



The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884-1929 (Studies in Industry and Society)

Elsbeth H. Brown

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In the late nineteenth century, corporate managers began to rely on photography for everything from motion studies to employee selection to advertising. This practice gave rise to many features of modern industry familiar to us today: consulting, "scientific" approaches to business practice, illustrated advertising, and the use of applied psychology.

In this imaginative study, Elspeth H. Brown examines the intersection of photography as a mass technology with corporate concerns about efficiency in the Progressive period. Discussing, among others, the work of Frederick W. Taylor, Eadweard Muybridge, Frank Gilbreth, and Lewis Hine, Brown explores this intersection through a variety of examples, including racial discrimination in hiring, the problem of photographic realism, and the gendered assumptions at work in the origins of modern marketing. She concludes that the goal uniting the various forms and applications of photographic production in that era was the increased rationalization of the modern economy through a set of interlocking managerial innovations, technologies that sought to redesign not only industrial production but the modern subject as well.



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