

Timeless Snapshots of Past and Present

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By [RICHARD B. WOODWARD](#)

In the 1940s and 1950s, when few others cared about 19th-century photography, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim bought the finest and rarest examples they could find. Among the 35,000 prints they amassed—by Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll and other artists—was one that may be the world's first photographic image, created circa 1826 by the inventor Nicéphore Niépce: a view out the window of his French country house. Roy Flukinger's **"The Gernsheim Collection"** (Texas, 360 pages, \$75) introduces us to the far-sighted couple and their unrivaled archive, now housed at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas.



Herman Leonard, who died this summer, photographed jazz musicians as the aristocrats of American nightlife. **"Jazz"** (Bloomsbury, 304 pages, \$65) collects more than 100 of his glamorous black-and-white portraits, many from the 1950s—the heyday of Counts, Dukes, Earls and other jazz royalty. Whether sitting in at a recording session with a barefoot Sarah Vaughan or at a crummy nightclub with Ben Webster, the photographer showed his subjects

as they would have wanted to be remembered. It turns out, that's how we want to remember them, too.

NASA realized when it teamed up with Life magazine in the 1960s that photography could build public support for its programs. Edward Weiler's **"Hubble: A Journey Through Space and Time"** (Abrams, 144 pages, \$29.95) is another prime specimen of the agency's marketing savvy. Along with 20 cosmic images from the space telescope, one for each year it has been in operation, there are essays about the mechanics of this floating observatory and its discoveries, as well as accounts of the five missions to repair its finicky instruments.

Anyone hoping to comprehend art photography today must reckon with the crystalline, super-sized work of Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Candida Höfer and other Germans who studied in the 1970s and '80s under Bernd and Hilla Becher. In Stefan Gronert's **"The Düsseldorf School of Photography"** (Aperture, 320 pages, \$95), superb ly printed images by these artists—Mr. Gursky's hypnotic picture of a "99 Cent" store in California, for starters—accompany a helpful essay that fills in gaps about the Bechers and their influential progeny.

Few photographers are as unapologetically poetic, or as confrontational, as Sally Mann. Notorious for portraying her children in various states of undress, Ms. Mann takes a long look at herself in her new book. **"Sally Mann: The Flesh and the Spirit"** (Aperture, 204 pages, \$55) features dozens of recent self-portraits, nude figure studies of her husband, and some "C.S.I."-like images from a visit to a "body farm" in Tennessee, where forensic scientists are trained. She has lately been coating her negatives with collodion, and the cracking and dripping that this antiquated wet process is prone to has only enhanced her death-suffused romanticism.

The U.S. has no major ruins to speak of, but the collapse of Michigan's auto industry in recent decades has given us a set of colossal industrial monuments to look upon despairingly. The images of economic havoc in Andrew Moore's **"Detroit Disassembled"** (Damiani/Akron Art Museum, 124 pages, \$50) take us on an unnerving tour of the abandoned factories, as well as the hotels, movie palaces, schools, and middle-class neighborhoods that crumbled soon after.

Lee Friedlander is 76 and has published at least one photography book every year since before many of us were born. Judging from his latest, **"America by Car"** (D.A.P./Fraenkel, 194 pages, \$49.95), he still has a lot left in his tank. The book shows how our views of the landscapes outside our cars—from our boulevards of strip malls to our national parks—are

warped by, and inseparable from, the windows and struts inside. Mr. Friedlander's camera reminds us what a weird and hilarious world we are ignoring most of the time.

A long list of photographers have visited Afghanistan and Iraq during the past decade, trying to capture the realities of war in these bullet-pocked places. Two titles this year, both admirably modest, add to our emotional knowledge. **"Infidel" (Chris Boot, 240 pages, \$35)**, a paperback volume by English photo journalist Tim Hetherington, is a close-up portrait of a frontline American combat unit in eastern Afghanistan, where daily life oscillates, as his friend Sebastian Junger writes, between "boredom and killing." Thomas Roma's **"Dear Knights and Dark Horses" (PowerHouse, 94 pages, \$24.95)** uses oblique metaphor to memorialize soldiers' sacrifices. Photographs of coin-operated ponies in front of stores around the artist's native Brooklyn are paired with portraits of a National Guard battalion set to deploy. Mr. Roma's dedication says it well: His book is for all those boys and girls who went off to war and "came home different."

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