umbrella for two....

...flower power versus....

...just different types of dresses....

...convergence....

...too much intimate?....

...the great leap.

Li Jia Li says

A beautifully written book of what's photography is about and how's photographer's mind works. I randomly bought it at random second-hand shop on the road and turn out to be a great book. I will definitely read it again.

Jeanette says

Reading about HCB's experiences and philosophies from the man himself was, of course, interesting. As a small compilation of miscellaneous thoughts, it's a good read. But those who want to get a peek into his mind (no pun intended) I think will find it a bit too short.

I'm still on a lookout for the Decisive Moment, if anyone knows where I can find an english copy that won't cost me one million dollars.

Sarah says

As someone with an interest in photography this is a book that I come back to now and again. The essays are short and easy to pick up and read here and there. They contain plenty of food for thought on observing the world through the camera lens. For example, the idea of the camera as Cartier-Bresson's sketchbook is intriguing to me. While many artists use traditional sketchbooks which contain drawings, ideas, and experiments, Cartier-Bresson uses a camera to record images, compositions, and events. He tells us it is his diary.

I also appreciate the parallel he makes between photography and drawing. He says "photography is an immediate reaction, drawing a meditation" (45). It's necessary to recognize the contrast between the two. The ability to "meditate" on a subject through drawing and taking time to understand and see it, may build on one's ability to capture the essence of that subject in a snapshot and vice versa.

Antonio Delgado says

These subtle revelations on the photographic process illuminates artistic process of one of the greatest artists of 20th century. The artist uses instruments at his disposition while conjuring the mind and the body into the process.

Greg Goodale says

I wish I could add more, but the negative reviews have covered most of what there is to say.

HCB had an extraordinary journey through art and photography. He trained as a painter, became a surrealist photographer, a strict adherent of classical composition, founded a major photographic agency which he then left, then abandoned photography altogether.

This book gives virtually zero insight into this fascinating life.

But I see the shortfall of this book not as the absence of biographical detail, but a lack of much substance related to contemporary issues in photography or (this is a photographer still not convinced of the merits of colour photography, for instance) anything that sheds light on HCB's practice or photography in his era. In fact some of the material is so meagre that their posthumous collection into one volume appear to be a rather desperate attempt to cash in on an individual who simply didn't write very much.

For examples of the extent to which photographers can be informative and inspiring, read some of the interviews with 20th century photographers in *Dialogue with Photography* by Paul Hill (but not the HCB interview).

Ivan says

a classic.

Ambreen says

Photography only makes sense with Bresson.

Chris says

The Decisive Moment

Photography is, for me, a spontaneous impulse coming from an ever-attentive eye, which captures the moment and its eternity Henri Cartier Bresson

Henri Cartier Bresson is of course the great photographer of 'The Decisive Moment'. Only last year I met him in Tbilisi – Georgia. On the street corner he photographed some fifty years ago. The street corner still looked the same. A little less paint on the wood, a little less glass in the windows but not really changed. I made a snapshot of it – see both photo's on google+ - <https://plus.google.com/1107005028247...>

What I did not remember is that the iron fence that was so irritating in my way while taking the snapshot, only just visible in the right corner. Played the lead on Cartier Bresson's photo. Complete with young boy performing a circus act there.

The small and the great photographer.

Rajiv Chopra says

I like this book a lot. There are some real nuggets of insight here. The good thing about the book, is that it is short and concise. There is no verbiage, if I may use the term.

There is, however, a small issue. In a short book like this, you would expect that the insights would be more liberally scattered through the book. A lot of space is devoted to his own impressions of friends etc. This in itself, is not a bad thing. The price for this, however, is a bit high

The insights, when you come across them, are invaluable

Ernest Junius says

I started taking photography seriously about two years ago, when I first bought my Voigtlander's Bessa R2a camera in Singapore. Previously, I was happy being an ignorant amateur, armed with my lomo LC-A, taking pictures of friends and sceneries I liked. But gradually, I had become more and more sensitive towards the quality of the images I took. I started getting mad when the images didn't come out the way I wanted to be (or as I saw it). Then I started to research more about photography, and for the first time acquainted with the name Henri Cartier-Bresson who, in my opinion, one of the few that had lived his life as a photographer to

the fullest extent (he lived to his 90s!), therefore logically, his wisdom about the subject is unparalleled. He had inspired me greatly ever since. My Leica says a lot about it.

The Mind's Eye, is a book that I have been wanting to read for long. Unfortunately it is such a rare title it wasn't available in most bookstores. Until recently I told myself, "it is now or never."

I bought the book via amazon and forked up a whole load of extra wads into it, plus 3 weeks of anxiety—for the delivery.

The book arrived just fine. It is nicely bound, in hardcover and seems like built to last. Also, it is so light (only over 100 pages) I did two rounds of reading today in the office.

However being short in words only makes it fare more in meaning and context. It is the kind of book that once you take out from your shelf, you will not likely to return it for a long time. It is the book that you would want to read again and again—either it is to understand it more, while away time, or just simply as a general reminder whenever you need it, therefore it would be nice to have it with you all the time—present and ever-ready on your desk.

I think HCB is a great teacher as he is a great photographer, but don't expect an instant revelation from his writing. He wrote as a photographer and that also demands an attentive photographer to understand what he talked about. It is philosophical and it ventures about photography in its very primal, basic comprehension more than in its technical qualities. It really helps me a lot for it teaches me exactly what I am lacking of as a dilettante.

As a sweet lagniappe, not only talking about photography, The Mind's Eye invites you to understand HCB's relationships with his close friends, such as Giacometti, Renoir and Breton—amusing tales that worth talking about over a hearty dinner with close friends.
