



Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage (Art Institute of Chicago)

Elizabeth Siegel

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Human heads on animal bodies, people in fanciful landscapes, faces that are deftly morphed into common household objects—these are among the Victorian experiments in photocollage seen and explained in this marvelous book. With sharp wit and dramatic shifts of scale, these images flouted the serious conventions of photography in the 1860s and 1870s. Often made by women for albums, they reveal the educated minds and accomplished hands of their makers, taking on the new theory of evolution, addressing the changing role of photography, and challenging the strict conventions of aristocratic society. Although these photocollages may seem wonderfully odd to us now, the authors argue that they are actually perfectly in keeping with the Victorian sensibility that embraced juxtaposition and variety.

This delightful book, the first to examine comprehensively the little-known phenomenon of Victorian photocollage, presents imagery that has rarely—and, in many cases, never—been displayed or reproduced. Illuminating text provides a history of Victorian photocollage albums, identifies the common motifs found in them, and demonstrates the distinctly modern character of the medium, which paved the way for the future avant-garde potential of both photography and collage.

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