
What happens to photographs after they have been discarded by their original owners? This title explores a specific subset of a collection of such photos, and in doing so, examines the way popular photography and the changing times shaped the way women presented themselves in front of the camera in the first seventy years of the twentieth century.

The collector, Peter J. Cohen, acquired the photographs from a myriad of places, including flea markets and galleries, over the course of a decade. As he amassed the collection, he categorized the photographs into various snapshot typologies. He noticed the preponderance of images depicting a trio of women and subsequently created a grouping that he titled “The Three Graces.” The reasoning for this title becomes more apparent as one thinks of the classical motif in relation to the twentieth century photographs included in the book. The collection was then donated to the Art Institute of Chicago, whereupon an exhibition was organized by the same name. This book was published to coincide with the exhibition.

“The Three Graces” photograph collection consists of 538 photographs, and the book includes around 135 of those images. The curator for the show and author of this book, Michal Raz-Russo, introduces the subject and explores the theme and the developing conventions associated with popular photography in an essay that precedes the images. This hardcover book is well bound and should stand up to repeated use. There is no bibliography or index, yet the text, while sparse, is thought provoking and informative. A checklist follows the 135 pages of plates of photographs (or photographs printed as postcards) that are beautifully reproduced and pleasant to page through. Readers will walk away pondering the questions and topics explored in the introductory essay while thinking about the diverse and somewhat eclectic group of photographs of women included in the book. Readers will want to know more about the collector of the photographs and want to see the more than 400 images in the collection that were not published in this title. This book is recommended for libraries collecting exhibition catalogues and/or with collections relating to photography, popular culture, collectors and collecting.

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