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About *Looking at Photographs: Animals* (1995)

This book came about as a collaboration with the late Jacques Lowe, a photographer and book packager. Having produced a series of children's books under the rubric *Looking at Paintings*, Jacques turned his attention to a comparable project about photography. He asked me to provide the texts; I was both honored and excited by the assignment: How do you teach young people to read photographs, and give them a vocabulary with which to discuss those images? How do you take complex ideas about photographic seeing and make them available to kids ages 8-12?

The larger plan included four titles: *Animals*, *People*, *Places*, and *Things*. Our intent was to find a selection of images for each volume that would permit me to discuss many of the issues particular to photography, from its technical aspects to the public and private meanings that photographs carry, including how photographers work and think. The images in the *Animals* book came from such photographers as James Balog, Peter Beard, David Doubillet, Elliott Erwitt, Ralph Gibson, Mary Ellen Mark, Sylvia Plachy, William Wegman, and Garry Winogrand.

The publisher that Jacques found, Chronicle Books in San Francisco, accepted the project enthusiastically. They committed to publishing the first two volumes, *Animals* and *People*, and then following those with the second set if the first pair did well. For reasons too complicated to explain, I wrote the texts for *Animals* and shared the picture-editing duties with Jacques, while he did most of the picture selection for *People* and wrote its texts himself (though the book includes my Preface as it appears in the *Animals* book, and here). These two titles appeared simultaneously in Spring 1995.

Dissatisfied with the results from those first two volumes, despite reasonable sales and glowing reviews, Chronicle remaindered both books just a year after publication, and cancelled the remaining two. This disappointed both Jacques and myself deeply, but he found no way to take the project elsewhere before his death. Rights to the overall project now rest with his estate.

I have considered ways of reworking the idea, and have come up with some; should anyone know a publisher interested in pursuing that, please contact me. (Review extracts appear at <http://nearbycafe.com/artandphoto/cspeed/reviews/animals.html>.) Meanwhile, copies of the *Animals* book (of both books, in fact) can be obtained reasonably inexpensively and easily through various online booksellers. So any teacher interested in trying this out with students should have no difficulty finding one.

I've decided to post three sample texts — on Eadweard Muybridge, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, and Alfred Stieglitz — with their accompanying images, plus the book's Preface and its Glossary. This provides a look at the approach we took, and may help anyone engaged in a similar effort.

— A. D. Coleman
Staten Island, NY
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This previously unpublished author's note appears here for the first time.

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