



William Eggleston's Guide

John Szarkowski

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William Eggleston's Guide was the first one-man show of color photographs ever presented at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Museum's first publication of color photography. The reception was divided and passionate. The book and show unabashedly forced the art world to deal with color photography, a medium scarcely taken seriously at the time, and with the vernacular content of a body of photographs that could have been but definitely weren't some average American's Instamatic pictures from the family album. These photographs heralded a new mastery of the use of color as an integral element of photographic composition. Bound in a textured cover inset with a photograph of a tricycle and stamped with yearbook-style gold lettering, the *Guide* contained 48 images edited down from 375 shot between 1969 and 1971 and displayed a deceptively casual, actually super-refined look at the surrounding world. Here are people, landscapes and odd little moments in and around Eggleston's hometown of Memphis--an anonymous woman in a loudly patterned dress and cat's eye glasses sitting, left leg slightly raised, on an equally loud outdoor sofa; a coal-fired barbecue shooting up flames, framed by a shiny silver tricycle, the curves of a gleaming black car fender, and someone's torso; a tiny, gray-haired lady in a faded, flowered housecoat, standing expectant, and dwarfed in the huge dark doorway of a mint-green room whose only visible furniture is a shaded lamp on an end table. For this edition of *William Eggleston's Guide*, The Museum of Modern Art has made new color separations from the original 35 mm slides, producing a facsimile edition in which the color will be freshly responsive to the photographer's intentions.

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