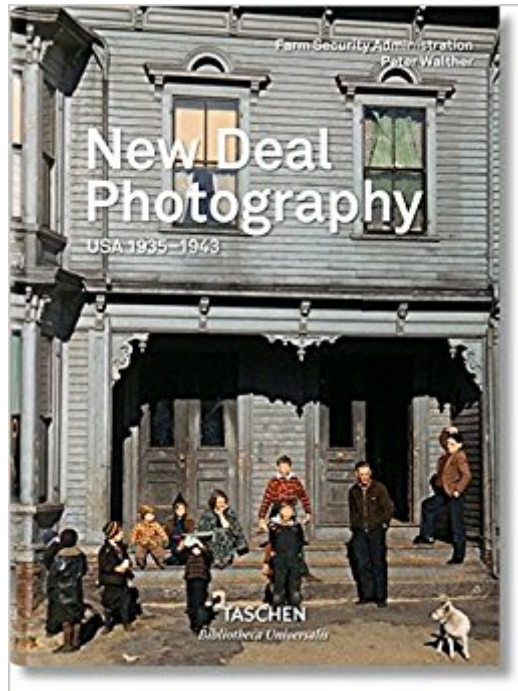




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New Deal Photography: USA 1935-1943



Synopsis

Another country: How the Farm Security Administration introduced America to Americans
Amid the ravages of the Great Depression, the United States Farm Security Administration (FSA) was first founded in 1935 to address the country's rural poverty. Its efforts focused on improving the lives of sharecroppers, tenants, and very poor landowning farmers, with resettlement and collectivization programs, as well as modernized farming methods. In a parallel documentation program, the FSA hired a number of photographers and writers to record the lives of the rural poor and "introduce America to Americans." This book records the full reach of the FSA program from 1935 to 1943, honoring its vigor and commitment across subjects, states, and stylistic preferences. The photographs are arranged into four broad regional sections but otherwise allowed to speak for themselves to provide individual impressions as much as they cumulatively build an indelible survey of a nation. Through color and black-and-white images, we meet convicts, cotton workers, kids on the street, and relocated workers on the road. We see subjects victim to the elements of nature and the timeless rituals of human life, as much as to the vagaries of the global economic market. We meet Dorothea Lange's iconic Migrant Mother, weather-beaten and worn, with two children leaning on her shoulders. What unites all of the pictures is a commitment to the individuality and dignity of each subject, as much as to the witness they bear to this particular period of the American past and to universal cycles of growing, playing, eating, aging, ailing, and dying. Through the lenses of such perceptive, sensitive photographers as Dorothea Lange, Jack Delano, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, Walker Evans, and Ben Shahn, subjects are entrenched in the hardships of their historical lot, caught in the loop of humanity, and yet face the viewer with what is utterly their own: a unique, irreplaceable, often unforgettable presence.

About the series: Bibliotheca Universalis • Compact cultural companions celebrating the eclectic TASCHEN universe at an unbeatable, democratic price! Since we started our work as cultural archaeologists in 1980, the name TASCHEN has become synonymous with accessible, open-minded publishing. Bibliotheca Universalis brings together nearly 100 of our all-time favorite titles in a neat new format so you can curate your own affordable library of art, anthropology, and aphrodisia. Bookworm's delight • never bore, always excite! Text in English, French, and German

Book Information

Hardcover: 608 pages

Publisher: Taschen; Mul edition (July 27, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 3836537117

ISBN-13: 978-3836537117

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1.7 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #101,898 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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Customer Reviews

“A comprehensive survey of the work done by the FSA, including that more rarely seen color work. From street scenes to pictures of field laborers and train yards, these images show us what the United States looked like in a bygone era, one rife with economic struggle.”
(washingtonpost.com)

Peter Walther has edited various publications on literary, photographic, and contemporary historical themes, including books on Goethe, Fontane, Thomas Mann, and writers in the First World War, as well as several illustrated books with historical color photographs. He has also curated several exhibitions. He is particularly interested in early color photography techniques.

Let me start by saying that photographs in this book are worth 5 stars. The problem with the tome is the text. For some odd reason the text included is in three languages - which wouldn't be a problem in and of itself - but the layout of the text is confusing as hell. This book could have used a much better layout editor to maintain a consistent flow from pictures to the multi-lingual text. If you can overcome the difficulty of the layout the pictures are well worth the effort.

If I'd only read the only review! Landscape photos across two pages, split by the spine just doesn't work!! One picture had a person's face split by the spine, totally took away from the visual experience. VERY uncharacteristic of the publisher!! I'm surprised this design got thru the Taschen machine!

Very disappointed; all of the colored pictures were in the ad-most of the book was black and white. It was a complete waste of money.

A thick, chunky book of photos in the Taschen Bibliotheca Universalis series (what they call 'compact cultural companions') with almost four hundred photos taken between 1935 and 1943. The majority are from the Farm Security Administration archives and a few from the Office of War Information but none showing how industry and the armed forces coped in a wartime setting up to 1943 when the OWI folded. As you would expect most of the really famous FSA photos are here: migrant mother by Lange; the bleached skull and dust storm by Rothstein; Ella Watson (American gothic) by Parks; Bud Fields and family by Evans. I think the strength of the book is the two hundred or more photos that are relatively unknown in a nicely varied selection, a lot of rural poverty of course but also a cross-section of American life back then. There are also fifty-five color photos scattered through the book's 608 pages and nicely this included ten from Russell Lee's significant photo essay of Pie Town, New Mexico taken in 1940. Author Peter Walther contributes, in the front of the book, a brief essay about the Roy Stryker and how he organised the photographers, the back pages have biographies of nineteen of them. The paper is a good matt art using a 175 screen for the images. All of them have captions and frequently a quote from the photographer about a particular shot. Though the book is full of really wonderful photos I've only given it four stars because of the format. An upright page 7.75 by 5.5 inches doesn't really work with so many landscape pictures, it leaves half a page for the captions (in three languages) and empty white space. The small format also means that all of the spread photos have the spine running through them. I was made aware of the book's shortcomings when comparing it with Michael Lesy's 2002 published 'Long time coming' which covers the same period with 410 photos (the only other book that has so many FSA pictures) but in a much larger size and with a photo a page though unfortunately no color. Of these two books I much prefer the Lesy title, more photos, a decent size and several good essays and it can be picked up for a low price, too.

What a wonder! So many I'd never seen before. Well organized by region.

Just a bunch of old pictures with very little said about any of them.

Wonderful book, great price!

I'm disappointed that the book format is so small, but the pictures in it are simply amazing. There is a decent amount of text as well, but I only read a few bits of it here and there. It needs to be a bigger book, and if it was it could be a shorter book as well.

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