



Photography and Play

Erin C. Garcia

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Photography and leisure go hand in hand. Cameras are part of our everyday lives, but we are never more likely to take a picture or to be photographed than when we are at play. As recreation and entertainment flourished in the nineteenth century, so too did the new medium of photography. Cameras became increasingly accessible to amateurs and were quickly deemed an indispensable part of what it meant to have fun. Acting as social commentators, many artists also turned their attention to the subject of pleasure and entertainment, often observing how photography itself has changed the way we spend our free time.

Photography and Play reveals the various ways that artists throughout photographic history have turned to topics as diverse as Victorian billiard players, Parisian barflies, moviegoers, sightseers, and suburban sunbathers. The book features eighty-seven photographs, all drawn from the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, that span nearly 150 years of image making. The works included are by such noted artists as Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, André Kertész, Bill Owens, Man Ray, Edward Steichen, Joel Sternfeld, Alfred Stieglitz, Weegee, and Garry Winogrand—all of whom documented people at play.

The illuminating introductory essay traces the relationship between the growing importance of leisure over the past 150 years and the part that photography has played in changing how we see ourselves.

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