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The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978

Sarah Greenough, Diane Waggoner, Sarah Kennel, Matthew S. Witkovsky

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The impact of the humble American snapshot has been anything but humble. Any American who takes a snapshot contributes to a compelling and influential genre. Since 1888, when George Eastman introduced the Kodak camera and roll film, the snapshot has not only changed everyday American life and memory; it has also changed the history of fine art photography. The distinctive subject matter and visual vocabulary of the American snapshot--its poses, facial expressions, viewpoints, framing, and themes--influenced modernist photographers as they explored spontaneity, objectivity, and new topics and perspectives. A richly illustrated chronicle of the first century of snapshot photography in America, *The Art of the American Snapshot* is the first book to examine the evolution of this most common form of American photography. The book shows that among the countless snapshots taken by American amateurs, some works, through intention or accident, continue to resonate long after their intimate context and original meaning have been lost.

The catalogue of a fall 2007 exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, *The Art of the American Snapshot* reproduces some 250 snapshots drawn from Robert Jackson's outstanding collection and from a recent gift Jackson made to the museum. Organized decade by decade, the book traces the evolution of American snapshot imagery and describes how technical, social, and cultural factors affected the look of snapshots at different periods.

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