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Snapshots capture everyday occasions. Taken by amateur photographers with simple point-and-shoot cameras, snapshots often commemorate something that is private and personal; yet they also reflect widely held cultural conventions. The poses may be formulaic, but a photograph of loved ones can evoke a deep affective response. In *Snapshot Photography*, Catherine Zuromskis examines the development of a form of visual expression that is both public and private.

Scholars of art and culture tend to discount snapshot photography; it is too ubiquitous, too unremarkable, too personal. Zuromskis argues for its significance. Snapshot photographers, she contends, are not so much creating spontaneous records of their lives as they are participating in a prescriptive cultural ritual. A snapshot is not only a record of interpersonal intimacy but also a means of linking private symbols of domestic harmony to public ideas of social conformity.

Through a series of case studies, Zuromskis explores the social life of snapshot photography in the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century. She examines the treatment of snapshot photography in the 2002 film *One Hour Photo* and in the television crime drama *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*; the growing interest of collectors and museum curators in "vintage" snapshots; and the "snapshot aesthetic" of Andy Warhol and Nan Goldin. She finds that Warhol's photographs of the Factory community and Goldin's intense and intimate photographs of friends and family use the conventions of the snapshot to celebrate an alternate version of "family values."

In today's digital age, snapshot photography has become even more ubiquitous and ephemeral_and, significantly, more public. But buried within snapshot photography's mythic construction, Zuromskis argues, is a site of democratic possibility.

About the Author

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Endorsements

"Contesting the will-to-conformity we tend to associate with snapshots, Snapshot Photography sees at least some of them as creating new modes of social belonging, and thus of social being. In the process of giving the snapshot a provocative social agency, Catherine Zuromskis also helps to restore this ubiquitous genre of photography to its own complicated history."

_Geoffrey Batchen, Victoria University of Wellington; and editor, Photography Degree Zero

"As snapshot images have become objects of cultural nostalgia in the digital age, this book offers rich insights into their manifold social and communal practices and their surprising aesthetic influence. Countering scholarly analyses of the normative powers of visual technologies, Snapshot Photography mines vernacular images for the fantasies and relationships they enable."

_Marianne Hirsch, author of Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory

"Snapshot Photography is that rare and brilliant study that takes something familiar, ubiquitous, and banal_the snapshot photograph_and teaches us to see it anew in all of its personal, public, and political complexity. Zuromskis's work is essential reading for anyone interested in the public and private power of photography."?

_Shawn Michelle Smith, Associate Professor of Visual and Critical Studies, School of the Art Institute of Chicago