



## Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity (Refiguring Modernism)

From Penn State University Press

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#2161758 in Books 2010-04-07 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.50 x .71 x 10.50 |, 2.58 #File Name: 0271035285256 pages | File size: 75.Mb

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity (Refiguring Modernism):

Products of modernity, postcards continue to provoke comment today as in the nineteenth century. With their unique status as interdisciplinary image-objects that cross lines of geography, economy, and gender, postcards epitomize the complex history of visual culture. These often sweet, nostalgic, inexpensive mementos of commercial culture have also been carriers, even instigators, of colonialist exoticism and political propaganda. They straddle the by now largely obliterated line between “high” and “low” art, between an earlier modernist art history and more recent work in visual culture. This fully illustrated volume is the first of its kind to bring together the latest interdisciplinary research on postcards as a significant area of scholarly inquiry. In addition to the editors, the contributors are Rebecca J. DeRoo, Ellen Handy, Elizabeth B. Heuer, Timothy Van Laar, Annelies Moors, Cary Nelson, John O’Brian, Naomi Schor, Kimberly A. Smith, Rachel Snow, Nancy Stieber, and Andrés Mario Zervigón.

“This fascinating collection of essays, well introduced and framed by the editors, marks the arrival of the study of postcards as an important component of the growing field of visual studies. Although the discipline of learning about societies from looking at their postcards has a history that goes back to distinguished earlier practitioners such as the

Surrealist poet Paul Éluard and the great American photographer of everyday life, Walker Evans, this book will serve as both a benchmark and an incitement to further study of this valuable archive of cultural traces.”—Herman Lebovics, SUNY Trustees Distinguished Professor, Stony Brook University“So ubiquitous that they have been invisible to serious scholarship, postcards have here at last been given the detailed, critical attention they need and deserve. This beautifully designed volume, which covers an admirably diverse range of practices and issues, addresses both the production and reception of the humble postcard, showing this image form to be an especially rich depository of cultural knowledge.”—Geoffrey Batchen, CUNY Graduate Center“This is a stimulating and often brilliant contribution to art history and visual culture studies. The editors have assembled an array of essays that both testify to and analyze in detail the crucial importance of a visual/verbal medium that has long been hidden in plain sight. Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity is exemplary for both its subjects and methods—and, not least, a revelation for anyone who thinks that there is no new ground to be broken in histories of the visual.”—Frederick Bohrer, Hood College“Meticulously edited and beautifully illustrated, Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity undoubtedly will become the first stop for anyone interested in the cultural history and aesthetics of the postcard. Instead of transforming the postcard into an emblem of a particular understanding of language, these essays explore material histories of the production and reception of postcards across multiple sites in order to grasp their place in histories of modern art and communications technologies, as well as their consequential roles in the increasingly turbulent discursive battles of the early twentieth century over issues such as race, gender, and national identity.”—Mark A. Wollaeger, Vanderbilt University“The book is well illustrated: its many examples of postcards range from generic views by anonymous individuals to photographs by Robert Frank, William Wegman, and others.”—W. S. Johnson, Choice“I am happy to opine that Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity is an excellent and topical anthology. Indeed, it is fair to say that we have needed this book for some time. To extend our understanding of postcards, this anthology offers an intelligent, varied, and rambunctious mix of essays that will be a valuable resource for teaching and new scholarship. To top it off, many of the essays are a pleasure to read.”—Robin Kelsey, [caa.reviews](#)About the AuthorDavid Prochaska is Associate Professor of History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870–1920* (1990, 2004).Jordana Mendelson is Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at New York University. Among her previous books is *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929–1939* (Penn State, 2005).