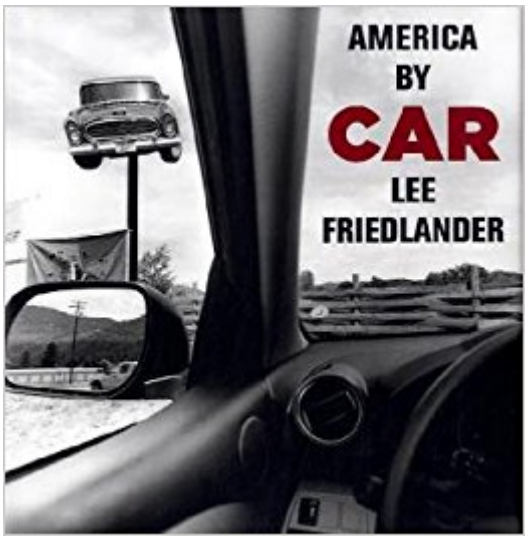
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Lee Friedlander: America By Car



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Synopsis

Enduring icons of American culture, the car and the highway remain vital as auguries of adventure and discovery, and a means by which to take in the country’s vast scale. Lee Friedlander is the first photographer to make the car an actual "form" for making photographs. Driving across most of the country’s 50 states in an ordinary rental car, Friedlander applied the brilliantly simple conceit of deploying the sideview mirror, rearview mirror, the windshield and the side windows as a picture frame within which to record the country’s eccentricities and obsessions at the turn of the century. This method allows for fascinating effects in foreshortening, and wonderfully telling juxtapositions in which steering wheels, dashboards and leatherette bump up against roadside bars, motels, churches, monuments, suspension bridges, landscapes and often Friedlander’s own image, via sideview mirror shots. Presented in the square crop format that has dominated his look in recent series, and taken over the past decade, the nearly 200 images in America by Car are easily among Friedlander’s finest, full of virtuoso touch and clarity, while also revisiting themes from older bodies of work (Friedlander occasionally used aspects of automotive architecture in photographs from the late 1960s and early 1970s). Never has America been photographed so penetratingly and ingeniously as in Friedlander’s latest body of work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lee Friedlander is 76 and has published at least one photography book every year since before many of us were born. Judging from his latest, "America by Car," he still has a lot left in his tank.

The book shows how our views of the landscapes outside our cars--from our boulevards of strip malls to our national parks--are warped by, and inseparable from, the windows and struts inside. Mr. Friedlander's camera reminds us what a weird and hilarious world we are ignoring most of the time. --Richard Woodward, Wall Street Journal, December 16, 2010

It is no secret that Lee Friedlander is one of my favorite photographers of all time. When I was just a pup trying to understand what photography was all about, Friedlander's work was an early influence. Of course, I've never yet achieved his level of commitment or purity of vision. He has stated that his conception of the photograph is all encompassing. He said his first photo ever was of his uncle with a brand new Hudson that also included numerous other incidental subjects. His photographs since then have given as much weight to the secondary as the primary subject matter. To borrow from the words of another of my favorite photographers, William Eggleston, Friedlander's work is highly democratic.In Friedlander's current project, he continues to utilize the Hasselblad Super Wide camera--a camera model he has been using on other projects for the past decade. The all-encompassing sweep of the wide lens fits perfectly with his methods. The tremendous depth of field, supported by fill flash, works here even better than in previous projects such as "Sticks and Stones", "The Desert Seen" and "Apples and Olives" for example. Those books were generally a chaotic tangle of elements that drew you in by challenging you to work out the puzzle. "America by Car" is more accessible."America by Car" is so full of treasures, I could not begin to describe them. I received this book last week and I've spent a good deal of time with it. Each time I've gone through it, I've had a smile on my face. Friedlander has come up with a wonderful project with photos over several years that includes the door, window frame, windshield and dashboard of whatever car he happened to be using at the time as an important element of the photograph. It's not just a method to frame the subject, the car is part of the main subject. As in other Friedlander photos, each element is as important as any other. Here he succeeded with a consistently high level of interesting and humorous pictures.This is a highly recommended book, easy to approach if you're not familiar with Friedlander's work yet a very satisfying for those of us who have known and loved his pictures for many years.

LF fans need wait no longer, this latest book of 192 square photos confirms that the magic is still there. The photos are totally Friedlander and he delivers a fresh twist by taking them all from the front seat of a car. By using the windscreen and door arch he creates two pictures and in many of them another image courtesy of the door mirror. Actually it's a bit more complex than that because

what he photographs outside the car is usually in layers of interest as it recedes from the viewer. The end result is a wonderful collection of shapes, texture, tonal qualities, depth of field and perhaps the most remarkable thing is that the everyday highway landscape in town or country can, in the hands of Friedlander, produce such dazzling images.The photos were taken between 1992 and 2009, though most are from this century with locations, quite literally, right across the country. There are noticeable themes as you turn the pages: people in the frame on pages 18 to 23; graves 110 to 119; trucks and industry 136 to 149; people again 150 to 157; STOP signs 185 to 191. Some shots, if you strip out the car from the photo, are similar to other Friedlander books. Page 182 could be from 'The Desert Seen' or pages 74/75 and 130/131 from his architectural masterpiece 'Sticks & Stones'.The book follows Friedlander's liking for square format prints (eight and a half inches) and his friends contribute to the book's wonderful look: Thomas Palmer for the separations, Katy Homans for the simple, elegant design and Meridian Printing for their usual immaculate 300 screen duotones.I've looked through the book several times and the W-O-W factor keeps popping up in my mind as I discover something new in a photo I've looked at over and over. Lee Friedlander delivers his own playful vision yet again throughout these pages.***SEE SOME INSIDE PAGES by clicking 'customer images' under the cover.

As a Friedlander fan, this book does not disappoint--the pictures are full of the chaos that seem to be his trademark, using the interiors of a multitude of rental cars as the plush plastic foregrounds to frame the ordinary and the absurd with equal aplomb. How can one resist signs for "Hot Women and Cold Beer" outside a steel shed, or "Support our troops--10 to 10" on an ice cream shop, or a "Keep out" sign by a dusty graveyard. My pleasure with the book was amplified by the surprise of finding several images from places I recognized--including a portrait of his friend Richard Benson walking away from a real estate office with the half dead cooling towers of Three Mile Island in the background, camera in hand. Most photographers would have made the picture of the real estate office with the towers--but Friedlander tweaks the image to include a tribute to a friend, a memory of a disaster, and a very good joke in a single frame.From a photography book collectors point of view, this book is a real bargain, 192 splendidly printed images. This book would be a bargain at twice the price.

This is an amazing book and is 100% Lee Friedlander in style. The question you need to ask yourself is "do you really love his work". If you do then this book is a must have; if you're just casually curious it may be too much. It's a very visually intense book and you're going to either love

it or hate it.

America by Car ... The greatest Friedlander book yet? The very best of Lee Friedlander, plus a lot of very cool plastic and glass.

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