



Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory

Marianne Hirsch

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Family photographs – snapshots and portraits, affixed to the refrigerator or displayed in gilded frames, crammed into shoeboxes or catalogued in albums – preserve ancestral history and perpetuate memories. Indeed, photography has become the family's primary instrument of self-representation. In Family Frames, Marianne Hirsch uncovers both the deception and the power behind this visual record. Hirsch provocatively explores the photographic conventions for constructing family relationships and discusses artistic strategies for challenging these constructions. When we capture our family photographically, we are often responding to an idealized image. Contemporary artists and writers, Hirsch shows, have exposed the gap between lived reality and a perceived ideal to witness contradictions that shape visual representations of parents and children, siblings, lovers and extended families. This book exposes the passions and rivalries, the tensions and anxieties that have for the most part remained on the edges or outside family albums. And it also permits us to appreciate the power of family photographs and the important role they have assumed in shaping personal and cultural memory, particularly through the traumatic dislocations of the post-war and post-Holocaust moment. Family Frames offers both a theoretical analysis and a passionate exploration of photographs. All who cherish family pictures now have a new frame for viewing them.



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