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Julie K. Brown. *Making Culture Visible: The Public Display of Photography at Fairs, Expositions and Exhibitions in the United States, 1847-1900.* New York: Routledge, 2001. xii + 192 pp. $54.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-5823-139-0.

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Photography was born in France, but came of age on the other side of the Atlantic for a host of reasons intrinsic to the American character. The haphazard brainchild of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre became the natural handmaiden to the Yankee propensity to tinker, trade and test the practical limitations of all constraints, including time. Julie K. Brown's *Making Culture Visible* is a highly informative, fully illustrated testament of a profession and place that essentially shared a parallel adolescence.

The primary weakness of the text is the brevity mandated by its survey genre, a facet particularly evident in the introduction, where the author fails to note the critical role networking played in turning the United States into a light-tight box-toting society that currently enjoys a one-to-one camera-to-citizen ratio. New York University was the stage, with famed art professor/inventor/entrepreneur Samuel F. B. Morse the principal protagonist. He was in Paris seeking investors for his revolutionary electric telegraph, when French Deputy Francois Arago announced Daguerre's discovery to the prestigious *Academie des Sciences* on January 7, 1839. When he returned to New York the following March, he carried with him a camera and the technical instructions for making a daguerreotype. Within a month, he wrote the first account of photography to be published in the United States and petitioned his gentlemen-scientist friends to assist him in founding a school to teach others the discipline. Initially, he sought the support of Alexander Simon Wolcott, a medical instrument manufacturer, who elected instead to launch the world's first portrait studio in New York City in April, 1840, the same month Morse persuaded his academic colleague, noted physician and chemistry professor Dr. John William Draper to found the first photography school in the United States at New York University.

Events thereafter moved rapidly. Between 1840 and 1843, Wolcott patented a mirror version of the daguerreotype camera; a light filtering system suitable to the blue light requisite to the daguerreotype process; and, an enlarger (or adjustable copying camera) capable of generating enlarged copies of images generated by both the daguerreotype and calotype processes, a rival system perfected by William Fox Talbot, the English scientist whose claims to original discovery were lost to the politics of prior publication. Meanwhile, Draper took the first photograph of the moon, the world's oldest surviving photographic portrait and the first photograph of the spectrum of the sun, as well as served as mentor to Albert Southworth, who in turn mentored Edward Anthony, Mathew Brady's principal competitor during the Civil War. Morse continued to lay tracks as the messenger, publishing and lecturing widely on the camera as an ingenuous, interdisciplinary tool equipped with an objective eye and a mirror-like memory. Public reaction is best likened to an addiction, a fact Brown brilliantly hammers home across six well-documented chapters and a tightly knit afterword that sagely concludes that "the public dimension of photography's history is an unfinished story that continues to be written today."

Segregated into three subsections appropriately titled "Industrial Fairs," "International Expositions" and "Institutional Exhibitions," Brown's narrative picks up at the end of the first decade of American photography, beginning with a descriptive account of the photograph as a capitalist commodity. The status was a natural outgrowth of the mid-nineteenth century inclination to stage industrial fairs as an accessible vehicle for translating innovations within the Ivory Tower to a parlance discernible to the common clay. She illustrates the vital role mechanical institutions played as sponsoring agents, then casts as case studies three prominent fairs staged in Boston, New York and Philadelphia respectively between 1847 and 1864; these were the same years that spanned the breach between the solo image daguerreotype and the 1851 introduction of Frederick Scott Archer's two part, collodion (wet plate) process, which definitively rendered the quest for multiple copies from a single frame a technical reality.

The author's background as resident and visiting scholar to both the Smithsonian Institution's Dibner Library and the National Museum of American History Library enables her to adroitly describe the emergence of a discernible class of amateur contributors to a discipline heretofore outside the reach of all save a tight cadre of intellectuals with the academic savvy, material resources and public standing to successfully marry art and science with minimal debate. She fails, however, to state the obvious. An amenable, relatively simple means of generating multiple copies broadened the scope of users to the extent that the Old Guard grew defensive, leading to art-versus-science style arguments and exhibition restrictions designed to separate the studied imagery crafted by working professionals from the uneven renderings produced by weekend photographers. Class proved a cloying issue, but as Brown chronologically reveals in subsequent chapters, the debate was of little consequence to the long queues of viewers who came, saw and savored photographs from both camps with equal, if not completely unbiased, enthusiasm.

In the final chapter of the "Industrial Fairs" section, Brown takes the reader on a vicarious journey through the mindframe and methods operative in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Using exhibitions held in San Francisco, Cincinnati and Cleveland in 1869 and 1870, she highlights photography's spreading scope as both keeper of the public record and a mechanical comrade to the dawning of the modern industrial age. Along with the expected scenes of battlefields and warriors, audiences were treated to a broad slate of international scenes that helped close geographical distances. The historical American fascination for all things relating to the Great West found succor in photographs of the natural landscape, while Yankee entrepreneurs used their savvy to promote their wares through cleverly disguised corporate displays designed to titillate the consumer.

These same trends continue throughout the "International Expositions" section of the text, with the lens forever widening to include virtually any subject accessible to photographers worldwide. Viewers were given a front row seat when a technological innovation came into contact with a raw land inhabited by Indians that looked radically different from the blood-thirsty beings depicted in the newly emergent fad of the dime novel. The centerpiece of it all was the dizzy wrangling that led to the decision by the Centennial Art Advisory Board to build a separate photographic hall for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, which marked the first large-scale exhibition of photographic equipment and processes to be staged in the United States.

Brown fully reveals the extent of American photography's evolution when she surveys the role of cameras as official tools of an uncertain generation torn between the industrial class's view of rules as little more than someone else's opinion and a struggling army of workers and crusaders intent upon attaining greater social parity through political reform. Splendid views of the western landscape, portraiture of well-heeled aristocrats and campy advertising images shared center stage with views of immigrant slums, dispirited Indians and a full gallery of rogues and other genetic misfits. People were simultaneously attracted and repulsed, but as Brown convincingly argues, photography remained a respected tool even though public awareness of its ability to shape reality was a widely known ruse.

During the final third of the text, Brown takes the reader on a highly educational tour of the various machinations and mindsets that led to the building of photographic museums and collections during the last half of the nineteenth century. High-minded purpose, professional politics and the snapshooter revolution spawned by George Eastman's 1888 introduction of the Kodak add drama to what proved a daunting challenge of what to collect, how it should be stored and in what fashion it should be shown. Because the information is so exact and clearly presented, the last two chapters alone more than render *Making Culture Visible* an intellectually provocative, highly meritorious read.

Aside from the subjectivity evident in any armchair criticism, Brown is to be commended for conquering a slice of the colorful history of a discipline too-long ignored by the academic community. She is a good writer, an excellent researcher and a sympathetic witness forthright enough to admit a truth that many of us hold self-evident. As the mirror image of society in all its manifestations, photography's social role and aesthetic reach is tempered only by the bounds of human imagination.

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