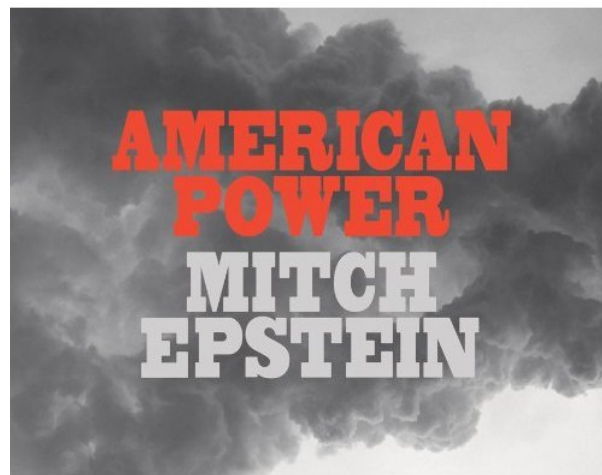


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Mitch Epstein's latest project tackles one of the most loaded issues on the nation's agenda: what and who powers America? Between 2003 and 2008, prompted by the evacuation of an environmentally contaminated Ohio town, Epstein traveled the United States to document the country's energy "hot spots," where fossil fuel, nuclear, hydroelectric, wind and solar power are produced, encountering further contaminations, Homeland Security obstacles, corporate invincibility and the occasional token of hope. In a post-Katrina and post-Patriot Act America, the angle of engagement permitted Epstein often varied, so that many of the power plants and refineries were shot from an enforced distance ("If you were Muslim, you'd be cuffed and taken in for questioning," he quotes an F.B.I. agent in West Virginia telling him). Alongside these classic depictions of looming, obdurate power, Epstein includes more idiomatic images--a woman wading in the water above Niagara Falls, father and son motorcross bikers, a tree cluttered with debris--which bring the issues back down to human scale. Epstein tells in an accompanying essay how these experiences deepened his political convictions, and led him to think harder about the artist's role in a country teetering between collapse and transformation. Here is his portrait of early twenty-first-century America, as it clings to past comforts and gropes for a more sensible and sustainable future.

Mitch Epstein has scrutinized the physical and psychic landscapes of America since the early 1970s. With the Recreation and Family Business projects, Epstein established himself as an artist who, in his own words, seeks "to engage with the complexity of our cultural state of things, rather than reduce it to visual sloganeering."

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Great book!

By Geoff

This book is excellent. The image quality is very good. The content is relevant and the size is great. It's a good representation of Epstein's photographic voice and one of those I can look through over. I would highly recommend this one!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

We have the Power, don't we?

By Robin

After five years of documenting energy across the country Mitch Epstein is now aware of two American powers: the one he set out to photograph and the other the power of the authorities to question his right to do so; after all he could have been a terrorist with a missile (or tripod with camera). In the short Afterword at the back of the book he reveals his frustration with energy producers who prefer not to have their plants photographed and use local police to enforce corporate instead of Constitutional law. In Poca, West Virginia, after being questioned by the sheriff and others an FBI man arrived, "You know," he said, "if you were a Muslim, you'd be cuffed and taken in for questioning."

Despite the local aggravation I think the sixty-three photos admirably set out what Epstein wanted to reveal: the look of energy. The scene is set from Plate one, a shot of some backyards with trees and green grass and the hulking cooling towers of the Amos Coal Power Plant, Raymond City, West Virginia, ever present as a grey background (I thought this photos was strangely reminiscent of a Gregory Crewdson tableau). Plate twenty-seven shows a mangled off-shore oil platform at Dauphine Island, Alabama, brought low by Katrina and it looks a stunning shot. Plate fifteen, a long shot of the Wyodak open-strip coal mine in Wyoming with huge yellow conveyer belts snaking across gouged out landscape. Plate sixty from Altamont with a wind farm, set in desert scrub, as the background to four golfers playing their shots on the lush grass of the course.

Though many of the excellent photos are of energy being made and the raw materials required to do it they are mixed in with shots of people, who in the context of a photo, are energy connected, for instance Plate sixty-two shows a couple relaxing some yards away from the force of Niagara Falls. I think the strength of the book is this mixing of people doing ordinary things and huge scale of energy producers, most of whose photos are taken as long landscape shots.

The production of the book is excellent as one would expect from Steidl. A lovely matt art paper with a 175 screen brings out the best in Epstein's creativity. Who would have thought that fossil fuels, nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, solar and alternative energy could provide such visual power.

***SEE INSIDE THE BOOK by clicking 'customer images' under the cover.

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Four Stars

By Jackie Jax

Quality images.

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