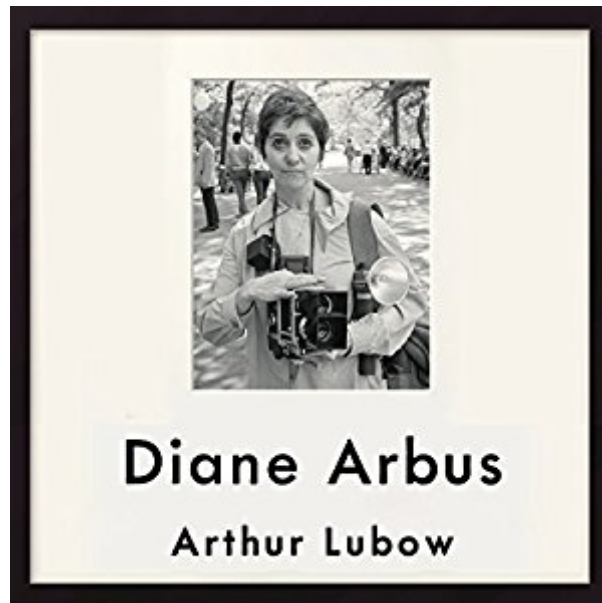




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Diane Arbus: Portrait Of A Photographer



Synopsis

Diane Arbus brings to life the full story of one of the greatest American artists of the 20th century, a visionary who revolutionized photography and altered the course of contemporary art with her striking, now iconic images. Arbus comes startlingly to life here, a strong-minded child of unnerving originality who grew into a formidable artist. Arresting, unsettling, and poignant, her photographs stick in our minds. Why did these people fascinate her? And what was it about her that captivated them? It is impossible to understand the transfixing power of Arbus's photographs without understanding her life story. Arthur Lubow draws on exclusive interviews with Arbus's friends, lovers, and colleagues to explore her unique perspective. He deftly traces Arbus's development from a wealthy, sexually precocious free spirit into first a successful New York fashion photographer, and then a singular artist who coaxed hidden truths from her subjects. Lubow reveals that Arbus's profound need not only to see her subjects, but to be seen by them, drove her to forge unusually close bonds with these people, helping her discover the fantasies, pain, and heroism within each of them.

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Customer Reviews

Perhaps everyone who has ever looked at Dianne Arbus's photos has wondered how she feels about her subjects; does she empathize with them or is she exploiting them? The woman who took the pictures is no less confounding, fascinating, and deeply touching. Lubow's extensive research and in-depth interviews with many people in Arbus's life, his insightful analysis of her work, his

evenhanded history of her life, including its many contradictions, and his sensitive attempt to bring her into as coherent a whole as any complex human being can be made into, make this not just a masterful biography of Arbus but a notable exemplar of the biographical art itself. The biography tells us, of course, not just of one life, but many, including Dianne's husband, the photographer and actor, Allan Arbus. And it's an exploration of the time when photography grew beyond Steichen's galleries into a major force in the New York art world. It gives insight into a critical era in fashion photography and the influence of Arbus's good friend Richard Avedon. And it deals sensitively with her suicide, the heartbreaking finale to her life but not to her fame and influence. It helps too that Lubow is a gifted, lucid writer who manages to work so much of his extensive research into the book without ever wearying the reader. Another reviewer here laments that Lubow didn't obtain rights to Arbus's pictures, which we would of course all like to have in our hands as we read the book, but the rights are impossible to obtain. They are kept under extremely guarded control by Arbus's daughters. You can, however, read the biography with books published by the daughters and thus gain immediate and full advantage of Lubow's penetrating analysis.

Recommend a great biography and I'll read it. After checking out various reviews of Arthur Lubow's Diane Arbus bio I ordered it and sat down to feast upon the photographer's fascinating life and unique photographs. This book has it all: it's insightful about her art, it's beautifully written, and it's replete with the kind of detail that comes only when an author has fully grasped the complexities of his/her subject. Lubow's descriptions of Arbus's photographs are so good that I didn't miss the inclusion of photographs. (Goggle them if you must.) This book is a page-turner.

Non judgmental and clearly written. I learned a great deal about her professional struggles. Although she worked for magazines like Esquire she remained economically marginal her whole life and had to depend on others, including her ex-husband for support. She is maddeningly self-destructive. I think her suicide was part of the trajectory from the beginning and was essential to her later fame.

First, let's acknowledge that Arthur Lubow's writing is, at best, pedestrian. None the less, this biography of mid-20th century photography icon Diane Arbus is a must read page turner for any student of photography, or the arts in general. The possessor of a truly brilliant, wildly original mind,

Arbus was wracked by insecurity, self doubts, and, most likely, by that psychiatric illness de jour, bipolar disorder. I have long been troubled by ethical issues related to the way she appears to have taken advantage of her vulnerable subjects, but after reading Lubow I think I understand the basis of those lapses, and see her work in a new light. In addition to being a biography of Arbus, this is a fascinating snap shot of mid century New York City and its world of photography and fashion.

Great biography of a very complicated person. And a wonderful story about the world of fashion and art photography. Also a portrait of New York City as well and the art world of the 50's through the 80's. Any professional in the field of psychology should read this and gain insight into the issues of being a freelancer and living from project to project. A good study of anxiety, depression and an artist who left a powerful legacy and a fascinating body of work that will be viewed for many years, if not forever.

An amazing book...makes me feel like I'm there with her. I loved this book.

It is no hagiography, and I suspect that if it were about anyone else but her, The subject of the book would love it. After all she loved prodding other people to rebel their secrets while keeping hers safely tucked away, There is a lot of insight into her life and those of the people who were immediately around her including legendary art directors, editors, writers, friends, lovers, and fellow photographers (including what I think will be the most honest assesment of Richard Avedon the person and Richard Avedon the photographer that we are likely to see) and is a very telling portrait of what it meant to be part of the worlds of art and publishing in New York City in the 1950s and '60s. Is there a lot of prying into complicated people's even more complicated sex lives? Why yes there is but the tone is neither smarmy or salacious (as in tje awful Bosworth biography), just a reporting of facts. Lubow discusses and analyses many of Ms. Arbus' photographs so it is handy to have ready access to well printed or reproduced versions handy. His insight is keen and is enhanced when speaks to or quotes the people she photographed.

Very engaging and well written, not sensationalistic though it could have been, and critically astute about the history of photography and its place during Arbus' life.

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