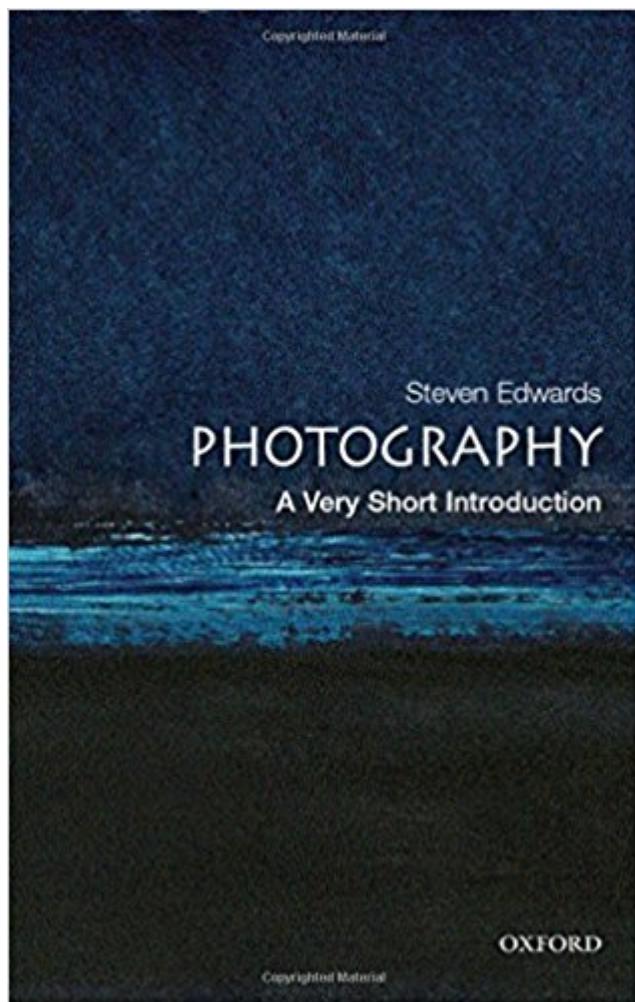


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# Photography: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



## **Synopsis**

Photographs are an integral part of our daily lives, from sensationalist images in tabloid papers, to personal family snapshots, to the art photography displayed in galleries and sold through international art markets. In this thought-provoking exploration of the subject, Steve Edwards provides a clear, lively, and imaginative approach to the definition, importance, and meaning of photography. He combines a sense of its historical development with an analysis of its purpose and meaning within a wider cultural context. Edwards also discusses both well-known and more unusual photos, from the highly controversial Cottingley Fairies to Ansel Adams landscapes, and from the shocking and influential Eddie Adams image of a Vietcong suspect being executed to the portrait/performance art work of Cindy Sherman. Edwards interrogates the way we look and think about photographs, and considers such issues as truth and recording, objectivity and fine art, identity and memory.

**About the Series:** Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Dr Steve Edwards is Research Lecturer in Art History at the Open University. Publications include the successful *Art and its Histories* (Yale, 1999), as Editor.

This book is not awful but not great. If you can focus hard and think deeply, you might love it. It has great insight into the philosophy behind photography and what exactly it is or is not; or how it may or may not be viewed. It primarily fails to keep the focus of the reader. The author's thought processes can be difficult to follow all the way through. You get the point if you keep reading, but it's difficult to get to that point. I have to read this book for a class and I often find myself having to go back and re-read paragraphs after I finish them so I can piece everything in the middle together.

This book is mostly about photography's place in the world, how it relates to other arts, and the long-lasting question of whether it can be conceived of as an art. Also, there are good discussions about whether photography is or is not evidence and whether it is or is not a truthful representation. In other words, this is mostly a book about the philosophy of photography, if you will. And, while short, it's dense and full of discussion. The book's largest flaw is that it glosses over digital photography until the end. For a book published in 2006, this may or may not be acceptable. But, then when the treatment of digital photography does come in a final chapter, that chapter is too simplified at best and verges on incorrect at worst. For example, at one point, the author indicates that it is impossible to detect tampering with an image. While it's true that digital technologies do make wholesale manipulation difficult to detect with the human eye, that's long been the case in photography. In the realm of the digital, there is a lot of work that has gone into algorithms that can detect manipulation. Also, if one is really interested in verifying that a photo is authentic for news purposes, Canon and Nikon (and maybe others) do have software solutions that rely on cryptographic signing to authenticate an image was made with a particular camera at a particular time and whether it was modified. With an attached GPS feed, even location data can be verified. Still, even with a few glaring issues which seem to be the result of revising the text over time, the book is a thought provoking read. I'd have given 4 stars except for the poor treatment of digital technology in photography. One further note for the Kindle edition, the font used is inconsistent and not as pleasant to read as the default font used by most of the other Kindle books I've read so far. There are several places where letters are broken. It's simply not as pleasant a read as other books from a font perspective.

I really like this book and I am considering making it mandatory for my freshman photo students at NYU. Edwards does a fantastic job of covering the major movements and critical theories in photography without endorsing any one in particular. It's a slim little book can be stashed in a

camera bag (easily lost, I am ordering my second copy) and read in bite sized nuggets. The best part is that he encourages further study by giving you just enough to be interested and then want more. It's true that it's a bit dated, but as someone who writes about photography, I can attest to the fact that it is fairly impossible to keep up with technology that is progressing so quickly. My last book was outdated before it hit the shelves. Use this book to establish a framework for the history of photography, then dig deeper on your own

The first thing to mention is that this is a history, not a how-to. With that in mind, it's not a bad history. This book is organized thematically and introduces photography through discussion of pictures in general, the definition and limits of photography, cameras and more. There's an interesting quote I'll live with a long time: "We all now live our lives in the presence of pictures." While the book is a little dense, it's an interesting read for the most part.

Great photography book!

Smallest book ever to be used as a text book. Great!

good

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